

79-104 Global Histories

Writing Workshop #1: Argument Stages

To prepare for Tuesday September 1st

Please review the two attached sample history essays written by former students and answer the following questions. Bring the completed homework to class on Tuesday September 1st.

1. Underline the thesis statement in each essay.
2. Does the thesis statement respond to the question?
3. Which thesis statement is more argumentative?

In other words, which thesis statement creates a better opportunity for the student to make an argument of his own by analyzing and commenting on the source text instead of just repeating the information from the source text?

Essay 1:

Prompt: What sort of picture do you get about the treatment of Babylonian women?

Hammurabi's Code is a set of written laws from the ancient Babylonian civilization; which makes it an important source for finding out about the treatment of women in terms of the laws that were applied in society, which themselves reflect the cultural attitudes during that time period. The main view we get throughout the laws is that women held a much lower status in society than men, as they were considered to be much less important than the men, their lives consisted of mainly being confined to household tasks, with few rights in important matters such as divorce and marriage.

The first-most noticeable way that we see inequality between men and women is the language itself in which each of the laws is written. Every single law is addressed to the men, with the use of the pronoun "he" throughout the text, even when the laws are closely referring to female issues. The general idea we get from this is that women were regarded as negligible when it came to issues that would deeply affect society (like laws).

The impression we get from most of the laws is that women were confined to the household and that almost all professions were occupied by men, leaving women no opportunity to directly make a contribution to the society's economy. Evidence of this is that every law concerned with the economy or a profession in any way (48 for debt; 53 and 54 for farming; 104 for trading; 215 for a physician and 229 for a builder) refers exclusively to men. This clearly illustrates that women did not take up jobs as much as men did. Laws 133 and 134 further emphasize this point by directly stating that women were not allowed to get their own "sustenance" by earning on their own, but expected to enter another household and depend on another man if their husbands were not present. This supports the point above about women not being part of many professions; perhaps it was a culturally frowned upon for women to be in a workplace, hence they were deeply encouraged to not seek work but rather depend completely on men for their economic needs.

One of the aspects of the poor treatment of women that stands out the most is the idea that Babylonian women were under the control of men, evident in the laws concerning marriage and divorce. We see that women had few consensual rights in a marriage. Law 128 is particularly interesting, as it considers a marriage's basic foundation to be sexual intercourse, especially putting blame on the woman to be "no wife" if there is no intercourse. Rather than forming emotional connections with their wives, men were encouraged to find a sexual connection first, while women had no voice in this. In addition, While men had the right to ask for divorce as stated in laws 137 and 138, women did not. Although *some* rights were given to women such as the right to own land and receiving a dowry, these laws were for the sole reason that the woman can bring up the children, not for her own benefit.

In conclusion, Hammurabi's Code gives the impression of women in Babylonian society to be considered inferior to men, and placed mainly in the household to look after the children. The Code was also skewed positively towards men's rights, and women were mainly disregarded when it came to the basic structure of society.

Essay 2:

Prompt: What does this document tell us about the ancient Babylonian social structure?

The Hammurabi code contains 282 rules and punishments that targeted to organize Babylonia social and economic life. The ancient Babylonia had three classes: free people from the upper class, free people from law state and slaves.

The free people from the highest social class or the amilu as known in the ancient Babylonia were those who enjoyed more rights than the others. According to the Hammurabi's code number 8 if any one from this class's goat was robbed the thief shall pay him more than to pay when he steals from a man from the lower class. Besides as mentioned in the code number 197 that if someone breaks an upper class free man's bone his bone must be broken, however if he breaks a lower class man's bone he has just to pay for one gold mina (code number 198).

The second class which is the class of freed men or the mushkenu is the one that comes just under the free men class. People from this class enjoyed fewer rights than the one from the upper class. The freed men are likely slaves who became free or men from the upper class but committed mistakes and were punished by losing their place and becoming freed men instead of free ones.

And finally, the last class which is the lowest one: the slaves or the wardu class. As any old empire, old Babylonia hired slaves who served the masters and who were concerned by the hardest tasks like building. They also enjoyed less than men from the other classes did, and if they had the attempt to escape from their masters they would be condemned to death even if some one else tried to take a slave whether male or female out of the court he shall be put to death.

In conclusion, Hammurabi was a powerful king who thought he was commanded by his gods to create the rule of law and justice over his people and for this reason he wrote a 282 rules and punishments code that organized life in Babylonia.