

Chapter 6. People Create Civilizations: The Urban Wave

Chapter 6. G. Media

General Media: The Urban Wave

5000 Years of Magnificent Wonders: World Wonders Beyond Time

2006, NR, 120 minutes, found on Netflix

Featuring spectacular location footage, this fascinating video whisks viewers away to explore scores of man-made mausoleums, memorials and monuments -- all from the comfort of home. Stops along the way include India's magnificent Taj Mahal; Peru's Inca stronghold Machu Picchu; England's mystifying Stonehenge; the remarkable Great Wall of China; Cambodia's Angkor Wat; and South Dakota's Mount Rushmore. 3 stars

The First Civilizations

2001, NR, 50 minutes, found on Netflix

Discover how human society evolved from nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes to create complex civilizations in Africa and Europe in this historical documentary, part of the Secrets of Ancient Empires series. Using artifacts, archival materials, interviews with scholars and reenactments of important events, this fascinating program re-creates life in the earliest civilized communities. 3 stars

The First Armies

2001, NR, 50 minutes, found on Netflix

Part of the Secrets of Ancient Empires series tracing the trajectory of human society, this documentary shows how evolving civilization prompted the creation of organized military forces meant to protect communities. Making the most of available archival materials and artifacts, expert interviews and reenactments of important events, The First Armies re-creates military life as it was in ancient times. 2.2 stars

The First Cities

2006, NR, 50 minutes, found on Netflix

Learn how urban centers as we know them came to be and how their growth led to an explosion of art, commerce and technological development in this historical documentary, part of the Secrets of Ancient Empires series. Making use of artifacts, archival materials, interviews and reenactments, this fascinating program depicts the life and times of the earliest civilized communities. 2.2 stars

The First Empires: The Story of Civilization

2006, NR, 50 minutes, found on Netflix

This thrilling chapter of the Story of Civilization series journeys to the ancient empires of Egypt and Greece to capture snapshots of everyday life as it was thousands of years ago. Combining fascinating footage filmed in locations all over the world with accurate re-creations and reconstructions, the program also examines how discoveries from ancient times went on to lay the foundation for much of our current knowledge. 2.5 stars

The First Merchants

2001, NR, 50 minutes, found on Netflix

See how the rise of cities spurred commerce and the development of the merchant class in this engrossing historical documentary, part of the Secrets of Ancient Empires series tracing the development of civilization. With ancient artifacts, archival materials, interviews and reenactments of important events, this absorbing program re-creates societal interactions in the earliest of civilized communities. 2.8 stars

The Genocide Factor: Genocide from Biblical Times Through the Ages

2008, NR, 57 minutes, found on Netflix

Director Robert J. Emery explores the roots of genocide, touching on the earliest records of systematic massacres known to man, from the Athenian siege of Milos in 416 B.C. to the extermination of the Herero tribe at the hands of the Germans in 1904. Hosted by Oscar winner Jon Voight, this entry from the acclaimed series features insight from noted guests such as Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel and William Schulz, director of Amnesty International. 2.4 stars

Lost Civilizations

1995, NR, 4 discs, found on Netflix

This series unearths the mysteries of ancient worlds, brought to life by astounding computer graphics and technology, accurate reenactments and fascinating stories. See how culture and history developed over 6,000 years in 25 countries. Learn about the reign of the pharaohs; how the Mayan culture established itself and influenced other communities; what truly happened to Atlantis and its people, lost in the seas forever; and more. 3 stars

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

2000, NR, 120 minutes, found on Netflix

This acclaimed documentary is a dramatized program that was shot on the scale of a major motion picture, employing a cast of thousands, location filming and digital imagery to re-create the seven wonders as they appeared in their original glory. I.M. Pei leads a team of renowned experts who reveal how the wonders influenced modern architecture and construction design. Pierce Brosnan narrates. 2.8 stars

Regional and Topical Media (arranged in alphabetical order)

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Africa | 5. Greece | 9. Religion |
| 2. China | 6. India | 10. Rome |
| 3. Egypt | 7. Japan | 11. Western hemisphere |
| 4. Europe | 8. Middle East | |

