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Mesopotamia (Cultures Of The Past)



Synopsis

Discusses the history, social order, customs, religion, and accomplishments of the area known as the "cradle of civilization."

Book Information

Series: Cultures of the Past

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Customer Reviews

The cover is upside down and backwards. Otherwise the book is in great condition and high quality.

The Mesopotamia volume of the Cultures of the Past series, unlike those devoted to the Ancient Egyptians or Spain in the Age of Exploration, looks at a series of ancient cultures that flourished in the Fertile Crescent at what is essentially the beginning of recorded history. Pamela F. Service has to touch on the kingdoms of Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria, all of which held sway over the rich land between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers ("Mesopotamia" means "land between the rivers"). In doing so, Service is also telling young readers the story of how the first civilization was created when human beings made the revolutionary change around 10,000 B.C.E. that they could plant seeds, grow their own crops, and manage herds of animals for eating. Agriculture required group effort and groups required organization under religious precepts and political guidelines. The next thing you know human beings are walking on the moon. Service's first chapter on The Cradle of Civilization traces these beginnings and looks at the History of the cultures that flourished in this area from Sumer, the first civilization, to the last glories of Babylon. Other chapters are devoted to the Cultural History of those who lived between the rivers, their Belief System in terms of the gods

and demons they worshipped and feared, the relationship between Beliefs and Society in living out the life decreed by the gods, and the Legacy of the Mesopotamians in terms of the creation of literature, early technological developments such as the pottery wheel, metalworking, cloth making, and the arch. Scattered throughout the volume are informative sidebars on topics ranging from the historical hero Gilgamesh to the laws of Hammurabi. The format of these volumes allows Service to get into more detail than the standard elementary school World History textbook. Consequently, while young readers might have trouble keeping the Assyrians distinct from the Babylonians, they will have an understanding of the key things these various ancient cultures had in common. Certainly there is not as much diversity among these particular cultures as you would find in Europe throughout most of its history. The book is illustrated with color photographs of ancient artifacts and archeological ruins. The back contains a chronology of events in Mesopotamia from the dog becoming the first domestic animal (which happened about a thousand years before farming began in the mountains north of Mesopotamia) to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus of Persia (which leads you to the volume on the Persian Empire), as well as a glossary, bibliography, and index. The Cultures of the Past series covers not only the standard topics such as the Ancient Greek and Ancient Romans, but also looks at the Ancient African Kingdom of Kush, the Ancient Maya, China's Tang Dynasty, and the Vikings. This look at Mesopotamia comes back farther than any other volume, but the series does come up to the time of Elizabethan England and the Aztec Empire.

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