**Social Studies: The Fertile Crescent**

Eleven thousand years ago, the area called the Fertile Crescent may have seemed an unlikely place to live and farm. This flat land in the Middle East was barren and dry. The clay soil was hard. Rain was scarce. So why did one of the first civilizations begin here?

Much of the Fertile Crescent is between two rivers. These are the Tigris and the Euphrates. How could people get the river water to their dry fields? They needed canals, ditches, or pipes to carry water to the dry land. This is called irrigation. With irrigation, people could grow crops.

Irrigation caused farming in the Fertile Crescent to become more successful. Farmers grew many crops. They grew barley, wheat, vegetables, date palms, and grapevines. There was plenty of food. As a result, several things happened.

One result was this: People were no longer hungry. They could store food for times when the crops did not do well.

Another result was that people could have other skills. Not everyone had to be a farmer. People could be gem cutters, metal workers, or carpenters. They could be judges, doctors, or musicians.