**Literary Arts 9**

**Mesopotamia DVG***“Land Between the Rivers”*

CULTURES: Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Achaemenid Persia

**Three Great Inventions of the Sumerians**

1. system of gods and god-man relationships
2. the city-state
3. writing

Similar words that mean ABSTRACTION based on a set of rules from a specific culture or time period

*stylization, conventionalization, generalization, formalization*

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| **Work** | **Notes** |
| *Worshiper Statues* or  *Votive Figures* |  |
| *Ziggurat* |  |
| *Victory Stele of Naram-Sin* |  |
| *Ashurbanipal Hunting Lions* |  |
| *Ishtar Gate* |  |

Patron of the Arts

Narrative Art vs. Landscape

Types of Sculpture:

* Cast
* Relief
* Subtractive

Cuneiform

Cylinder Seal

Lyre

Nomads Gear/Utilitarian Art

Motifs:

* Bull
* Tree of Life
* Rosettes

Stele

Ziggurat

**Neolithic Revolution and Gobekli (Guh-bekh-LEE THE-peh)**

Until recently it was believed that the *Neolithic Revolution* began with gradual warming of the Ice Age which then allowed for cultivating plants and herding animals. It was thought that agriculture gave rise to cities, writing, art and religion. Was also thought to have occurred in Mesopotamia (southern Iraq) and spread from there.

Now we think that the “revolution” was carried out by many hands across a huge area over thousands of years – and that worship sparked civilization – all because of aReligious sanctuary in southern Turkey built 11,600 years ago by hunter-gatherers 7000 years before Stonehenge. It is the oldest known temple (thus oldest known example of monumental architecture). Massive stone pillars are almost shoulder to shoulder and are arranged into a set of rings. In the middle of each ring are 2 taller pillars. Stones not rough as in Stonehenge, but smooth carved limestone. Pillars have carved reliefs of animals (gazelles, snakes, foxes, scorpions, and wild boars – more *deadly* creatures than benign ones). The structure sits on top of a hill (how dramatic when lit with torches – also caused the reliefs to appear to be shivering the fire light). Stones weighing 16 tons, some 18 feet tall, were transported to the site. Large amounts of flints and choppers mean that the stones were transported and then carved at the site. There were no wheels or beasts of burden – no writing, metal, or pottery.

At this time man lived in small nomadic bands, foraging for plants and hunting wild animals. Construction of this center would have required many people coming together in one place. No indication of agriculture, dwellings, or cook fires at site – but huge amounts of gazelle and Auroch bones probably mean that the workers would have been fed by constant shipments of game brought in from other areas.

Remember, most of the world’s great religious centers (in the past and today) have been destinations for pilgrimages – the Vatican, Mecca, Jerusalem, Bodh Gaya (Buddhist,) Cahokia (Native American). Gobekli was at the edge of the Fertile Crescent and by 6,000 BCE the transition from hunter-gathers was largely complete. “Discovering that hunter-gathers had built this site was like finding that someone had built a 747 with an X-acto knife”. “I think what we are learning is that civilization is a product of the human mind.”

Info from a dig begun in 1994 by Klaus Schmidt reported in *National Geographic*, June, 2011, “The Birth of Religion” by Charles C. Mann

**Proverbs from ancient Sumer and Babylon:**

* For a man’s pleasure, there is marriage: on thinking it over, there is divorce.
* A sweet work is everyone’s friend.
* He has dug a well where there is not water; he has raised a husk without a kernel.
* The life of day before yesterday has departed today.
* If you go and take the field of an enemy, the enemy will come and take your field.
* Writing is the mother of eloquence, and the father of artists.
* Be gentle to your enemy as to an old oven.

**Lu-dingir-ra’s Praise of his Mother:**

My mother fills songs and prayers of joy,

Her glance is sparkling in the Akitum-festival.

Like a princess, a song of abundance,

She brings joy to the dancing places,

A lover, a loving heart of inexhaustible delight,

Food for the captive, who returns to his mother.