CLUSTER II: **First Civilizations: Ancient Mesopotamia (c. 3000–1200 BCE)**

- ➢ ***What were the pros and cons of life in early complex societies?***
- ➢ ***Why did ancient Mesopotamian societies create government and laws?***

The complex societies (or civilizations) of ancient Mesopotamia are the oldest known complex societies on earth. Mesopotamia was an incubator of human achievements, from the first written literature and science to the first monumental building projects, from wheeled vehicles to water management systems, and from legal codes to libraries. Cluster 2 will leave students with a sense of wonder for the avalanche of astonishing "firsts" generated by the peoples of this region (corresponding to the modern-day nation of Iraq, and parts of Iran, Kuwait and Syria). Going further, students will also apply critical thinking to examine some drawbacks of civilization alongside its benefits (Supporting Question 1). Cluster 2 begins by grounding students in the conventions and vocabulary for representing ancient historical time and the timeline as an informational text. It then introduces Mesopotamian city-states and empires, guiding students to investigate the topics of governance, religion, economy, education and literary culture in the daily lives of Mesopotamians. Cluster 2 closes with a deeper analysis of one topic: governance and law, probing the intentions and purposes of Mesopotamia's early legal codes in the context of daily life (Supporting Question 2). For practice standards, these lessons center PS1 (civic knowledge and participatory skills). They also introduce the concept and practice of credibility analysis in a 6th grade context (PS5).

A note on terminology: throughout Units 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4, the curriculum generally favors the term "complex societies." We do so in recognition of the fraught and offensive ways that "civilized" and "uncivilized" have been deployed historically in Eurocentric narratives of the ancient past. However, "civilization" and "complex society," as used today, are synonymous terms that students will encounter. Because middle school students will need familiarity with both as readers/viewers of social science articles, websites, and videos, "civilization" appears periodically in all clusters, especially where ease of readability is a goal.

By the end of this cluster, students should be able to…

- ❖ Use or interpret time-related vocabulary and terminology (especially BCE/CE, millennium, circa) to comprehend and describe the ancient past.
- ❖ Synthesize information from diverse primary and secondary sources to make and support inferences about realms of daily life (religion, government, economy, literature, and law) in ancient Mesopotamia.
- ❖ Describe the significance of groundbreaking achievements developed by the peoples of Mesopotamia.

- ❖ Evaluate the intents (intended audience) and purposes of Mesopotamian laws and legal codes.
- ❖ Determine the credibility of a secondary source and a historical primary source by applying several evaluative criteria (such as author expertise, intended audience).

Contents

Vocabulary

Tier 2:

pro and con, religion, benefit, literature, myth/mythology, hymn, war, conquer, credibility

Tier 3:

millennium, BCE (Before Common Era), CE (Common Era), circa (c.), city-state, patron god, cuneiform, writing system, scribe, epic, empire/imperial, stele, divine

Supporting Questions for Mesopotamia Cluster:

1. *What were the pros and cons of life in early complex societies?*
2. *Why did ancient Mesopotamian societies create government and laws?*

Standards and Lessons Where Addressed

Key Content Standards	Lessons
6.1:8 Use correctly the words or abbreviations for identifying time periods or dates in historical narratives (decade, age, era, century, millennium, CE/AD, BCE/BC, c. and circa). Identify in BCE dates the higher number as indicating the older year (that is, 3000 BCE is earlier than 2000 BCE).	6, 10
6.3b:1. Explain how the presence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers contributed to the development of agriculture and ancient complex societies; explain why historians have called the region that surrounds these rivers "the Fertile Crescent."	6, 7
6.3b:2. Identify the locations and time periods of the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians as successive states and empires.	7, 8, 9
6.3b:3. Describe how irrigation, mining and metalsmithing, agriculture, the domestication of animals, and inventions such as the wheel, the sail, and the	6, 7, 9

plow contributed to settlement and the growth of Mesopotamian civilizations.	
6.3b:4. Analyze the important characteristics and achievements of early Mesopotamia. a. a complex society with rulers, priests, soldiers, craftspeople, farmers, and slaves b. a religion based on polytheism (the belief in many gods) c. monumental architecture (the ziggurat) and developed art (including large relief sculptures, mosaics, carved cylinder seals) d. cuneiform writing, used for record keeping tax collection, laws and literature e. the first epic (the Epic of Gilgamesh) and the first set of written laws (the Code of Hammurabi)	6-11

Key Practice Standards	**Lessons**
(1) Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions by learning about civic innovations and/or religious diversity, and participating in discussions and debates.	7, 9-11
(5) Evaluate the credibility of secondary and primary sources, and their relevance to answering a specific question.	9, 10

Key Literacy Standards	**Lessons**
(R5) Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally), including how written texts incorporate features such as headings.	6, 10
(R10) Independently and proficiently read and comprehend history/social studies texts exhibiting complexity appropriate for the grade/course.	7, 8, 9, 11
(SL4) Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate vocabulary, eye contact, volume, and pronunciation.	7, 10

LESSON 6: **It's About Time! Meeting the Mesopotamians**

Context

To open Cluster 2, Lesson 6 orients students to historical timelines and timeline conventions while introducing them to ancient Mesopotamia — our oldest known example of a complex society. Lesson 6 builds upon notions of time and its representation first encountered in Unit 6.1, but goes further, enabling students to work with and begin to construct this unique form of informational text (i.e. a timeline) (R5). Following an activator intended to "hook" student curiosity about ancient Mesopotamia, students practice translating a prose paragraph into data points on a timeline. They do so utilizing newly-learned disciplinary conventions and vocabulary (B.C.E., circa, etc.) that are centered in Guiding Principle 4 of the MA DESE Framework and foundational for Grades 6, 7 and beyond. The lesson closes with a Supporting Question launch of the Cluster 2 question, *What were the pros and cons of life in early complex societies?* as a set-up for Lesson 7, 8 and 9 (PS2).

Learning Objective

Organize chronological information by summarizing and sequencing key events in Mesopotamia's ancient history on a BCE timeline.

Language Objective

Summarize and sequence chronological information about Mesopotamia's ancient history on a BCE timeline using content vocabulary for time.

Supporting Multilingual Learners

Levels 1-3: Review and translate the words *earlier/later* and *before/after* while demonstrating how to use the timeline to ensure that students have Tier 1 vocabulary needed to describe events in relation to each other on a timeline.

Levels 4-5: Model how to use synonyms to paraphrase the information from the time cards.

Vocabulary

millennium, BCE (Before Common Era), CE (Common Era), circa (c.), pro and con

Materials

Lesson 6 Slidedeck, Mesopotamia: It's About Time! Student Reading & Timeline Glossary, It's About Time Cards, Supporting Question Launch handout

Advance Preparation
Before class begins, draw an empty timeline on the board with arrows going in two directions, and the sides marked for BCE and CE time; you will use this to model a crucial (and difficult!) concept for students. Be sure there is ample room on the BCE side of the timeline, and mark off approximately equal space for 6 millennia. Your timeline should look approximately like this image on Slide 2; alternatively, print handouts of this slide for students to mark up.

Most students will benefit greatly from physically sequencing the time facts that appear on pages 2-4 of their handout. Prepare for the timeline activity by printing and cutting the cards (It's About Time Cards), for students to either work on individually or in pairs.

