

ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

Grade Level: Grade 1

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Length of unit: Five days - 45 minute lessons

I. ABSTRACT

- A. This first grade unit on Mesopotamia focuses on the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia. We will look at the geography, government, religion, and the development of writing. In addition, we will see how laws are important to the development of a civilization. This will be a five day unit. Students will demonstrate comprehension of this unit by completing projects, a class book, and a test.

II. OVERVIEW

- A. Concept Objectives
1. Understand a few components of culture including literature, politics, religion, and geography. (This correlates with Colorado State Standards #1, 3, & 6)
 2. Understand the role of literature, (reading and writing) in government.(C.S.S. #5)
 3. Understand the role of literacy and of the passing down of culture. (C.S.S. #1)
- B. Content
1. Importance of Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
 2. Development of writing; why it is important to the development of civilization
 3. Code of Hammurabi (early code of laws); why rules and laws are important to the development of civilization
- C. Skill Objectives
1. Students will locate Mesopotamia on world map.
 2. Students will locate and label Mesopotamia, Tigris River, and Euphrates River on individual maps.
 3. Students will write and draw pictographs and cuneiform writing.
 4. Students will define vocabulary from this unit.
 5. Students will compare and contrast King Hammurabi's laws to those in our society.
 6. Students will create a code of laws for the classroom.
 7. Students will be familiar with a ziggurat and the culture that surrounds it.
 8. Students will write and illustrate a class book about Mesopotamia.

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- A. For the teacher
1. *What Your First Grader Needs to Know*, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
 2. *Ancient Civilizations: Mesopotamia*, by Jane Pofahl
 3. *The Ancient Near East: A Bellerophon Coloring Book*, Bellerophon Books
 4. *Gilgamesh the King*, Ludmila Zeman
- B. For students
1. Students should have prior knowledge of the names and locations of the seven continents. They should also have knowledge of the differences between rivers and oceans.

IV. RESOURCES

- A. *A First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, by E.D. Hirsch

- B. *What Your First Grader Needs to Know*, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- C. *Ancient Civilizations: Mesopotamia*, by Jane Pofahl
- D. *The Ancient Near East: A Bellerophon Coloring Book*, Bellerophon Books
- E. *Gilgamesh the King*, Ludmila Zeman
- F. *Mesopotamia, Ancient Civilizations Series*, Frank Schaffer Publications
- G. *Mesopotamia*, Pamela F. Service
- H. *Science in Ancient Mesopotamia*, Carol Moss
- I. *Core Knowledge Sequence*, Core Knowledge Foundation

V. LESSONS

Lesson One: Mesopotamia - What, Where, & When

A. Daily Objectives

1. Lesson Content

- a. Introducing Mesopotamia, Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and the idea of early civilizations.
- b. Geographical awareness: Locate the two rivers, and the area of Mesopotamia on a map and globe.
- c. Introduce vocabulary and background information.

2. Concept Objective

- a. Students will be able to understand how the geographical features of the Mesopotamian area have affected the development of the civilization.

3. Skill Objectives

- a. Students will learn about the oldest civilization recorded in history.
- b. Students will understand the relative location of this civilization.
- c. Students will develop a vocabulary related to this civilization.

B. Materials

- 1. Map (reproducible)
- 2. Markers & crayons
- 3. Wall map & globe
- 4. Crescent rolls (optional)

C. Background Notes

- 1. There is no country today called Mesopotamia. The name Mesopotamia refers to an area of land that was called that over 7,000 years ago. Today, it is the land that includes southeastern Turkey, eastern Syria, and most of Iraq. The main section of the region was called the "Fertile Crescent." The area was called fertile because ancient farmers used the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to irrigate their crops, thus making the soil fertile. The crescent looks like a boomerang. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers run through the crescent and converge at the Persian Gulf. Mesopotamia means "The land between two rivers." (See *Ancient Civilizations: Mesopotamia* in bibliography.)

D. Key Vocabulary

- 1. Mesopotamia - the place between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in western Asia. Also known as "The cradle of civilization."
- 2. Fertile - green, lush area with dark, rich soil.
- 3. Crescent - a shape (similar to a quarter of a moon or a crescent roll.)
- 4. Civilization - a group of people in a city.
- 5. Tigris and Euphrates Rivers - rivers in western Asia.

