

# 24 EXCITING PLAYS FOR ANCIENT HISTORY CLASSES

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## Contents

*To the Teacher . . . . v*

### ***The Plays***

1. Problems of Early Peoples . . . . .	1
2. Life in Ancient Sumer (A Boy's "Education") . . . . .	7
3. Egypt, 2500 B.C. . . . .	13
4. Abraham Monotheism and the Covenant . . . . .	21
5. Kush: Africa's Oldest Interior Empire . . . . .	29
6. Hammurabi and His Law Code . . . . .	35
7. The Shang Dynasty: The Birth of Chinese Civilization . . . . .	43
8. Crete, Home of Europe's First Civilization: The Minoan . . . . .	51
9. The Israelites Flee Egypt and Receive the Law . . . . .	59
10. Ruth of the Old Testament . . . . .	65
11. The Life and Times of David . . . . .	71
12. Life in the Ancient Western Hemisphere . . . . .	79
13. Daniel, the Prophet . . . . .	85
14. The Buddha and the Five Visitors . . . . .	93
15. Ancient Athens: Citizen Debate . . . . .	97
16. Ancient Greece: 432-399 B.C. . . . .	103
17. Alexander the Great: Dream to the Winds . . . . .	111
18. Asoka and the Mauryan Empire (India) . . . . .	121
19. Ancient China: The Ch'in and Han Dynasties, 221-87 B.C. . . . .	129
20. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt . . . . .	137
21. New Testament Times: The Parable of the Good Samaritan . . . . .	147
22. Rome, A.D. 67 . . . . .	153
23. Christianity and the Roman Empire, A.D. 177-323 . . . . .	163
24. The Fall of the Roman Empire in the West . . . . .	171

## Problems of Early Peoples

### *Characters*

**SAGESSE**, a wise man  
**LORO**, his parrot  
**SKICK and DUG**,  
Sagesse's aides

**FANE and ORMILIG**,  
wanderers

### *Scene I: Under a large tree, somewhere in the Eastern Hemisphere, a long, long time ago.*

- SAGESSE:** Loro, look. Two visitors approach. Call Skick and Dug.
- LORO:** (*whistles*) Skick! Dug! We've got company. Real strange ones. Get your Polaroids ready.
- SKICK:** You called, oh Wise One?
- SAGESSE:** Yes. Please make our visitors feel welcome.
- DUG:** I don't think they can speak.
- LORO:** They're nothing but savages. Look how they pull their scraggly hair.
- SKICK:** What painful facial expressions they make.
- DUG:** What can this behavior mean?
- SAGESSE:** Chronic depression from miserable life-styles.
- LORO:** Send them both to psychiatrists.

2 *Problems of Early Peoples*

- SKICK:** How absurd! Who could understand them?
- SAGESSE:** Good point, Skick. What they need is language.
- LORO:** And some strong deodorant and mouthwash!
- DUG:** Shut up, feather-head!
- SAGESSE:** Skick, Dug, accompany these two to my vacation condo. Return when they have learned language.
- SKICK:** Written, too?
- SAGESSE:** Of course. They'll need to take notes.

***Scene II: A few months later.***

- LORO:** (*whistles*) The hairy ones are back. Hope they both had good long baths.
- DUG:** Wise One, allow me to introduce Fane and Ormilig.
- SAGESSE:** Welcome. Now, what have you learned about them?
- DUG:** You were right. Both of them were very depressed. They left their people to find a better life.
- SAGESSE:** Be specific. What problems did they have?
- SKICK:** We've taught them much, and now they can speak for themselves.
- FANE:** Oh, Wise One, our lives were so hard.
- ORMILIG:** And *boring!*
- SAGESSE:** Tell us more.
- FANE:** The same food, raw and stringy meat, day after day after day . . . .

- ORMILIG:** And no safe and comfortable places to rest.
- LORO:** No problem. There's a Taco Bell next to a Motel 6 just beyond the sunset.
- SKICK:** Loro, ever heard of parrot soup?
- SAGESSE:** That's enough. We're here to solve problems, not create them. Now, think . . . . What could these people use?
- DUG:** A . . . a . . . . Fire!
- SKICK:** Makes the meat taste better, and keeps you warm. Plus, it scares away dangerous animals.
- SAGESSE:** Anything else? Wild game isn't always available.
- DUG:** A . . . a . . . . Berries! And other wild plants.
- SAGESSE:** Yes, but what can you do when you've picked them bare?
- SKICK:** Farming! Agriculture! We'll teach Fane and Ormilig all about planting and harvesting grain.
- DUG:** Of course . . . . And how to grind it into flour for making bread.
- LORO:** Yeah, and how to deep-fry it for doughnuts.
- FANE:** Sounds great. But there's more to life than eating.
- ORMILIG:** Right. We're tired of wearing these animal skins. They're hard to fit.
- FANE:** Yeah. And they're too stiff and hard.
- LORO:** Give them a Land's End catalog. They have some very stylish jackets.

#### 4 *Problems of Early Peoples*

- SKICK:** How about a parrot-feather suit?
- SAGESSE:** We can help in this matter, too. Dug can teach you all about sheep and their wool.
- DUG:** Certainly. But first I have to show them how to make sharp tools to shear off the wool. You get some copper and tin. Then you heat them together to make bronze . . . .
- LORO:** Going to the nearest hardware store would be much easier.
- SKICK:** And that's only a few thousand years away!
- SAGESSE:** How about planting cotton? After all, it "breathes." Skick, you can teach them.
- SKICK:** I suppose, but I hate all those seeds—takes forever to comb them out.
- LORO:** Call my friend Eli. It's long distance, but I know he can solve your seed problem.
- ORMILIG:** We need help moving things . . . large, heavy things . . . and lots of little things at one time. A person's only got two hands, and my feet and back sure get tired.
- SAGESSE:** Dug, you're the mechanical one.
- DUG:** Very simple. We make a cart and hook it to a strong, tame animal like a horse or ox. But first we have to make some wheels.
- LORO:** Be sure to make them round this time.
- DUG:** Loro, I'm going to make your neck one of the spokes if you don't knock off the wisecracks.
- SAGESSE:** These projects should keep you all very busy for some time.

