

The Story of the World



Volume 1: Ancient Times

ALSO BY SUSAN WISE BAUER



The Story of the World

History for the Classical Child
(Well-Trained Mind Press)

Volume 2: The Middle Ages (revised edition 2007)
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The Story of the World

History for the Classical Child



Volume 1: Ancient Times

From the Earliest Nomads to the Last Roman Emperor

25th Anniversary Expanded Edition



by **Susan Wise Bauer**

illustrated by Jeff West



Charles City, Virginia

Well-Trained Mind Press

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Introduction

How Do We Know What Happened?



What Is History?

Do you know where you were born? Were you born at a hospital, or at home? How much did you weigh when you were born? What did you have to eat for your first birthday?

You don't remember being born, do you? And you probably don't remember your first birthday party! So how can you find the answers to these questions?

You can ask your parents. They can tell you about things that happened long ago, before you were old enough to remember. They can tell you stories about when you were a baby.

These stories are your "history." Your history is the story of what happened to you from the moment you were born, all the way up to the present. You can learn this history by listening to your parents. They remember what happened when you were born. And they probably took pictures of you when you were a baby. You can learn even more about your history from these pictures. Did you have hair? Were you fat or thin? Are you smiling or frowning? What are you wearing? Do you remember those clothes?

You have a history—and so do your parents. Where were they born? Were they born at home, or at a hospital? Where did they go to school? What did they like to eat? Who were their best friends?

How can you find the answers to these questions? You can ask your parents. And if they don't remember, you can ask *their* parents—your grandparents.

Now let's ask a harder question. Your grandmother was once a little girl. What is her history like? How much did she weigh when she was born? Did she cry a lot? When did she cut her first tooth? What was her favorite thing to eat?

You would have to ask *her* mother—your *great*-grandmother. And you could look at baby pictures of your grandmother. But what if you can't talk to your great-grandmother, and what if you don't have any baby pictures of your grandmother? Is there another way you could find out about your grandmother's history?

There might be. Perhaps your grandmother's mother wrote a letter to a friend when she was born. "Dear Elizabeth," she might have written. "My baby was born at home on September 13. She weighed seven pounds, and she has a lot of fuzzy black hair. She certainly cries a lot! I hope she'll sleep through the night soon."

Now, suppose you find this letter, years later. Even though you can't talk to your great-grandmother, you can learn the *history* of your grandmother from her letter. You could also learn *history* if your great-grandmother kept a diary or a journal, where she wrote about things that happened to her long ago.

In this book, we're going to learn about the *history* of people who lived a long time ago, in all different countries around the world. We're going to learn about the stories

they told, the battles they fought, and the way they lived—even what they ate and drank, and what they wore.

How do we know these things about people who lived many, many years in the past? After all, we can't ask them.

We learn about the history of long-ago people in two different ways. The first way is through the letters, journals, and other written records that they left behind. Suppose a woman who lived in ancient times wrote a letter to a friend who lived in another village. Her letter might say, "There hasn't been very much rain here recently. All our crops are dying. The wheat is especially bad. If it doesn't rain soon, we'll have to move to another village!"

Hundreds of years later, we find this letter. What can we learn about the history of ancient times from this letter? We can learn that people in ancient times grew wheat for food. They depended on rain to keep the wheat healthy. And if it didn't rain enough, they moved somewhere else.

Other kinds of written records tell us about what kings and armies did in ancient times. When a king won a great victory, he often ordered a monument built. On the monument, he would have the story of his victory engraved in stone letters. Or a king might order someone in his court to write down the story of his reign, so that everyone would know what an important and powerful king he was. Thousands of years later, we can read the stone letters or the stories and learn more about the king.

People who read letters, journals, other documents, and monuments to find out what happened in the past are called *historians*. And the story they write about the past is called *history*.

