About 7,000 years ago, the Sumerians made their home in a new land and one of the first civilizations was born. This land was placed between the banks of two great rivers. From these rich banks, they dug paths for streams to weave their way through their land and flush their soil with water. Today, we call this irrigation. This allowed the Sumerians to plant so much food on their land that they could not eat all of it. In other words, they had a surplus of food. With this surplus, they could feed people to do other jobs than farming, they could also trade it with their neighbors. People would now gather to trade all kinds of goods in markets. These markets then grew into the world’s first cities.
Use this map to explain where the ancient civilization of Sumer was located.
Use these pictures to explain how the Sumerians irrigated their land.
The first great city of Sumer was called Eridu. The Sumerians believed that this city was given to them by a god called Enki, who they also believed created mankind. From 5400 BCE to 2900 BCE Eridu was the most prominent city in Sumer until there was great flood. By that time, there were many other big cities in Sumer; the city of Ur had a population of about 65,000 people.

The Sumerians believed it was their duty to serve the gods. Each city had a temple called a Ziggurat where a god was supposed to live. Priests would bring the gods offerings from the people to keep their god happy. Each city worshiped and housed a specific god. The gods were so important to the Sumerians that the first kings were probably priests.
Myths are stories told by ancient people as way of explaining the world. This is a synopsis, or a short description, of the Sumerian myth of how humans were created.

After the world was created, the gods divided it up among one another. The heavens were given to Anu—the father of the gods. The rivers and streams were given to his son Enki, and the Earth was given to his son Enlil. Enlil ruled over the Earth where the lesser gods toiled and worked the land to produce food for the higher gods.

First, they had to sacrifice one of the gods. They then mixed his blood and flesh with clay to form the first humans. The first humans were formed out of fourteen blocks of clay that were molded by fourteen goddesses. Mami put these fourteen statues into a birthing chamber and seven men and seven women walked out.

These fourteen humans began the human race. Mami taught them how to live and how to work the land so that they could produce food to sustain the gods.

After many years of this hard labor, the lesser gods revolted and told Enlil that they were not going be slaves anymore. Some of higher gods wanted to punish the rebels, but Enki decided they could create mortal humans to do all the work of the gods. So Enki and the birth goddess Mami went about creating the first humans.
Monologue

A monologue is a speech given by one person. Write your own monologue of how you imagine one angry god could cause his fellow gods to revolt against mighty Anu and his sons.

Example:
Looking upon his brothers and sisters and their rhythms of motion and endless toil, a god throws down his shovel and voices his outrage.

“Look at us! Look around you! For what purpose is this? What sort of bargain is this?” He points to the heavens in anger. “With what weight could you balance an eternity of suffering? Answer me this or throw down your shovels!”

Quotation rules:
Dialogue must be contained in quotes: “Hello my dear.”
Close a quotation only when the dialogue ends: “Hello my dear. I’m glad to see you.”
Dialogue ends in comma if there is a sentence extension: “Hello my dear,” said John.
Quotations go after periods and commas.
Babylon

Babylon was one of the greatest cities to rise out of ancient Sumer. It was probably founded by Sargon the Great, a warrior king from the North who conquered Sumer and created the Akkadian Empire. After his death in 2215 BCE, his empire fell apart and Babylon emerged as one of the most powerful cities in the ancient world.

Babylon was a major center of trade. Within its walls, people would gather from all around to buy and sell goods in markets. Common goods that were traded were: grains, clothes, fish, pottery, and jewelry.
The commerce of marketplace led the Sumerians to invent a writing system called cuneiform to keep records of their transactions. Cuneiform was written with a reed on clay tablets. Scribes were trained at schools called edubbas (tablet houses) to learn the skill of writing.

We have records of students in these edubbas complaining of being hit with rods by their teachers because of their misbehavior or their slow learning. During this time, there was a popular story of a scribe who invited his teacher to his house to be spoiled with fine foods and gifts so that the teacher would treat him better at school.

**Write a story about a student from an edubba that invites his teacher to dinner so that he will be treated better at school.**
Hammurabi founded the Babylonian Empire around the time of 1760 BCE. He started his reign in a time of peace, but a hostile kingdom from the South called Elam dragged all of Mesopotamia into war. Hammurabi teamed up with other kingdoms to defeat the Elamites, but he did not get much help from them and he felt betrayed. After his victory over the Elamites, he brought the rest of Mesopotamia under his rule using force.

The Code of Hammurabi

Hammurabi is well known for creating one of the first code of laws. He had his laws inscribed on a stele (a large stone pillar) for all to see.

Many of the laws were rather harsh. For example, if you accused falsely of a crime or if you brought a slave outside the city gates then you were put to death.

Other laws were rather reasonable and helped ease the burdens of everyday life. Debtors, for example, did not have to pay rent during years of bad harvest.
If you posted your own Code of Hammurabi in your house, then what would your laws be?
At the end of the story of Gilgamesh, Ishtar in the form of a snake eats the flower of vitality. Write an alternative ending to the story of Gilgamesh where the flower does not get eaten. How would this flower effect Gilgamesh and the people of his city?