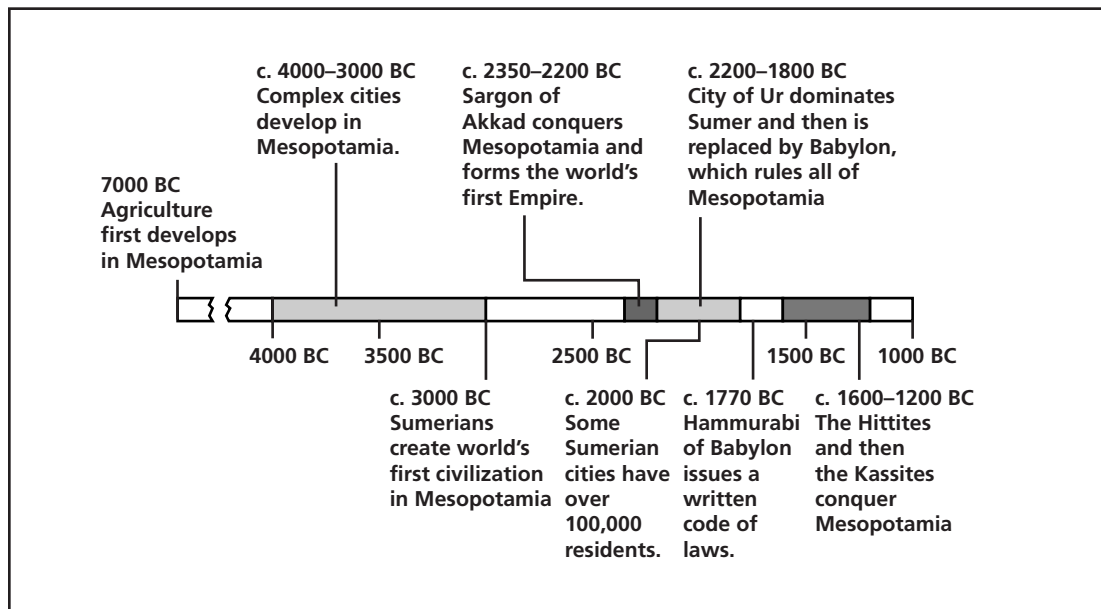


ACTIVITY**1****Document-Based Activities****Ancient Mesopotamia****Using Source Materials****Part A**

DIRECTIONS Examine the following texts and pictures. Underline key words and make notes in the margin if you wish. Then use the documents and what you have learned in your studies to answer the questions. Your answers will help you write a short essay about ancient Mesopotamia.