Chapter Seven

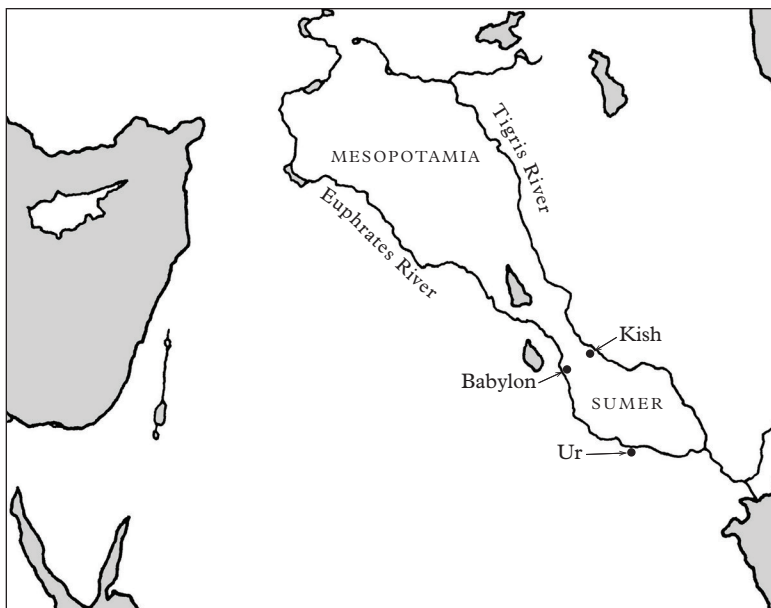
Hammurabi and the Babylonians



Hammurabi's Code

You can probably tell that Mesopotamia was not a very peaceful place to live. City-states fought each other. Powerful leaders tried to build empires by conquering other city-states. Sometimes the empires lasted for a long time. Sometimes they collapsed in just a few years—and another powerful leader tried to take over. The people of Mesopotamia lived with war all the time. Sometimes they stayed inside their city walls and hoped that they would be safe. But sometimes they fled. They would travel to another place, hoping to avoid trouble.

Around 1792 BC/BCE, a king named Hammurabi inherited the throne of Babylon from his father. Babylon was a city near Kish (the home of Sargon). At first, Hammurabi only ruled a small area of the land around his own city. But soon he began to conquer some of the smaller cities around him. He convinced the kings of other cities to swear allegiance to him. Soon he ruled over the whole southern part of Mesopotamia. This area was called Babylonia, after the city of Babylon.



Babylonia

Hammurabi didn't want people to obey him just because his army was strong. He wanted his empire to be governed by just laws. He believed that the chief god of Babylon, Marduk, made him king so that he could treat people fairly. In one of his letters, Hammurabi calls himself "the reverent god-fearing prince." He says that his job as king is "to make justice appear in the land, to destroy the evil and the wicked so that the strong might not oppress the weak."

Hammurabi wanted people to follow his laws because they were right, not just because soldiers were making them obey. He also wanted his whole empire to follow the same laws and rules. So Hammurabi wrote down all of the laws that he thought were fair. He had them carved in stone, on a monument that showed him getting the

laws from the sun god. These laws are called the Code of Hammurabi. They were unusual because everyone had to follow them—rich people, poor people, soldiers, farmers, merchants, and even kings.

Here are some of the laws in the Code of Hammurabi. Do you think these are fair? Why or why not?

- ☞ If someone cuts down a tree on someone else's land, he will pay for it.
- ☞ If someone is careless when watering his fields, and he floods someone else's field by accident, he will pay for the grain he has ruined.
- ☞ If a man wants to throw his son out of the house, he has to go before a judge and say, "I don't want my son to live in my house anymore." The judge will find out the reasons. If the reasons are not good, the man can't throw his son out.
- ☞ If the son has done some great evil to his father, his father must forgive him the first time. But if he has done something evil twice, his father can throw him out.
- ☞ If a thief steals a cow, a sheep, a donkey, a pig, or a goat, he will pay ten times what it is worth.
- ☞ If he doesn't have any money to pay with, he will be put to death.
- ☞ An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. If a man puts out the eye of another man, put his own eye out. If he knocks out another man's tooth, knock out his own tooth. If he breaks another man's bone, break his own bone.
- ☞ If a doctor operates on a patient and the patient dies, the doctor's hand will be cut off.

- ☞ If a builder builds a house, and that house collapses and kills the owner, the builder will be put to death.
- ☞ If a builder builds a house, and that house collapses and kills the son of the owner, the son of the builder will be put to death.

Hammurabi was a very religious man. He believed that the gods themselves had given him the Code of Hammurabi. So he rebuilt many of the temples and ziggurats that had been destroyed in fights between city-states. He encouraged his people to sacrifice to the gods, and to learn more about them. At that time, people in Babylon believed that they could find out what the gods were doing by watching the movements of the planets and stars. So they spent a lot of time studying the sky. They knew where all the constellations were. They knew the difference between stars and planets.

From watching the sky, the Babylonians were able to figure out that the earth goes all the way around the sun. They called the time that it took the earth to go all the way around the sun one time one “year.” Then they divided this year into twelve months. They were the first people to divide a year into twelve months, just like we do today.

The Babylonians were also the first to divide a day into twenty-four hours, and to divide an hour into sixty



minutes. So whenever you look at a calendar to see what day of the month it is, or look at a clock to see what time it is, you're using methods that we inherited from the Babylonians.

Chapter Seventeen

The Phoenicians



Phoenician Traders

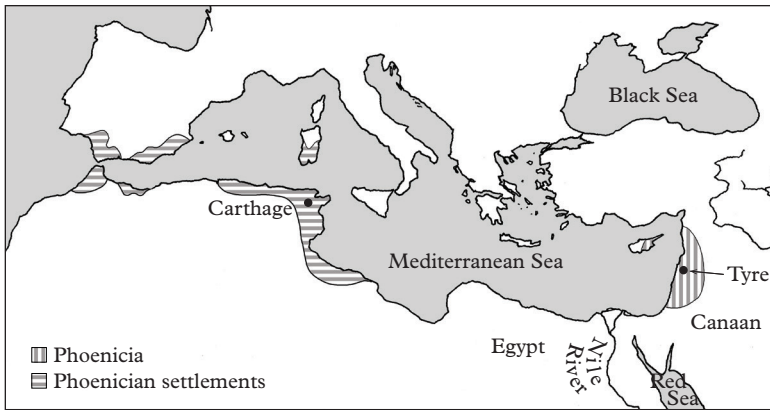
When the Israelites walked from Egypt back up to Canaan, they weren't moving into an empty country. There were already people living in Canaan!

