



Mesopotamia

BY JONATHAN BURACK



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Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments are designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about the Mesopotamia. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available (or planned) for each unit in a typical world history class.

Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

What Are These Assessments Like?

A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of world history

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards—Assessment 1 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 1, Assessment 2 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 2, and so on. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

Based on primary or secondary sources

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source or on a primary and a secondary source. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone. Links to online versions of print media are available in the Bibliography. Please note that these links were valid at the time of production, but the websites may have since been discontinued.

• Brief tasks promoting historical literacy

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the students' mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

• Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments

A *basic* and an *advanced* version of each assessment are provided. The *basic* assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The *advanced* assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the *basic* version.

• Easy to use as both learning and assessment tools

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess students' historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

• Evaluating student responses

Brief but specific suggestions are provided, defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly, they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

Teacher INSTRUCTIONS

Assessment 1 Basic Level The Floods of Mesopotamia

Key Ideas and Details

1. (6–8) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

KUsing This Assessment

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their ancient history coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should note the references in Document 1 to the unpredictable and sudden nature of the floods. Crops might already have been in the fields when the floods arrived to wash them away. The danger of floods was even greater given that Mesopotamia depended on agriculture not merely for survival but for goods to trade for many otherwise needed items. The passage from the Gilgamesh story echoes this concern in its colorful and emotional description of the "all-powerful flood" and "frenzied storm." Also, it specifically notes the impact on agriculture of the flood that "drowns the harvest in its time of ripeness." Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should see that the floods made it even more important for people in that region to turn to irrigation and other techniques of water control. This required greater levels of social organization, leading to the development of the first cities. In the end, it also made possible much greater surpluses to trade for timber and minerals, also adding to the wealth and power of the early cities of Sumer.

The Floods of Mesopotamia

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source and one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Document 1: A Secondary Source

"Mesopotamia" is Greek for "the land between the rivers." The rivers in this case were the Tigris and Euphrates. Each year, the rivers flooded, carrying silt from the nearby mountains. This kept the land extremely fertile. But the flat topography meant that floods could bring vast destruction as well as fertile new soil. Unlike the Nile in Egypt, Mesopotamia's floods were not easy to predict. They could sweep away crops already growing in the fields. Only with a system of levees and canals could the waters be controlled and the land put to use. Such a system required a high degree of cooperation and skillful organization. Also, each city turned to its god or gods for help in the face of what was an uncertain and challenging environment.

Sumer's flat, empty plain was good for raising barley and wheat, and for grazing sheep, goats, and other animals. But it lacked key resources, such as timber and the copper and tin needed to make bronze. This meant that Sumer had to carry on a great deal of trade. It depended on a steady surplus of agricultural goods to trade for minerals and timber with peoples in the Zagros Mountains, Asia Minor, and along the Mediterranean coast. This trade encouraged the growth of cities, usually at temple sites along the trade routes. These cities, in turn, became political and religious centers for their surrounding regions. The city-states of Sumer were built both for trade and for its priests and temples needed to appease Sumer's unpredictable deities.

Source Information: This is a secondary source document about the role played by the Tigris and Euphrates in the rise of the ancient Mesopotamian civilizations. A secondary source is an account of past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. This passage is from *Ancient Mesopotamia* by Jonathan Burack, History Unfolding (Culver City, CA: MindSparks, 2009).

Basic

Document 2: A Primary Source

The rampant flood which no man can oppose,

Which shakes the heavens and causes earth to tremble,

In an appalling blanket folds mother and child,

Beats down the canebrake's full luxuriant greenery,

And drowns the harvest in its time of ripeness.

Rising waters, grievous to eyes of man,

All-powerful flood, which forces the embankments

And mows down mighty trees,

Frenzied storm, tearing all things in massed confusion

With it in hurling speed.

Source Information: In time, the development of agriculture made more complex societies possible such as the ancient city-states along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This passage describing floods on those rivers is from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, perhaps the most famous of all Sumerian myths. This part of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is quoted by Thorkild Jacobsen in "Mesopotamia," which is included in *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, by Henri Frankfort (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 139.

Assessment Questions

1. How do both documents offer evidence of why floods were especially fearful and threatening to ancient Mesopotamians?

2. Did the floods have any positive effects on the growth of civilization in this region? Cite specific details from either or both documents to support your answer.

Assessment 1 Advanced Level The Floods of Mesopotamia

Key Ideas and Details

- **1. (9–10)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- **1. (11–12)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

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Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past. As called for by the Common Core standard for grades 11–12, it also prompts students to relate the textual details to "an understanding of the text as a whole."

