

Unit Title: Unit 1 - Prehistory and River Civilizations

Grade Level: 10

Subject Area: World History

Duration/Length/Number of class periods: 2 weeks, 10 class periods (could be stretched if time permits)

Description:

This unit will open by examining the prehistory of the world, when humans lived as hunter-gatherers. As plants and animals were domesticated, human beings began to settle and farm. This led to the development of the earliest civilizations: Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, and China, and their key traits: social, political, religious, intellectual, technologic, and economic developments and institutions. All civilizations, but especially the world's first, are/were impacted by their geography. Students will specifically examine the development of the first civilization in Ur in Mesopotamia. Students will then have a choice in examining a second civilization (Egypt, the Indus Valley, China) and compare it to Mesopotamia. The summative assessment will ask students to write a one-page ode to the river of the civilization they chose to study second. The ode will sing the praises of the river for what it has helped provide the civilization and bemoan the tribulations the river has brought.

Established Goals (National, State, Local):

MN Social Studies Standards:

- Code: 9.4.3.7.1
Grade 9-12, Strand 4: History, Substrand 3: World History, Standard 7.1: The emergence of domestication and agriculture facilitated the development of complex societies and caused far-reaching social and cultural effects. (Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples: 8000 BCE–2000 BCE)
- Code: 9.4.3.7.2
Grade 9-12, Strand 4: History, Substrand 3: World History, Standard 7.2: The emergence of domestication and agriculture facilitated the development of complex societies and caused far-reaching social and cultural effects. (Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples: 8000 BCE–2000 BCE)

What Enduring Understandings are desired?

- Understanding how civilization(s) develop can help us better understand history, the world today, ourselves, our own and other cultures.
- Understanding how geography impacts the development of civilization(s) can help us better understand history, the world today, ourselves, our own and other cultures.

What Essential Questions will be considered?

- What advantages and disadvantages would there be to living a hunter-gatherer (Neolithic) lifestyle?
- How does the domestication of plants and animals change the lifestyle of humans?
- What are common key traits of a civilization?

- How does geography impact social, political, religious, intellectual, technological, and/or economic developments and institutions in ancient civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, China)?

Students will know / be able to:

- Define and describe life during Paleolithic times, including nomads and hunter-gatherers.
- Define and describe life during Neolithic times, including slash and burn farming and plant and animal domestication.
- Define and describe key traits of Civilization, including job specialization, institutions, record keeping, and advanced technologies.
- Describe the social, political, religious, intellectual, technologic, and economic developments and institutions in Mesopotamia, such as the Bronze Age, bartering in Ur, and the ziggurats constructed to worship their gods.
- Describe the social, political, religious, intellectual, technologic, and economic developments and institutions in one other ancient civilization of their choice (Egypt, Indus Valley, China), such as the impact of pharaohs and theocracy on government in Egypt, the planned cities with grid patterns, residential districts, and plumbing and sewage systems in the Indus Valley, and the importance of the Mandate of Heaven in relationship to the dynastic cycle in China.
- Explain the unique impact geography has had on the social, political, religious, intellectual, technologic, and economic developments and institutions in Mesopotamia and one other chosen ancient river valley civilization, such as how silt, left behind by receding flood waters, was exceptionally fertile allowing river civilizations to plant and harvest enormous quantities of crops and establish surpluses, which allowed for job specialization, led to the need for complex organization to construct irrigation solutions, enabled them to trade and required record keeping to develop.

Description	Formative	Summative	Introductory Activity	Learning Activity	Student Technology Used	Teacher Technology Used	ISTE Standards
Introductory Activity: scenario, aliens have abducted you and are questioning you about your planet. How would you describe your planet? Would you use broad categories that are general or would you give them specific details that are unique to some places but not others; or a combination? Students can complete this activity in small groups using Padlet or Jamboard. Ultimately, by categorizing and grouping the descriptions, many students will begin to see the key traits of civilization emerge - social, political, religious, intellectual, technologic, and economic institutions and developments.	X		X		X		
SPRITE Activity: following up the Intro Activity, introduce the acronym as the key traits of civilization: social, political, religious, intellectual, technologic, and economic institutions and developments. Provide a definition for each letter and example of what it could look like. Example: politics could include things like specific leaders or groups of people that are in charge, laws that are developed, styles of governance,	X		X	X	X	X	

