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# Ancient Mesopotamia & Ancient India

*Mr. Donn and Maxie's Always Something You Can Use  
Series*

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# ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

## Introduction

**Subject:** Ancient Mesopotamia (Sumer, Babylonia, Assyria)

**Level/Length:** This unit was written with sixth graders in mind, but can easily be adapted for grades 5–9. The unit is presented in twelve sections including the final activity; some sections are mini-units and will take longer than one class period to complete. Lessons are based on a 55-minute class period or they can be adjusted to fit any time frame. As written, time frame needed to complete this unit: 4–5 weeks.

**Unit description:** This unit covers 5000 years of ancient Mesopotamian history and explores the early civilizations of Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria, along with inventions, elements of a civilization, the Bronze Age, Hammurabi's Code, Gilgamesh—the first superhero, Cylinder Seals, Cuneiform, the Royal Tombs of Ur, Babylon, gods and goddesses, professions, beliefs, and daily life. It concludes with a review game, based on Knowledge Bowl. Activities are varied and include classifying, abstracting, map work, writing, reading, speaking, researching, interpreting, presenting, and other higher level thinking activities.

**Rationale:** In view of the latest government guidelines on education with “no child left behind,” this unit was developed to meet standards applicable in most states. Lessons are designed to address various learning styles and can be adapted for *all* students' abilities.

**Setting up the room:** With this unit, there is little need to set up much of the room in advance. Travel posters or maps will brighten the room until student work is posted. Throughout the unit, the students will be creating several things to decorate the classroom including a Mesopotamian Mural, Magical Myths, and Cylinder Seals.

**WORD WALL:** We would encourage you to set up a word wall, perhaps with the outline of an ancient tablet with some cuneiform shapes at the top or sides for a design. Place new words as you discover them in the unit on your word wall. Once a week, have the students pick a word, any word, define it, and use it in a sentence. Use the word wall to fill in short periods of time throughout the unit.

**DOOR INTO CLASSROOM:** A simple step design, zigzagging upward around your door, made of construction paper, would suggest a ziggurat.

**Setting up student notebooks:** Have your students set up their notebooks divided into six sections with dividers between each section. Label the sections Geography, History & Literature, Daily Life, Religion/Gods, Inventions, and Government. As students receive handouts and returned work, ensure that they place them in the appropriate section. Sometimes with ancient civilizations, the lines between the sections are blurred. We will do our best to separate them.

**The Dig:** (No-Name Papers): You might wish to dedicate part of one bulletin board to *The Dig*. The students add art to *The Dig*, which changes now and then, and help to post no-name papers as needed. All unclaimed no-name work is posted until the end of each unit. As students spot their work, it can be turned in at any time. As the closing act of any unit, the students in each class walk by, single file, and pay their respects. If any “no-names” are left by the end of the unit, they’re “buried.” It doesn’t matter if no-names are posted for the whole unit or for a single day—points off are the same. The work was attempted; it just wasn’t claimed. *The Dig* is also a great place to post handouts for students who missed a class to pick up the materials they need to catch up.

## SECTION ONE: Geography of Ancient Mesopotamia

Time frame: 2 class periods (55 minutes each)

1. Natural Barriers
2. Geography of Mesopotamia

Understand and use an atlas

### Preparation:

- Daily Question. Use overhead or write question on the chalkboard.
- World Atlas
- Overheads: three, one each of the reproducibles listed below (maps)
- Reproducibles: three maps of the same geographical area  
*Outline Map of the Middle East (no labels)*  
*Map of Ancient Mesopotamia (labeled)*  
*Map of the Middle East Today (labeled)*

### Daily Questions:

Day One: What is a natural boundary?

Day Two: What is geography?

**Open Class: Ask:** Have you ever gone for a hike or a walk?

### Activity: Class Discussion, Natural Barriers

(Brief class discussion after each question.)

Ask:

- If a river ran across the path you were on and there was no bridge, what would you do? What if it was a really big, deep, fast moving river?
- Have you ever been in the desert?
- What is something you must bring with you in the desert?
- How does a person get across the desert?
- How about mountain climbing?
- How do you cross a mountain range?
- If you have an opponent who doesn't want you to cross the river, desert or mountain could they make it even more difficult for you?

Say: Rivers, deserts, mountains, and seas are called natural barriers. (Put "natural barriers" on your word wall.)

Hand out atlas or maps or have students turn to the appropriate page in their textbook. They can work alone or in pairs.

Say: Use your atlas to find the natural barriers that surround the USA.

Allow students time to do so. They should come up with at least the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Lakes.



**Activity: Mapping Mesopotamia**

(Teacher Note: The Fertile Crescent runs from the Taurus Mountains in the north to the Arabian Desert in the south, and from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Zagros Mountains. Ancient Mesopotamia is in the Fertile Crescent. But the Crescent is bigger than ancient Mesopotamia. Today, the Crescent includes such countries as Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Kuwait, as well as the Sinai Peninsula, and northern Mesopotamia. We don't go into this much detail, but you might choose to do so.)

Materials needed: atlas or maps of Iraq/Mesopotamia  
2 blank maps of the Middle East

Once you have the natural barriers around the USA listed, have the students turn to the appropriate page in the atlas (Iraq or Mesopotamia) and have them list the natural barriers around Iraq or Mesopotamia. They should come up with the Zagros Mountains, the Taurus Mountains in the north, the Syrian and/or Arabian Desert, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Hand out 2 blank maps of the Middle East. On the first map, have students find and label: the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea, the Zagros Mountains, and the Syrian Desert. Have them create a map key and color in their maps.

On the second map have them outline, label, and color in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf. Have them compare the map of Mesopotamia to the modern countries. (They will discover that ancient Mesopotamia was mostly in the same area as modern day Iraq.)