E. Procedures and Activities

1. Write vocabulary on overhead or chalkboard and review pronunciations and definitions.
2. Read Hirsch (What Your First Grader Needs to Know) - pg. 122 as an introduction. Stop at "A Great Mesopotamian Story."
3. Look at wall map and a globe to locate where ancient Mesopotamia is today.
4. Have different students come up to wall map and point out where Mesopotamia is located.
5. Hand out map to children (Appendix A). Have them locate and touch the Mesopotamian area. Have them point specifically to the crescent shape & two rivers. Optional activity - Pull out a crescent roll and have children look at the shape of it to understand the shape on the map. Point out Tigris River is on top and Euphrates River is under Tigris. Also locate Africa, Egypt and Nile River with finger.
6. Use overhead to guide children with map work. Children use a green crayon to color over the Mesopotamian area.
7. Next, use a blue crayon to trace over the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
8. Label Tigris River with a black crayon and have children write a "T" next to it. Do the same with the Euphrates River and label it with "E."
9. Color in the surrounding seas with a blue crayon.
10. Trace over the Nile River with a blue crayon.
11. Review vocabulary with children.
12. Collect maps for end of the unit books.

F. Evaluation/Assessment

1. Teacher observes students while they are coloring and labeling map.
2. After collecting maps, teacher grades map.
3. Review vocabulary throughout day.

G. Standardized Test Connections

1. C.S.S. #1 - Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships.
2. C.S.S. #3 - Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.

Lesson Two: Cuneiform Writing

A. Daily Objectives

1. **Lesson Content**
 - a. Students will learn about pictographs.
 - b. Students will learn and write cuneiform writing.
 - c. Introduce vocabulary and review background information.
2. **Concept Objective**
 - a. Students will have an understanding of the progression of cuneiform writing to how we write today.
3. **Skill Objectives**
 - a. Students will learn about the oldest civilization recorded in history.
 - b. Students will create pictographs from today's culture.
 - c. Students will develop a vocabulary related to this civilization.
 - d. Students will create cuneiform writing on a tablet.

B. Materials

1. Chart paper
2. Cuneiform pictograph/diagram (Appendix B)
3. Modeling clay
4. Straws or toothpicks
5. Magazines

C. Background Notes

Cuneiform writing was developed before hieroglyphics. Cuneiform means "wedge shaped," which is exactly what cuneiform was: a thin, triangular, wedge shaped kind of writing. Pictographs changed to cuneiform writing. The writing was done on clay tablets because paper did not exist. A writing utensil called stylus was used to make the wedge-like impressions in clay.

D. Key vocabulary

1. Pictographs - A picture which represents an object.
2. Cuneiform - The system of writing developed in ancient Mesopotamia. It was based on wedge shaped characters and was usually inscribed on clay tablets.
3. Stylus - A writing utensil that the Sumerians used to write words with.
4. Tablet - A piece of clay that was used to write letters and stories on.
5. Character - A person who appears in works of fiction (made-up or imaginary stories.)

E. Procedures and Activities

1. Write vocabulary on overhead or chalkboard and review pronunciations and definitions.
2. Teacher shows cuneiform diagram on chart. Teacher explains how pictographs changed to cuneiform writing and gives background knowledge.
3. Students collect pictures or images from magazines that they are familiar with, such as product or sports logos.
4. Using the cuneiform chart as a reference, have students create three or more steps in which the images change from pictographs to cuneiform writing. Students glue pictures on construction paper (See Appendix C.)
5. Students share finished project with class.
6. Collect finished project for end of the unit book.

DAY TWO OF LESSON TWO

7. Review diagram from previous day.
8. Introduce to students pictures of the tablets and tools that the Mesopotamian people used to communicate.
9. Pass out modeling clay and tooth picks to each student.
10. Using the modeling clay and toothpicks have students try to copy the cuneiform writing.
11. Share as a class the finished project.

F. Evaluation/Assessment

1. Teacher observes and collects student's pictographs and cuneiform writing and saves for unit book compiled during the culminating activity.
2. Orally review vocabulary throughout day by using a chart.