Teaching Note
For general teacher background pertinent to Lesson 6 (and helpful across Cluster 1), see The Mesopotamians (History on the Net), Mesopotamia: Civilization Begins, an exhibition website from the Getty Museum, and Ancient Mesopotamia 101 from National Geographic. To appreciate Mesopotamia's artistic achievements, view The Met Museum's Art of the First Cities in the Third Millennium BC for one end of the timeline, and the Met's astonishing Digital Reconstruction of the Palace at Nimrud, Assyria (during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II , 9th century BCE) for a later phase. Regarding the last resource, you might send students to explore this for enrichment or if they complete an assignment early.

Warm Up: Wondering about Mesopotamia (5 minutes)

Write the word "Mesopotamia" on the board and have students practice pronouncing it (Mess-uh-poe-TAY-mi-ah).

Let them know that next class period they will "time travel" to experience a "day in the life" of a Mesopotamian city. To prepare for that experience, this lesson will introduce them to historical highlights of ancient Mesopotamia and the cultures that existed there.

The first way they will meet Mesopotamia is through a music video. Everyone needs writing or scrap paper to jot notes as they watch. These are their viewing tasks (Slides 3 and 4):

- Decide if this is a primary or secondary source. Be prepared to explain your answer.
- What are two things you're now most curious to learn about Mesopotamia's history? Write them down. (*It's fine if you don't spell all the new terms or names exactly right, just sound them out as best you can!*)

Play the music video for students.
There are two video options; choose the one you prefer.

The Mesopotamian Song by JamCampus (2:11; linked from Slide 3)
Ancient Mesopotamia Song by Mr. Nicky (3:42; linked from Slide 4)

After, have students briefly share their answers in small groups (being mindful of the time). End by reaching consensus on the first question.

➢ *Teacher guidance: Students should recognize that this music video fits the definition of a secondary source about Mesopotamia (the video does not come from the time of ancient Mesopotamia; and the filmmaker consulted other secondary and primary sources to compile the information they put into the video). Students may need help to understand that an informational text can be entertaining or humorous and still convey accurate information, as these generally do (albeit simplified).*

Supporting All Learners

Both videos are humorous and fast-paced. Both include captioning of the lyrics. It may be helpful to set the video to a slower playback speed; this can be done using the utility icon on Youtube. (Note that the Jam Campus song is a clever spoof of Rihanna's "Disturbia," which some students may possibly know — but please be aware that Rihanna's music video for the original song has adult content you won't want to highlight for 6th graders.)

⭐ Making a Timeline of Mesopotamian Highlights (35 minutes)

Distribute to each student the handout Mesopotamia: It's About Time! Student Reading & Timeline Glossary. The activity begins shortly with a class read-aloud.

Before they begin, turn attention to the "glossary of time terms" that appears below the two-paragraph text on their handout and on Slide 5. Ask students if they know any of these terms already.

Teaching Note

The primary purpose of this activity is carefully introducing disciplinary-specific terms and conventions for the representation of historical time; these are crucial

- ➢ Note that students will get a helpful hands-on practice with all this terminology in just a moment; this is only a preview.
- ➢ The most difficult of these terms/concepts will be BCE time and the way it is read "backwards" from right to left. So take a moment to preview the concept, using the definition in their glossary and some practice examples on the whiteboard. One good exercise: ask students to show you where to put the years 1 CE and 1 BCE. If helpful, make the analogy with number lines they know from Math and negative numbers — but do make sure students know that we do not count a year Zero! Most importantly, be sure they can see that in BCE time, the larger numbers are older than smaller numbers.

Teaching Note (Optional)
If you wish, take some time now to go over the terms BC and AD as well and briefly explain their origin using optional Slide 6. (Use the PPT hide function if you don't wish to address it here.) If not here, you will have a second opportunity to circle back in Cluster 4 where students will make the jump from the BCE to the Common Era dates when they study the Abrahamic Religions. Here is a student-level explanation, and a teacher background article from ThoughtCo that references some of the debates surrounding these choices.

Now turn to the informational text itself. Project on the whiteboard "Mesopotamia: It's About Time!" — a two-paragraph informational text to read together (Slide 7). Students should follow the text in their handout.

After they read, have a quick debrief. Ask a few reading comprehension probes. But quickly get to the main idea: that this text as presented probably seems difficult to follow (since we can't comprehend a jumble of dates!). See if students can come up with any suggestions that would make it easier (*hint: a timeline with the events in order*).

Now students have a job to do: in the remaining time for this activity, they will take a "Timeline Challenge."

across the two years of our ancient history curriculum (Grades 6 & 7). In particular, it gives students practice with BCE time and the concept of a millennium as a time term; and it exposes them to several ways that time can be represented in an informational text (i.e. in narrative form and on a chronological timeline). Through this activity students will also gain a big-picture overview of ancient Mesopotamia's history by organizing their own timelines, populated with data points from a text.

Making Connections

In Unit 6.1, students looked at timelines and created a timeline representing turning points in prehistory. Here students build on that earlier work, utilizing newly-learned disciplinary conventions and vocabulary for the representation of historical time (B.C.E., circa, etc.) that are foundational for Grades 6, 7 and beyond.

Making Connections

For a culturally relevant dimension to the lesson, keep in mind that the BC/AD discussion is an opportunity to uncover cultural assumptions in the

Hand out the cut-up cards, where they will find the same article, broken into short chunks, about one sentence per card.
Their Timeline Challenge directions are here on Slide 8 and reproduced just below. You might choose to leave them posted as students are working.

- ➔ Their first job is to organize the cards in order of the sentences (the cards are numbered to help them with this).
- ➔ Next, they should find all the cards that have date facts. (*Hint: there are SIX of these.*) They can move the other cards out of the way.
- ➔ Now put these date facts into chronological order: that means, from oldest on the left to most recent on the right.
- ➔ Last step: choose several of these time facts to rephrase (shorten!) and add to their individual timeline of ancient Mesopotamian history. Incorporate at least two of their new vocabulary words for time: circa, millennium, BCE.

Teacher guidance:

- ➔ *To check on comprehension when they get to Step 3, have every student raise the card for the oldest event on the timeline. (Answer: it is the founding of Eridu c. 5400 BCE)*
- ➔ *If helpful, model together as a class how to shorten and rephrase date facts for the timeline.*
- ➔ *The date facts are found on cards 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 11.*

Supporting All Learners (and pacing note)
There are numerous ways to adapt this activity. The critical piece is the sequencing of events and their correct orientation (largest numbers are oldest and go furthest to the left); you could dispense with the individual timeline writing and simply have students lay the pieces out on their desks or chart paper with tape for millennium markers. In an oral review, ask student volunteers to rephrase a shortened version of each date fact so you can write it on the board; challenge them to use the new vocabulary spoken out loud. If the concept of BCE time is particularly difficult for your students to grasp, the Timeline Challenge can be completed as a full-class exercise on the white board; just build in pauses so students or student-pairs can grapple with each element on their own before the class answers together.

ways we think about history, dates, and time. Students will benefit from knowing (and some may already know) that many other cultures have starting point years or date numbering systems that are more "relevant" to their cultural context. They typically use these to supplement the BCE/CE time conventions that are widely accepted around the globe in modern times. Read here, for example, about the modern Assyrian dating system which is rooted in an interesting aspect of its ancient past.

Making Connections

Remind students that they have already practiced adding events to a timeline in Unit 6.1.