**Close activity: Say:** Ancient Mesopotamia covered an area that was about 300 miles long and about 150 miles wide. The cities in ancient Mesopotamia were built between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. These rivers flow into the Persian Gulf. The word Mesopotamia actually means (in Greek) “the land between the rivers.”

The “land between the rivers” has seasons that vary from cool to hot. Temperatures can rise over 110 degrees Fahrenheit. There is very little rainfall. Storms do blow in from the Persian Gulf, which cools things off. The area does have slight seasons. It can get quite cool at certain times of the year. And the desert cools off at night.

**Close Class:** You might think it would be an awful place to live. But actually, it was great. We'll find out why next time we meet.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_  
PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Ancient Mesopotamia



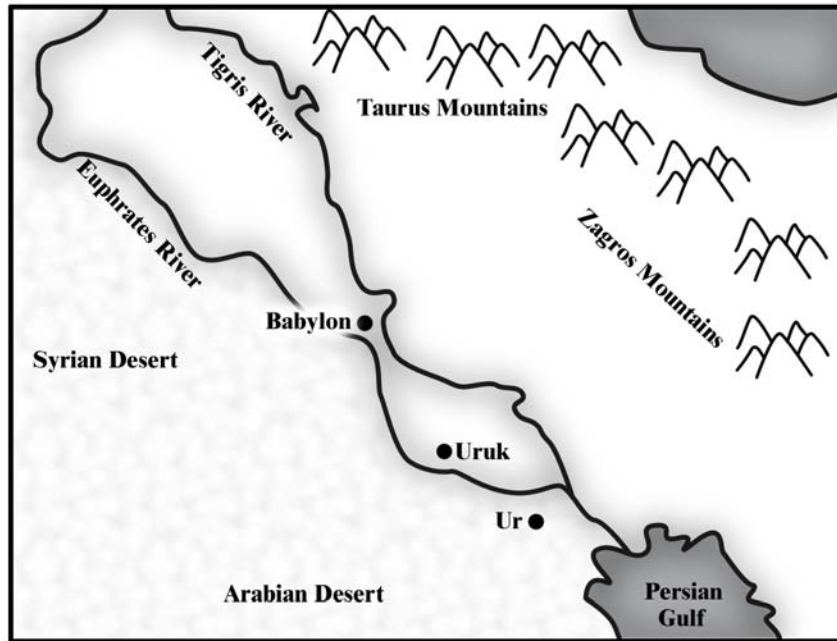
### Find and label:

**City of Ur**  
**City of Uruk**  
**City of Babylon**  
**Tigris River**  
**Euphrates River**  
**Syrian Desert**  
**Arabian Desert**  
**Taurus Mountains**  
**Zagros Mountains**  
**Persian Gulf**

## Present Day



## Ancient Mesopotamia



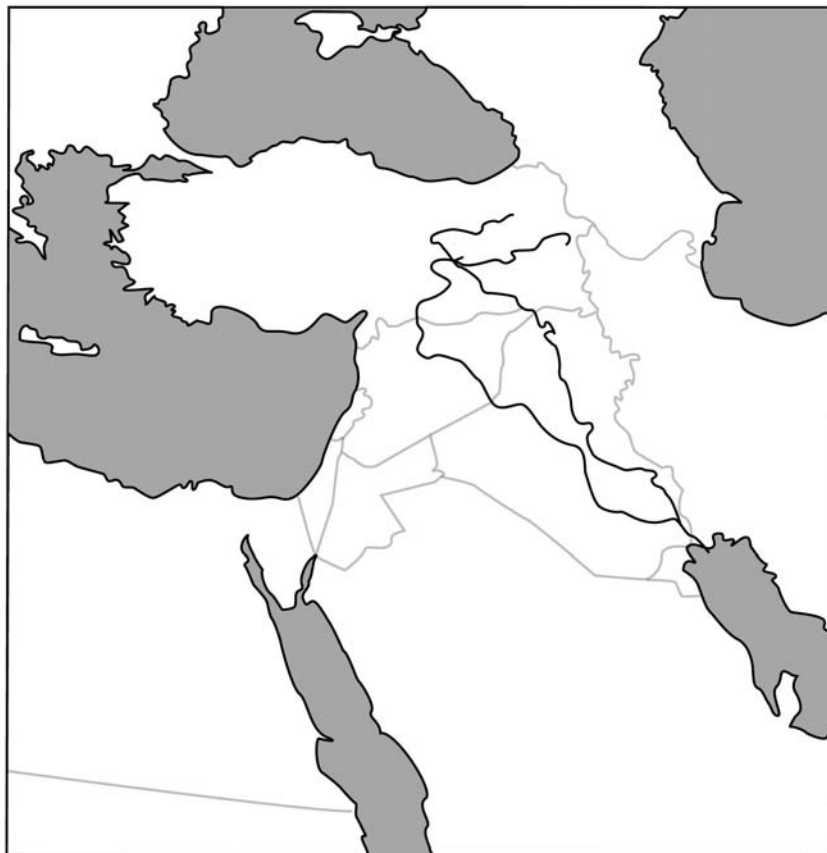
## Present Day



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_  
PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Middle East



### **Find and label:**

<b>Tigris River</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>Euphrates River</b>	<b>Syria</b>
<b>Persian Gulf</b>	<b>Iraq</b>
<b>Red Sea</b>	<b>Iran</b>
<b>Mediterranean Sea</b>	<b>Kuwait</b>
<b>Black Sea</b>	<b>Jordan</b>
<b>Greece</b>	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Israel</b>
	<b>Lebanon</b>

## Middle East (present day)

