

UNIT 1 ANCIENT HISTORY LESSON 1

Summary

- In this lesson, students will read "Hammurabi" (pp. 20-23) to understand the significance of Hammurabi's Code and the basic principle of justice contained within the code.

Social Studies Background

Hammurabi (unknown-1750 B.C.) was the sixth and most well-known king of Babylon. He hailed from a family of rulers who were descendents of the Amorites, a semi-nomadic tribe of fierce warriors that rose to power and ruled over Mesopotamia.

In 1792 B.C., Hammurabi succeeded his father, Sin-muballit, to the throne. As king, he strengthened his empire by building stronger city walls, digging irrigation canals, and building temples that celebrated Babylon's deity, Marduk. He also expanded his empire until all of Mesopotamia was under his control.

But Hammurabi's greatest and most-enduring accomplishment was a set of laws he wrote that came to be known as Hammurabi's Code.

This collection of 282 laws, which was carved into a four-ton slab of black stone, governed how people in his empire would live. It covered everything from homicide and assault to debt and divorce.

Hammurabi's rules were harsh. They were one of the first examples of "an eye for an eye" type of justice. And they weren't always fair. Punishments were determined by a person's social standing. And men had more rights than women. Nonetheless, the Hammurabi's rules brought unity and stability to his empire.

ENGAGE

Encourage students to flip through the article and turn and talk with a partner to discuss what they see. Invite students to ask questions or share what they already know about Hammurabi and his kingdom in Babylon.

EXPLORE

Instruct students to read the two captions on pages 20-21 of their Readers. Discuss how the captions describe the two sides of this great king of Babylon.

EXPLAIN

Point out to students that Hammurabi was king of Babylon for about 40 years. During that time, he built up and expanded his empire. But he is best known for the set of laws he wrote. **Ask:** *Why does Hammurabi's Code have such a significant place in history?* (It was one of the first and most complete legal codes ever written.) Have students turn and talk as they discuss the types of issues Hammurabi's Code covered. Challenge students to identify reasons why the laws weren't entirely fair. (It favored people of wealth and rank. It also favored men over women.) Then have students explain why, although far from perfect, Hammurabi's Code brought unity and stability to his empire. (Because the laws were written down, judges could not rule arbitrarily. This promoted the idea that justice was universal and enduring.)

ELABORATE

Invite students to search National Geographic and other sites for more information on Hammurabi's Code. Challenge them to find, read, and analyze Hammurabi's code.

EVALUATE

Have students complete the **Content Assessment** for this lesson. Encourage them to share and compare their results in small groups.

CONTENT ASSESSMENT: Hammurabi's Code

Use information from the article and additional sources to answer each question below.

<p>What were some of Hammurabi's codes?</p>	
<p>How did the code favor certain people?</p>	
<p>What do the laws in Hammurabi's Code reveal about ancient Babylonian society?</p>	
<p>In what way, if any, are the laws in Hammurabi's Code still applicable today?</p>	