

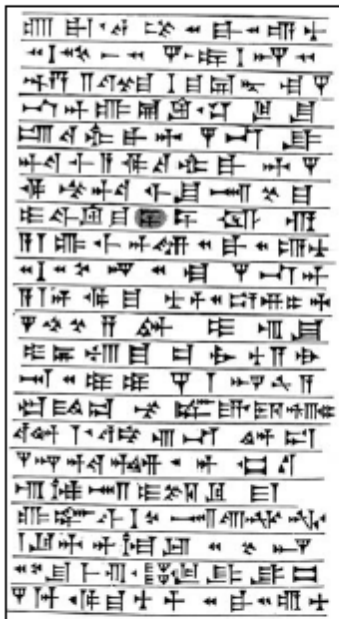
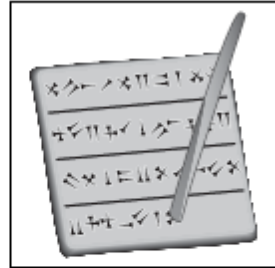


## TASK AND FATE FACTS SCRIBE

Study the Task and Fate Facts for your role each day. The facts will give your clan members information to help complete Tasks and make decisions when confronted by Fate. Be prepared at all times to contribute what you know to help your clan.

### Writing

One of the greatest contributions of the early civilizations of the Fertile Crescent was writing. The first efforts at writing were pictures. The Sumerians developed the first known writing system, *cuneiform* (from the Greek: *wedge-shaped*). The Sumerians developed cuneiform to record the amount of grain brought to their warehouses. Scribes scratched the wedge-shaped symbols on clay tablets. They kept detailed records of the food supply. They also kept records of taxes. Gradually writing became more complex and sophisticated. The Phoenicians developed the first formal alphabet.



### Benefits and Costs

Writing developed because centralized governments needed to keep accurate records. As the city-states grew, the rulers set up a system to ensure food for everyone. Peasant farmers worked and lived outside the city walls. The ruler protected the farmers with his or her army. The ruler also provided irrigation and flood control. These public works projects benefited the farmers. In return, the farmers gave up some of their crops (grain) in taxes. The taxes (grain) were stored in warehouses inside the city walls. Grain was distributed to those who specialized in various jobs within the city walls.

### Written Records

Symbolic writing enabled ancient societies to function. Using the services of scribes, ancient governments were able to collect, store, and distribute grain efficiently. This was the major function of the first governments. Government officials also used scribes to draw up contracts and treaties and write down laws. Religious leaders used writing to document the rules of their religion and record their religious ceremonies.

### Scribes

Scribes were the record keepers of their society and the recorders of their history. They enriched their societies with advances in mathematics, astronomy, and literature. Very few other people in ancient societies were trained to read and write. Only a select group of boys were chosen at a young age to become scribes. They studied for many years. Their training was strict and demanded hour after hour of reading and writing. Scribes were the first educated class in history.

