



Sumerian Achievements

The Invention of Writing

- The Sumerians made one of the greatest cultural advances in history.
 - They developed cuneiform (kyoo-NEE-uh-fohrm), the world's first system of writing. But Sumerians did not have pencils, pens, or paper. Instead, they used sharp reeds to make wedge-shaped symbols on clay tablets.



Pictographs



Development of Writing				
	3300 BC	2800 BC	2400 BC	1800 BC
Heaven				
Grain				
Fish				
Bird				
Water				

Sumerian writing developed from early symbols called pictographs. Writers used clay tablets to record business deals, like this tablet that describes a number of sheep and goats.

Writing

Sumerians first used cuneiform to keep records for business, government, and temples. As the use of cuneiform grew, simple pictographs evolved into more complex symbols that represented basic parts of words. Writing was taught in schools.

Scribes

- **Becoming a writer, or scribe, was a way to move up in social class.**
- **Scribes began to combine symbols to express complex ideas. In time, scribes wrote works on law, grammar, and mathematics.**
- **Sumerians also wrote stories, proverbs, songs, poems to celebrate military victories, and long poems called epics.**

Advances and Inventions

- **The Sumerians were the first to build wheeled vehicles like carts and wagons.**
- **They invented the potter's wheel, a device that spins wet clay as a craftsman shapes it into bowls.**
- **They invented the ox-drawn plow and greatly improved farm production.**

Sumerian Achievements



They were the first people to build wheeled vehicles, including carts and wagons.



The Sumerian's artistic achievements included beautiful works of gold, wood, and stone.



Cylinder seals like this one were carved into round stones and then rolled over clay to leave their mark.



This stringed musical instrument is called a lyre. It features a cow's head and is made of silver decorated with shell and stone.



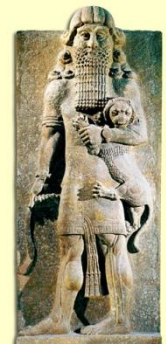
The Sumerians were the first people in Mesopotamia to build large temples called ziggurats.



The bull's head is made of gold and silver.



This gold dagger was found in a royal tomb.



Archaeologists think this statue from the 700s BC represents Gilgamesh.

More Inventions

- They built sewers under city streets.
- They learned to use bronze to make strong tools and weapons.
- They named thousands of animals, plants, and minerals, and used them to produce healing drugs.
- The clock and the calendar we use today are based on Sumerian methods of measuring time.

Architecture

- **Sumerian remains reveal great skill in architecture.**
- **A pyramid-shaped ziggurat dominated each city.**
- **Most people lived in one-story houses with rooms arranged around a small courtyard.**

Sculpture and Jewelry

- **Sumerian art is renowned for sculpture and jewelry.**
- **Sculptors created statues of gods for the temples, and made small objects of ivory or rare woods.**
- **Jewelers worked with imported gold, silver, and fine stones. Earrings and other items found in the region show that Sumerian jewelers knew advanced methods for putting gold pieces together.**

Cylinder Seal

- **The Sumerians also developed a special art form called the cylinder seal.**
- **The cylinder seal was a small stone cylinder that was engraved with designs and could be rolled over wet clay to decorate containers or to “sign” documents.**



Music

- **Music played an important role in Sumerian society.**
- **Musicians played stringed instruments, reed pipes, drums, and tambourines both for entertainment and for special occasions.**