The people who lived up in the north of Canaan were called Phoenicians, and they were the greatest sailors in the ancient world. The northern part of Canaan wasn't a very good place to grow wheat, because it was rocky and sandy and dry. It wasn't a good place to raise animals, because there wasn't enough grass or water to make them fat and healthy. And it was hard to get into or out of—it was surrounded by steep craggy hills.

So the Phoenicians pushed their boats out onto the water and sailed around the Mediterranean Sea. They became traders. They cut down the tall cedar trees that grew in their homeland and floated the logs to other countries. They built beautiful furniture and sold it for a high price. They sold salt and dried fish and embroidered cloth. And they sailed around the coast of the Mediterranean and found the best places to dig up tin and other metals.

But the Phoenicians were best known for their glass.

Ancient glassmaking was a long, complicated process. First, the Phoenicians made a special chemical called *lye*



Phoenicia and Its Settlements

by pouring water over the ashes from a wood fire and collecting the liquid that oozed out. They mixed this lye with pure sand and melted the sand-lye mixture over a hot, hot fire. To get the fire hot enough to melt sand, slaves probably had to fan the fire with special pumps called *bellows* for hours and hours.

Once they had melted the sand and lye together, the Phoenicians would pour the mixture into special molds. When the sand-lye mixture cooled, it was hard, shiny glass. Sometimes the Phoenicians colored the glass by putting red, blue, and yellow dyes into it, or wound colored threads around the molds so that the finished glass had a pattern of threads all through it. Sometimes the glass even had gold and jewels in it.

Other ancient peoples made glass too. But the Phoenicians were the first glassmakers to invent *glassblowing*.

Have you ever blown bubbles in your milk through a straw? That's exactly what the Phoenicians did with their hot liquid glass. Instead of pouring the glass into

a mold, a Phoenician glassmaker would dip a hollow pipe made out of thin metal into the sticky melted glass. Some of the glass would cling to the end of the pipe in a glob. Then the glassmaker would blow very gently through the pipe. The glass at the other end would puff out into a big round bubble. As long as the glass was still soft, the glassmaker could stretch it out so that bubble was long and thin, or twist it into different shapes. Finally, the glassmaker would cool the glass and break it carefully off the pipe. Blown glass was the most beautiful and expensive kind of ancient glass. All around the Mediterranean Sea, people were happy to pay the Phoenicians for this blown glass.

The Phoenicians were also known for making a beautiful purple dye out of snails. They collected snails, called *murex*, from the sea and boiled them with salt water and lemon juice for ten days. The boiling snails smelled awful. As a matter of fact, Phoenician cities like Tyre were famous for their stench—caused by the dye-factories that were boiling snails. “You stink like a man from Tyre” was a favorite insult in ancient times!

When the dye was finished, the Phoenicians dipped wool into it. The dye turned the wool a dark, beautiful purple. It took so many snails to make purple dye that the cloth made from purple wool was expensive. Sometimes it cost a whole year’s pay to buy a purple cloak. So purple was often called “the color of kings” because only kings could afford to wear it.

The Founding of Carthage

The Phoenicians sailed all around the Mediterranean Sea. And they started *colonies*—little settlements of Phoenician people—in many of the places where they landed. One of the most famous cities was Tyre, over in Canaan. Another was Carthage, all the way over in North Africa.

Carthage was first settled around 814 BC/BCE. At first, Carthage was just a tiny village. But soon it grew to be a huge, busy city where merchants from all different countries came to trade their goods.

We don't know the names of the first Phoenicians who settled in Carthage. But later, a great writer named Virgil told this famous story about the beginnings of the city of Carthage:

DIDO WAS A PHOENICIAN PRINCESS, THE sister of the king of Tyre. She was a fortunate woman—she was married to a very rich man, and she lived in a luxurious palace.

But Dido's brother, the king, was jealous of her and of her husband's wealth. He wanted all that money for himself! So the king had Dido's husband arrested and put to death.

Dido was terrified. Would she be next? She gathered together all of her friends and left Tyre in the middle of the night. They pushed away from the shore in a boat and sailed away, never to return.

Dido and her friends traveled and traveled. Finally, they spotted land.

“Let’s go ashore here, and build a new city!” Dido urged her friends. They agreed, but when they reached the place where Dido wanted to settle, they found that the land was already settled.

“We should go somewhere else,” Dido’s friends said. But Dido was determined to build her new city on that very spot. She wanted to live close to the water, so that ships would visit her new city and trade with her.