1. Africa

Africa

National Geographic, 2001-2001, NR, Seasons 1 DVD

This epic series from National Geographic presents Africa through the eyes of its people, conveying the diversity and beauty of the land and the personal stories of those who shape its future. 3.5 stars

Nubia: The Forgotten Kingdom

2004, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Archaeologists Julie Andersen and Salah Ahmed travel back in time to unearth the mysteries of Nubia, an ancient kingdom in the heart of Africa now known as the Sudan. See how their team of researchers bore into the past (literally and figuratively) in this massive excavation dig of Dangeil, a Nubian city that's been recently discovered and that has provided, along with answers, even more questions that need to be explored. 3 star

Sound of the Soul

2005, NR, 150 minutes, available on Netflix

Filmmaker Stephen Olsson examines Morocco's annual Fez Festival of World Sacred Music, a fascinating cultural event that invites musicians of all faiths from around the world to perform in this ancient Arab city. The film is a showcase for both the historic sites of Fez and the talented performers who hope their music can help audiences move beyond the political and religious differences that often keep their different cultures separated. 2.5 stars

Wonders of the African World

1999, NR, 3 discs, available on Netflix

Take a journey to far-off lands with world-renowned scholar and educator Henry Louis Gates Jr. as he examines the historical events that shaped 20th century Africa. Exploring the continent on both land and water, Gates attempts to locate the centuries-old remains of celebrated African cities and kingdoms, sometimes finding what he's looking for in unlikely places scattered throughout modern towns. 3 stars

Zulu Wars Trilogy

2003, NR, 161 minutes, available on Netflix

Presented in three parts and featuring narration by Academy Award-nominee John Hurt, this documentary gives life to one of the most devastating events in African history, when two nations harshly fought for domination in South Africa during the mid-19th century. Three stories are told -- "Shaka, King of the Zulu"; "Blood River"; and "Red Coat, Black Blood" -- via re-creation of the battle scenes where the clashes occurred. 3 star

2. China

Ancient Mysteries: Forbidden City: Dynasty and Destiny

1996, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Catch a glimpse of China's incredible Forbidden City, built in the 15th century as the home of 24 emperors. A walled fortress containing palaces, temples, theaters and housing for thousands, the 250-acre city was constructed by more than a million laborers and stood for 500 years. Experts take viewers on a tour of the fortress that was only to be entered by royalty and their families, and share the history of the emperors who made it their home. 3.6 stars

China's Great Wall

2007, NR, 100 minutes, available on Netflix

Filmed with high-definition photography, this fascinating documentary sheds light on the history of the famed Great Wall of China, a man-made wall of stone stretching some 4,000 miles. Segments dissect the technological feats surrounding the wall's remarkable construction and also examine the various myths and legends about one of the world's greatest wonders. 2.8 stars

Journey Along the Silk Road

2005, NR, 120 minutes, available on Netflix

Actor Ken Ogata takes you on an archaeological journey down the legendary Silk Road, the ancient trading route between China and the West. Also explored are the controversial claims of French scholar Paul Pelliot, who posited the existence of another route for the Silk Road across great stretches of desert. This remarkable documentary provides a fascinating glimpse into a rarely explored region, opening a window onto the past. 2.4 stars

Lost Treasures of the Ancient World: Ancient China

2000, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

This engaging program traces China's long history and architectural achievements, such as the 4,000-mile-long Great Wall, the terra-cotta army of the first Chinese emperor and Beijing's Forbidden City. Computer-generated re-creations of an ancient Chinese village, expert commentary and location footage accompany the documentary. 3 stars

Modern Marvels: The Great Wall of China

1997, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

The Great Wall of China is great indeed. Visible even from space, it spans thousands of miles, cutting through mountains, valleys and rivers. And, it's generally believed that hundreds of workers died during its construction.