G. Standardized Test Connections

1. C.S.S. #3 - Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.

Lesson Three: Ziggurats

A. Daily Objectives

1. Lesson Content
 - a. Students will learn about ziggurats
 - b. Introduce vocabulary and background information.
 2. **Concept Objective**
 - a. Students will have an understanding of the ziggurats and the importance they played in the culture of Mesopotamia.
 3. **Skill Objectives**
 - a. Students will create a ziggurat using popsicle sticks.
 - b. Students will develop a vocabulary related to this civilization.
- B. Materials**
1. Popsicle sticks
 2. Ziggurat maze (Appendix F)
 3. Construction paper - 8 1/2 x 11
 4. Scissors
 5. Glue
- C. Background Notes**
- To honor their gods (sky god, sun god, water god, storm god, etc.), the people of Mesopotamia built temples called ziggurats. Ziggurats were enormous monuments with sides that looked like stair steps. In addition to worship, most commercial activity of the city took place at the temple, including food distribution in the trading of goods (See Bibliography - What Your 1st Grader Needs To Know)
- D. Key Vocabulary**
1. Ziggurat - A temple built in Mesopotamia.
 2. Temple - A building used for religious worship.
 3. Gods - Supernatural beings or spirits worshipped in religions that believe in many gods, rather than one.
 4. Trade - The process of buying, selling, or exchanging goods or services.
- E. Procedures and Activities**
1. Write vocabulary on overhead or chalkboard and review pronunciations and definitions.
 2. Explain ziggurats and their history, and also show pictures from Hirsch text pg. 122.
 3. Pass out construction paper (8 1/2 x 11) and popsicle sticks.
 4. Guide students in making their own ziggurats.
 5. Collect ziggurats as students complete them for their end of the unit book.
 6. Do "A-Maze-ing Ziggurat" worksheet. (See Appendix F.)
- F. Evaluation/Assessment**
1. Teacher observes the making of ziggurats.
 2. Students show their ziggurat pictures and share an interesting fact they learned about the history of ziggurats.
- G. Standardized Test Connections**
1. C.S.S. #6 - Students know that the religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.

Lesson Four: King Hammurabi

- A. Daily Objectives**
1. Lesson Content

- a. Students will become familiar with Hammurabi, King of Babylon, and how he created the Code of Laws.
 - b. Introduce vocabulary and background information.
 - 2. **Concept Objective**
 - a. Students will understand the importance of the code of laws back in ancient Mesopotamia, and also for today.
 - 3. **Skill Objectives**
 - a. Students will create classroom laws and consequences.
 - b. Students will develop a vocabulary related to this civilization.
- B. **Materials**
 - 1. Chart paper
 - 2. Markers and crayons
 - 3. Measuring tape
 - 4. Lined paper
 - 5. Construction paper (11 x 17)
 - 6. Scissors
 - 7. Glue
- C. **Background Notes**

King Hammurabi was king of Babylon. He created the "Code of Laws." The concept of the laws was "an eye for an eye." Hammurabi believed that the citizens of Babylon needed to be held accountable for all their actions.

Hammurabi 's code of laws was posted on a stele (large stone tablet) that was eight feet tall. The main message throughout the code was that the strong should not hurt the weak. The code stated the rights of the individual and was the model for many law systems in later years.
- D. **Key Vocabulary**
 - 1. Unite - to join together
 - 2. Reign - royal rule
 - 3. Code - a collection of laws for a country
 - 4. Accusation - to blame someone who broke a law
- E. **Procedures and Activities**
 - 1. Write vocabulary on overhead or chalkboard and review pronunciations and definitions.
 - 2. Read Hirsch text, pg. 124 & 125 to students.
 - 3. Share some examples of King Hammurabi's laws (See Appendix E.).
 - 4. Teacher sets up chart paper on board.
 - 5. Students create their own classroom code of laws and consequences, as teacher writes them on chart paper.
 - 6. Optional activity - Policeman (guest speaker) comes in to classroom to discuss importance of laws and consequences.
 - 7. Optional activity - Make a ziggurat on construction paper (11 x 17) with cut-out worksheets to review concepts students have learned (See Appendix D.)
- F. **Evaluation/Assessment**
 - 1. Teacher interacts with students as they create their classroom code of laws.
- G. **Standardized Test Connections**
 - 1. C.S.S. #6 - Students know that the religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.

VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- A. Teacher hands out all of students' previous work (maps and pictures of ziggurats) to make end of the unit individual books.
- B. Teacher also needs to make individual photocopies of the classroom code of laws to hand out to students to include in their books.
- C. Students will write three sentences on lined paper to include in their books, stating three different facts that they learned.
- D. Students create cover for books using construction paper.
- E. Assemble books for students and send home with them.
- F. To conclude unit, have a day that consists of reviewing vocabulary (on chart paper) and facts. Students could play a game such as baseball or a revised version of jeopardy to review all of this information before the test (See Appendix G.)

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

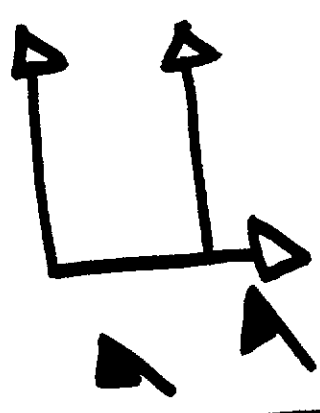
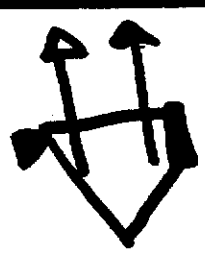
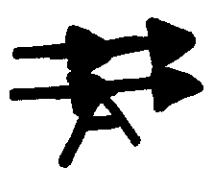
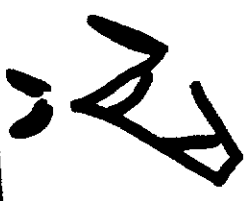
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APPENDIX B

F-SH

OX

GLA



Hammurabi's Laws

* If a man has accused someone and has cast an accusation of murder against him and has not proved it, the accuser shall be put to death.

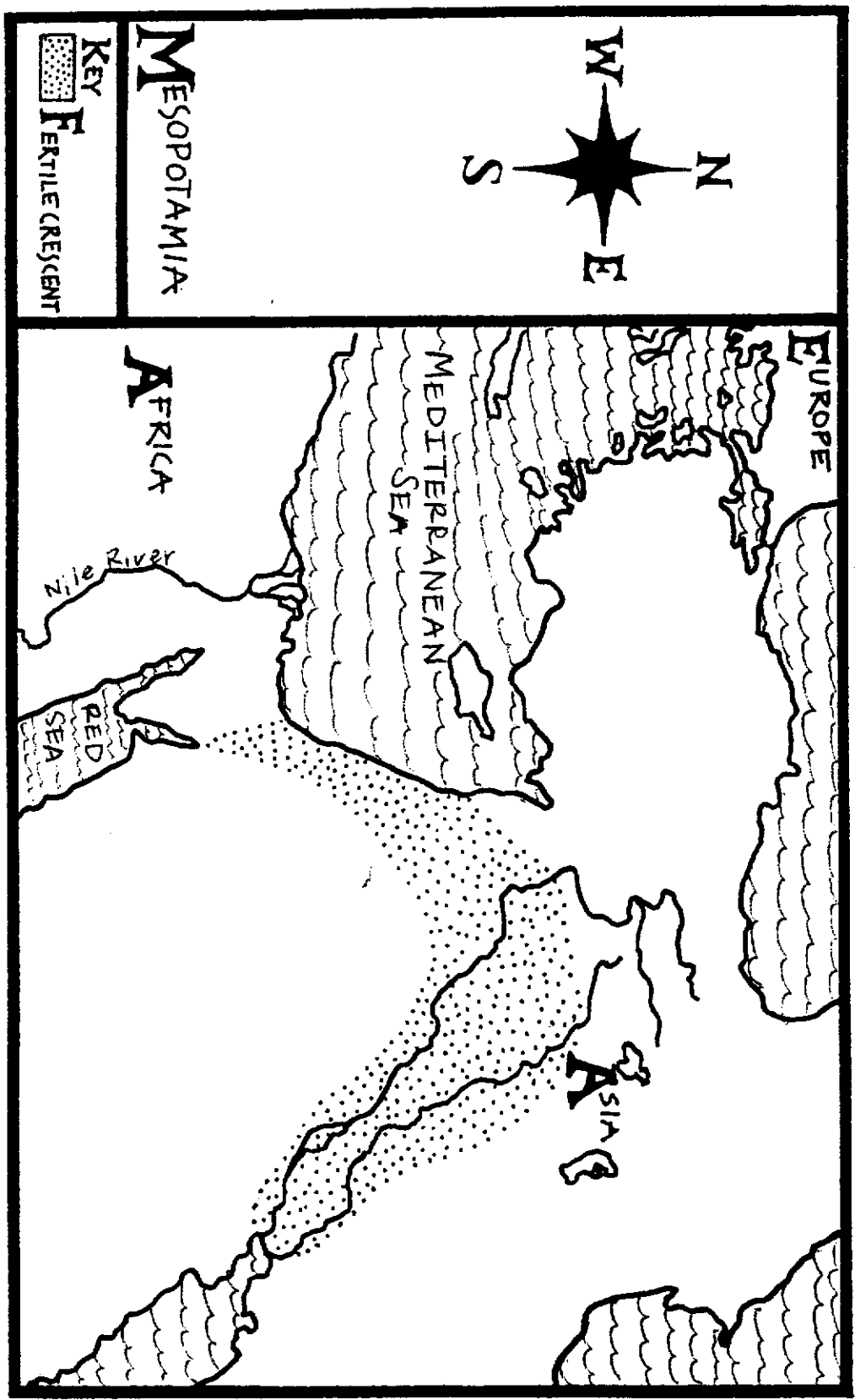
* If a son has struck his father, they shall cut off his hand.