So she said to the owner of the land, “Will you sell me as much land as I can cover with the skin of a bull?”

“Of course!” the owner agreed. He thought that Dido would put her bull hide down over a little patch of ground, just large enough to stand on. But instead, Dido got out a very sharp knife and cut her bull hide into hundreds of long, thin strips. She laid the strips out, end to end, around a huge portion of land.

“There!” she said. “Now keep your promise and sell me this ground.”

The owner of the land was forced to agree. So Dido and her friends built a tower on the ground and named their tower “Bull’s Hide.” They settled around the tower and named their city Carthage. Soon, ships from all over the world came to Carthage to buy and sell their goods. The city bought with a bull’s skin became one of the most powerful in the world.

Note: The Phoenician civilization was at its height between 1200–700 BC/BCE.

Chapter Twenty-Five

The Aryans of India



Life on the Ganges River

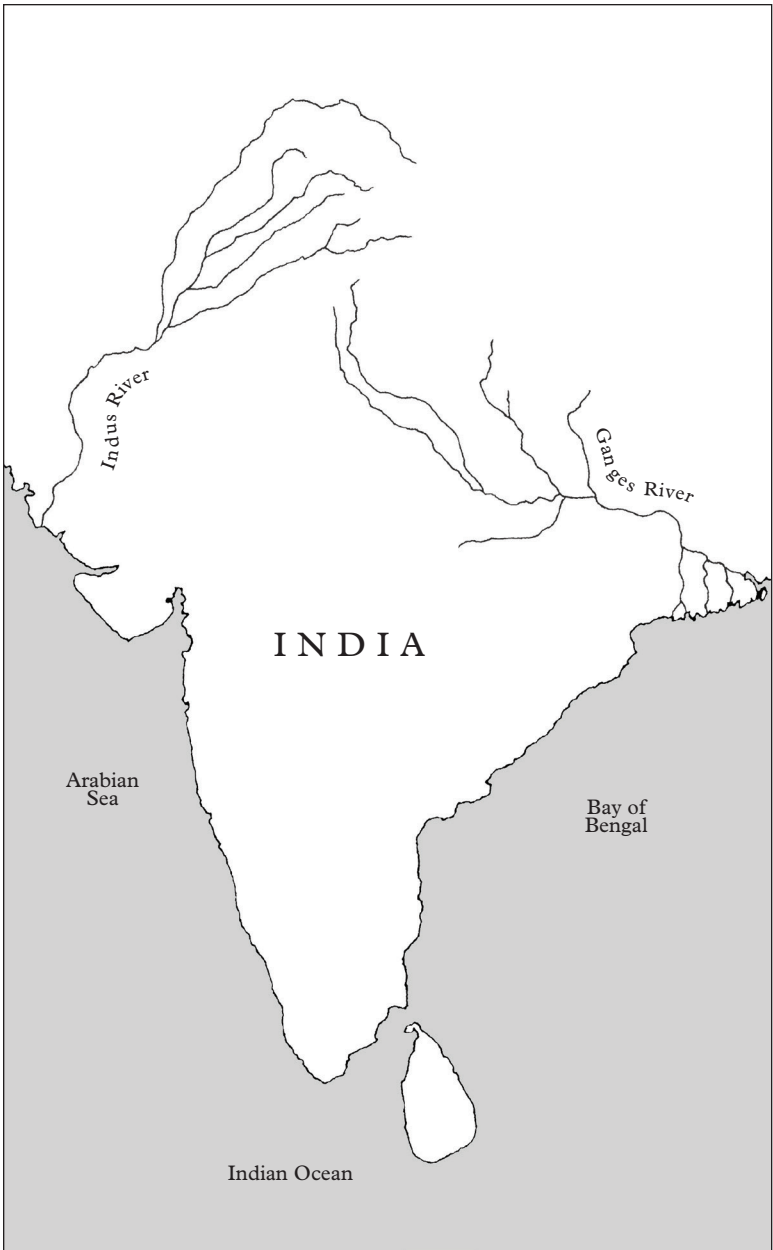
While the Greeks and the Romans and the Persians were all building their power near the Mediterranean Sea, another great civilization was growing in another part of the world—the Indus Valley.

Do you remember reading about Mohenjo-Daro, the mysterious deserted city of the Indus Valley? The citadel cities of the Indus Valley were deserted long, long ago. Maybe the cities were attacked by invaders. Maybe a long drought killed all the crops and forced the people to move away. Perhaps an earthquake destroyed the citadels. We'll never know for sure.

But India didn't just sit empty! After the people of the Indus Valley disappeared, new settlers came into India. They were called the *Aryans*, and they came down into India from the north, from the area we call *Asia*.

At first, the Aryans were nomads. But they soon settled down along the two big rivers of India, the Indus River and the Ganges River. They became farmers, just like the people who lived in the first villages of Mesopotamia. They grew crops for food. And like the people of ancient Mesopotamia, the Aryans raised animals, especially horses and cows.