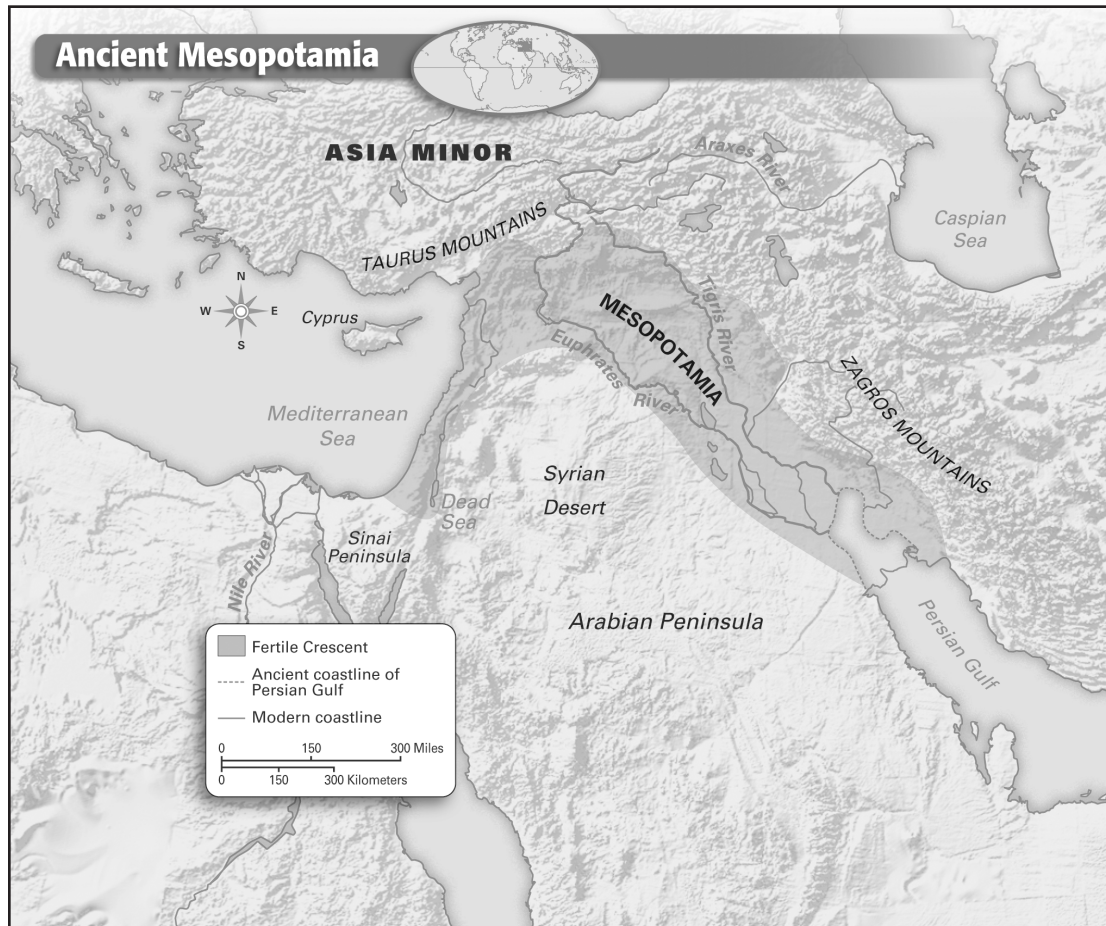
Document 1

1a. According to the time line, about how long ago did the Sumerians create the world's first civilization?

1b. About how old was Mesopotamian civilization when Hammurabi created his code of laws? Do you think they were the very first laws written in Mesopotamia? Why or why not?

Activity 1, Ancient Mesopotamia, continued

Document 2



2a. Why did the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flood each year?

2b. Within which large arc of rich, fertile farmland was Mesopotamia located?

Activity 1, Ancient Mesopotamia, continued

Document 3

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *hath*, *subjection*, *entrusted*, *sceptre*, *bringeth*, *thereof*, *garnered*, *procured*. You may want to look them up in a dictionary. Marduk, Anu, and Bel were Babylonian gods.

Hammurabi, the mighty king, the king of Babylon, the king who hath brought to subjection the four quarters of the world, who hath brought about the triumph of Marduk, . . . am I.

When Anu and Bel gave me the land of Sumer and Akkad to rule and entrusted their sceptre to my hands, I dug out the Hammurabi-canal, which bringeth abundance of water unto the land of Sumer and Akkad. Both the banks thereof I changed to fields for cultivation, and I garnered piles of grain, and I procured unfailing water for the land of Sumer and Akkad.

—from a monument

3a. What is Hammurabi so proud of?

3b. Why were canals so important to Mesopotamia?

Activity 1, Ancient Mesopotamia, continued**Document 4**

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *outgrowth, cuneiform, millennium, stereotyped, compilations, considerable, acquaintance, botanical, zoological, mineralogical, excavated, dismissed*. You may want to look them up in a dictionary or encyclopedia.

The Sumerian school was the direct outgrowth of the invention and development of the cuneiform system of writing, Sumer's most significant contribution to civilization. The first written documents were found in a Sumerian city named Erech . . . Among them are several which contain word lists intended for study and practice. That is, as early as 3000 BC, some scribes were already thinking in terms of teaching and learning . . .

In the third millennium BC, these "textbooks" became increasingly more complete, and gradually grew to be more or less stereotyped and standard for all the schools of Sumer. Among them we find long lists of names of trees and reeds; of all sorts of animals, including insects and birds; of countries, cities, and villages; of stones and minerals. These compilations reveal a considerable acquaintance with what might be termed botanical, zoological, geographical, and mineralogical lore . . .

One of the most human documents ever excavated in the Near East is a Sumerian essay dealing with the day-to-day activities of a schoolboy . . .

The composition . . . begins with a direct question to the pupil: "Schoolboy, where did you go from earliest days?" The boy answers: "I went to school." The author then asks: "What did you do in school?" There follows the pupil's reply . . . "I recited my tablet, ate my lunch, prepared my (new) tablet, wrote it, finished it; then they assigned me my oral work, and in the afternoon they assigned me my written work. When school was dismissed, I went home, entered the house, and found my father sitting there. I told my father of my written work, then recited my tablet to him and my father was delighted."

