

Chapter 4 Terms to Know

1. **silt** small particles of fertile soil
2. **irrigation** a way to supply dry land with water through ditches, pipes, or streams
3. **surplus** an amount that is left over after a need has been met
4. **city-state** an independent nation made up of a city and the land around it
5. **polytheism** a belief in more than one god
6. **ziggurat** a pyramid-shaped tower with a temple at the top
7. **cuneiform** a Sumerian writing system that used wedge-shaped marks made in soft clay
8. **scribe** a person who copies or writes out documents; often a record keeper
9. **epic** a long poem that tells the story of a hero
10. **empire** a group of many different lands under one ruler
11. **tribute** a payment made to a ruler or state as a sign of surrender
12. **province** a district within a larger country or empire
13. **caravan** a group of merchants traveling together for safety, usually with a large number of camels
14. **astronomer** a person who studies stars, planets, and the moon