Every year, the Ganges River overflowed its banks and left rich, dark soil all over the fields nearby, just like the Nile



India

River in Egypt. The people of ancient India grew wonderful crops in the dirt left by the Ganges River floods. They grew wheat, like the Mesopotamians, and rice, like the Chinese. Without the Ganges River, the people of India wouldn't have been able to survive. They believed that the river had been provided by their chief god, Shiva, the god of life.

Here is the story that the people of ancient India told about Shiva and the Ganges:

ONCE, THE RIVER-GODDESS GANGA LIVED IN the heavens. She never came down to earth at all; instead, she danced through the skies, bringing water to all who lived in the clouds, but ignoring the ground down below.

The good king of India, King Bhagiratha, grew more and more worried. How could his people survive without water? Surely Ganga would come down from the heavens and bring water to the people who lived on earth.

But Ganga refused to come down. She stayed up in the skies with her water—and the people of India were thirsty.

So King Bhagiratha called to Shiva, the god of life. “Shiva!” he cried. “We are dying of thirst! Please, please send Ganga to earth for us.”

When Shiva heard Bhagiratha's cries, he called Ganga to his throne. “Ganga,” he said, “the people of earth are thirsty. You must go down to the earth and take water to them!”

Ganga refused. “I will not!” she said. “I will stay here in the skies, my favorite place to be. Let the people of earth take care of themselves.”

“But I command you!” Shiva answered, “and you must obey me.”

At that, Ganga became furious. “Go to earth?” she yelled. “I’ll go to earth all right—and drown everyone on it!” She balanced on the top of a cloud, ready to throw herself down to the earth with such violence that water would flood the entire surface of the ground.

But when Shiva saw what she was about to do, he leaped down to earth ahead of her. When Ganga came crashing down, she landed on his head, and her full weight came down on Shiva, instead of on the unhappy people of earth. Water flowed down Shiva’s head in seven streams, down onto the thirsty ground beneath him. The seven streams came together into one mighty river—the Ganges River. And the Ganges River brought life and plenty to all the people who lived along its banks.

The people who believed in Shiva and Ganga were called *Hindus*. Today, their religion is called *Hinduism*. And many Hindu pilgrims still come to the banks of the Ganges. At dusk, they float lighted candles on the water and pray to the river-goddess, Ganga.

The Castes of Ancient India

The people of ancient India worshipped Shiva, Ganga, and many other gods. Their religion, Hinduism, taught that these gods had created

life on earth. One of the holy books of Hinduism, the Rig Veda, tells this story about how life began:

LONG, LONG AGO, THERE WAS ONLY ONE gigantic man who lived in the whole universe. His name was Purusha. He had a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet. The gods looked at Purusha and said, “Let’s make a world from this enormous man!”

So the gods turned Purusha’s head into the sky, and his eyes into the sun. They turned his legs into the Earth. His breath became the wind. And out of his body, they made four different kinds of people.

The first and most important people were the priests—the *brahmin*. They came out of Purusha’s mouth. They were intelligent and wise; as they walked out onto the Earth, they became the most honored people in India. They were given the most delicious food, the finest clothing, and the biggest houses.

Out of Purusha’s arms, the gods made the second kind of people—the noble warriors. They rode out onto the Earth on strong, beautiful horses. Their job was to protect the priests from enemies and to rule India. They too had good food and fine clothing, but not quite as fine as that of the priests.

Then the gods made traders and farmers out of Purusha’s knees. The traders bought and sold goods; the farmers grew crops and raised their animals. They worked hard every day. They had enough food to keep them from going hungry, warm clothes, and dry houses. Their lives were harder than the lives of warriors and priests.

Finally the gods came to the bottoms of Purusha's feet. Out of his feet, they made a humble group of people—the servants. Servants were not allowed to learn how to read and write. Instead, they spent their lives taking care of the priests, the warriors, and the traders and farmers.

These four groups of people became known as *castes*.

If your family belonged to the farmer caste, you could only grow up to be a farmer. You could only marry someone who was also born to be a farmer. You could never be a warrior or a priest. And if your parents were servants, you were doomed to be a servant. Priests, warriors, farmers, and traders expected you to serve them for the rest of your life. You would never learn how to read, or to write. You would spend the rest of your life cooking, washing, and cleaning for someone else!

But the poorest people in India were those who didn't belong to the caste system at all. They were called "Untouchables." They weren't priests, or warriors, or farmers, or traders, or even servants. They belonged to the poorest, most miserable families in India. The "Untouchables" did all the dirtiest jobs in ancient India. They buried dead animals, cleaned the streets, worked in the fields, and picked up trash. They weren't allowed to drink water from public wells, or to use the same dishes as people from the four castes. These early Hindus believed that touching an Untouchable would make them unclean. And they didn't even want to look at the Untouchables who did the dirtiest jobs! Those Untouchables were called Unseeables. They were only allowed to do their work at night.

