

# WHICH ENVIRONMENTAL

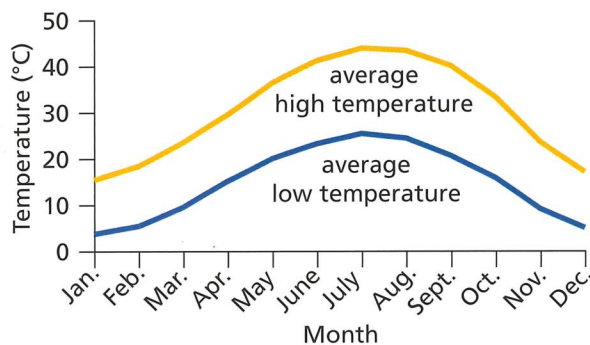
Early *Homo sapiens* were hunter-gatherers. They survived by moving around to hunt animals and gather fruit, berries, roots, and plants.

As the most recent ice age came to an end, the glaciers started to melt and recede. Temperatures rose and rainfall increased. These climate changes enabled people in many parts of the world to gradually start settling in one place, where they could grow plants and raise animals for food. As you read about early societies, think about the environmental features that were important to the daily life of these early humans.

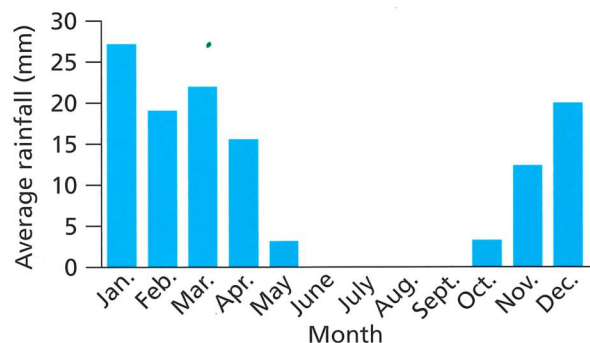
## Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent



Average High and Low Temperatures in Baghdad Today



Average Rainfall in Baghdad Today



Source: World Meteorological Organization

Mesopotamia was one region where early *H. sapiens* settled. Baghdad, the capital of Iraq today, is located in the heart of what was ancient Mesopotamia. Scientists believe that the climate of Mesopotamia was similar to the climate of Baghdad today. **Q:** Examine the map and both graphs. What features of the environment do you think were significant in attracting hunter-gatherers to settle in Mesopotamia? What opportunities and challenges might the temperature and rainfall have presented?

# WHAT FEATURES WERE SIGNIFICANT?

## LAND BETWEEN RIVERS

Mesopotamia lay between and around several bodies of water. It was part of an area often called the **Fertile Crescent**, which was—and still is—rich in natural resources. These resources included **fertile** soil for growing healthy crops and grains, such as wheat, which grew naturally in the area. The grains provided food for animals and could be ground into flour to make bread.

People began settling in Mesopotamia in about 10 000 BCE. They learned to adapt to the environment. For example, people began to **domesticate**, or tame, wild animals to help with farm work.

Every year, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flooded. The flooding of the rivers created challenges for farmers, but it also helped to keep the land fertile. The floods carried nutrient-rich **silt** (fine soil particles) from the riverbanks to the **floodplains** (low-lying areas next to the rivers). The silt sank to the bottom and helped to create rich soil for growing crops.

**Q:** Which environmental features do you think presented the most significant opportunities for farmers? Which presented the most significant challenges? Explain your reasoning.

Mesopotamians built dams, dikes, and canals to divert water from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Ancient carvings show how Mesopotamian people used water from canals to **irrigate** their crops during hot, dry months. Irrigation canals are still used in Iraq today. **Q:** In what ways would irrigation canals have been significant for people living in ancient Mesopotamian societies? For people today?

