



A New Set of Laws

From the mountains of present-day Turkey, two rivers flow through Syria and Iraq to the Persian Gulf. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is part of an area called the Fertile Crescent. Although the region has a desert climate, the area between the rivers is fertile farmland. In Greek, the region was called Mesopotamia, or “land between the rivers.”

Settlers, known as the Sumerians, came to Mesopotamia to farm. By 3000 B.C., the Sumerians had built several city-states in Mesopotamia. A city-state is a city and the farmland that surrounds it. Each one was like its own country, and the city-states were often at war with each other. Because they fought each other, the city-states were too weak to survive attacks from outsiders.

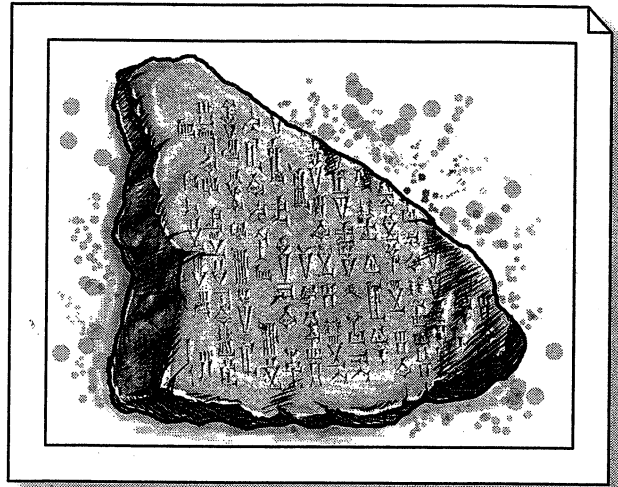
Around 2000 B.C., nomadic warriors invaded Mesopotamia. They set up their capital at Babylon and started an empire. An empire brings several peoples, nations, or independent states under the control of one ruler.

Hammurabi, who ruled from 1792 B.C. to 1750 B.C., was the Babylonian Empire’s greatest ruler. He brought all the people in his empire together under one set of laws. It was one of the first sets of laws to be written down. This set of 282 laws is called Hammurabi’s Code. The laws covered family issues, business conduct, and crime. Copies were carved in stone and placed all over the empire for people to read.

Hammurabi’s Code followed the idea of retaliation: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. For example, one of the laws reads as follows: “If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.” Everyone had to follow the laws. However, punishments for breaking them were different for the rich and the poor, and for men and women.

By today’s standards, Hammurabi’s Code was very strict and punishments for breaking the law were severe. However, by giving specific penalties for specific crimes, Hammurabi’s Code established social order. If a person was wronged, the state punished the offender for breaking the law. This stopped people from getting revenge by taking the law into their own hands.

Historians have learned a lot about the Babylonian Empire by studying the laws of Hammurabi’s Code. For example, laws about marriage and family show that men were superior to women in Mesopotamian society. The Babylonian Empire reached its peak during Hammurabi’s rule. About 200 years after he died, the Babylonian Empire fell to new invaders.

