HAMMURABI’S CODE OF LAW

Students will be able to describe the legacy of Hammurabi and offer personal inferences in regards to the justification of his laws.
EARLY MESOPOTAMIAN EMPIRES

By 2350 B.C., a powerful leader named Sargon took control of both northern and southern Mesopotamia.

Sargon is known as the world’s first emperor, the leader of the world’s first EMPIRE. Empires bring together many different peoples and lands under one ruler.

Sargon’s empire was called the Akkadian Empire. It ruled an area called the FERTILE CRESCENT.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why is this area known as the Fertile Crescent?

This area was good for farming and in the shape of a crescent.

Sargon’s empire lasted for about 200 years.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Should Sargon be remembered as an important person in world history?
THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

Around 2000 B.C., people known as the Amorites began to invade and take control of Sumerian city-states. They chose the city-state of Babylon as their capital.

From 1792 to 1750 B.C., an Amorite king named Hammurabi ruled the empire.

Hammurabi expanded the empire to control other parts of the Fertile Crescent.

Hammurabi used governors to help him control the lands.
DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does this mean?
Emperors need trusted people to send out to different regions.

Hammurabi also sent people to collect taxes and appointed judges to help keep order.
HAMMURABI’S CODE OF LAW  DISCUSSION QUESTION: What would our society be like without laws?

Hammurabi believed he needed a set of rules/laws for the people of his vast empire to obey.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why wouldn’t Hammurabi just let the individual city-states govern themselves?

Hammurabi believed a CODE OF LAW would help control the empire. A code of law is a set of written rules for people to obey.

Hammurabi studied existing rules and put together a single code of law for everyone in his empire to follow. The code, written in cuneiform was displayed on huge pillars near a temple.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What impact do you think this would have had on the people?

The code’s goal was to bring justice, fair treatment of people, to the people of his empire. The code listed acts of wrongdoing along with punishments as well as rights to people living within the land. Even women and children had rights, which was not the case in many other ancient cultures. Punishments varied depending on social class. In all there were 282 different codes of law.
GROUP DISCUSSION ACTIVITY: For each situation, record your idea of how the law should apply. Then, see how Hammurabi’s Code applied to the situation. After, write down your reaction as either FAIR, LENIENT, HARSH.

SITUATION 1: What should be done to the carpenter who builds a house that falls and kills the owner?

Hammurabi’s Code #229: If a builder builds a house for someone, and does not construct it properly, and the house which he built falls in and kills its owner, then that builder shall be put to death.

SITUATION 2: What should happen to a boy who slaps his father?

Hammurabi’s Code #195: If a son strikes his father, his hands shall be hewn (cut) off.

SITUATION 3: What should be done about a wife who ignores her duties and belittles her husband?

Hammurabi’s Code #143: If the woman has not been careful but has gadded about, neglecting her house and belittling her husband, they shall throw that woman into the water.

SITUATION 4: What should be done to the man who can not pay his debts?

Hammurabi’s Code #117: If a man be in debt and is unable to pay his creditors, he shall sell his wife, son, or daughter, or bind them over to service. For three years they shall work in the houses of their purchaser or master; in the fourth year they shall be given their freedom.

SITUATION 5: What should happen if a nobleman dies during surgery?

Hammurabi’s Code #218: If a doctor makes a large incision with an operating knife and kills a nobleman or commoner, the doctor’s hands shall be cut off.

SITUATION 6: What should the punishment be for robbery?

Hammurabi’s Code #22: If anyone is committing a robbery and is caught, then he shall be put to death.