* If a man committed robbery and is arrested, that man shall be put to death.

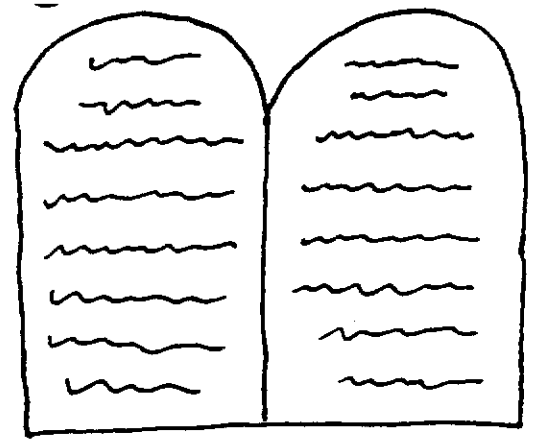
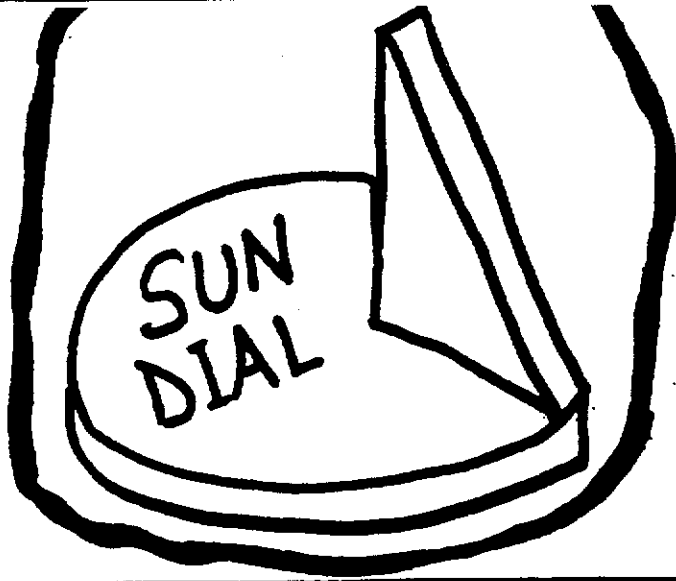
* If a surgeon has made a deep incision in a freeman with a bronze instrument and saved a man's life... he shall take ten shekels of silver.

APPENDIX E.

