

Marvelous Mesopotamia: “The Land of Firsts”

Grade Level: First Grade

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Length of Unit: Four Lessons

I. ABSTRACT

Marvelous Mesopotamia introduces students to the “Cradle of Civilization”. Using the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, students will learn that Mesopotamia was the site of the first civilization. Students will understand the importance of writing based on the contributions of the Mesopotamian people. Through the use of technology students will obtain information via the Internet to be incorporated into hands on activities. In cooperative learning groups students will create a classroom code of laws, and gain an understanding of the purpose of rules and laws. The contributions of the Mesopotamians will be further explored by learning about the inventions and accomplishments of the people and their effects on daily life, past and present.

II. OVERVIEW

A. Concept Objectives.

1. The student understands the relative location of places. (TEKS 1.4)
2. The student understands the purpose of maps and globes. (TEKS 1.5)
3. The student understands the importance of family beliefs, customs, languages, and traditions. (TEKS 1.15)
4. The student understands the purpose of rules and laws. (TEKS 1.10)

B. Content Objectives:

1. Students will recognize the importance of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. (p. 27)
2. Students will understand the development of writing and why writing is important to the development of civilizations. (p. 27)
3. Code of Hammurabi (early code of laws), why rules and laws are important to the development of civilization. (p. 27)
4. Students will recognize the contributions of the ancient Mesopotamian people, and how these inventions and accomplishments presently affect our daily life.

C. Skill Objectives:

1. The student will locate, label, and color selected areas on the map.
2. The students will recognize the Fertile Crescent as the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
3. The students will discuss the importance of the rivers and their significance to plant/crop growth.
4. The students will locate the website: <http://www.upennmuseum.com/cuneiform.cgi> “Write like a Babylonian.”
5. The students will be able to manipulate the web site enabling them to type their name, and print the cuneiform translation.
6. The student will read and illustrate a booklet highlighting Mesopotamian contributions such as the wheel and the calendar.
7. The student listens attentively and engages actively in a variety of oral language experiences. (TEKS 1.1)
8. The student uses problem solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. (TEKS 1.19)
9. The student understands the purpose of rules and laws. (TEKS 1.10)

10. The student listens attentively and engages actively in a variety of oral language experiences. (TEKS 1.1)
11. The student uses problem solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. (TEKS 1.19)
12. The student communicates clearly by putting thoughts and feelings into spoken words. (TEKS 1.4)

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

A. For Teachers

1. Hirsh, E.D. J.r. *What Your First Grader Needs to Know*. New York, New York: Dell Publishing, 1997. ISBN 0-385-31987-8.
2. <http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/edpgs/su96/meso/mesopotamia.html>.
3. Sands, Stella. Editor, *Kids Discover-Mesopotamia*. New York, New York: Kids Discover, 1999. ISSN 1054-2868

IV. RESOURCES

- A. *Ancient civilizations for Children: Ancient Mesopotamia* Video, 1998 by Schessinger Media
- B. Hirsch, E.D.Jr. *What Your First Grader Needs to Know*.1997 Dell Publishing
- C. <http://www.ed.psu.edu/k12/edpgs/su96/meso/mesopotamia.html>
- D. <http://www.upennmuseum.com/cuneiform.cgi>
- E. *Kids Discover Magazine-Mesopotamia* 1999 by Stella Sands
- F. *My Nine Lives by Clio* by Marjorie Priceman
- G. *My Nine Lives by Clio* Video (optional)

V. LESSONS

Lesson One: Geography of Mesopotamia

A. Daily Objectives:

1. Concept Objectives
 - a. The student understands the relative location of places. (TEKS1.4)
 - b. The student understands the purpose of maps and globes. (TEKS1.5)
2. Content Objectives
 - a. Importance of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
3. Skill Objectives
 - a. The student will locate, label, and color selected locations on the map.
 - Tigris and Euphrates rivers
 - Persian Gulf
 - Fertile Crescent
 - b. The student will recognize the Fertile Crescent as the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers by coloring and labeling it on the map.
 - c. The students will discuss the importance of the rivers and their significance to plant/crop growth by planting and recording seed growth.