- FANE:** Very true, and we're grateful for all your help. But as I previously stated, there's more to life than—
- SAGESSE:** The basic necessities of food, shelter, and clothing. Skick, you're the artistic one . . . .
- SKICK:** Thank you. Fane, Ormilig, I'll teach you how to express and communicate your deepest thoughts and feelings, how to entertain yourself and others.
- ORMILIG:** That would be great. Our only diversion is throwing rocks and sticks at each other. And they can hurt.
- LORO:** You need hockey helmets. How about baseball? Tennis, anyone?
- SKICK:** I'll teach you painting, music, dance, drama . . . .
- SAGESSE:** In time . . . . I think you're both ready to return to your people. Skick and Dug will accompany you and teach you these things where you live.
- FANE:** We would like that, but they cannot come with us. Our people would do them great harm.
- SAGESSE:** Why? Have they no laws? No peaceful order?
- ORMILIG:** None. It's every person for himself or herself. The strongest rule. Only those who submit survive.
- FANE:** That's another reason why we left.
- SAGESSE:** You and your people need justice and protection. That's what laws and government are for.
- LORO:** But watch out for politicians.
- ORMILIG:** What's that bird talking about?



6 *Problems of Early Peoples*

- SAGESSE:** Oh, something that always seems to be put in civilization's bag. Upon further reflection, I think you need to spend a little more time here.
- LORO:** Yeah, so you can learn how to cope with marriage problems by watching *Divorce Court*.
- DUG:** Loro! That's enough! No potato chips for a week!

## Life in Ancient Sumer (A Boy's "Education")

### *Characters*

**HOADI**, a mother  
**LANI**, a girl  
**ZEF**, a boy

**AROEL**, a father and scribe  
**NARAM**, a foreman on a farm

### *Scene I: Early morning, Ur, Sumer, c. 3000 B.C.*

- HOADI:** Zef . . . . Zef! Time to get up! You don't want to be late for school again! Zef! Lani, be a good girl and wake up your lazy brother.
- LANI:** Zef! Wake up or I'll water the hair on your empty head!
- ZEF:** Leave me alone! I'll box your ears if you don't get out of here!
- LANI:** Touchy, touchy, big brother. Mother, Zef refuses to move. What should I do?
- HOADI:** Go and get your father.
- AROEL:** Here I am. Zef, if you're not at the table in sixty seconds, I'll put you on a trading boat where you'll row like a naked slave the rest of your life!
- ZEF:** I'm up!
- HOADI:** The master teacher said if you're late once more, he'll remove you from the school.
- AROEL:** Son, don't throw away your whole future.

**Repro**

8 *Life in Ancient Sumer*

- LANI:** I wish I could go to school like Zef.
- HOADI:** Hush, now, Lani. You know only boys can attend scribes' school.
- LANI:** Zef's so lucky. It's not fair!
- ZEF:** Won't you people listen to me for a change? I hate that school! I hate it! I hate it!
- HOADI:** Shame on you! How could you say such a thing? Don't you realize what your father had to do to get you enrolled?
- ZEF:** I don't care! I still hate it!
- HOADI:** Do you have any idea how disappointed this makes us feel? Don't you care about our feelings?
- ZEF:** How about mine? You don't know how horrible that school is. From sunup to sundown, doing nothing but sitting on a hard bench trying to learn two thousand stupid writing characters.
- HOADI:** Did you think becoming a scribe would be easy?
- LANI:** Nothing good is ever accomplished without hard work, sweat, and some pain.
- ZEF:** Does that mean getting beaten for not knowing your lessons perfectly? I've had enough of that. I'm quitting.
- HOADI:** How ridiculous! You're throwing away the chance to have one of the best jobs in all Sumer.
- LANI:** Let me take Zef's place. I know just as much cuneiform as he does.
- ZEF:** Dad, just face it. I'm not cut out to be a scribe. I don't care about the good pay or high prestige.

**Repro**

- HOADI:** This is the worst tragedy our family has ever had to endure. How have I failed as a mother?
- AROEL:** Calm down, now. I'm going to take the day off and see what other jobs might interest our son.
- HOADI:** Where are you going?
- AROEL:** All over town and into the countryside.
- LANI:** I want to go! I want to go! Please take me, too!
- HOADI:** No! I need you here.

***Scene II: Farming area, later that day.***

- AROEL:** So you don't want to work in the court system?
- ZEF:** Not there. They didn't argue and fight. The court guy tried to get everybody to agree.
- AROEL:** It's called arbitration, and that "guy" was the public arbitrator. His job is to find a fair settlement both sides can agree to. We don't like bringing in the law, except as a last resort.
- ZEF:** I'd rather be outside moving around, anyway.
- (They come upon NARAM.)*
- AROEL:** Naram, old friend, could you please show my son around—and put him to work for a few hours?
- NARAM:** With pleasure.
- AROEL:** Zef, without our fertile soil and efficient irrigation system, our city, as we know it, would not exist.
- ZEF:** What do you mean?