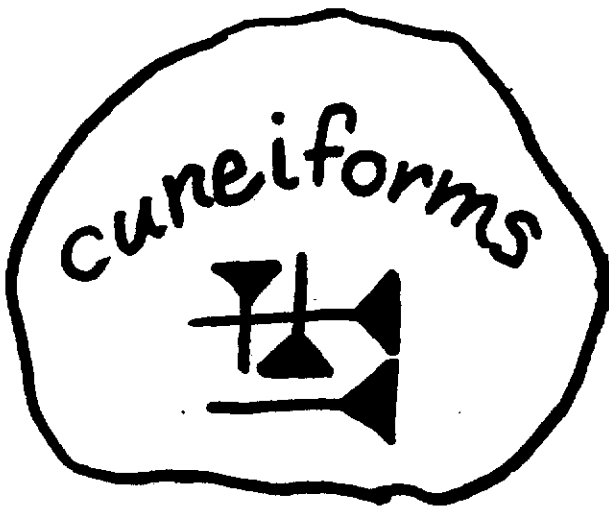
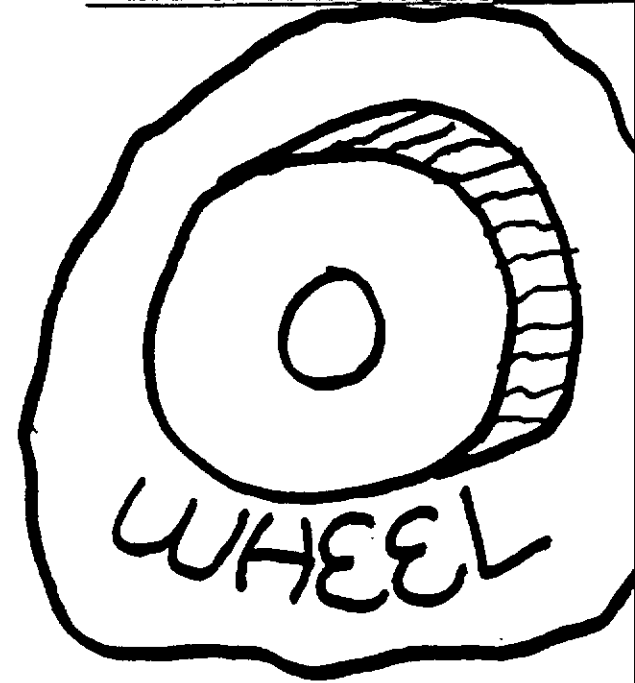
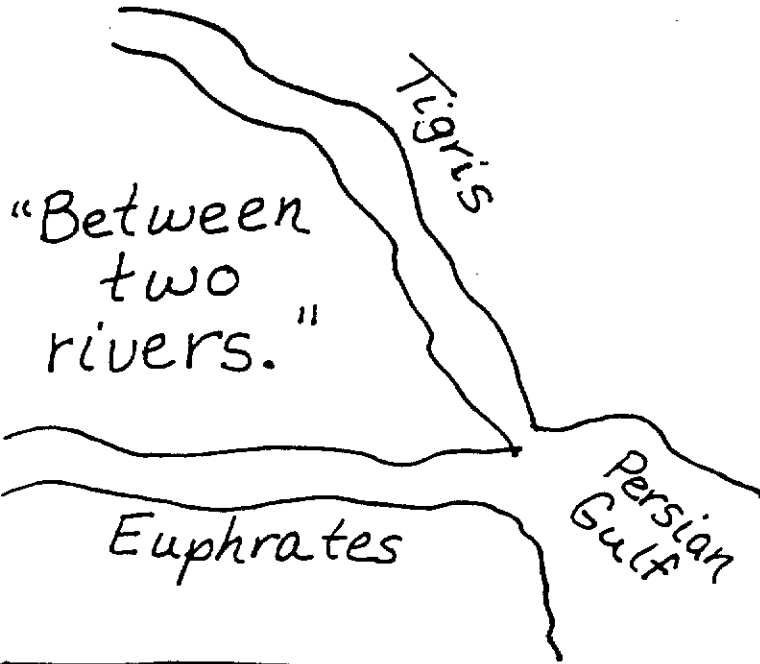
Mesopotamia



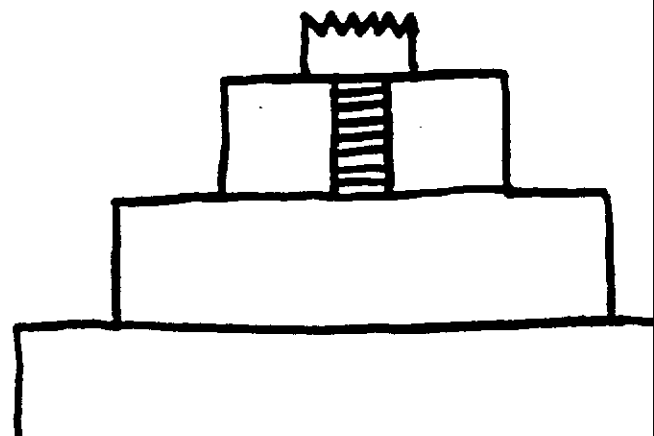
1. Identify the following on your map (refer to a map of Mesopotamia in an