diplomacy and warfare with outside peoples, etc. Students work in small groups to describe the schools in terms of SPRITE using Padlet or Jamboard. Example: religion is seen in many ways in school, but our public high school does not sponsor any religion. You might see students' fashion or accessories demonstrate their faith. Student groups might form in part because of their faith - ie Muslim Student Association. Extension opportunity - have students construct a SPRITE chart for their favorite book or movie. Easy examples could include Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Shrek, etc.							
Paleolithic Lifestyle: begin with Schoology discussion of what causes inequalities in the world today? Could be individuals or groups. Support with evidence and post then reply to two other peers' postings. Short notes and video on the basics of Paleolithic life (hunting, gathering, nomads, small groups of 30-50, primitive tools, no writing). Students then work in small groups to analyze the positives of living this lifestyle and the negatives of living this lifestyle and post on Padlet or Jamboard. End activity is to try and explain two examples of social, political, religious, intellectual, technologic, and economic institutions and developments (basically these existed only minimally at this point in human history, returning to opening question - because there was no job specialization, and all were either hunters or gatherers, and both were necessary to group survival, this may have been humanity's most egalitarian and equal time).	X			X	X	X	
Neolithic Lifestyle: begin by reviewing Paleolithic life and discuss the best positives and biggest negatives about this life. Short notes and video on the basics of Neolithic life (domesticated plants and animals = farming, sedentary life = cities, farming = surplus = job specialization = social classes = inequalities). Students work in small groups to analyze the positives of living this lifestyle and the negatives of living this lifestyle and post on Padlet or Jamboard. End activity is to try and explain two examples of social, political, religious, intellectual, technologic, and economic institutions and developments (these institutions begin to develop increasing complexity as people become sedentary and populations grow).	X			X	X	X	
Civilization in Ur: students read the textbook section and complete a SPRITE chart detailing the six key traits of civilization and how they manifested in Ur in Sumer. Sumer was one part of Mesopotamia and this introductory section explains the manifestation of civilization in one of its city-states: Ur. This could be done individually or students could work to jigsaw the section of the textbook (five pages). Students can access the textbook with a hard copy or a digital version online.	X			X	X		

Civilization in Mesopotamia: combination of teacher notes (filling in gaps from the textbook) and students reading the textbook section and completing a SPRITE chart detailing the six key traits of civilization and how they manifested in Mesopotamia. This section is larger and covers geography and environmental challenges, Sumerian culture as a whole, and other later groups like the Akkadians and Babylonians. This could be done individually or students could work in small groups on the textbook section (6 pages). Students can access the textbook with a hard copy or a digital version online. Extension activity: primary source reading of Hammurabi's code, specifically examining the sections of the laws and how they relate to the SPRITE categories, trying to get students to infer and analyze key values from Mesopotamian society based on the construction of the law code.	X			X	X		
Student Choice: students can choose the next river valley civilization that they want to study and compare to Mesopotamia. Choices include Egypt on the Nile River, the Indus Valley in the Indian subcontinent, and China's Yellow and Yangtze rivers. Students will get two days to read the section of their choice (ranges from 4-7 pages) and complete a SPRITE chart detailing the six key traits of civilization and how they manifested in that region. Egypt perhaps had it the easiest, because the Nile tended to flood regularly and predictably. India is the most challenging because their writing system has not been deciphered, leaving us less specific knowledge of their civilization which could pose an issue for students. Like Egypt, the section on China is a bit longer and has plenty of detail. The SPRITE chart will also include space to compare Mesopotamia to the second civilization. Students can access the textbook with a hard copy or a digital version online.	X			X	X		
Ode to the River: for the summative assessment of the unit, students will be asked to construct a one-page poem that is an ode to the river. The teacher has constructed one as a model for Mesopotamia. We will read this aloud in class and discuss how specific examples of Mesopotamia's SPRITE characteristics show up in the poem. Example: upon you, oh Euphrates, I built my city-states, but you destroy them seemingly every other year with your flooding (city-states were typically independent and functioned like individual countries do today). Students can construct and submit their poem in a variety of fashions - submitting a written Google doc, reciting it in a Tik Tok video, making a presentation with Google Slides, Sway or Canva, etc.		X			X		X

Materials, tools and resources:

Chromebooks & chargers for students

World History: Patterns of Interaction textbook
Unit Plan Author: Les Moffitt, Burnsville High School (lmoffitt@isd191.org)
Additional credit given to: William Engelhardt, Burnsville High School - help(ed) co-create many lessons and assessments