It was a terrible thing to be born into an Untouchable family! Untouchables were poor and badly treated. They weren't allowed to go to the doctor when they were sick. Children from Untouchable families couldn't go to school, or grow up to do jobs that they liked. They had to collect garbage and work in the fields, like their parents.

Thousands and thousands of people were Untouchables in ancient India—with no chance ever to be anything else.

Siddhartha

The priests, warriors, and rulers of ancient India lived well. They had good food and drink, soft beds to sleep in, beautiful clothes, and servants to do anything they asked. The traders and farmers of India weren't quite as well off—but they also had food to eat, decent houses to live in, and enough money to take care of themselves and their families.

But the servants who belonged to the lowest caste of India worked hard for very little money. They had to do the jobs that the priests, warriors, rulers, traders, and farmers didn't want to do. Servants didn't have nice houses or clothes. They weren't even allowed to learn how to read.

And the Untouchables were even more miserable than the servants. Untouchables couldn't even be friends with servants. They were only allowed to talk to each other. They spent their days doing dirty, disgusting jobs. And at the end of the day, they weren't even paid enough money to eat properly or to buy warm clothes.

Chapter Thirty

The People of the Americas



The Nazca Drawings

We have been reading about the people who lived in Europe, Africa, and Asia. But over on the other side of the world, other ancient civilizations lived.

Like the people of ancient Africa, the people of the Americas didn't leave written records behind them. So we don't know as much about them as we know about the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and the Greeks.

But the people of the Americas did leave artifacts behind them—ancient buildings, ruined villages, and mysterious earth mounds.

If you put your finger on the Fertile Crescent again, and this time go *left* (remember, left is *west*), you'll go across the Mediterranean Sea and out into the Atlantic Ocean. And if you keep going across the Atlantic Ocean, you'll come to two *continents* (big masses of land) linked together in the middle by a narrower strip. These are the Americas. The top continent is called North America, and the bottom continent is called South America. We call the strip in the middle Central America.

South America has mountains all along one edge and flat, fertile land in the middle. Tribes of ancient people lived both in the mountains and down in the jungles of the flat lands.

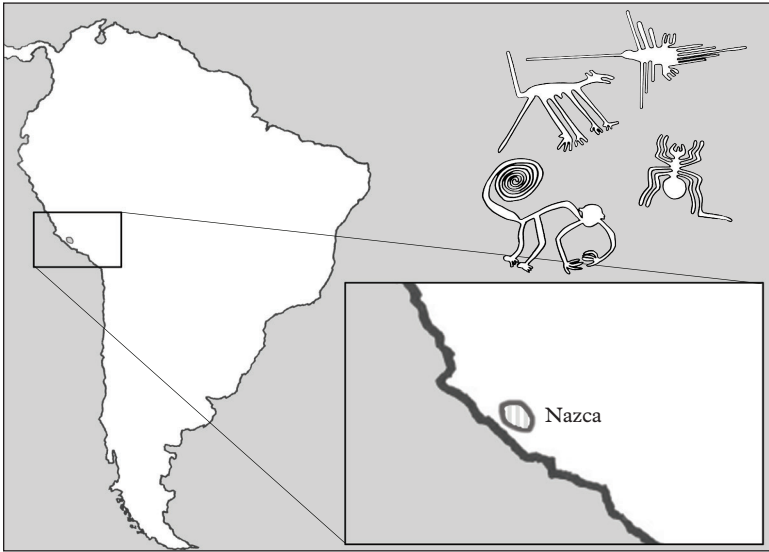
Like the people of ancient Mesopotamia, the people of ancient South America grew crops, kept animals, hunted, and caught fish. Just like the people of ancient Africa, they ate root vegetables every day. The African roots were known as yams, but South Americans grew a very similar root known as *cassava*. They learned how to dry the cassava roots and grind them up into a powder. They used this powder to make a kind of pudding that you may have eaten yourself—tapioca pudding. (If you haven't eaten it, ask your parents or your grandparents what it tastes like!)

One of these South American tribes was called the Nazca. They lived along the rivers of South America in a place that is now called Peru. The Nazca left behind them one of the strangest mysteries of ancient times.

More than two thousand years after the Nazca lived in South America, an airplane flew over Peru. The pilot looked down. He saw a drawing of a monkey—a drawing that covered hundreds of feet of ground. The lines of the drawing were scraped into the earth. From down on the ground, the drawings couldn't be seen. The lines just looked like old roads, or gashes in the ground. But from up in the air, those lines made pictures.

Soon, other fliers discovered more enormous pictures: a spider, a pelican almost one thousand feet tall, a hummingbird, and flowers. They also found spirals, squares, and other patterns carved into the ground. There were over a thousand line drawings and patterns there on the earth!

Because there is very little rain in the area where the Nazca drawings were made, the lines have lasted for over a thousand years. A highway was built across some of the drawings, and others have been damaged by cars driving



Nazca Line Drawings in South America

across them or by people scuffing at the lines with their feet. But many of the drawings are still intact. Look on this page for a map of the drawings. Can you tell what they are?

