



Mesopotamia Process Drama

6th Grade

Social Studies/Drama

Written by Linda Gold

Core Curriculum,

Social Studies Standard 1 Students will understand how ancient civilizations developed and how they contributed to the current state of the world.

Objective 1 Explain why physical geography affected the development of early civilizations. **Objective 3** Explain how modern governments can trace some of their attributes to the systems of power, authority, and governance established in ancient civilizations.

Objective 4 Analyze how the earliest civilizations created technologies and systems to meet community and personal needs.

Art Area, Standard

Standard 6.T.CR.6:

Develop dialogue and actions that focus on the development and resolution of dramatic conflicts.

Standard 6.T.P.3:

Observe, listen, and respond in character to other actors throughout a scripted or improvised scene.

Standard 6.T.R.2:

Justify responses based on personal experiences when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.

Standard 6.T.CO.3:

Investigate universal or common social issues and express them through a drama/theatre work.

Objective: Students will participate in a process drama to learn about the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia and how it has contributed to our world today.

Sources: <https://www.worldhistory.org/Mesopotamia/>

Materials:

Make copies of the attached pictures and word list

Lesson Outline

Warm-up: Heavier When it's Full. Students will divide into groups and decide on something that they can carry in some type of container. They are to pantomime carrying the empty container, filling it with something, and carrying it when it is full, demonstrating that it is easier to carry when it is empty than when it is full. Emphasize that they cannot carry each other (the object and what's in it must be imaginary) and that they cannot use words. Allow the audience to evaluate each group by guessing what they were carrying. Reinforce realistic behaviors.

Hook: Show a picture of Ancient Mesopotamia. Ask, "What is this picture of? Where is this located?"

Narration: We're going to go back in time, about 5,000 years ago, to an ancient land known as Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia was located in part of what is known as the Fertile Crescent,

between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers. The name Mesopotamia means land between the rivers. Today, Iraq and parts of Turkey and Syria are located here. Mesopotamia is one of the first civilizations in recorded history. They established laws. They developed a complex form of writing known as Cuneiform. They even started the first schools where young boys from wealthy families were taught to be scribes. Girls could be scribes too but they could not go to the schools. They were taught at home. (What is a scribe? Why did they need them? They had no monetary system. Instead, they worked on trade and scribes wrote everything down.) What do you think the people of this time might have done in order to provide a living for themselves and their families? Most of the people of the time period would be farmers. Assign the students to all become Mesopotamian farmers. Divide them into groups of 4-6. These will be their individual farms.

Still Image: It is a nice, sunny day in early June. Create a still image of what you would be doing in the morning of such a day.

Improvisation: Bring the image to life and let it play for a few minutes.

Teacher in Role: Enter the scene in role as a farmer whose farm is close to the Tigris River.

Spread the news that the Tigris is swelling from the snow run-off and will soon flood the farm land. Make sure everyone realizes that we must work together or there will be no food for anyone.

Meetings: Meet in groups to decide what to do about the coming floods. Be sure the students understand that they need the water for their crops because it doesn't rain enough during the growing season, but if the rivers flood their crops, they will be ruined. If they don't come up with the idea themselves, help them to decide to build an irrigation system. This way the flood water can be directed into channels that will provide water for their crops. Everyone must help if it is to be completed in time. Vote on a student to be placed in charge of the system. You may also encourage some of the farmers to gather in as much as their crops as possible in case they don't finish the irrigation system in time.

Improvisation: Let the students improvise the building of the irrigation system and the gathering of crops. After a while, freeze the action.

Narration: Although the irrigation system was a good idea, it was started too late. A few of the farms were saved but not all could be saved. Some of the crops were harvested early to avoid the flood waters but many were destroyed. Some of the silt in the flood waters blocked some of the canals and the land still flooded. Determine whose crops were saved and whose crops were lost by passing out saved and lost slips to the farmers.

Meeting: Meet in groups to decide what to do. How will everyone have enough food to eat? Who will be given the most food? Who will have to go without? After giving the individual groups time to discuss, meet as one group. Allow those who lost their farms to ask questions of those who did not lose their farms.

Narration: King Hammurabi was a ruler in ancient Mesopotamia. He established what many consider to be the first code of laws. These laws were carved on a pillar of hard black stone, 8 feet high. (Show picture) In order to understand what the laws were like; we are going to pretend that the scarcity of food made the people angry and quarrel and fight with one another. Some resort to stealing in order to survive. Instruct the students to find a partner and determine who did what to whom. (Remind the children of personal space and taking our drama seriously.)
They will come before King Hammurabi to be judged and sentenced.

Teacher in Role: Take on the role of Hammurabi and pass sentences on the people who have broken the law. All sentences should be very logical, i.e.: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The rich shall receive more leniencies.

Discussion: (out of role) Ask the students why they need to learn about civilizations like Mesopotamia. Talk about what it was like to live then. Ask some or all of the following question: Would you like to have lived then? Why or why not? How are things different now? Are there places in the world that still have laws like this? Do most of the people today have to farm to survive? Do farmers today still use irrigation canals to water their crops?

Saved	Lost	Lost	Saved
Lost	Saved	Lost	Lost
Lost	Lost	Saved	Lost
Saved	Lost	Lost	Saved
Lost	Saved	Lost	Lost
Lost	Lost	Saved	Lost
Saved	Lost	Lost	Saved
Lost	Saved	Lost	Lost
Lost	Lost	Saved	Lost
Saved	Lost	Lost	Saved
Lost	Saved	Lost	Lost





Mesopotamia