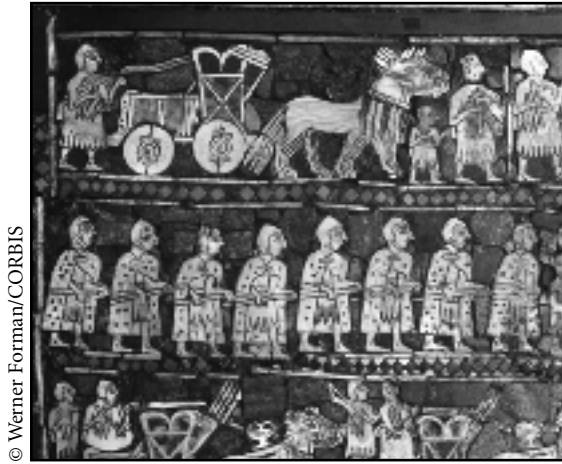
—From *History Begins at Sumer* by Samuel Noah Kramer.
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by permission of the **University of Pennsylvania Press**.

4a. What was the basic purpose of schools in ancient Mesopotamia?

4b. Why did Kramer call the development of writing "Sumer's most significant contribution to civilization"?

Activity 1, Ancient Mesopotamia, continued

Document 5



© Werner Forman/CORBIS

—The standard of Ur, c. 2600 BC



Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

—Assyrian wall carving, c. 630 BC

5a. What new invention in transportation had the Mesopotamians made by 2600 BC?

5b. Two thousand years later, how had the Mesopotamians improved their invention?

Activity 1, Ancient Mesopotamia, continued**Document 6**

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *exalted, righteousness, well-being, pending, justified, capital, suit, gentleman, mina*. You may want to look them up in a dictionary or encyclopedia. Anu and Bel were Babylonian gods.

[From the Prologue]

Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak; . . . to further the well-being of mankind.

[Examples from the Code of Laws]

3. If a man, in a case pending judgment, has uttered threats against the witnesses, or has not justified the word that he has spoken, if that case be a capital suit, that man shall be put to death.

195. If a man has struck his father, his hands one shall cut off.

196. If a man has caused the loss of a gentleman's eye, his eye one shall cause to be lost.

197. If he has shattered a gentleman's limb, one shall shatter his limb.

198. If he has caused a poor man to lose his eye or shattered a poor man's limb, he shall pay one mina of silver.

229. If a builder has built a house for a man and has not made strong his work, and the house he built has fallen, and he has caused the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death.

[From the Epilogue]

By the command of Shamash (the sun-god), the great judge of heaven and earth, let righteousness go forth in the land . . . In future time, through all coming generations, let the king, who may be in the land, observe the words of righteousness, which I have written on my monument. . . .

—Code of Hammurabi, c. 1780 BC

6a. According to Hammurabi, why did he order this collection of laws to be written?

6b. How did the Code of Hammurabi affect Mesopotamian society?

Activity 1, Ancient Mesopotamia, continued**Document 7**

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *furlong*, *royal cubits*, *precinct*, *enclosure*, *masonry*, *wont*. You may want to use a dictionary or encyclopedia to look them up.

The city stands on a broad plain, and is an exact square, a hundred and twenty furlongs in length each way . . . It is surrounded, in the first place, by a broad and deep moat, full of water, behind which rises a wall fifty royal cubits in width and two hundred in height . . . The city is divided into two portions by the river which runs through the midst of it. This river is the Euphrates, a broad, deep, swift stream . . . The houses are mostly three and four storeys high . . . The centre of each division of the town was occupied by a fortress. In the one stood the palace of the kings, surrounded by a wall of great strength and size in the other was the sacred precinct . . . a square enclosure two furlongs each way, with gates of solid brass . . . In the middle of the precinct there was a tower of solid masonry, a furlong in length and breadth, upon which was raised a second tower, and on that a third, and so on up to eight. The ascent to the top is on the outside, by a path which winds round all the towers. When one is about half-way up, one finds a resting-place and seats, where persons are wont to sit some time on their way to the summit. On the topmost tower there is a spacious temple.

—Herodotus, ancient Greek historian, c. 550 BC

7a. What kind of building does Herodotus say is on the top of the tower?

7b. Was religion was an important force in Babylonian society? Explain your answer.

Activity 1, Ancient Mesopotamia, continued

Document 8

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *eruptions, tumors, afflict, inexhaustible, hydromel, saturate*. You may want to use a dictionary or encyclopedia to look them up.

For eruptions and tumors which afflict the body: Fill a vase which has held drugs with water from an inexhaustible well; put in it a shoot of . . . a . . . reed, some date-sugar, some wine, some bitter hydromel; add to it some . . . saturate it with pure water (and) pour upon it the water of the (sick) man; cut reeds in an elevated meadow; beat some pure date-sugar with some pure honey; add some sweet oil which comes from the mountain (and) mix them together; rub (with this ointment,) the body of the (sick) man seven times.

—from a text in the British Museum

8a. What is this “recipe” supposed to cure?

8b. How did Assyrian doctors come up with this remedy? Do you think it worked? Why or why not?