So how did the Nazca people make these drawings? After all, they couldn't fly. They couldn't get up in the air to see what their finished drawings looked like. Making a line drawing on the ground must have been like drawing with your eyes closed. Do you think you could draw these pictures with your eyes closed? It probably wouldn't look much like a bird when you were finished.

No one has been able to solve the mystery of the Nazca drawings. The best guess we can make is that the Nazca people were very good at mathematics. They could figure out how long each line should be, where it should turn, and where it should meet the next line through doing

calculations. Another theory is that the Nazca artists used the position of the stars to help them with their drawings.

But the Nazca civilization ended about 1,500 years ago. So we will never know the answer to this question.

The Heads of the Olmecs

Just above South America is Central America, which is sometimes called *Mesoamerica*. Earlier, we read that *Mesopotamia* means “between the rivers” because *potamia* means “rivers” and *meso* means “between.” (Remember the hippopotamus? *Hippo* means “horse” and *potamus* means “river,” so a *hippopotamus* is a “river horse”!) Well, since *meso* means “between,” *Mesoamerica* means “between the Americas.” Central America is between North America and South America.

The Olmecs were the first civilization in Central America. They built a big city, now called San Lorenzo, in the country that we now call Mexico. The city stood up on top of a huge hill. The most important people—leaders, priests, and rich men—lived up in the city. Poor people and farmers lived down at the foot of the hill, on the plain. They grew crops on the plain and sent them up for the important people to eat. If you were an Olmec, it was much more fun to be rich than to be poor.

At the center of the city, on top of the hill, the Olmecs built a huge pyramid of dirt and clay. The platform was so high that it could be seen by someone standing miles away. Every single bit of clay that was used to build the pyramid had to be hauled up the hill in baskets. The Olmecs built the dirt pyramid basketful by basketful,

Chapter Thirty-One

The Roman Republic



The Roman Builders

Let's go back to a city we haven't visited for a while—the city of Rome, now the center of the Roman Republic.

Do you remember the last king and queen of the kingdom of Rome? Tullia Minor and Tarquin the Proud were driven out of the city, and two consuls were chosen to replace them. The Roman Republic was no longer a monarchy.

But Rome was still warlike! The Romans weren't content just to stay in their little city of Rome. The bigger the city got, the more land the Romans wanted. And the best way to get land was to take it from other towns and tribes.

So the Romans attacked their neighbors and conquered them. The more land they conquered, the richer they got. Soon, the Roman Republic controlled the whole Italian peninsula.

Now, the Romans needed to be able to travel easily from one end of the peninsula to the other. So they began to build roads.

Most roads in the ancient world were rough, muddy tracks filled with holes and blocked by rocks and fallen trees. But the Romans built roads that were easy to travel on. First, they dug a wide ditch and filled the ditch with sand. Then they poured small stones on top

of the sand. Next, they poured concrete over top of the stones. Finally, they laid wide, smooth paving stones on top of the concrete. Along the road, the Romans put up stone pillars and carved on them the distance between towns. A traveler on a Roman road could look at these *milestones* and know exactly how much farther he had to go!

The Romans became famous for their beautiful roads. The most famous of all Roman roads was called the Appian Way. It led from Rome to several large Roman cities in Italy. The Appian Way can still be used today. Roman roads were so well built that they lasted for hundreds of years. Today, many roads in Italy still follow the tracks of the old Roman roads.

And the Romans were the first ancient people to use concrete. They discovered that if they mixed volcanic ash, water, and lime, the soupy mixture would dry as hard as stone. They used this concrete to cement large stones together into both roads and buildings. In fact, the Romans built whole apartment buildings out of concrete. Some of these ancient apartment buildings were five stories high! One Roman writer tells the true story of an ox who escaped from his owner on market day and ran into an apartment building. It kept climbing up higher and higher and higher, until it reached the top floor. And then it jumped out of a window.

Unfortunately, some of the apartment buildings weren't very well built—and they collapsed, sometimes killing the people who lived inside. Others were slums, without any water or toilets. Whole families lived in one room. They dumped their waste out the windows into the streets.

As the Roman cities grew larger and larger, the people who lived in them needed more and more fresh water. So the Romans designed special channels for water, called *aqueducts*. The aqueducts were like narrow stone bridges with water pipes that ran across the top of them. Through these aqueducts, the Romans could bring water into the cities from springs thirty miles away.

The Romans needed water for drinking and cooking, but also for taking baths. Baths were very important to the ancient Romans! Most of them took a bath every day. But they didn't bathe in a bathtub, like you do. Instead, they went to the public baths, which were more like swimming pools. People gathered at the public baths to get clean. They rubbed oil or animal fat on their skin, and then scraped themselves clean with special curved blades. Then they could swim in cold or hot water, brought in by the aqueducts.

Today, the ruins of Roman roads, buildings, baths, and aqueducts can still be found in the places where the Romans lived—even though they were built more than two thousand years ago.

The Roman Gods

The Romans went to Greece to buy and sell. In Greece, they learned about the Greek gods, and heard Greek myths. And when they came back to Italy, they adopted the Greek gods as their own.