Launching the Supporting Question (10 min)

Now that students have previewed historical highpoints of Mesopotamia by creating a timeline, they are ready for the Supporting Question Launch. Share the supporting question about ancient Mesopotamia they will work to answer in the first half of Cluster One (Slide 9):

What were the pros and cons of life in early complex societies?

This is a good place to introduce (or reinforce) the vocabulary terms **pro** and **con**, and practice with an example familiar to your students (Slide 10).

Then distribute copies of the Supporting Question Launch handout. Independently or in pairs, ask students to fill in their responses to the questions below. (Note: the term "complex societies" is vocabulary from Unit 6.1, so for the moment, let students sit with it and see what they can recall.)

- **Know:** *What do I already know about this topic?*
- **Wonder:** *What do I want to know?*

Afterward, ask several students to contribute either a Know or Wonder response, and record them on a KW T-chart or flipchart paper. Keep these ideas posted throughout Cluster 2.

Lastly, depending on their level of recall, you may wish to circle back to the term "complex societies" with a deeper or more precise recollection. Reminding them of their river society maps (Unit 1, Lesson 21), ask what they can recall about the characteristics of complex societies. Collect student ideas on the board. Then check their recall against the chart of "Complex Society Characteristics" on Slide 11. Point out that when they visit a Sumerian city-state next time they will see most of these characteristics in action!

Formative Assessment

Collect timelines and SQ Launch handouts as formative assessment for the lesson.

Making Connections

Later in Cluster 2 of 6.2 (L9), students will produce a pros and cons list about Mesopotamian civilization. While investigating the history of Egypt and Nubia in Cluster 3 of 6.2, students will engage in a debate where they will be assigned a pro or con position. Thoughtful pro and con argumentation is a valuable civic skill and an aspect of skill development for speaking and listening.

LESSON 7: **City Life: Visiting a Sumerian City-State**

Context

The rise of cities and city-states was another enormous milestone in human history. With their time orientation established in Lesson 6, students move on to investigate ancient city life through the lens of Supporting Question 1. Lesson 7 invites students to spend a day within the walls of an ancient Sumerian city-state in the late 3rd millennium BCE. Social scientists have constructed a surprisingly vivid and detailed picture of life in the cities of ancient Mesopotamia, due in part to the availability of numerous translated cuneiform texts. Using sensory learning stations and some imagination, students engage in a Mesopotamia simulation that involves deliberation for a community decision (PS1). Students explore primary texts, visuals, virtual-reality reconstructions and more to analyze key themes of urban life with a focus on religion, education, government and the economy (R10). Lesson 7 concludes with a writing exercise (completed for homework): students write a speech or report to help their community make a decision, demonstrating content knowledge and exercising civic intellectual and participatory skills (PS1, SL4, W1).

Learning Objective

Describe key aspects of Sumerian city life with a focus on religion, education, government, and the economy.

Language Objective

Write a brief informative speech describing the pros and cons of moving to a Sumerian city referencing key aspects of city life.

Supporting Multilingual Learners

Levels 1-3: Guide students at this level to explore the visual sources of each part of the simulation first. Students may respond on their note sheet using their native language or a response with mixed English and native language use (called *translanguaging*) before writing their homework in English. For the writing assignment, allow students to write in list form.

Levels 4-5: Students at this level would benefit from a few model sentences or sentence starters that could be used in the speech.

Vocabulary

city-state, *religion*, *ziggurat*, *patron god*, *cuneiform*, *scribe*, *bureaucracy*, *canal*

Materials
Lesson 7 Slidedeck, Day in the Life of a Sumerian City-State student packet, Experiential Learning Stations & Activities

Advance Preparation
The core of this lesson set-up is the set of three experiential learning stations that represent three crucial focal points of an ancient Sumerian city: the temple (religion), the scribe school (education/government), and the canals, riverfront and shops (commerce/economy). The full set of materials and tasks for each station can be found here in the document Experiential Learning Stations & Activities (Google Slides). Students will also need this Day in the Life of a Sumerian City-State student packet to record their answers.

Regarding set-up for the stations activity/simulation: Teachers will find it helpful to set up one or more computers at each station ahead of time, with the relevant slides or websites already pulled up for students to use. Also consider printing out selected materials (from the stations slideshow) and arraying them at the stations so students spend some time off of screens. The primary sources and the background readings would all be good candidates. Feel free to enhance the centers as well with other props, visuals or signage. (If you have Lego fiends in your class, see if someone will build you a DIY ziggurat model some days before this lesson! Here are DIY directions from a middle school YouTuber.) Last, plan how students will be grouped and the order in which you want them to rotate. Note: depending on your classroom geometry and class size, you may wish to double up the stations (1, 2, 3 and A, B, C) for better access and flow.

Activator and Introduction (10 min)

Ask students to think back to their first social studies unit this year (6.1).
See what they can recall:

> *What changed after the Neolithic Revolution began? In Neolithic societies, what lifestyle did most people live?*
>
> (*Answers: farming; production of grains; domestication of animals for work and food; settled life in organized villages)*

Archaeologists tell us this is a good description of Mesopotamia starting circa 9,500 BCE. People of this region lived the village farming lifestyle for thousands of years. They grazed their flocks of sheep and raised cereal grains and lentils to feed the community.

But something big was about to change again! Read together Slide 2: **The Rise of Cities: A New Idea.**

Then pause and ask: what does a city mean to you? Make a class word splash of student ideas and word associations digitally or on the whiteboard.

Return to finish **The Rise of Cities: A New Idea** (continued on Slide 3).

Then explain that today the class is going to investigate what it was like to live in an ancient Sumerian city-state. Students will do that by using imagination and "visiting" one of these ancient cities.

Other points to add (in your own words):

- Social scientists know an amazing amount of detail about how these cities looked, sounded and smelled — for example, what people ate, the music they listened to, what they did for fun. We know these things from archaeological digs and artifacts, paintings and art, and especially, from written records.
- The story of Mesopotamia's writing system, first invented by Sumerians, is one of the things they will learn about today.

One more thing before they head over to ancient Mesopotamia: preview the vocabulary they'll encounter in this Sumerian city (Slide 4) — **ziggurat, patron god, cuneiform, scribe, bureaucracy, canal**. Point out that whenever you go somewhere new, it's good to get familiar with some of the words and practices used there!

Teaching Note

Excellent background knowledge on urban culture and the daily life of ancient Sumerian cities will be found here: William Hafford, "Mesopotamian City Life" *Expedition Magazine* 60 (2018), from the Penn Museum. See Mesopotamian Religion: Gods, Practice, and Priests (History on the Net) for insight about one vital dimension of urban culture.

⭐ Simulation: A Day in the Life of a Sumerian City-State (35 min)

Teaching Note
In this loosely structured simulation, students are in a role; they are given a scenario and must respond as someone might have done in the 3rd millennium BCE. They explore three parts of the Sumerian city and gather information through a set of experiential learning stations that guide them to primary sources, websites, virtual reality tours, and more. (See the **Advance Preparation** note at the top.) We based this simulation on the city-state of Ur for several reasons: the great ziggurat of Ur is among the best reconstructed ziggurats in Iraq; and much is known about Ur from a major excavation of its royal tombs. But note that our "city-state"in this simulation is actually a composite; we have borrowed knowledge and sources from other neighboring Sumerian cities as needed.

Distribute the student packet, Day in the Life of a Sumerian City-State. Introduce the simulation activity by reading together the scenario box (light yellow) at the top of page 1.

