



Soil that is near a river is usually fertile. Farming villages located on rivers could generally support larger numbers of people, and so grew in size. Food supplies, and other goods, could also be brought in from other areas by boats using the river. Rivers were for ancient civilizations what highways and air routes are for modern people.

If we say that the writing and recording of events signals the beginning of civilization, then the first of the four earliest civilizations began between 3500 and 3000 B.C. This was Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in what is today Iraq. The next civilization, a few hundred years later, was along the Nile Valley of Egypt. The cities of the Indus Valley, in present-day Pakistan, developed about 2000 B.C. Along the

*As this map shows, river valleys were important environments for early civilizations. What other geographic characteristics do these civilizations have in common?*