But they called these Greek gods by their own, Roman names. Do you remember Zeus, the king of the Greek gods? He made the golden apple so that he could start the

Chapter Thirty-Nine Troubles in China



The End of the Han Dynasty

The Han emperors had reigned over a unified China for many, many years. But while bad emperors ruled over Rome, China also began to suffer.

Famine wiped out crops in some parts of the vast Han Empire. Other villages and cities were drenched by violent storms; thousands drowned when dams broke and fields and houses were covered with water. Livestock died. Food dwindled. Scores of Chinese farmers had to leave their land and try to find somewhere else for their families. Hungry and desperate, many of them banded together to fight against their local governments. One Chinese historian wrote, “The poor had no way to stay alive. They rose up and became thieves and bandits instead!”

The Han emperors did their best to provide for their people. Throughout the first century AD/CE, the Han rulers tried hard to keep the peace, feed their subjects, and protect the Silk Road.

Slowly, the Han Empire began to recover.

But then, a strange thing happened. Children kept inheriting the throne!

When the Han emperor Zhangdi died, in AD/CE 88, his nine-year-old son inherited his title. This son died in his twenties, when *his* heir was only five months old. And

when *that* baby ruler died, his twelve-year old cousin became emperor!

This continued for many years. The next emperors were crowned at the ages of ten, one, seven, and fourteen. All of them died young. For over fifty years, the Han had a child as emperor!

You probably wouldn't be able to rule an entire huge kingdom all by yourself, without the help of any adults. Neither could the young Han emperors. They weren't really running their country. Their uncles, cousins, mothers, and aunts were ruling instead. And not all of those relatives were good people! Many of them were just trying to gain power and wealth for themselves. No one was paying attention to the well-being of the whole Han Empire. Instead, everyone was trying to gather as much land and steal as much tax money as possible.

Meanwhile, the many poor families of China had to work harder and harder to pay higher and higher taxes. Because trade along the Silk Road was so important, hundreds of young men were forced to join bands of soldiers who kept the Silk Road safe from thieves and highwaymen.

Then, more disasters swept over the country.

Horrible epidemics of sickness killed thousands and thousands of people. Floods wiped out more villages and still more farm animals. And then, a wave of locusts—grasshoppers that eat everything in their way—destroyed even more of the crops that the Chinese needed to survive.

The people of Han China were weak, hungry, and hopeless. So in AD/CE 184, a band of warriors who called themselves the Yellow Turbans declared that they were ready to fight back!

They were led by a man named Chang Chueh, who claimed that he was a magician. He promised that he could heal sickness. He told his followers that, if they took his magic medicines, they couldn't be wounded in battle. They could fight against the Han government, and not be afraid.

Of course, Chang Chueh couldn't do anything that he promised. But the Chinese people were angry and desperate. Over 350,000 of them joined Chang Chueh's Yellow Turban rebellion!

At first, the Yellow Turbans lost every battle that they started. The Han armies defeated them easily.

But then, the Han generals started to think to themselves: The Yellow Turbans don't really matter. There are only children in the Han palace. We could take the throne for ourselves!

One of those generals, a man named Dong Zhuo, stopped fighting the Yellow Turbans. Instead, he took his army and marched into the capital city of Han China. He captured the thirteen-year-old emperor and declared himself ruler of the Han. He didn't actually have that many soldiers following him—but every night, he told a hundred or so of his men to sneak quietly out of the city after dark. Then, he had them return during the next morning with flags flying and drums beating. That way, the people of the capital city thought that he was being joined every day by more and more soldiers—when it was actually the same hundred men leaving and coming back into the city over and over again!

Another general, Ts'ao Ts'ao, saw what Dong Zhuo was doing. He said to himself, "Dong Zhuo doesn't even have that many men! If he can make himself emperor, I can claim power for myself as well!"

Soon, Ts'ao Ts'ao got his chance! Another angry war leader assassinated Dong Zhuo. When he heard that Dong Zhuo was dead, Ts'ao Ts'ao marched into the city with his men, took over the royal palace, and forced the young Han emperor to marry his own daughter. Ts'ao Ts'ao didn't try to make himself emperor—but because he controlled his daughter and his son-in-law, he was now the *real* ruler of Han China.

But by then, there was no empire left to rule.

The Yellow Turban rebellion had killed hundreds of thousands of people. The country was still suffering from famine, floods, and sickness. No one really believed that the young emperor was the rightful ruler of China. They all knew that violent generals were in charge instead. The young emperor himself abandoned his throne and spent the rest of his life living quietly.

The time of the Han was over.

The Three Kingdoms, the Jin, and the Sixteen Kingdoms

After the Han emperor gave up his throne, the enormous Han kingdom fractured into three different pieces—the Three Kingdoms.

The Three Kingdoms were called the Cao Wei, the Dong Wu, and the Shu Han. For nearly fifty years, the Three Kingdoms fought with each other. There was no peace in China!