

Mesopotamia

Strand: History

Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere

Topic: Early Civilizations

Content Statement: Early civilizations (India, Egypt, China and Mesopotamia) with unique governments, economic systems, social structures, religions, technologies and agricultural practices and products flourished as a result of favorable geographic characteristics. The cultural practices and products of these early civilizations can be used to help understand the Eastern Hemisphere today.

Introduction: Mesopotamia was a civilization that lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is modern day Iraq/Kuwait. The rivers were important because they helped with transportation and irrigation to benefit agriculture. The transportation on these rivers only flowed one way because of the strong current. This changed when the Sumerians, people of Sumer that were the first to establish a city, created the wheel, which changed the way they were able to transport goods and trade. This civilization started around 5000-3500 BC. The people of Mesopotamia domesticated plants and animals which made them different than the nomads and identified them as villagers. The marshes and channels of the area, which are no longer prominent in modern day Iraq, served as sources of food, protection and life for the civilizations. They also went through multiple phases that led them to the first writings that were used to record buying and selling. The people of Mesopotamia contributed many ideas to society also including the sailboat, and the concept of city.

Artifacts:

1. Location: Mesopotamia was located around the area that is modern day Iraq. I have included a map of the area that shows modern day boundaries of Iraq in order to give a comparison of where it was located.

Teaching Idea: I would ask students to compare and contrast modern day pictures of the area with the descriptions of Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia was located in an area known as the fertile crescent. What does this name mean?



Evolution from Token to Cuneiform Writing					
Token	Pictograph	Neo-Sumerian/ Old Babylonian	Neo-Assyrian	Neo-Babylonian	English
					Sheep
					Cattle
					Dog
					Metal
					Oil
					Garment
					Bracelet
					Perfume

2. Regions: Tokens

Clay tokens were used in Mesopotamia as a way to keep track of trade. Tokens were used as early as 7000 BC. In order to maintain accuracy, tokens were strung together and later put into an envelope with the token image stamped as the closure. Tokens differed from what we think of as money because the number system was not fully established. Three oils were different than 3 sheep and had different representations. Eventually, they symbols they used led to the writing system called cuneiform that was done on clay tablets to record buying and selling.

Teaching Idea: I would create a trade simulation in the classroom. I would use a variety of nonsense materials. I would not ask the students to keep track of what they initially had or traded for. When they reported their trades to

me, I would ask for the records. This would show students the importance of creating a common form of communication through writing.

3. Human Interaction: Cow

Through the domestication of animals and plants, Mesopotamia became a rich agricultural land. This separated the people from what were known as the nomads. In addition to cows, they were able to grow wheat, barley, fruit, and vegetables. They were also able to domesticate sheep, goat, pigs, and donkeys in addition to cows.



Teaching Idea: I would ask students to write a creative story in which animals are not domesticated. How would their lives be different?



4. Place: Clay

The temples and pyramids created throughout Mesopotamia were made from mud and stone. In the southern parts of Mesopotamia, materials were limited as there was not an abundance of natural stone or wood. People had to rely on imported materials or substitute materials. They often substituted with terra-cotta, which is baked clay.

Teaching Idea: I would collaborate with the art teacher to have students create unique pieces of artwork using clay. I

would also have them make models of the structures found in Mesopotamia. I would make connections to the magnitude of the pyramids and tombs that were made by the Mesopotamians. We would use mathematical proportions to compare the size of the actual structures to the pieces they are creating. We would focus on the tools available at the time compared to the tools available in construction today.

5. Movement: Wheel

Prior to the invention of the wheel, people in Mesopotamia were limited in their ability move goods and trade. They relied on the rivers, but were limited in only moving downstream. Then, they would have to take their boats apart and transport them back up the river on land. The invention of the wheel allowed for carts to move heavy goods.



Teaching Idea: I would ask students to brainstorm how many ways the wheel is used in their lives. I would also want them to brainstorm forms of transportation that we use currently and how this would be different without the wheel. I would focus on getting the students to understand how this invention was monumental to movement.

Bibliography

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