B. Materials:

1. maps of Mesopotamia with corresponding overhead (Appendix A)
2. Dixie cups
3. sand
4. potting soil
5. seeds
6. water /watering can
7. map pencils
8. markers

- C. *Key Vocabulary:*
1. Mesopotamia-“the land between two rivers”
 2. fertile- producing a large amount of crops or vegetation
 3. crescent-shaped like a moon
 4. civilization-the way of life of people
 5. Euphrates and Tigris Rivers- The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers begin in Eastern Turkey. They flow southeasterly into Modern day Iraq. The area between the two rivers was once called Mesopotamia, the location of the world’s first civilization.
 6. Iraq- Present day Mesopotamia
- D. *Procedures/Activities:*
1. Introduce unit by reading *My Nine Lives by Clio*, Life # 1
 2. Distribute individual maps and map pencils.
 3. Use the related overhead to identify and locate specific landmarks on the map.
 4. Color the outlines of the rivers blue.
 5. Shade the area between the two rivers green to illustrate the fertile area, and color the surrounding desert areas brown.
 6. Discuss the importance of the twin rivers. Discuss the following questions to guide students into understanding the idea of the fertile area:
 - Why do you think these rivers are important?
 - What happens to the rivers when too much rain falls?
 - Compare and contrast the areas on the map. Why is the area by the rivers green? Why is the area away from the rivers brown?
 - What is needed for plants to grow?
 - Discuss crops grown in the area, such as figs, cucumbers, onions, pomegranates, lettuce, turnips, almonds, rice, chickpeas, fish, wheat, etc.
 - Why is this area vital to the existence of these people?
 - Which is better for planting in, sand or soil?
 7. Distribute two small paper cups to each student. With a marker label one cup soil and the other sand. Each student will fill the correctly labeled cup halfway with potting soil and one with sand. Students will gently create a hole with their index finger in which to place seeds. Give students two or three seeds for each cup. Cover seeds lightly with soil/sand. Water.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation:*
1. Distribute worksheet Appendix A. Students will record and/or measure signs of plant growth over a five day period. Final assessment will be ongoing depending on plant growth.
 2. Students will be able to locate on class map the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and the Fertile Crescent.

Lesson Two: Cuneiform

- A. *Daily Objectives:*
1. Concept Objectives
 - a. The student understands the importance of family beliefs, customs, languages, and traditions.
 2. Content Objectives
 - a. Students will understand the development of writing and why writing is important to the development of civilization.
 3. Skill Objectives

- a. The students will locate the website: <http://www.upennmuseum.com/cuneiform.cgi> “Write like a Babylonian.”
 - b. The students will be able to manipulate the web site enabling the students to type their name, and print the cuneiform translation.
- B. *Materials:*
1. modeling clay
 2. popsicle sticks
 3. markers
 4. 4x6 index cards
- C. *Key Vocabulary:*
1. cuneiform- The ancient Sumerians created the world’s first writing system known as cuneiform. The term cuneiform means “wedge-shaped”. Sumerian writing is wedge shaped because of the type of instrument used to create it.
 2. stylus- Instrument used by the Sumerians to write. A stylus is a wedge-shaped instrument made out of reed. The stylus was used to write on wet clay tablets.
 3. edubba- An edubba is a school where young boys learned reading, writing, and arithmetic.
 4. scribe- After graduating from edubba, a young man became a writer, or a scribe.
 5. tablets- A small flat slab that meant to be written on.
 6. archeologist- Scientist that researches the past by finding fossils, monuments, and tools left by ancient people.
- D. *Procedure:*
1. Teacher will take students to a computer lab or provide access to a computer with Internet access.
 2. Locate web site, <http://www.upennmuseum.com/cuneiform.cgi>
 3. Students will type full name and initials in the proper fields. Click inscribe.
 4. Click file, scroll down to print and print out name translations.
 5. Distribute modeling clay and index cards.
 6. Students will roll out clay and place it on the surface of the index card so it is flat. Distribute popsicle sticks.
 7. Students will transfer their name from the computer printout to clay tablets using popsicle sticks as a stylus.
 8. Allow tablets to dry over night. Display tablets in Writing Center.
 9. Keep computer printout of students names to use in Lesson Four.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation:*
1. The students will follow directions and successfully access the web site to transfer cuneiform writing to clay tablets.