Students are ready for their visit to Ur. Use the groupings and rotation order that you devised. Invite students to explore three city experiences representing key aspects of Sumerian daily life: the Scribe School (representing education and government bureaucracy), the Great Temple (religion), and the Canals, Riverfront & Shops (commerce and the economy). The full collection of readings, sources and student tasks can be found in this set of slides: Experiential Learning Stations & Activities.

Consider using a buzzer, bell or gong to mark the movement times. Plan on 8-10 minutes per station.

As students work their way through the experiential stations, circulate to give support.

Teaching Note: Optional

You might take a minute to show students this lovely computer-simulated reconstruction of ancient Ur if you'd like them to have a mental picture of the built environment and its geographical setting. We recommend you choose a faster playback speed.

Teaching Note

You might let them know that, as a representative of the king's government in the city-state of Ur, you will inform them of where they go and when it is time to rotate. Sumerian life was orderly and organized, as best we can tell, so you can set the tone!

Supporting All Learners (and Pacing Note)

If you have the time in your scope and sequence, Lesson 7 could be taught over two days. This would allow students to investigate the optional extension materials at one or more of the stations. Do two station rotations on Day One and the remaining rotation on Day Two. The writing element could turn into an

Writing Assignment: A Report for Your Village (5 min discussion/debrief; write the report for homework)

Begin the debrief by asking students about their day in Ur.

- *What was their personal high point experience?*
- *What is something they think their village and family members would appreciate about life in Ur, and why?*

Gather ideas in a way that allows for widespread participation but very brief responses; it should go quickly as many students will name the same highpoints.

Next ask,

- *Was there anything that disappointed or concerned you about city life?*

  *Teacher guidance: On the **positive side**, students will generally observe (in developmentally appropriate terms) that daily life in Ur offered its residents diverse goods to buy, a higher standard of living, and the creativity and stimulation that comes from many people living together exchanging ideas. They might notice that the Sumerian city-state also provided order, safety and employment through its government bureaucracy and a rich religious life that residents found comforting and protective to face the ups and downs of being human.*

  *Observant students may also see hints in the background texts and sources of some of the city's **negative aspects**: patriarchy (girls cannot go to Scribe School; women's primary role is running the household); social class divisions (servants and laborers are mentioned); crowds and crime; and social control (students whipped for being late to school; the expectation that city residents will provide substantial gifts to the temple).*

in-class activity; or you could keep the homework assignment but have students engage in a pre-write where they orally present two or three persuasive talking points to a small group of classmates (no more than two).

Check-In: Writing Task for Homework

Show students where to find this on page 3 of their student packet, Day in the Life of a Sumerian City-State.

> Your village sent you to the city to be their "eyes and ears": that's why you spent a day investigating the city-state of Ur. Now you are tasked with bringing back a report that will help them make a decision about whether to move to the city.

For homework, write down the words you would say to your village — your family, friends and neighbors. Include 2 or 3 good reasons to move to a Sumerian city (the **pros**). Also include at least 1 drawback (the **cons**) they should know about city life as they deliberate and make their choice.

LESSON 8: **The World's First Writers**

Context

Lesson 7 introduced the complexity of life in the Mesopotamian city-states, including the emergence of state-supported religion and priests, and the development of cuneiform writing. Lesson 8 probes another astonishing development of the ancient Mesopotamian world: the creation of written literature. The lesson features two bodies of writing in two distinct genres: the mythical adventures of a Sumerian king in the epic of Gilgamesh; and poems to the moon god and his daughter by Enheduanna – priestess, princess, and the world's first named author! Students begin by brainstorming the benefits and diverse purposes of literature in their own society. In the main activity they work closely with Mesopotamian literature as a primary source, documenting what they learn in this reading exercise through an original illustration plus caption (R10), and a "tabletop mini-gallery" debrief (PS3, SL1). Lesson 8 closes by summarizing the benefits that written literature may have brought to Mesopotamia with reference to Supporting Question 1. This in turn paves the way for the Putting It Together activity in Lesson 9.

Learning Objective

Analyze works of Mesopotamian literature as primary sources to explain the thoughts and feelings of ancient people who read and wrote these works.

Language Objective

Write a caption for an original illustration that summarizes the main idea of a primary source.

Supporting Multilingual Learners

Levels 1-3: Students at lower proficiency levels can be assigned to the poetry of Enheduanna as this text is overall less complex.

Levels 4-5: If students are assigned the Epic of Gilgamesh and you choose the longer version, allow them to read the bulleted version first.

Vocabulary

benefit, literature, myth/mythology, epic, hymn

Materials

Lesson 8 Slidedeck, Mesopotamian Literature: Comprehension Quick Check, Poems of Enheduanna, paper, colored pencils and other drawing supplies.

Advance Preparation
Excellent teacher background on these fascinating works of world literature is supplied by the following: Gilgamesh, essay by Ira Spar (Met Museum of Art); The Epic of Gilgamesh from Invitation to World Literature (Annenberg); Enheduanna, the World's First Named Author (BBC.com); and She Who Wrote: Enheduanna and the Women of Mesopotamia (Morgan Library exhibit and video).

Teaching Note
If one or more students in your class has experienced the recent loss of a loved one, please be aware that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* famously explores this theme. We excluded from our close-reading activity the second half of the epic (focused on his profound grief and attempts to recover his friend from death). But some students might find these passages on their own. If you have concerns, it is certainly possible to teach the lesson by focusing solely on the poetry of Enheduanna for the main activity ("Close Reading: Ancient Literature as a Primary Source").

Also, please bear in mind that almost all ancient world literatures, mythologies and religious traditions make explicit reference to sexuality and sexual acts as forms of primal human and divine energy. This is true of the original Mesopotamian literature referred to in Lesson 8 — though all such references have been carefully excluded from the materials provided here for 6th grade learners.

Activator: The Benefit of Books (5 minutes)

Start the lesson with a think-and-share. Give students these question prompts (Slide 2). Ask them to free-write for one minute. They may write on one or both questions. Preview the definition of **benefit** as needed.

- How do books **benefit** our society?
- How do books help or **benefit** you?

Collect students' ideas. A fine way to do so is using Jamboard or another digital-sharing platform where students can easily post their own thoughts and see those of their classmates. Briefly discuss their responses as a class.

Making Connections

This lesson, focused on the value and benefit of books, presents a fine opportunity for a "civic action" extension (PS7). Students can turn their own ideas about the benefit of books into small posters or a giant banner for their school or public library, and help put a spotlight on our libraries as a valuable civic resource. The banner could include sections on how literature

➢ *Teacher guideline: It is important that students surface a wide array of ideas here; later these will pave the way for speculation about the purposes and benefits that literature brought to the people of ancient Mesopotamia. Some ideas to listen for: books entertain, or teach; give us role models; show us other parts of life; make us feel less alone or confused; help us process our feelings; educate and inspire; give us something we share or have in common; unify a community.*

benefited people in the ancient world vs. today. (The month of April contains National Library Week and National Librarian Appreciation Day.) Where appropriate and needed, your class could advocate for branch libraries, library hours, or other civic causes. Or students could advocate for the "freedom to read" locally and globally.

