

**Grade 6 Unit 2 : Mesopotamia (MS Social Studies)**

Revised by Dr. Griggs 12/2017

**Unit Title: Mesopotamia, the Land Between the Rivers**

**Grade Level: 6**

**Unit Narrative:** Students will analyze the first river valley civilization from a geographic perspective while learning the parts of a river system and how rivers both helped and hindered Sumerian development. They will move on to develop a definition of “civilization,” discover what components are necessary for a successful civilization, and evaluate artifacts to determine whether those components were present in Mesopotamia during the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. They will then study the achievements of four Mesopotamian empires before finally assessing the impact of the Mesopotamians on our lives today.

**Desired Results**

<b><i>AERO Standards and Performance Indicators</i></b> (Prioritized standards in bold)	<b><i>Long Term Learning Targets (student friendly language)</i></b>
<p>1.8.c Explain the causes of significant historical and current political events and issues.</p> <p>3.8.b Describe social effects of environmental changes and crises resulting from natural phenomena.</p> <p><b>3.8.d Evaluate conventional and alternative uses of land and water resources in the community, region and beyond.</b></p> <p><b>3.8.e Describe ways that human events have influenced, and been influenced by, physical and human geographic conditions in local, regional, national, and global settings.</b></p> <p><b>4.8.a Examine the interaction between people and the environment and understand how people both shape and are shaped by the environment that they live in.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- I understand how geographic causes led to the growth of Sumerian civilization.</li><li>- I can connect river flooding and arid climate to new technologies and the rise of city-states in Mesopotamia.</li><li>- I know that the Sumerians developed new technology such as irrigation, levees, and the plow to make the most of their limited water resources.</li><li>- I understand and can explain ways in which rivers are both helpful and hurtful to people.</li><li>- I can explain how kings took power in the first city-states, the characteristics of Sumerian kings, and how they used religion to justify their power. I can explain how empires are</li></ul>

6.8.b Explain how different types of government acquire, use, and justify power.	different from city-states, and why the Mesopotamian empires fell.
<p align="center"><b><i>CCSS ELA &amp; Literacy in History/Social Studies Standards</i></b></p> <p><b>(RH.6-8.7)</b> Integrate visual information with other information in print and digital texts</p>	<p align="center"><b><i>Long Term Literacy Targets</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I can effectively use images of Sumerian artifacts as evidence in my persuasive writing on the topic: “Was Sumer the first civilization?”</li> </ul>

<b>Content Connection</b>
<p>Connect to art: Students will be researching, drawing, and labeling a diagram of a river system.</p> <p>Connect to science: Students will learn about the role that the water cycle plays in river systems.</p> <p>Connect to language arts: Students will engage in persuasive writing as to whether Sumer was the first civilization.</p> <p>Connect to math: Students will use maps and map scales to calculate distances between important locations in Mesopotamia.</p>

<b>Guiding Questions</b>	<b>Big Ideas</b>
<p align="center"><b><i>Essential Questions</i></b></p> <p>How do rivers help and hurt people?</p> <p>How does a river system work?</p>	<p align="center"><b><i>Enduring Understandings</i></b></p> <p>Rivers provide a source of life in dry climates, food through fishing, the means to grow crops, and building materials (mud bricks). Sadly, rivers also can flood, change course, or dry up entirely, causing big problems for communities.</p> <p>Rivers, which drain a watershed, begin with rainfall or snow melt at their source, usually in a high place, and flow down through many tributaries into a main channel. They carry fertile silt and deposit it on their</p>

How did geographic challenges lead to the rise of city-states in Mesopotamia?

floodplain when they flood. Rivers create important ecosystems like wetlands before flowing into a larger body of water at their mouth.

Without enough food in the rocky soil of the Zagros Mountain foothills, early Mesopotamians were forced to move to the floodplains of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. There, they encountered flooding and a lack of rain, and adapted by building levees and inventing irrigation. As irrigation systems clogged with silt, they were required to work together to keep them in operation. Community size increased and leaders (kings) emerged. To defend their lands, kings built large walled cities called city-states.

Why do historians classify ancient Sumer as a civilization?

Social scientists suggest seven characteristics of successful civilizations: government, culture, religion, writing, stable food supply, technology, and social structure. Artifacts found in the region prove that Sumerians made progress in all of these areas.

What were the achievements of the Mesopotamian Empires?

Each Mesopotamian empire had strengths and weaknesses, but all fell in the end. The Akkadians united all of the Sumerian city-states and recorded their history on steles. The Babylonians increased trade and invented the first code of laws. The Assyrians were a warlike people that perfected the technology of warfare, but also made advances in the arts. The Neo-Babylonians fortified Babylon and build an ancient wonder of the world--the Hanging Gardens.

What did the Mesopotamians do for us?

Mesopotamians invented all sorts of things that we still use today: the wheel, mathematics, irrigation and plowing, the concept of time, maps, cities, and writing to list a few.

