

MESOPOTAMIA

Mark It on the Map

Hang a world map on the wall. Have students look at the map on page 6 and locate on the world map the area known in ancient times as Mesopotamia. Point out the area enclosed by the dotted line and read the note on page 7. Then have students look at the map on page 7 and locate on the world map the countries that now occupy the lands once known as Mesopotamia. Note the location of Kuwait — both in the past and today.

Vocabulary

historian	immortal
civilization	mythology
ziggurat	almanac
pictograph	irrigate
cuneiform	cylinder seal
city-state	tribute
Islam	

Introduction

Have students read “Message From the Editors” on pages 2–3. Ask them what they have recently heard or read about the area formerly called Mesopotamia. Ask them which present-day persons they associate with this area and how events there affect world politics and the world economy.

Questions for Discussion

- What does the name “Mesopotamia” mean, and how did it come to be associated with this area?
- How did the cuneiform system of writing develop?
- On what number did the Sumerians base their number system, and what traces of this system can we find in our present system?
- How did the Sumerian city-state develop as the first form of central government?
- What did archaeologists find in the royal tombs at Ur? Why were these discoveries so important?
- Why was Mesopotamia nicknamed the Fertile Crescent?
- How did Assyria’s rise to power affect the lifestyle of the Assyrians? Give specific examples.
- What were the Hanging Gardens? Who built them and why?

Writing Workout

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- Write an essay explaining what you think the Babylonians meant when they said “Take away your sword, and may the gods help you” (page 3).
- Explain why trade and trade routes often led to war in ancient Mesopotamia.

Viewpoints

Have students choose one of Hammurabi’s laws as stated on page 37 and write an essay giving their opinions of the law as well as the reasons for their opinions.

Then and Now

Pharmaceutical accounts from Mesopotamia tell of medicines made from plants, seeds, and herbs. Modern health food stores sell many “natural” medicines. Ask students whether they use any natural medicines at home. Have them tell which ones, what the ingredients are, what each is supposed to cure, and how effective the remedy is.

Get Into Art

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- Read “Tales From Mesopotamia” on pages 14–18. Choose your favorite and illustrate it.
- Follow the directions on pages 26–27 to make replicas of the cylinder seals used in Mesopotamia.

Class Projects

- Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one of the four Mesopotamian cities described on pages 24–25. Have the groups find out as much information as possible about their cities. On an appointed day, have one spokesperson from each group report what his or her group has found to the rest of the class.
- Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the archaeologists on pages 45–46. Give the students time to research more information about these archaeologists. Then have each group make a display (poster, chart, diagram, collage) about its archaeologist's discoveries and their significance.
- Have students read the article about cuneiform on page 39. Then have each student write a letter using the Ugaritic alphabet and give it to a classmate to decipher.

Words With a Past

Divide students into five groups and assign each group one of the words on pages 32–33. Have each group illustrate the history of its “word” using magic markers, paints, clay, or clippings from magazines to make a collage.

Research Projects

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- The story of the Great Flood is found in the literature of many civilizations. Read the Babylonian tale on pages 16–17, then research other Flood stories and compare them with the Babylonian version.
- For hundreds of years, little has changed among the Marsh Arabs who inhabit present-day southern Iraq. Go to the library and research the history and lifestyle of these people.
- Try to find information about archaeological sites that were damaged during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Time Line

Have students read “Past Is Present” on pages 40–43. Then have them make a time line clearly identifying the nations that have ruled Mesopotamia.

Just for Fun

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- Read “Tales From Mesopotamia” on pages 14–18, then fill in the blanks in the puzzle on page 19.
- Compose a letter using the Ugaritic alphabet found on page 39.

Follow These Footsteps

Sir Leonard Woolley	Hammurabi	Ur-Nammu
Herodotos	Sargon I	Cyrus
Naram-Sin	Alexander the Great	Lugalzagesi
Süleyman the Magnificent	Enheduanna	Saddam Hussein
Gilgamesh	Paul-Émile Botta	Ashurnasirpal II
Sennacherib	Sir Austen Henry Layard	Nebuchadrezzar
Hormuzd Rassam	Nabopolassar	Robert Koldewey
Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson		