

Focus Question:

What were the important features of ancient Mesopotamia?

Book Summary

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational

Although humans have existed for nearly two hundred thousand years, civilized societies did not emerge until relatively recently. One of the most fascinating and earliest examples of civilized society is that of ancient Mesopotamia. *Ancient Mesopotamia* offers a detailed look at the history and influence of this fertile part of the world. The book can also be used to teach students how to make inferences and draw conclusions as well as to identify adjectives. The book and lesson are also available for levels W and Z.



Lesson Essentials

Instructional Focus

- ☐ Summarize to understand text
- ☐ Make inferences and draw conclusions
- ☐ Describe information provided by graphics
- ☐ Recognize and use adjectives
- ☐ Identify and use content vocabulary

Materials

- ☐ Book: *Ancient Mesopotamia* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Make inferences / draw conclusions, adjectives, content vocabulary worksheets
- ☐ Discussion cards
- ☐ Book quiz
- ☐ Retelling rubric

Vocabulary

Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

• Words to Know

Story critical: *city-states* (n.), *civilized* (adj.), *cuneiform* (n.), *nomadic* (adj.), *phonologic* (adj.), *pictographs* (n.)

Enrichment: *alloy* (n.), *commerce* (n.), *demigod* (n.), *smelted* (v.), *stele* (n.), *ziggurat* (n.)

- **Academic vocabulary:** *control* (n.), *expand* (v.), *important* (adj.), *item* (n.), *same* (adj.), *show* (v.)

Guiding the Reading

Before Reading

Build Background

Write the words *civilized society* on the board and have students read them aloud. Invite volunteers to share what they know about these words. Point out that a civilized society is one that has rules and laws that help groups of people live and work together. Organize students into small groups and provide each group with a piece of chart paper. Write the following question on the board: What makes our country a civilized society? Have students work in their groups to record their responses to this question. Invite each group to share their responses with the class.

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book and author's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: Summarize

Explain to students that engaged readers *summarize*, or create a brief overview, as they read. Explain to students that when readers summarize what they read it helps them identify the sequence of the events described in the book. Point out that a summary often answers the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*. Create a chart on the board with the headings *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, and *Why*. Read aloud a summary from the back of a familiar book. Ask students what information is included in the summary and what information is omitted. Remind students that a summary includes only the most important details. Point out that a summary may include the entirety of the book or simply a section or chapter of a book.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill:

Make inferences / draw conclusions

- Explain to students that not all information in a book is directly stated. Discuss how sometimes

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

readers need to make inferences and draw conclusions by using details in the book to understand the indirect language used. Point out that an *inference* is a conclusion drawn by readers connecting clues in the text to information they already know. Point out that making inferences during reading allows readers to understand ideas in a text on a deeper level.

- Ask students to turn to the table of contents on page 3. Point out the section titled “Warring City-States.” Ask students to make an inference about this section. Explain that this title points to the fact that during the time of ancient Mesopotamia there was not always peace. Point out that, on the basis of this information, we can infer that these warring times influenced the culture and development of this society.

Vocabulary

Have students turn to the “Words to Know” box on the copyright page. Discuss each word with students. Then, have students turn to the glossary on page 20. Explain that the glossary provides definitions for the vocabulary words in the book. Point out the use of each content word and academic vocabulary word in the book, and then use each word in a different model sentence. Have students work in groups to create posters for these words. Have them include on each poster the word and its part of speech, the definition, the word in an example sentence, and a picture illustrating the meaning of the word.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about ancient Mesopotamia. Write the Focus Question on the board. Invite students to look for evidence in the book to support their answer to the question.
- Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in a future discussion.

During Reading

Text-Dependent Questions

As students read the book, monitor their understanding with the following questions. Encourage students to support their answers by citing evidence from the book.

- *What was Mesopotamia, and where was it located?* (level 1) page 4
- *How were the Ubaid different from traditional nomadic people?* (level 2) pages 5 and 6
- *What made Uruk the most important city-state?* (level 2) pages 7–9
- *What was cuneiform, and how did it change Mesopotamian culture?* (level 2) pages 8 and 9

- *In what ways did trade influence the culture of ancient Mesopotamia?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *Why was Mesopotamia also known as the Fertile Crescent?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *How did ancient Mesopotamia influence the world?* (level 3) multiple pages

Text Features: Graphics

Have students turn to page 16 and locate the supplemental text box labeled “A System of Sixty.” Point out that the additional text is provided by the author to expand upon and clarify the information discussed in the book. Ask a volunteer to explain what information the author is conveying through this graphic. Point out that such features are often present in nonfiction books. Have students discuss the following questions with a partner: *Why did the author include information about number base systems? How does this additional information help you to better understand the influence of Mesopotamian culture on the world and modern-day society?* Have students share their discussions with the class.

Skill Review

- Remind students that a summary of a book or section of a book describes only the most important events and details. Have students work in groups to reread and create an oral summary of the section “Prosperity and Advancement.” Direct them back to the chart on the board and review that a summary often includes *who, what, when, where, and why*. Invite students to share their summary with another group and have students give a thumbs-up signal if the summary addresses the most important details of the section.
- Have students work independently to create a written summary of the book in its entirety, referring to the information on the board. Then, have students work with a partner to exchange summaries and provide feedback.
- Model making inferences and drawing conclusions. **Think-aloud:** *As I read about ancient Mesopotamia, I am aware of the details provided by the author, and I am also aware of the information that is not in the text but is implied. By making inferences and drawing conclusions about the text, I am able to gather much more information about the topic than what is stated in the text. For example, as I read about the pictographs and the phonologic systems that developed in early civilized cultures, I can infer that during this period there were rapid advancements in the culture. When I consider the importance of written language in our current culture, I am able to infer that these developing systems in ancient Mesopotamia were incredibly impactful in the shaping of cultures throughout the world. Although the author does not state this directly, I can use the details in the text to make*

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

inferences and draw conclusions.

- Model how to complete the **make-inferences / draw-conclusions worksheet**. Have students identify details from the book and prior knowledge they have about those details. Then, have students make inferences on the basis of that information. Have students discuss the inferences with a partner.

After Reading

Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Skill Review

Graphic Organizer:

Make inferences / draw conclusions

Review the make-inferences / draw-conclusions worksheet that students completed. Have students share their work in groups. Invite volunteers to discuss their inferences as a class and share why and how they made those inferences.

Comprehension Extension

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided for extension activities.

Response to Focus Question

Have students cite specific evidence from the book to answer the Focus Question. (Answers will vary, but sample responses may include the following: *The important features of Mesopotamia include the development of irrigation, the creation of city-states, and the growth of written language skills.*)

Comprehension Checks

- **Book quiz**
- **Retelling rubric**

Book Extension Activities

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Adjectives

- Have students look at the images on page 7. Ask them to create a list of words that describe the images of a ziggurat. Have volunteers share the words they came up with and write the words on the board.

- Point out that the words they just listed are called **adjectives**. Explain that **adjectives** are words that describe nouns and pronouns and that an adjective tells which one, how many, or what kind.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *Trade routes from Asia and Europe went through the rich plains of Sumeria.* Have students work with a partner to identify the adjective in the sentence and the noun or pronoun it describes. Then have students determine whether the adjective describes which one, how many, or what kind.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work independently to reread pages 7 through 11 and circle all the adjectives and underline the noun or pronouns they describe. Then have them identify whether each adjective describes which one, how many, or what kind. Invite students to share their findings with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **adjectives worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.

Word Work: Content vocabulary

- Explain to students that knowing the meaning of the words they read in *Ancient Mesopotamia* will better help them understand the influence of this culture on the world. Point out that knowing the definition of vocabulary words will also help them understand many of the cause-and-effect relationships that took place in early civilized societies.
- Have students turn to page 10 and locate the word **demigod**. Point out that the word is in boldface print because the author feels that it is important for the reader to understand the meaning of the word **demigod**. Have students turn to a partner and locate the part of the text that helps define the word. Point out that oftentimes an author will either provide a direct definition of a boldface word or will give clues as to its meaning.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following words on the board: *commerce, nomadic, stele, ziggurat*. Invite students to work in small groups and provide each group a piece of chart paper. Have them fold the chart paper into four sections and label each section with one of the content vocabulary words on the board. Have students draw or write a definition for each word and then share their findings with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **content vocabulary worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.

Connections

- See the back of the book for cross-curricular extension ideas.