Lesson Three: Hammurabi and the Code of Laws

- A. *Daily Objectives:*
1. Concept Objectives:
 - a. The student understands the purpose of rules and laws.
 - b. The student listens attentively and engages actively in a variety of oral language experiences.
 - c. The student uses problem solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings.
 - d. The student communicates clearly by putting thoughts and feelings into spoken words.
 2. Content Objectives:
 - a. Code of Hammurabi (early code of laws), why rules and laws are important to the development of civilization.

3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will understand the importance of laws by writing classroom laws in cooperative learning groups.
- B. *Materials:*
 1. writing paper
 2. marker, pencil
 3. brown or gray butcher paper, crumpled and worn to look old
 4. butcher paper, any color
 5. optional: picture of Hammurabi accepting the laws
 6. Appendix C Sample KWL
- C. *Key Vocabulary:*
 1. law- a rule of conduct or action that a nation or group of people agrees to follow; a whole collection of established rules.
 2. code-a system of rules or principles
 3. Hammurabi- The king of Babylon, after a war ruled all of Mesopotamia. Developed the code of laws for Mesopotamia and established many new reforms. He gathered laws from surrounding areas and put them together to create a code of laws.
 4. justice- just or right action or treatment; the quality of being just or fair.
- D. *Procedures:*
 1. Begin by writing a KWL chart about laws as a whole group. Divide a large piece of chart paper into three columns. Label the columns What We **K**now, What We **W**ant To Know, and finally, What We **L**earned.
See sample KWL (Appendix C)
 2. Discuss the following questions:
 - a. Why do people need laws?
 - b. What would happen without laws?
 - c. What are some laws you know?
 3. Place students into three cooperative groups, name these groups after the Sumerians, Assyrians, and Babylonians. Each group will write three to four new classroom laws or rules.
 4. When students have completed their laws, come back together as a whole group. Students will share their laws and decide what are the best laws for the class to follow. To model Hammurabi's Code, give the code a name, for instance, Ms. Crenshaw could name the laws developed in her class "Crenshaw's Class Code".
 5. Using brown or gray paper, record the student created laws.
 6. Discuss the similarities and differences between teacher created classroom rules and student-made laws.
 7. Complete KWL chart.
 8. Children select the created code or original classroom rules they wish to follow for one week. At the end of that week discuss which set is better.
Extension: The students will create a poster of a silly, or fun to follow law.
Example: It is here by declared that cake cannot be eaten without ice cream.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation:*
 1. Students will be assessed by their application of laws to classroom behavior.
 2. Students will be assessed on their ability to work cooperatively in a group.

Lesson Four: Inventions and Accomplishments

- A. *Daily Objectives:*
 1. Concept Objectives:

- a. The student understands how technology has affected daily life, past and present.
2. Content Objectives:
 - a. Students will recognize the contributions of the ancient Mesopotamian people, and how these inventions and accomplishments presently affect our daily life.
3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. The student will read and illustrate a booklet highlighting Mesopotamian contributions, such as the following:
 1. the wheel
 2. stringed instruments
 3. the arch
 4. the lens
 5. the calendar
 6. the first farm and plow
 7. boats (personal floatation devices)
 8. cuneiform
- B. *Materials:*
 1. vocabulary chart (Appendix D)
 2. pencils, crayons
 3. stapler
 4. chart paper
 5. “Where Would We Be Without the Wheel?”, student booklet (Appendix E)
 6. “Where Would We Be Without the Wheel?”, teacher answer key (Appendix F)
- C. *Key Vocabulary:*
 1. invention- anything created or produced for the first time.
 2. accomplishment- to succeed in doing
 3. arch- curved part of a structure that serves as support
 4. cuneiform-the world’s first writing system, created by using a wedge shaped instrument.
- D. *Procedure:*
 1. Discuss inventions found in the classroom such as clock, pencil sharpener, lights, etc. List them on the chart paper.
 2. Distribute booklets and read it with students.
 3. Students will complete sentences in booklet using vocabulary chart (Appendix D)
 4. Students will illustrate and color inventions in booklet.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation:*
 1. Students will be able to illustrate and name inventions created by the people of Mesopotamia.

VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY

The students will participate in a Harvest Celebration. The class will sample foods grown in the area called the Fertile Crescent. Students will be introduced and be able to identify selected foods. Students will bring from home some of the fruits and vegetables discussed in Lesson One to share with the class. Students will share the last page of “Where Would We Be Without the Wheel?” that asks which Mesopotamian accomplishment is the most important and why.

VII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

- A. Map of Mesopotamia

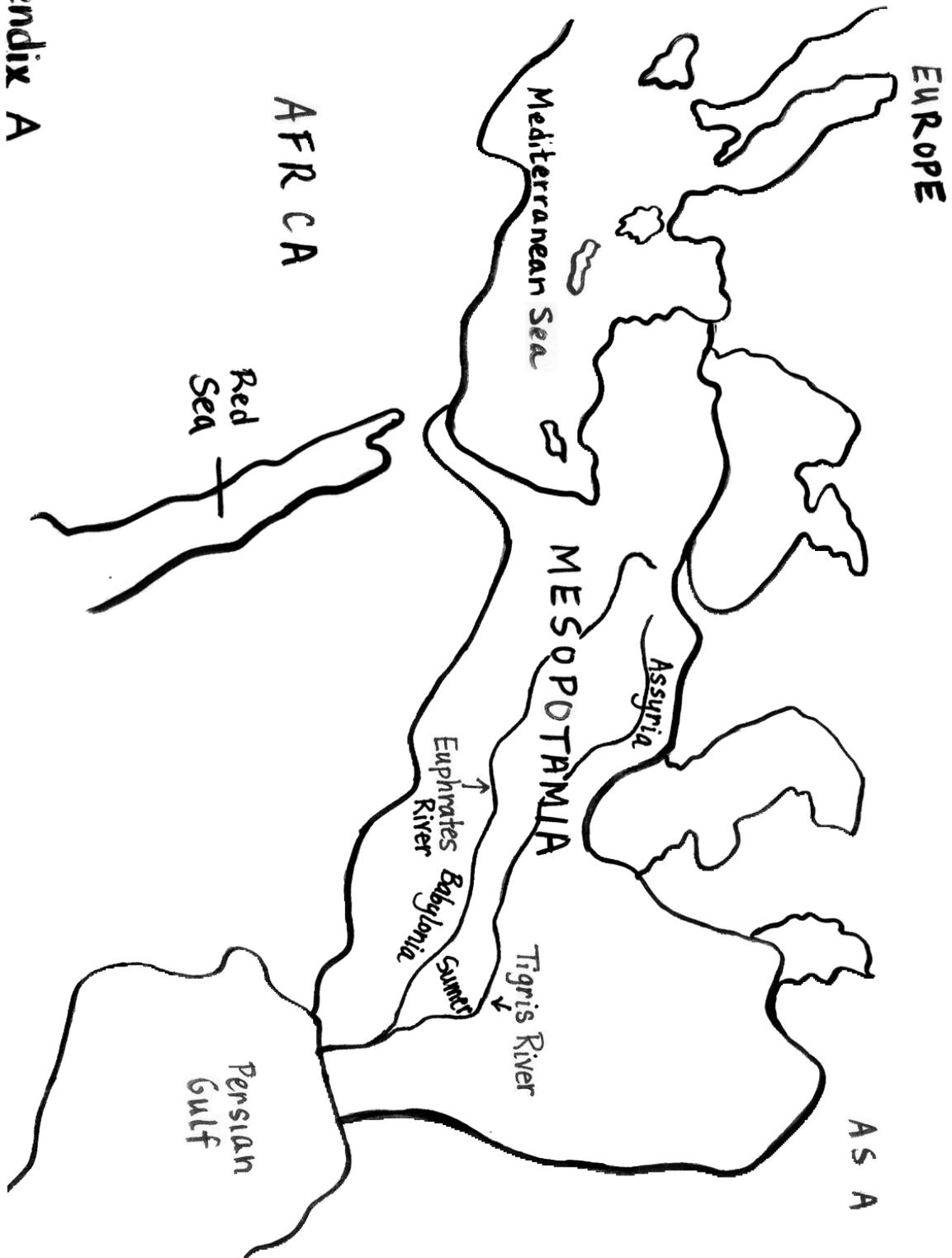
- B. Did your plants grow?
- C. Sample KWL Chart
- D. Lesson Four
- E. Where Would We Be Without the Wheel? student booklet
- F. Answer Key for Lesson Four

