

The Fertile Crescent, Mesopotamia, and the Persian Empire

Lesson 3



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Babylonians conquered Mesopotamia and created a code of law.
2. Invasions of Mesopotamia changed the region's culture.

Key Terms and People

monarch a ruler of a kingdom or empire

Hammurabi the city of Babylon's greatest monarch

Hammurabi's Code the earliest known written collection of laws, comprising 282 laws that dealt with almost every part of daily life

chariot a wheeled, horse-drawn battle cart

Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean king who rebuilt Babylon

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Lesson Summary

THE BABYLONIANS CONQUER MESOPOTAMIA

By 1800 BC, a powerful government had arisen in Babylon, an old Sumerian city on the Euphrates. Babylon's greatest **monarch** (MAH-nark), **Hammurabi**, had conquered all of Mesopotamia.

Hammurabi was not just a brilliant war leader. During his 42-year reign, Hammurabi oversaw many building and irrigation projects, improved the tax collection system, and brought prosperity through increased trade. He is most famous, however, for **Hammurabi's Code**, the earliest known written collection of laws. It contained laws on everything from trade, loans, and theft to injury, marriage, and murder. Some of its ideas are still found in laws today. The code was important not only for how thorough it was, but also because it was written down for all to see.

On what river was the city of Babylon located?

Why do you think it is important for laws to be written down?

Lesson 3, continued**INVASIONS OF MESOPOTAMIA**

Several other civilizations developed in and around the Fertile Crescent. As their armies battled one another for Mesopotamia's fertile land, control of the region passed from one empire to another. The Hittites of Asia Minor captured Babylon in 1595 BC with strong well-made iron weapons and the skillful use of the **chariot** on the battlefield. Soon the Hittite king was killed, and the Kassites captured Babylon and ruled for almost 400 years.

In the 1200s BC, the Assyrians briefly took over Babylon but were overrun by invaders. It took 300 years, but by around 900 BC they were the next group to conquer all of the Fertile Crescent and parts of Asia Minor and Egypt. The key to their success was their strong, fierce army. They also used iron weapons and chariots. They were well organized. Every soldier knew his role.

The Assyrians ruled from Nineveh (NI-nuh-vuh), a city in the north. They collected taxes, enforced laws, and raised troops through local leaders. The Assyrians also built roads to link distant parts of the empire. One Assyrian king built a royal library with tens of thousands of cuneiform tablets.

A series of wars started in 652 BC. In 612, BC the Chaldeans, a group from the Syrian Desert, conquered the Assyrians and set up a new empire of their own.

Nebuchadnezzar (neb-uh-kuhd-NEZ-uhr), the most famous Chaldean king, rebuilt Babylon into a beautiful city. According to legend, his grand palace featured the famous Hanging Gardens. The Chaldeans revived Sumerian culture and made notable advances in astronomy and mathematics.

Name four groups that conquered all of Mesopotamia after the Babylonians.

Which older Mesopotamian civilization did the Chaldeans admire and study?

Lesson 3, *continued*

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CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Sequence Make a timeline with approximate dates showing the various empires and invasions that characterized the history of Mesopotamia up to the time of the Chaldeans.

chariot	Hammurabi	Hammurabi's Code
monarch	Nebuchadnezzar	

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DIRECTIONS Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

- _____ was the most famous Chaldean king who rebuilt Babylon into a beautiful city and whose palace was famous for the Hanging Gardens. (**Hammurabi/Nebuchadnezzar**)
- A powerful ruler of a kingdom or empire is known as a _____. (**monarch/chariot**)
- _____ was a brilliant military leader who brought all of Mesopotamia into the Babylonian Empire. (**Nebuchadnezzar/Hammurabi**)
- The Hittites skillfully used the _____, a wheeled, horse-drawn battle cart, to move quickly around the battlefield and fire arrows at their enemy. (**chariot/monarch**)
- _____ was famous for his code of laws, which dealt with almost every part of daily life and was written down for all to see. (**Nebuchadnezzar/Hammurabi**)

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DIRECTIONS On the line provided before each statement, write **T** if a statement is true and **F** if a statement is false. If the statement is false, write the correct term on the line after each sentence that makes the sentence a true statement.

- _____ 6. The Hittite soldiers used the monarch in their battles to capture Babylon.

- _____ 7. Under the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, injuring a rich man brought a greater penalty than injuring a poor man.