### Terminology (New or Recently Introduced Only)

River source, Tributary, Main river, Meander, Upstream, Floodplain, River mouth, Watershed, Downstream, Wetlands  
 Cartographer, Geographic grid, Coordinates, Meridians, Parallels, Projection, Mental Map, Absolute location, Relative Location, Eurasia  
 Mesopotamia, Tigris River, Euphrates River, Sumer, Irrigation, Levee, Silt, City-State  
 Civilization, Social structure, Technology, Merchant, Scribe, Ziggurat, Culture, Cuneiform  
 Empire, Capital, Tribute, Code of laws, Economy, Siege

### Performance Task

Students research, draw, and label a diagram of a river system.

Students complete a flow chart illustrating how geographic causes led to social effects and the rise of Sumerian city-states.

Students create a civilization spoke diagram for their own country using the criteria they learned during the study of Sumer and calling on modern examples to apply the seven characteristics of civilizations in a real-life situation.

Students make a set of Mesopotamian empire trading cards, highlighting the relative strengths and weaknesses of each empire.

Summative Assessments		
<i>Title:</i>	<i>Description:</i>	<i>Standards (coded)</i>
Unit test (big summative)	Summative assessment that will test student's knowledge of the unit. This will include content-based recall, skills-based questions, geography questions, and an extended response critical thinking question.	1.8.c, 3.8.b, 3.8.d, 3.8.e, 4.8.a, 6.8.b
Sumerian civilization spoke diagram (small summative)	This small summative, given half-way through the unit, aims to evaluate student understanding of some big questions introduced so far: How can artifacts help us learn whether ancient cultures were a civilization? Was ancient Sumer a civilization? What evidence do you have to support your answer?	1.8.c, 3.8.d, 6.8b

<b>Formative Assessments</b>		
<b><i>Title:</i></b>	<b><i>Description:</i></b>	<b><i>Standards (coded)</i></b>
Mesopotamian empire trading cards	Students create a set of trading cards showing the four major empires of Mesopotamia. The cards, which highlight the achievements and powers of each empire, help them to understand how each was unique.	3.8.e, 6.8.b
My country is a civilization annotated spoke diagram	Students create a civilization spoke diagram for their own country using the criteria they learned during the study of Sumer and calling on modern examples to apply the seven characteristics of civilizations in a real-life situation.	1.8.c, 6.8.b
Flow chart of geographic causes and effects that lead to the rise of city-states	Students complete a flow chart illustrating how geographic causes led to social effects and the rise of Sumerian city-states.	1.8.c, 3.8.b, 3.8.e, 6.8.b
River system diagram	Students research, draw, and label a diagram of a river system.	3.8.e, 4.8.a
BBC Human Planet: Rivers film viewing guide	Students complete a viewing guide as we watch BBC's Human Planet: Rivers--Friend and Foe. The film follows Sam Niang, a Laotian fisherman, as he walks a high wire strung above the raging Mekong River rapids on an extraordinary commute to work. There's also a look at the remarkable partnership between Samburu tribesmen and wild elephants in their search for water in the dried-out river beds of northern Kenya. Also in the programme, a father takes his two children on a six-day trek down a frozen river as part of the most dangerous school run on Earth, and the ice dam busters of Ottawa provide a dynamite solution to a city centre hold-up. In short, the focus of this film is how rivers affect people.	3.8.d, 3.8.e, 4.8.a

Lesson	Instructional Focus	Long term learning targets	assessment
River Systems	Rivers provide the essentials of life: fresh food and water. They often provide natural highways and enable us to live in just about every environment on earth. But rivers can also flood, freeze or disappear altogether!	<p>How do rivers help and hurt people?</p> <p>How does a river system work?</p>	<p>Formative: BBC Human Planet: Rivers film viewing guide.</p> <p>Formative: River system diagram</p>
Rise of Sumerian City-States	The Rise of Sumerian City-States In a Response Group activity, students learn how responses to geographic challenges resulted in the formation of complex Sumerian city-states.	How did geographic challenges lead to the rise of city-states in Mesopotamia?	Formative :Flow chart illustrating how geographic causes led to social effects and the rise of Sumerian city-states.

Ancient Sumer	Students work in pairs in a Social Studies Skill Builder to learn about the characteristics of civilization and analyze artifacts to determine how each characteristic was exhibited in ancient Sumer.	Why do historians classify ancient Sumer as a civilization?	Formative: My country is a civilization illustrated and annotated spoke diagram.  Small Summative: Sumerian civilization spoke diagram.
Four Empires of Mesopotamia	While viewing a teacher-led PowerPoint presentation, students complete a research chart on the achievements of four different Mesopotamian empires: the Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Neo-Babylonian empires that ruled Mesopotamia from approximately 2300 to 539 B.C.E. They use this research to make trading cards highlighting each empire's strengths and weaknesses.	What were the most important achievements of the Mesopotamian empires?	Formative: Mesopotamian empire trading cards.  Summative: Unit test given after the end of this lesson.