No wonder it's steeped in myth and mystery, an aura that this episode from "Modern Marvels" attempts to explain with the help of leading historians, modern engineers and archival footage. 3.7 stars

Secrets of the Silk Road

2007, NR, 90 minutes, available on Netflix

The Silk Road, one of history's most famed trade routes, linked China to Europe, the Middle East and India and was traveled by such legends as Alexander the Great, Marco Polo and Genghis Khan's Mongol warriors. Follow in the footsteps of the iconic figures and see how the road's ancient past is wrapped up in the fast-changing world of modern China, particularly the country's remote western region. 2.7 stars

Egypt

5000 Years of Magnificent Wonders: Ancient Egypt

2006, NR, 108 minutes, available on Netflix

Using animated reconstructions, location footage and stunning photography, this absorbing video transports viewers to Egypt to explore some magnificent ancient landmarks. Stops on the itinerary include the Valley of the Kings, the Great Sphinx, the Al Karnak temple complex, the mortuary shrine of Hatshepsut and other monuments of antiquity. Leading historians discuss the advanced construction methods used to erect the architectural wonders. 3 stars

Ancient Egypt Unearthed

2009, NR, 2 discs, available on Netflix

In this documentary series, noted archaeologist Dr. Zahi Hawass digs deep to uncover new clues regarding some of ancient Egypt's greatest mysteries, including the civilization's remarkable military and architectural achievements. Hawass also examines the day-to-day lives of ordinary Egyptians; the role of powerful women rulers such as Cleopatra, Hatshepsut and Nefertiti; and reasons for Egypt's surprisingly swift decline on the world stage. 3.1 stars

Ancient Egyptians

2003, NR, 2 discs, available on Netflix

This series makes the most of CGI technology to reenvision Egypt of long ago. Historical figures speak in historically accurate language (made clear by subtitles), as events that viewers may have only read about in textbooks unfold before their eyes. Episodes include "The Battle of Megiddo," "The Tomb Robber's Tale," "Murder in the Temple" and "The Twins' Tale." Also included are featurettes on clothing, hieroglyphs and more. 3 stars

Egypt's Golden Empire

2002, NR, 1 DVD, available on Netflix

This program tracks the development of Egypt's New Kingdom, a majestic era marked by the rise of powerful rulers, the birth of a sophisticated civilization, and advances in art, culture and politics that would influence the world for years to come. 3.2 stars

In Search of History: Secrets of the Rosetta Stone

2006, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

In 1799, when French troops near Rosetta, Egypt, discovered an ancient basalt slab carved with hieroglyphs, little did they know it would provide the key to unlocking the mysteries of an ancient civilization. This History Channel presentation reveals the saga of the Rosetta stone -- from its discovery and the many failed attempts to decode it to the deciphering of its text more than two decades later by Jean Francois Champollion. 3.1 stars

Tutankhamun & the Golden Age of the Pharaohs

2007, NR, 118 minutes, available on Netflix

Boasting more than 50 treasures and artifacts excavated from the tomb of the pharaoh Tutankhamun, this world-class exhibit comes straight into your living room courtesy of the Cairo Museum. Host Omar Sharif guides viewers through an exploration of relics found not only in Tut's tomb, but also those of his contemporaries, including Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV, as well as the boy king's great-grandparents, Yuya and Tuya. 3 stars

4. Europe

The Celtic World: The Story of Civilization

2006, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Featuring authentic on-location footage, this installment of the Story of Civilization series blends accurate recreations, expert analysis and dazzling period imagery to tell the fascinating story of Celtic culture. Traveling back to ancient Britain, the program immerses viewers in an uncommon world ruled by druids and priests, exploring the complexities of tribal structure and revealing the roots of a great warrior civilization. 2.9 stars

The Germanic Tribes

2008, NR, 2 discs, available on Netflix

Follow the development of the Germanic Tribes from a primitive people to an influential power with this historical documentary series, which examines the ways this misunderstood group lived day to day, fought their enemies and honored their gods. Through recent discoveries and research findings, this program convincingly dispels inaccurate myths that the Germanic Tribes were nothing but barbarians. 3 stars