Introduction: Meet the World's First Best-Selling Authors (15 min)

Note: The main body of the lesson features two literary works: the mythical adventures of a Sumerian king in the epic of Gilgamesh, and poems to the moon god and his daughter by Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon of Akkad — priestess, princess, and the world's first named author. This introduction lets students "meet" these works, placing them in historical context and showing why they are such remarkable innovations in world history. It prepares them to engage more deeply with these very ancient texts in the close-reading exercise that follows. It also introduces key vocabulary terms for the lesson and the unit as a whole: literature, epic, myth, hymn.

Bring students' attention back to Mesopotamia. Explain that we can ask a similar question about these ancient societies they've been studying:

> *How did literature benefit ancient Mesopotamia and its people?*

Teaching Note

Sumerian and Akkadian were two major languages of ancient Mesopotamian. Like the Greeks and the Romans (Hera vs. Juno) these two cultures had their own names for parallel gods and goddesses. As explained in the slides, for example, the moon god was called Nana in Sumerian and Sin in Akkadian.

The class will be learning today about two extremely famous works of Mesopotamian **literature** (defined on Slide 3). These were so popular over so many centuries and cultures that we can think of them as the first literary best-sellers — as well as the oldest written literature that social scientists have yet discovered.

Begin the introduction to the Epic of Gilgamesh using Slides 4-7.

Continue with the introduction to Enheduanna and her poetry, using Slides 8-10.

Teacher note on pacing: Facilitate this overview according to the needs of your class. There are built-in pause points for the introduction of vocabulary, "further learning" facts, and discussion prompts, but it is not necessary to follow every pathway. Move toward completion so students can work directly with the texts in the close reading activity that follows.

Check-In
You may give students this three-question Mesopotamian Literature: Comprehension Quick Check as a check-in for understanding key ideas.

⭐ Close Reading: Ancient Literature as a Primary Source (25 minutes)

Students have now been introduced to two ancient works of Mesopotamian literature and their authors. Explain that the class will go deeper by reading some of the literature itself. Historians often use sections or passages of ancient literature as primary sources.

- ➔ Literature can help us understand the thoughts, beliefs or emotions of people in the distant past.
- ➔ That's because literature comes from a certain time period we can determine, and was written with an intended audience and purpose in mind.

That's what they will be doing in the rest of this lesson.

Directions (shown on Slide 11):

- ❖ Some students in the class will specialize in the poetry of Enheduanna (Team E). Other students will specialize in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Team G). Students in both groups will be responsible for reading and understanding one short literature passage.
- ❖ After reading, every student will create their own illustration and caption for the passage they read closely. They should draw one scene from their Gilgamesh "tablet" or one image from their Enheduanna poem in whatever

Teaching Note

This introduction to Enheduanna incorporates a clip from the TEDEd video, "Who Was the World's First Author?" Important: please use this recommended clip only; it ends at 3:14 with the words "*Enheduanna's most valuable literary contribution was the poetry she wrote to Inana, goddess of war and desire — the divinely chaotic energy that gives spark to the universe.*" Immediately following this clip is a very brief but explicit reference to sexuality that is interesting but not grade-level appropriate for typical 6th grade learners.

way they visualize it. The caption they write should summarize the main idea or action of their passage.

- ❖ Sharing and discussing one another's illustrations in a "tabletop mini-gallery" will prepare them to make inferences and answer our original question: *How did literature benefit ancient Mesopotamia and its people?*

Students can begin their close reading and illustration work. Typically this will be done independently; see adaptations above for EL students and those who need additional supports. You should leave five minutes of this time block for the "tabletop mini galleries"; see below.

Sources for Team E = Enheduanna:

- ☐ Poems of Enheduanna, excerpts; adapted by Primary Source

Sources for Team G = Gilgamesh:

- ☐ A Short Version of the Epic of Gilgamesh : divided by tablet numbers and easy to assign. Use Tablets 1-7.
- ☐ Alternative: Epic of Gilgamesh – History for Kids. (A very simplified version at a lower Lexile level. The story is divided into 8 segments with bullet points.)

As students wind down their illustration work, organize them into small working groups around tables, on rugs or mats, etc. They should spread their illustrations out for their group to see. This is their "tabletop mini gallery."

- ➔ Direct each student to talk through their illustration for their group mates.
- ➔ Students may ask questions and share supportive comments ("One thing I appreciated about your illustration is…").

Table Discussion & Wrap Up (5 mins)

Keep students in the same working groups from their tabletop galleries. Pass out chart paper or writing paper, one sheet per group. Assign a scribe for each group.

Supporting All Learners

Many versions of the Gilgamesh epic — like most authentic mythology of ancient cultures — include content that is not appropriate for most middle school learners and may be disturbing (including references to adultery, sexual violence, and prostitution). Carefully preview any outside sources you select. The two recommended sources here are summarized and adapted for young people.
- A Short Version of the Epic of Gilgamesh is an excellent and authentic retelling minus the more mature elements; it is divided by tablet numbers and easy to navigate.
- Epic of Gilgamesh (History for Kids) is a far simpler version that will benefit some readers. The story is divided into 8 bullet points without headings; students may need help to get situated with their assigned passage.

Share again the question from the start of class, along with Supporting Question 1 (Slide 11):

> *How did literature benefit ancient Mesopotamia and its people?*

Based on the literature they read and learned about today, ask them to brainstorm about the benefit of literature to ancient Mesopotamian people — at least two benefits.

> *Possible student responses: Helped people handle emotions like fear and triumph; entertained people; educated people about better ways to behave (cp. with Gilgamesh as a bad king); warned them about angering gods; gave people heroes (cp. with Gilgamesh later as a good king); if they praised their gods by reciting hymns, the gods might favor them or be nice to their city; gave them a connection with their community through shared gods, shared stories.*

Formative Assessment

Collect the student illustrations and these benefit lists as a formative assessment for the lesson.

LESSON 9: **More Mesopotamian "Firsts"**

Context

In Lessons 7 and 8 students investigated some of the Mesopotamians' remarkable discoveries focused on daily life, religion, and the origins of writing and literature. In this class, Lesson 9, they will turn to other Mesopotamian "firsts" related to technology, government, and the way that societies are organized. Reading and exchanging information from and about brief articles on Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria, students learn more about the forms of governments and states in the ancient world (PS1, R10). They also begin to make inferences about the serious down-sides of civilization — war, conquest, enslavement, and empire. Students consider the credibility of an informational text and what information it cites in an exercise introducing (or reinforcing) this crucial dimension of information literacy and Practice Standard 5 (PS5, R9). That main activity of the lesson then prepares them to engage in the final component of Lesson 9: a Putting It Together discussion on the pros and cons of life in early complex societies, reinforced with a Ticket to Leave.

Learning Objective

Analyze Mesopotamian "firsts" related to technology, government, and the organization of societies in order to evaluate the credibility of a source and identify several profound drawbacks of civilization (empire, war and slavery).

Language Objective

Use a graphic organizer to read and summarize information from a non-fiction text about technology, government, and social organization in ancient Mesopotamia.

Supporting Multilingual Learners

Levels 1-3: If the quantity of text is overwhelming, guide students to skim the texts for the word "first" and then read the surrounding sentences in order to fill in the graphic organizers. Students will still be able to grasp the main ideas from the reading and can read sentences copied from the text during the give-one-get-one activity.

Levels 4-5: Encourage students of higher levels to paraphrase the "firsts" they read about in their article with their own words when sharing with their peers. Remind them to use synonyms to paraphrase.