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A. Caselli, Giovanni. *The First Civilizations*. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, ISBN 0-911-745-59-9.
- B. Henrich, Jean. *The Big Book of Ancient Mesopotamian Activities*. USA: Henrich Enterprises, ISBN 0-926473-59-X.
- C. Hirsch, E.D. Jr. *What Your First Grader Needs to Know*. New York, New York: Dell Publishing 1997. ISBN 0-385-31987-8.
- D. <http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/edpgs/su96/meso/mesopotamia.html>.
- E. <http://www.upennmuseum.com/cuneiform.cgi>
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- G. Merriam-Webster. *Webster's New Young American Dictionary*. New York, New York: Smithmark Publishers, 1995. ISBN 0-8317-9166-7
- H. Samoyault, Tiphaine. *How the Alphabet Began*. New York, New York, 1996. ISBN 0-670-87808-1.
- I. Sands, Stella. Editor *Kids Discover-Mesopotamia*. New York, New York: Kids Discover, 1999. ISSN 1054-2868.
- J. Whitecraft, Melissa. *The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers*. New York: Grolier Publishing, 1999. ISBN 0-531-11741-3.

Appendix A

Appendix A



APPENDIX B
Lesson One

Name: _____

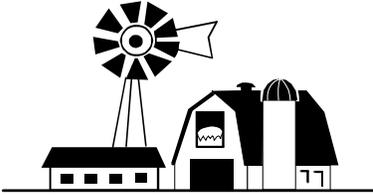
Did your plants grow?
Write YES or NO

Plant Growth	Sand	Soil
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		

Appendix C
Sample KWL Chart

<u>What we Know:</u>	<u>What we Want to know:</u>	<u>What we Learned:</u>

Appendix D
Lesson Four



farm



stringed instruments



inflatable boats



lens



calendar



arch

**Appendix D, continued
Lesson Four**



plow



cuneiform/writing

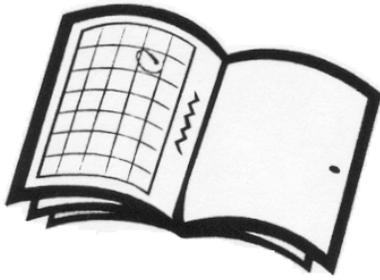


wheel

Appendix E

Where Would We Be
Without the Wheel?
And other inventions from
Mesopotamia

By: _____



The first form of writing was called _____.
Write your name in _____ ancient writing.

Do you like the sound a guitar makes? Thank the Ancient Sumerians. They invented the first _____ instruments, such as a harp and a guitar.

A _____ greatly changed the life of the Sumerians. It helped the people record the date, month, and year.

3

Mesopotamians were also the first to use an _____ when constructing buildings. This allowed them to build structures taller and heavier.

4

The Mesopotamians were the first _____ in the Fertile Crescent. They used the _____ when planting crops.

5

The Assyrians made the first _____ from animal skins to help them float across rivers.

6

Mesopotamians were the first to use the _____ for transportation

7

The Assyrians were the first to use a piece of glass to magnify an object, that means to make it look bigger. It is called a _____.

8

Appendix F
Lesson Four- Answer Key

Where Would We Be
Without the Wheel?
And other inventions from Mesopotamia
By: _____

Mesopotamians were the first to use the wheel for transportation.

Do you like the sound a guitar makes? Thank the Ancient Sumerians. They invented the first stringed instruments, such as a harp and a guitar.

Mesopotamians were also the first to use an arch when constructing buildings. This allowed them to build structures taller and heavier.

The Assyrians were the first to use a piece of glass to magnify an object, that means to make it look bigger. It is called a lens.

A calendar greatly changed the life of the Sumerians. It helped the people record the date, month, and year.

The Mesopotamians were the first farmers in the Fertile Crescent. They used the plow when planting crops.

The Assyrians made the first boats from animal skins to help them float across rivers.

The first form of writing was called cuneiform. Write your name in ancient writing.