Holy Warriors

2005, NR, 120 minutes, available on Netflix

Popular wisdom has taught us one version of King Richard the Lionhearted's epic struggle to pry Jerusalem from the jaws of an aggressive Muslim conqueror, Salah Al-din (aka Saladin). But as history has shown, there's always another side to the story. Relying on provocative interviews with both Christian and Muslim scholars, this fascinating PBS documentary reexamines a familiar legend from an unfamiliar perspective. 3.1 stars

Vision: From the Life of Hildegard von Bingen

2009, NR, 110 minutes, available on Netflix

Directed by longtime star of independent German cinema Margarethe von Trotta, this reverent biopic chronicles the fascinating story of 12th-century Christian mystic and scientist Hildegard von Bingen (Barbara Sukowa). Despite living in an era when women are proscribed from preaching and interpreting scripture, Hildegard believes that the visions she experiences are a gift from God that she must reveal -- even at the risk of condemnation. 3.5 stars, I gave it a 5 star, I thought it was excellent. Good portrayal of nuns and life in 12th century Europe.

5. Greece

Athens: The Dawn of Democracy

2007, NR, 120 minutes, available on Netflix

In this PBS program, historian Bettany Hughes explores the realities of ancient Athens's "Golden Age" and uncovers a mix of brilliant, humanity-changing philosophies and dark, war-like themes that co-existed in one turbulent time and place. Although ancient Athens still retains its reputation as a pure and shining democracy, its history tells a more complicated story that includes slavery, black magic and an unquenchable thirst for war. 3 stars

Lost Treasures of the Ancient World: Ancient Greece

1999, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Using innovative 3D graphics, computer animation, reconstructions and location footage, this intriguing video takes viewers to the birthplace of democracy to visit some of Greece's architectural wonders. Among the

treasures on the itinerary are the majestic Parthenon, the magnificent Acropolis, Delphi and the inspirational temple of Zeus. Eminent expert John Bennet of the Institute of Archaeology contributes his insight. 3 stars

The Spartans

2004, NR, 180 minutes, available on Netflix

Of the various Greek city-states, Sparta was distinctive because of the rigorous military regimen it ingrained in its people; this presentation documents the history of one of the most fascinating societies in ancient times. The program examines the militaristic, collective and organized social construction assembled by the Spartan people, from the culture's humble beginnings and rise to greatness to its ultimate demise. 3.7 stars

Troy: Unearthing the Legend

The History Channel, 2004, NR, 2 discs, available on Netflix

This collection of documentaries from the History Channel explores two classical Greek civilizations, unearthing details on Sparta and its warriors at the Battle of Thermopylae, as well as examining the great Trojan War to separate fact from legend. Interviews and reenactments bolster the lasting influence of these events on western civilization, from Homer's literary epic, *The Iliad*, to modern military methods inspired by ancient Greek tactics. Shy of 3 stars

The True Story of Alexander the Great

2005, NR, 150 minutes, available on Netflix

Considered the most successful warrior in recorded history, Alexander the Great conquered Asia by age 32. His innovative battle tactics remain a topic of endless fascination to scholars and military leaders. Actor Peter Woodward hosts this absorbing documentary that chronicles Alexander's life through ancient historians' narratives, interviews with contemporary scholars, state-of-the-art reenactments and tours of key historical sites. 3 star

6. India

Lost Treasures of the Ancient World: Ancient India

2000, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Reflecting a storied past rich in culture and, in the case of ancient India, wealth, the Taj Mahal stands as the country's most recognizable landmark. Through location footage, computer animations and graphics, this absorbing program explores the civilization's extensive history, belief systems and cultural achievements, journeying back in time to re-create the building of the Taj Mahal and present a stunning replica of a 3,000-year-old city. 3 stars

The Story of India

2007, NR, 3 hours, available on Netflix

Hosted by noted historian Michael Wood, this documentary series explores the many facets of Indian society, including the arts, spiritual traditions, the diverse population, the rising high-tech business community and more. Explore the rich culture of India with this visually striking program that takes viewers on a fascinating journey from the country's ancient origins to its significant place in our contemporary global community. Hosted by noted British historian Michael Wood, the series explores the many facets of Indian society, including the arts, spiritual traditions, the diverse population, the rising high-tech business community and much more. 3.5 stars I saw this series and it was very good!