KING HAMMURAB

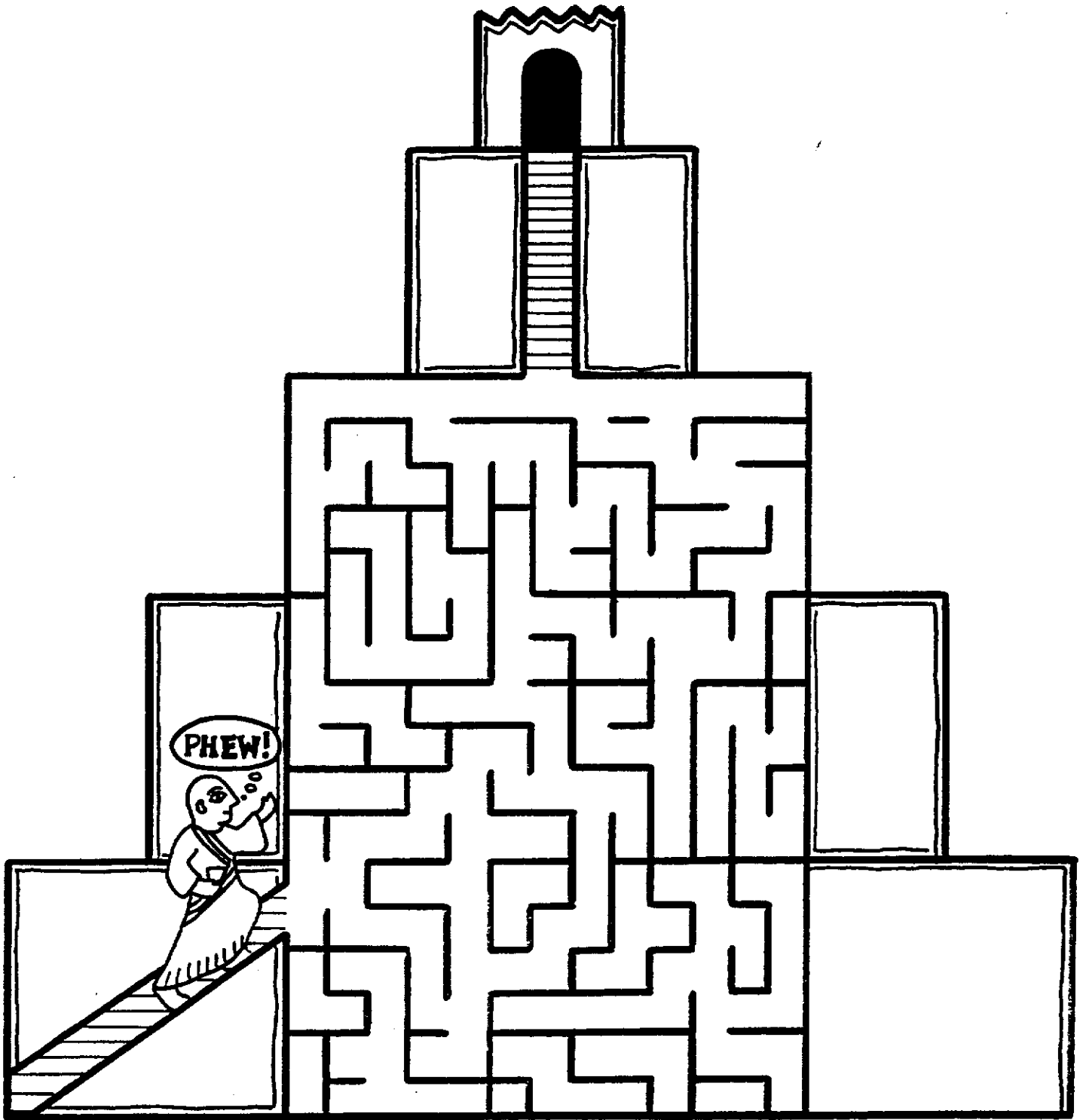


ZIGGURAT



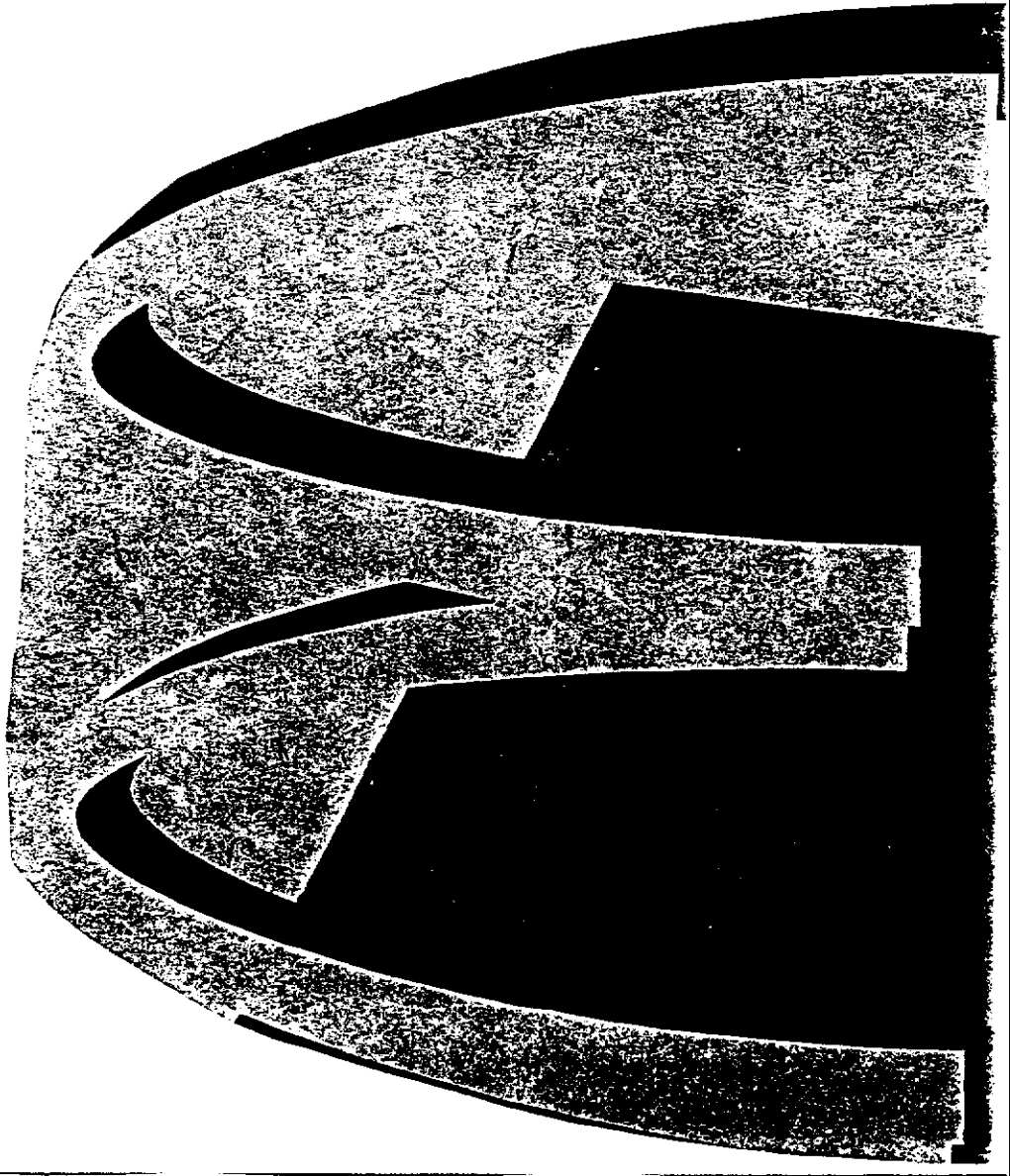
The A-Maze-ing Ziggurat

Help Sobeck the Priest climb the ziggurat.





Nike



McDonalds