



First Writers-The Sumerians: They Wrote On Clay

Gary Arthur Thomson

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Sumerians were the first people to write. Using a sharp three-cornered stylus, they wrote on clay-small wedge-shapes called cuneiform. With writing, Sumerians turned the corner from prehistory to history! After at least two million years of humans telling stories, the Sumerians introduced literacy. Most civilizations passed down their heritage through orally recited traditions-stories were passed from one generation to another by word of mouth. The Sumerians were the first to write down their oral traditions. To make the historical record easier, the Sumerians invented calendars with exact dates of events and contracts often corroborated by astronomy. Since Sumerian farmers invented irrigation and created a surplus, other Sumerians could choose to specialize in law, education, architecture, engineering, marketing, and politics-all of which were accompanied by written records. Using the writings of the Sumerians and modern archaeology, this book will trace the story of the Sumerians, the world's first writers.

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