Warrior Empire: The Mughals

2006, NR, 91 minutes, available on Netflix

This absorbing History Channel documentary looks at the nomadic people known as the Mughals. Roaming south Asia's landscape, they conquered everything in their path and paved the way for modern India, Pakistan and

Bangladesh. In addition to leaving behind a legacy of artistry, culture and military expertise, the Mughals built the magnificent Taj Mahal, a tomb that required 22,000 laborers and took more than 22 years to complete. 3 stars

7. Japan

Lost Treasures of the Ancient World: Samurai Japan

2000, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Rich in history and tradition, Japan's grand monuments, shrines and pagodas trace 1,000-plus years of the country's vibrant culture, a culture largely steeped in Buddhism. But standing in contrast to the ancient belief system were the samurai warriors, who lived by a different code. Through 3-D graphics and state-of-the-art computer animation, this fascinating program invites viewers to travel back in time to explore life during a bygone era. 3 star

Samurai: Behind the Blade

2008, NR, 47 minutes, available on Netflix

Japan's ancient samurai tradition is chronicled in this hourlong documentary, which looks to history, science and literature to answer questions about the legacy and mysterious lives of the warrior aristocracy. The film examines some of the truths behind the mask, including the samurais' preoccupation with death, their impressive mastery of fine arts and their code of honor -- which carried a heavy price. 3.1 stars

8. Middle East

The Hittites: A Civilization That Changed the World

2004, NR, 120 minutes, available on Netflix

Jeremy Irons narrates this Turkish documentary that profiles the ancient civilization of the Hittites, who -- at the height of their power in the 14th century B.C. -- controlled a vast empire. The video explores their history through interviews with experts and dramatic reenactments, including a spectacular depiction of the battle of Kadesh, in which the Hittites crushed the Egyptian pharaoh's vaunted army. 3.1 stars

Legends of the Arabian Nights

2006, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Through glorious illustrations and entrancing clips, the stories a young woman spun to keep a malevolent sultan from murdering her come to life in this A&E program that explores the legends' roots, themes and messages. Leading authors and historians analyze the stories set in India, Persia, Egypt, Turkey and China to answer questions as to who wrote the tales and why, and why so many of them are driven by the presence of genies and magic. 3 stars

Persepolis: Re-discovering the Lost Capital of the Persian Empire

2008, NR, 60 minutes, available on Netflix

This enlightening documentary allows viewers to experience the glory of Persepolis, the capital of the Persian Empire built in 520 B.C. by King Darius I of the Archaemenids, who first created a 40-acre terrace to hold the spectacular complex. Architects Wolfgang Gambke and Kourosh Afhami use a computer animation program to virtually re-create Persepolis. The film also explores the history and culture of the Persian people of that era. 3 stars

9. Religion

The Bible's Buried Secrets: Nova

2008, NR, 112 minutes, available on Netflix

With contributions from a team of noted historians, archeologists and biblical scholars, this thought-provoking "Nova" documentary explores the history behind the creation of the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Old Testament. Drawing on more than 100 years of archeological discoveries and centuries of biblical examination, the program addresses many of the questions whose answers have long eluded the religious and scientific communities. 3 stars

The Buddha: The Story of Siddhartha

2010, NR, 120 minutes, available on Netflix

Through a visual tapestry of evocative paintings and sculptures, this compelling Emmy-nominated documentary from filmmaker David Grubin explores the life of the Buddha, his quest for serenity and his eventual enlightenment. Insightful interviews with contemporary Buddhists, including the Dalai Lama and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet W.S. Merwin, shed light on Buddhism and its relevance today. Richard Gere narrates

Jesus: His Life

1995, NR, 100 minutes, available on Netflix

From his birth in Bethlehem to his Crucifixion, here is the story of Jesus of Galilee. Join leading scholars and theologians as they explore the mysteries and myths of Jesus's miraculous life and legacy. You'll walk the Holy Lands and hear his words, and you'll also discover new archaeological findings that are yielding fresh insights into the life and times of one of the most celebrated and revered figures in history. 3.1 stars

