

CHAPTER

2

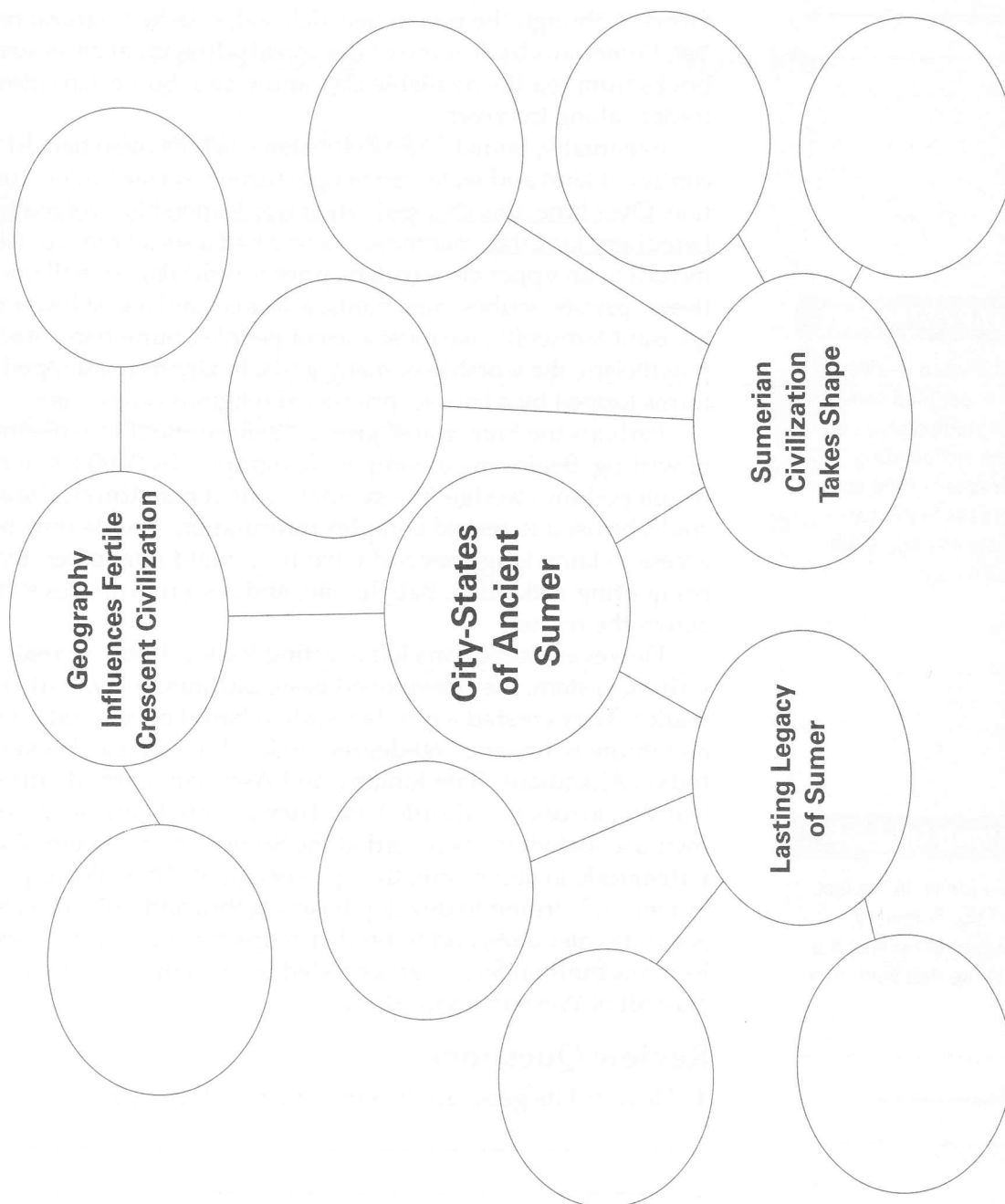
SECTION 1

Note Taking Study Guide

CITY-STATES OF ANCIENT SUMER

Focus Question: What were the characteristics of the world's first civilization?

As you read this section in your textbook, complete the concept web below to identify the main ideas about the city-states of Sumer under each heading.



CHAPTER

2

SECTION 1

Section Summary

CITY-STATES OF ANCIENT SUMER

READING CHECK

What were ziggurats?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *evolved* mean in the underlined sentence? What context clues can you find in the surrounding words or phrases? Circle any words or phrases in the paragraph that help you figure out what *evolved* means.

READING SKILL

Identify Main Ideas In the last paragraph of the Summary, which sentence represents the main idea? Write that sentence below.

Around 3300 B.C., **Sumer**, the world's first civilization, arose in Southeastern **Mesopotamia**. Mesopotamia lay within the **Fertile Crescent**, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The region's geography affected its people. Frequent flooding forced Sumerians to work together to protect homes and control water for irrigating farms. Although the region had rich soil, it lacked natural resources. Yet, Sumerians built some of the world's first great cities using bricks from readily available clay and water. Sumerians also became traders along the rivers.

Eventually, Sumer had 12 city-states, which often battled over control of land and water. So people turned to war leaders for protection. Over time, this changed when war leadership evolved into hereditary kingship. Sumerian society had a social rank, or **hierarchy**, including an upper class (rulers, priests, officials), a small middle class (lesser priests, scribes, merchants, artisans), and a vast lower class (peasant farmers). Like most ancient peoples, Sumerians practiced polytheism, the worship of many gods. In **ziggurats**, stepped platforms topped by a temple, priests led religious ceremonies.

Perhaps the Sumerians' greatest achievement was the invention of writing. Beginning as simple pictographs, by 3200 B.C. writing had developed into wedge-like symbols, called **cuneiform**. Cuneiform could be used to record complex information. People now had access to knowledge beyond what they could remember. Eventually, conquering Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian armies swept across the region.

However, Sumerians left a lasting legacy. Besides creating a writing system, they developed basic astronomy and early mathematics. They created a number system based on six, setting up 60-minute hours and 360-degree circles. We still use this system today. Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians carried Sumerian learning across the Middle East. They adopted cuneiform for their own use. Babylonians recorded the Sumerian oral poem, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, in cuneiform, thus preserving it. They also expanded on Sumerian learning to develop basic algebra and geometry, to create accurate calendars, and to predict eclipses. Later, the Greeks and Romans built on Sumerian knowledge; then they went on to influence all of Western civilization.

Review Questions

1. How did its geography help Sumer to develop?

2. What major contributions to learning were made by Sumerians?