Vocabulary

war, empire/imperial, conquer, credibility/credible

Materials
Lesson 9 Slidedeck, Empires, Politics, War: Sumer, Babylon and Assyria mini-articles, Give One/Get One sheet, Mesopotamia: Complex Society Review Sheet

Teaching Note
Sumerians, Babylonians, Akkadians and Assyrians were some of the various communities and peoples – originating in city-states – who lived alongside each other in the many centuries of Mesopotamian civilization, with rising and falling dominance at various periods of time. For the needs of a 6th grade curriculum, the simplified history presented here should generally suffice. Educators can learn more about our three featured groups by consulting the cited articles linked on this student handout.

Advance Preparation
The first half of Lesson 9 relies on brief articles from the Empires, Politics, War: Sumer, Babylon and Assyria handout — a set of three readings. You need to print enough copies so that each student has just one of the three. Each brief article fits on a single page. Students will read their assigned article independently, then answer a few analytical questions to prepare for a "Give One, Get One" exchange with classmates. Each student in the class will also need the Give One/Get One sheet to record their answers.

Activator: Returning to a Question, Defining Terms (5 mins)

Remind students that they've been working In Cluster 2 to answer this question (Slide 2):

What were the pros and cons of life in early complex societies?

In Lessons 7 and 8 they investigated some of the Mesopotamians' remarkable discoveries focused on daily life, religion, and the origins of writing and literature. In this class (Lesson 9) they will turn to other Mesopotamian "firsts" related to technology, government, and the way that societies are organized.

- ➢ Toward the end of class they will start to compile their pro and con lists, then engage in a Putting It Together activity.

Pause to preview this key vocabulary: **war**, **empire**, **conquer.** These are important words and ideas for all of Grades 6 and 7. (*Students will likely have some preconceived ideas about them, but here they will be introduced to more precise social science definitions.*)

- ➢ To begin, pair students off and ask them to write down their own best working definitions for each vocabulary term.
- ➢ Debrief their ideas, then share the grade-level definitions on Slide 3 & Slide 4.

⭐ Analyzing an Informational Text (with a Credibility Mini-Lesson): Sumer, Babylon, Assyria (30 min)

Teaching Note: One feature of this activity is guiding students to evaluate the credibility of an informational text through an exercise introducing (or reinforcing) this crucial dimension of Practice Standard 5 (PS5). In some schools, students have already learned how to evaluate credibility during information literacy sessions with librarians or teachers of other disciplines. In that case you will be extending their prior knowledge to the social studies context. By all means use the checklist or protocol endorsed by your district and with which students are familiar. Substitute it at Slide 6 below and apply it to the articles for this activity.

Distribute the Give One/Get One sheets and the mini-articles on Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria (as described in Advance Preparation above). Each student should be assigned to one of the three, and they should now have that reading in hand.

Explain that in this activity, students will read about three of the important civilizations that flourished in the region of Mesopotamia over its thousands of years of ancient history: Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria.

- ➢ Reading their assigned article, they will analyze Mesopotamian "firsts" related to technology, government, and the organization of societies.

- ➢ Afterwards, they will "give and get" information in a series of exchanges with classmates who read about the other civilizations.

Pause here for a mini-lesson on **credibility**. In your own words, explain that your class wants to think about the quality and trustworthiness of the articles they will be reading. We always want to be confident we are sharing good and true information when we use it ourselves and pass it on to others!

Pre-teach the vocabulary terms **credibility** (meaning *"trustworthiness"*) and **credible** (*believable; truthful; can be trusted*) using Slide 5. Then do one of the following:

1) Share on Slide 6 the suggested 6th-grade criteria for evaluating credibility: author/creator, date, intended audience, purpose, and citation of sources; or

2) Display the protocol for evaluating credibility that your school already uses.

Teaching Note

For understanding how to teach about the credibility of sources, educators may benefit from this Education World post and this bibliographic page that suggests ways to think about the credibility of primary sources in ancient world studies.

To practice applying this skill, students can use their assigned article. Walk them through the steps, pausing for each component.

Teacher guidance: Keep in mind that early in the year, this is an emerging skill, meant to build good research "hygiene," and their evaluation needn't be deep or exhaustive. It is enough for students to practice looking at the author bio or the "about" page of a website, noticing that the article is backed by a list of sources which themselves can be found and opened, and that its purpose is to educate and inform. In this case, students learn from the organizational description that the author of all three articles is Primary Source – the non-profit organization that was selected by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to author the 5th, 6th and 7th grade curriculum. The conclusion to be drawn from the exercise is that these sources are credible — published by a group with knowledge of the subject, backed by checkable sources, and with a purpose to inform and educate.

Transition to the independent reading task. As they read their own "mini-article," students should fill in the boxes for their assigned civilization on the Give One/Get One Sheet. That includes the question box at the bottom of the page ("*Choose one of your "firsts." Decide if it was positive, negative, or some of both for*

the people of this civilization. Explain why in your own words.")
Circulate to give support where needed.

- ➢ When most students have finished filling in the boxes for their own assigned civilization, invite them to meet with a classmate who read about one of the other civilizations and exchange answers.
- ➢ Repeat the process for the remaining civilizations, for a total of three.
- ➢ Students should fill in answers from these conversations on their Give One/Get One sheets.

Putting It Together: Pros and Cons of Civilization (15 mins)

Give each student their own copy of the Mesopotamia: Complex Society Review Sheet. Ask students to think back once more to Supporting Question 1 (it appears at the top of the review sheet):
What were the pros and cons of life in early complex societies?

In pairs, have students begin coding the items on the sheet. For each item they should discuss and decide: was it a "pro," a "con," or a mixture of both for ancient Mesopotamian people? Have them write a "P" or "C" next to each item.

After they have done this work for 5-6 minutes, bring the group together. Create a two-column chart on the whiteboard or a digital form. Ask student pairs to share their thoughts, with the teacher serving as scribe and facilitator to chart many of their responses. Not all students will have identical answers. That is great! Encourage your students to voice divergent views and defend their own views with reasoning and examples.

Formative Assessment

To assess understanding, and to reinforce claim-making about the benefits and drawbacks that emerged from lifestyles in the earliest complex societies , wrap up with this "Ticket to Leave" prompt (Slide 7):

Choose one item from the “pro” or from the “con” side of the two-column chart. In two-three sentences, give your best explanation of how this was a benefit to society, or how it hurt society.

Alternatively, this can be completed for homework.

LESSON 10: **Hammurabi's Stele: Analyzing a Monument and Its Meaning**

Context

Building on their introduction to the ancient Mesopotamian innovation of a written code of laws in Lesson 9, students begin Lesson 10 with a launch of the Supporting Question: *Why did ancient Mesopotamian societies create government and laws?* This question will guide their learning for the next two lessons as they analyze and discuss excerpts of Hammurabi's Code from ancient and modern perspectives. After the Supporting Question Launch, students interact with a famous primary source, the stele of Hammurabi's Code (1780 BCE) discovered in modern-day Iraq in 1901. By considering the authorship/credibility and organization of the stele (engraving, prologue, laws, and epilogue), students begin to probe its purposes for Mesopotamian society (PS5, R5). The lesson concludes with a closer look at two laws concerning agriculture, probing the motivations an ancient society might have had to regulate matters related to the food supply. Students read these laws with a partner, consider their societal purpose, and share their observations and reactions to the laws in a class discussion (PS1, SL4). In Lesson 11, students will explore additional legal categories of Hammurabi's Code, including family, property, and criminal law.