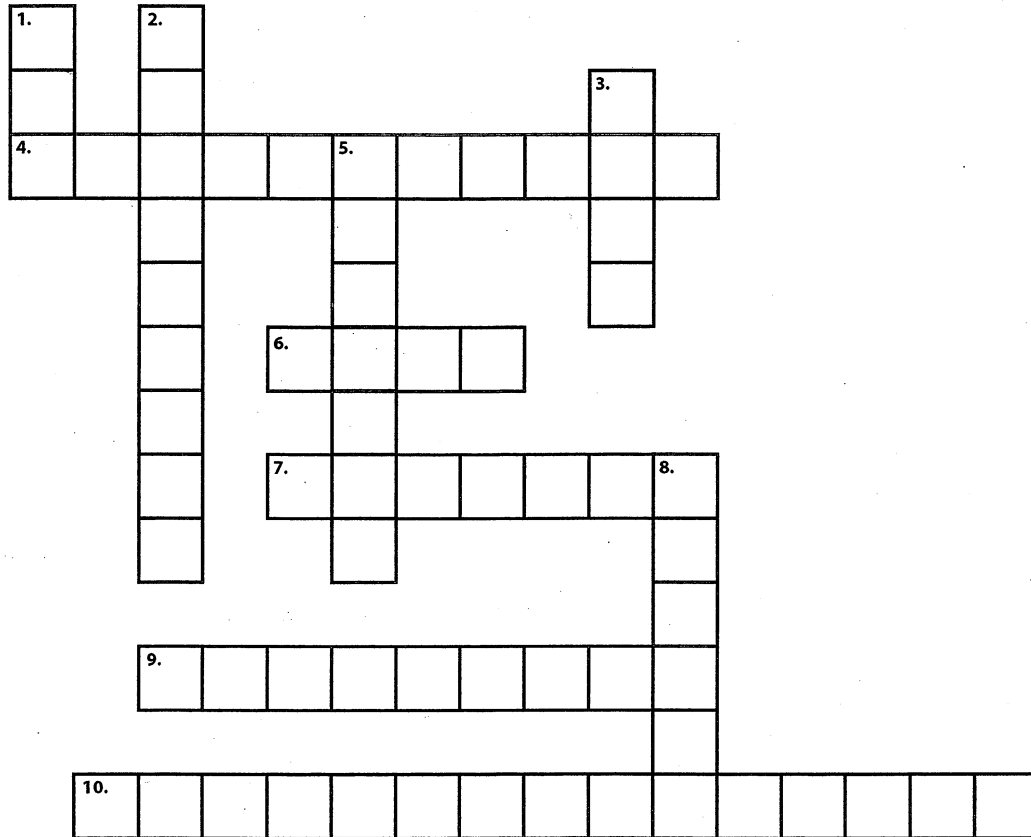




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Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

4. Hammurabi's Code followed the idea of _____.
6. Hammurabi's Code was one of the first sets of _____ to be written down for a state.
7. Under Hammurabi's Code, the state punished the offender for breaking the law instead of individuals getting _____.
9. Two hundred years after _____ died, the Babylonian Empire fell to new invaders.
10. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is part of the _____.

DOWN

1. The Sumerian city-states were often at _____ with each other.
2. A/an _____ is a city and the farmland that surrounds it.
3. Punishments for breaking the law were different for the rich and the _____, and for men and women.
5. The Babylonian Empire started when nomadic warriors _____ Mesopotamia.
8. Copies of Hammurabi's Code were carved in stone and placed all over the _____.



Quiz: A New Set of Laws

True/False

Decide if each statement is true or false, and write "true" or "false" in the blank.

- _____ 1. Invaders took over Mesopotamia and started the Babylonian City-State.
- _____ 2. The area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is made up of fertile farmland.
- _____ 3. Hammurabi's Code followed the idea of retaliation.
- _____ 4. Hammurabi's Code was one of the first sets of laws to be written down.
- _____ 5. The Babylonian Empire had no laws about crime.

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. Hammurabi's Code was _____.
- A. memorized by the Babylonian people
 - B. carved in stone and placed where people could read it
 - C. a secret that only the emperor knew
 - D. none of the above

7. Under Hammurabi's Code, if a man put out the eye of another man, he would _____.
- A. be killed
 - B. be put in jail
 - C. be forced to pay a fine
 - D. have his own eye put out

Short Answer

Answer the following question in complete sentences.

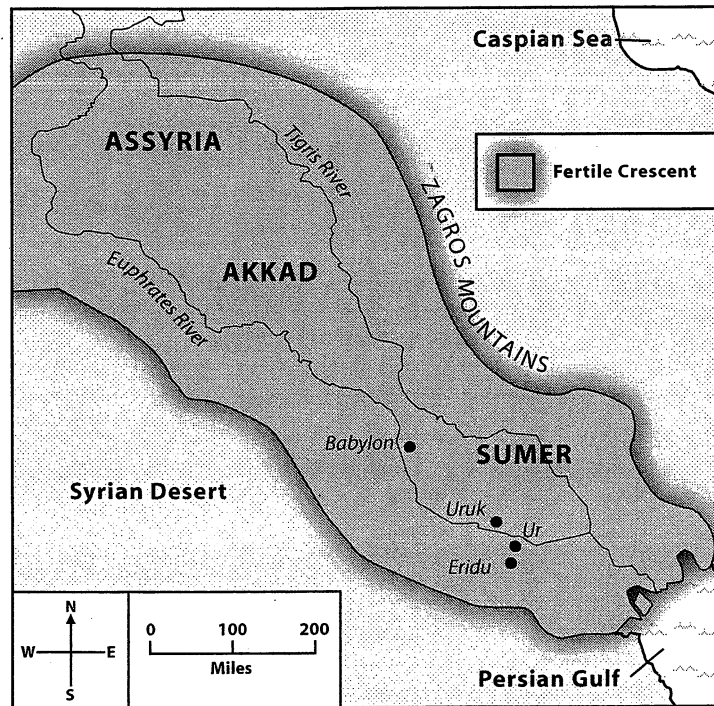
8. What is the name of the area located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers?



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Map – Ancient Mesopotamia

Use the map to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.



1. What borders the Fertile Crescent to the northeast?

2. What borders the Fertile Crescent to the southwest?

3. What is the name of the river closest to Babylon?



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Extension Activities

Choose one of the following activities to complete. Write the answer in complete sentences.

1. Hammurabi’s Code says, “If a son strike his father, his hands shall be cut off...If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.” Do you think this type of punishment is fair? Explain your answer.
2. Babylon was revived by Nebuchadnezzar in the 600s B.C. Under his rule, the famous Hanging Gardens were built. Look on the Internet or at the library to find out three facts about the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.
3. How did Hammurabi’s Code advance civilization? Explain your answer.