10. Rome

Lost Treasures of the Ancient World: Ancient Rome: The Glorious Empire

1999, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Combining computer animation, meticulous reconstructions and location footage, this fascinating documentary takes viewers through the streets of ancient Rome to revisit the city's countless treasures. Rome's historical legacy and past glory come alive through works of art, depictions of daily life and landmark structures such as the Forum, the Colosseum and the Pantheon. Noted experts provide contextual commentary. 2.8 stars

The Roman Empire in the First Century

2002, NR, 219 minutes, available on Netflix

This PBS-produced documentary sweeps through history as the Roman Empire reigns in the 1st century. But for the Romans, being in control meant dealing with a spate of social problems: coups, power struggles and crimes. Out of the ashes of disorder, however, rose a Phoenix-like empire even stronger than its original version -- thanks to the work of thinkers, fighters, noblemen and peasants.

Rome: Engineering an Empire

2005, NR, 94 minutes, available on Netflix

This fascinating History Channel documentary highlights the engineering feats involved in the construction of ancient Rome, reinforcing the adage that the city was hardly built in a day. Segments focus on the construction of the city's famed aqueducts and the Baths of Caracalla, as well as landmarks such as Hadrian's Wall, Caesar's Bridge, the Coliseum and the Pantheon. Actor and art history buff Peter Weller (of Robocop fame) guest stars. 3 ½ stars

Rome: Power & Glory

2000, NR, 2 discs, available on Netflix

With reenactments, ancient monuments, period art and writing, this series presents the complete history of Rome, from its primitive beginnings to the height of its glory, its eventual decline and its legacies today. Rome was once a thriving empire, an epicenter of culture, commerce and politics. But as wars chipped away at its territory and outer strength, a crumbling infrastructure and systemic corruption made it crumble from the inside. 3.4 stars

The True Story of Hannibal

2008, NR, 100 minutes, available on Netflix

Known for his epic defeat of the Romans after a famous trek through the Alps that saw the Carthaginian general leading his troops on the backs of elephants, Hannibal is regarded as one of history's greatest military minds. Drawing on the expertise of historians, military experts and archaeologists, this incisive feature chronicles the life of the great war strategist, from his swift rise to prominence to his ultimate defeat in 203 BC. 3 star

11. Western Hemisphere

The Americas: The Story of Civilization

2006, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

This installment of the Story of Civilization series harkens back to the days of sun gods, human sacrifice and sacred beasts, focusing on the collective worlds of the Aztecs, the Mayans and the Native Americans. Blending dazzling period imagery with authentic on-location footage, accurate re-creations and reconstructions, and expert commentary and analysis, this program quietly exposes the roots of America's past. 2.7 stars

Cracking the Maya Code

2008, NR, 52 minutes, available on Netflix

The cryptic hieroglyphs of the ancient Maya civilization have fascinated -- and puzzled -- many brilliant minds for years. Traveling deep into the jungles of Central America, "Nova" follows the struggles of these tenacious code breakers. The long road to discovery includes an interview with David Stuart, whose startling breakthrough made just after high school helped make him the youngest-ever recipient of the MacArthur "genius" grant.

In Search of History: Lost City of the Incas

2005, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

This fascinating A&E series takes viewers on a guided tour of the ruins of beautiful and enigmatic Machu Picchu, relying on archival footage and expert interviews to unravel its many mysteries. Situated high atop the Andes Mountains, the spectacular Incan city was long thought to be legendary. But in 1911, American explorer Hiram Bingham stumbled upon its remains, forever opening its secrets to the world. 3.2 stars

Mayans & Aztecs

1999, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Travel back in time and experience the ancient Mayan and Aztec cultures via on-location footage, paintings, computer animation and historical re-creations. Skilled artisans and farmers dominated the peaceful society of the Mayans, who erected the magnificent temple at Chichén Itzá. The Aztecs created a legacy of superb architecture and art, and are also remembered for their rituals of human sacrifice. 2.8 stars