Learning Objective

Analyze features and selected laws from Hammurabi's Code in order to determine its purposes for ancient Mesopotamian society.

Language Objective

Discuss the purpose of different sections of Hammurabi's Code with a partner using the root form of verbs (verbs that follow the word "to").

Supporting Multilingual Learners

Levels 1-3: Give students a list of statements using root/infinitive verbs to refer to throughout the lesson. The statements should be potential purposes for each component, such as "to protect the people/farmers/rulers" or "to make sure there is enough food." Include some distractors/incorrect statements. During the turn and talk, students can refer to this list and choose an appropriate answer to fill in a sentence frame, "I think the purpose is ___." Students at higher levels can explain their reasoning.

Levels 4-5: To aid comprehension of Laws 48 and 49 for students at this or any level, illustrate or act out the scenarios with students from the class.

Choose one student as gardener, creditor/banker, and landowner and demonstrate with props such as hats, a toy shovel, nametags, etc.

Vocabulary
stele, divine

Materials
Lesson 10 Slidedeck, Supporting Question Launch, Text Features, and Laws 48 and 49 Handout

Advance Preparation
Photocopy and staple the documents for this lesson into a packet in order to streamline the time needed to distribute resources.

Teaching Note
For Lessons 9 and 10, strong background knowledge for teachers can be found at The Code of Hammurabi, an article from World History Encyclopedia; this article from History.com; and an enjoyable podcast, The Code of Hammurabi, from University of Washington.

Supporting Question Launch (10 minutes)

Project Slide 2 and in your own words, remind students that in Lesson 9, they learned that the Babylonian King, Hammurabi, posted the laws for his empire where everyone could see them. Then use the timeline and images on the slide to point out that while Hammurabi's Code may be the best-known law code from the ancient world, it is not the oldest. Point out the three earlier Mesopotamian law codes: Urkagina, Ur Nammu, and Lipit-Ishtar. Share that we only have fragments of these earlier law codes but almost all of Hammurabi's laws.

Project Slide 3 and explain that for the next two lessons, they will be working with a new Supporting Question:

Why did ancient Mesopotamian societies create government and laws?

Teaching Note

If students struggle to come up with three things they know about why Mesopotamian societies created government and laws, encourage them to

Distribute copies of the Supporting Question Launch handout. Independently or in pairs, ask students to fill in their responses to the questions below.

- **Know:** *What do I already know about this topic?*
- **Wonder:** *What do I want to know?*

Then ask several students to contribute either a Know or Wonder response and record them on a KW T-chart or flipchart paper. Keep these ideas posted throughout Cluster 2.

reflect on their learning in Lesson 7-9. It would also be acceptable to ask them to consider what they know about a society's need for government and laws more generally.

⭐ Introducing Hammurabi's Code: Analyzing a Stele as a Text (20 minutes)

Organize students into pairs and ask them to turn over their Supporting Question Launch to find the Text Features Graphic Organizer. Explain that they'll watch a quick video explaining the carved image at the top and then discuss the various sections and features of the **stele** with a partner. Move to Slide 4. Briefly review the definition of the words **stele** and **divine**, which are featured in the clip. Then show the first 1:38 of the clip (the video is timed to stop at this place).

Teaching Note

Students may be interested to know that the stele is 7 feet 4 inches tall and has a circumference of about 5 feet. That is much bigger than any legal book we have! (Fun fact: NBA basketball talent Victor Wembanyama is the same height as the stele.)

After the video, pause for a **credibility** check. Ask, and give students a moment to consider,

1) Who was the author/creator of this source and when did they write it? (*Note: Help students use proper language for recording dates in their answer, i.e., "King Hammurabi, 1780 BCE" or "circa 1780 BCE."*)

2) Did they have expertise about laws and government that make this a credible source to answer some of our questions about ancient government?
(*Answer: yes! Hammurabi, as a leader and law maker of this period, had valuable expertise about the topic we want to examine.*)

Teaching Note

This is meant to be a straightforward exercise. More complicated questions about primary sources – their point of view, blind spots, etc. – will be treated in the next Unit, 6.3.

Then have students turn and talk with their partner about the question on Slide 5.

Why would Hammurabi choose to include this engraving on the stele? What does it say about the purpose of the stele?

Debrief as a whole class, encouraging students to use the sentence frame, “Its purpose was to… “

Some answers that you might hope to hear include:

- To show his power. To reinforce his power.
- To illustrate what is happening for people who cannot read.
- To make people afraid not to follow the laws; to show the importance of the laws because they came from a god.

Next, have the class read and review the rest of the stele’s features. Assign one of the three remaining features to every pair of students and have them analyze it with a partner. They should discuss:

> *What was the purpose of this feature?*
> *What could it tell me about why ancient Mesopotamian societies created government and laws?*

Move to Slide 6 and debrief their findings as a whole-class discussion. Some answers you might hope to hear include:

- Prologue: To state the purpose of the laws. To explain that Hammurabi wants to help and protect his people.
- Laws: To make it clear what the expectations are for the people. To explain how they will be held accountable for following the rules and living together as a community. To remind us that our actions matter.
- Conclusion: To reinforce the idea that the laws are just and effective and should be followed even after Hammurabi’s rule.

Analyzing a Primary Source: Hammurabi’s Laws about Agriculture (20 minutes)

Have students move to the last page of their Lesson 10 packet to find Laws 48 and 49 from Hammurabi’s Code. Share that Hammurabi’s Code included laws about many different categories, including family life, crime, and property. Today, we will wrap up the lesson by looking at two laws about agriculture

and use these to model the approach they will use when looking at the other categories in the next lesson.

Begin by projecting Slide 7 and asking students:

> *Why would ancient Mesopotamian society need or want to make laws about agriculture?*

Have students turn and talk briefly, then ask volunteers to share back their responses. These may include answers such as:

- Societies need to have stable food supplies in order to thrive.
- People need to eat to survive.

Next, ask students to work with their partner to read the two laws and fill out the reasons and observations portions of their graphic organizer. Give them about 10 minutes for this. Then bring the class together to discuss/debrief their findings.

Some responses/observations you might hope to hear include:

- Ancient Mesopotamian societies needed a stable food supply. The first law encourages people to grow crops without worrying about going into debt if the weather does not cooperate.
- Ancient Mesopotamian societies needed a stable food supply. The second law holds a person responsible for wasting good land by not growing crops.

To probe or challenge student thinking, you might ask:

> *In Law 48, why should the creditor lose the money he loaned to the planter? (After all, it's not his fault the weather was bad either.)*

- Here students might observe that the creditor can afford to lose his loan, but the planter has nothing to repay him with — sending him into deeper debt will not help society or encourage people to grow crops.

  Or, *What might happen if these laws did not exist?*

Supporting All Learners

If students would benefit from more support, you could also analyze and discuss the two laws as a whole-class activity using Slides 8 and 9.

- Here students may offer that society's food supply might be in jeopardy, or people might become very poor. Or they might be lazy or careless with other people’s property.

Wrap up the lesson by asking students to share any final observations about the laws. (For example, they could share their opinions of the laws, comparisons or contrasts to laws that they know about, or questions that they have.)

They will continue to study Hammurabi’s Code in the next lesson.

LESSON 11: **Law and Government in Ancient Mesopotamia**

Context

In Lesson 10, students analyzed the text features of Hammurabi's stele and probed the reasons why ancient Mesopotamian societies would choose to have laws about agriculture. In Lesson 11, students return to Hammurabi's Code, this time considering the rationale for laws about physical safety, property, professional responsibility and family (R10). Students first work in small groups to analyze the laws and their consequences (R5), practicing making eye contact and supporting their ideas with evidence and reasoning as they discuss the laws and complete a graphic organizer (SL4). Afterward, the whole class contributes to a Putting It Together discussion of the Supporting Question: *Why did ancient Mesopotamian societies create government and laws?* This discussion also provides the opportunity to consider the laws in a modern context and the civic avenues to addressing legal standards that are unjust (PS1). Lesson 11 wraps up Cluster 2 and sets the stage for further exploration of governance in two other ancient civilizations of the region: Egypt and Nubia.

Learning Objective

Analyze selected laws from Hammurabi's Code in order to determine their purpose for ancient Mesopotamian society.

Language Objective

Discuss the purpose of selected laws from Hammurabi's Code in small-group and whole-class format using evidence to support reasoning.

Supporting Multilingual Learners

Levels 1-3: You may add a step for students to illustrate a few of the laws in order to check comprehension. Group students of mixed proficiency levels together and set up a structured group work protocol to facilitate interaction in the group. Students may refer to the list of purposes from the previous lesson to serve as models for how to explain purpose.

Levels 4-5: Provide a reference of sentence starters and/or academic conversation talk moves such as in Figure 1 here to help students cite evidence, clarify and build on each other's ideas in class discussion.

Materials

Lesson 11 Slidedeck, Hammurabi's Code handout

Making Connections
The image included on the cover slide is one of 23 marble relief portraits over the gallery doors of the House Chamber in the U.S. Capitol, depicting historical figures noted for their work in establishing the principles that underlie American law. For more information, see Relief Portrait Plaques of Lawgivers | Architect of the Capitol.

⭐ Analyzing a Primary Source: Hammurabi's Laws about Property, Physical Safety, Professional Responsibility and Family Life (30 minutes)

Teaching Note
Some of the laws and punishments included in this activity are harsh; they may be upsetting to a sensitive student. You know your students best and can edit the handout as needed to meet their needs. The curricular rationale for including the harsh punishments is to show that ideas of what is fair, just or necessary are an important feature of a society's civic philosophy. Cruelty toward accused or imprisoned individuals has been a feature of many societies across space and time. You might point out to students that, in the modern world, international organizations and treaties have condemned mistreatment of imprisoned people in theory, as have our own nation's laws. This is indeed a positive development. Sadly, however, these ideals are not always consistently practiced.

Organize students into groups of four and Project Slide 2. Share that today students will continue to analyze Hammurabi's Code to look for evidence to answer the Supporting Question: *Why did ancient Mesopotamian societies create government and laws?* Yesterday they looked at laws about agriculture, and today they will look at laws about physical assault, family life, professional responsibility and property.

Provide each student with a Hammurabi's Code handout. Explain to students that they should read each set of laws together, first considering the reason for each individual law (why ancient Mesopotamian society would want or need the law); then

Teaching Note

Students may be curious about Law 143 (in Family Law) and what Hammurabi's Code means by saying the woman "shall be thrown in the water." Some translations use the word "drowned" to describe the punishment, but others do not.

coming up with two thoughts, observations or questions they have about each set of laws.

Project Slide 3 and give students this added guidance: 1) to use evidence and reasoning to support their claims, and 2) to maintain eye contact with their classmates as they discuss the laws.

> *Note: This prompt will encourage students to practice presentation skills (SL4); these are revisited in the Summative Assessment for Unit 6.2.*

Give students about 30 minutes to work through the laws, about 7 minutes per category. (Some categories might take slightly longer than others.) As they work, circulate to support student learning and probe their understanding of the laws they are analyzing.

Teaching Note

The Mesopotamian right for a woman to divorce her husband will possibly seem surprising to some students (and educators). But it was a feature of many ancient civilizations of Eurasia and Africa, including Egypt. The patriarchal control over divorce that is familiar to Western audiences is a legacy of medieval Christianity that carried forward well into the 20th century. For background, read The Heartbreaking History of Divorce (Smithsonian Magazine) or The History of Divorce Law in the USA (History Cooperative).

Putting It Together: The Purpose and Intent of Hammurabi's Code (20 minutes)

Bring the whole class together for a Putting It Together Activity. Project Slide 4 of the Supporting Question.

Begin by asking students to share their thoughts about why Mesopotamian society wanted or needed these laws and a government to enforce them. Then ask them to share their thoughts, questions and observations about the laws. It may be helpful to start with the more straightforward categories of property, physical assault and professional responsibility before moving onto the more complex topic of family law.

As students talk, record their ideas on the board or chart paper.

Teacher guidance: Below are some points that may be raised in the discussion of each category. This is not a checklist, and you will certainly not be able to discuss each of these ideas; the list is background support for the teacher.

Property (Slide 5)

- ➔ People want to feel like their property is safe if they are going to live in a community with a large number of people they don't know or are not related to.
- ➔ The penalty is very harsh – perhaps to discourage anyone from even trying (or thinking about trying) to steal.
- ➔ It is interesting that if the thief is not caught, the community reimburses the person who is robbed. This suggests that the community is collectively responsible for preventing theft.

Physical Safety (Slide 6)

- ➔ Violence is disruptive to a peaceful society – these laws and punishments discourage it.
- ➔ The laws about physical assault are different depending on one's class. (For example, when a man harms a man of equal rank, the punishment is to receive the identical harm to his person. But if the person he harms is of lower rank, he just receives a fine.)
- ➔ It is interesting that the punishment for anyone hitting a man of higher rank is to be whipped in public. The public nature of the punishment suggests it is a warning to keep people of lower rank in their place.
- ➔ These laws seem written to preserve the power of the upper class.

Professional Responsibility (Slide 7)

- ➔ People need to be able to trust that the people they hire are competent and have proper training. Both laws discourage people from taking money to do jobs they are not qualified to do.
- ➔ These laws put responsibility on the people to do their jobs well. In society, if everyone does their job well with attention and care, the entire society will benefit.
- ➔ The laws seem to put a tremendous amount of pressure on the builder and the doctor. There does not seem to be any room for special circumstances.
- ➔ The punishment for the doctor basically ends their career since it would be very hard to be a doctor without hands in ancient Mesopotamia.

Family Law (Slide 8)

- ➔ These laws indicate that society wants families to be stable and supportive of each other.
- ➔ Family members have legal obligations to treat each other well. For example, the father cannot kick his son out of the house without a good reason.
- ➔ A wife CAN leave her husband if he neglects her – but cannot leave if she is a "bad wife" and neglects him.
- ➔ A son loses his hand if he hits his father (this suggests that a son must respect his father).
- ➔ The laws about wives seem somewhat sexist. It is true that a woman is allowed to leave a man if she presents evidence against him – but the law about being a bad wife does not mention presenting evidence against her.
- ➔ The law about the son striking the father does not appear to provide any exceptions or understanding of circumstance – What if it was self-defense?

After engaging in a conversation about the four categories of laws, invite students to share additional questions and observations. For example:

- ➢ *How are the laws similar to or different from the laws that organize our society?*
- ➢ *Which laws seem fair and reasonable? Which laws do not?*
- ➢ *What could ancient Mesopotamians do to change laws they thought were unfair?*
- ➢ *What can we do in our society to change laws that are unfair?*