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should note the references in Document 1 to the unpredictable nature of the floods, unlike those on the Nile. Crops already in the fields could be washed away. The flood danger forced people to turn to irrigation and develop other techniques of water control. This required greater levels of social organization, leading to the development of the first cities. The floods also brought fertile soil to the land and made possible the surpluses that could be traded for timber and minerals, adding to the wealth and power of the early cities of Sumer. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should note the overall tone of menace and chaos that is expressed in the passage from the Gilgamesh story. It speaks of the "all-powerful flood," the "frenzied storm," the "massed confusion," etc. It also specifically notes the impact on agriculture of the flood that "drowns the harvest in its time of ripeness." Document 1 refers not only to the unpredictable flood patterns, but also to the wide-open lands, the lack of many vital resources, and other factors that made life uncertain and that could have led to conflict and competition in the desire to secure resources.

The Floods of Mesopotamia

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source and one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 1: (9–10) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information. **(11–12)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Document 1: A Secondary Source

"Mesopotamia" is Greek for "the land between the rivers." The rivers in this case were the Tigris and Euphrates. Each year, the rivers flooded, carrying silt from the nearby mountains. This kept the land extremely fertile. But the flat topography meant that floods could bring vast destruction as well as fertile new soil. Unlike the Nile in Egypt, Mesopotamia's floods were not easy to predict. They could sweep away crops already growing in the fields. Only with a system of levees and canals could the waters be controlled and the land put to use. Such a system required a high degree of cooperation and skillful organization. Also, each city turned to its god or gods for help in the face of what was an uncertain and challenging environment.

Sumer's flat, empty plain was good for raising barley and wheat, and for grazing sheep, goats, and other animals. But it lacked key resources, such as timber and the copper and tin needed to make bronze. This meant that Sumer had to carry on a great deal of trade. It depended on a steady surplus of agricultural goods to trade for minerals and timber with peoples in the Zagros Mountains, Asia Minor, and along the Mediterranean coast. This trade encouraged the growth of cities, usually at temple sites along the trade routes. These cities, in turn, became political and religious centers for their surrounding regions. The city-states of Sumer were built both for trade and for its priests and temples needed to appease Sumer's unpredictable deities.

Source Information: This is a secondary source document about the role played by the Tigris and Euphrates in the rise of the ancient Mesopotamian civilizations. A secondary source is an account of past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. This passage is from *Ancient Mesopotamia* by Jonathan Burack, History Unfolding (Culver City, CA: MindSparks, 2009).

Document 2: A Primary Source

The rampant flood which no man can oppose, Which shakes the heavens and causes earth to tremble, In an appalling blanket folds mother and child, Beats down the canebrake's full luxuriant greenery, And drowns the harvest in its time of ripeness. Rising waters, grievous to eyes of man, All-powerful flood, which forces the embankments And mows down mighty trees, Frenzied storm, tearing all things in massed confusion With it in hurling speed.

Source Information: In time, the development of agriculture made more complex societies possible such as the ancient city-states along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This passage describing floods on those rivers is from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, perhaps the most famous of all Sumerian myths. This part of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is quoted by Thorkild Jacobsen in "Mesopotamia," which is included in *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, by Henri Frankfort (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 139.

Assessment Questions

1. The particular nature of the floods in Mesopotamia played a big role in the emergence of complex civilizations there. What details in Document 1 help explain why this was so?

2. Some historians believe geography was a factor in explaining the instability and insecurity ancient Mesopotamian peoples often seemed to experience. What details in both documents seem to support that view?



Assessment 2 Basic Level The Code of Hammurabi

Key Ideas and Details

2. (6–8) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 2 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 2 for grades 6–8. It asks students to summarize the central ideas in a source from the text itself without imposing ideas or attitudes external to the text. This is not easy to do. This activity assesses the ability to read closely in order to build an overall understanding of the source out of the text itself.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should be able to detect the passage's generally critical view of the law code as one based on a principle of "grim retaliatory punishments." To support this view, Horne lists the very harsh punishments for several sorts of crimes—with no exception made for unintentionally harmful acts. Horne also seems to ridicule the superstitious practice he mentions at the end of the passage. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question may vary. It will depend on how one views the punishments Horne lists. Many may agree they are rigid, vengeful, and cruel. Others, however, may see them as early attempts to base rules on at least some concept of fairness, however harsh from our point of view. This question should be debated—perhaps along with Assessment 6 for this set.

The Code of Hammurabi

Directions: This exercise asks you to study one secondary source document carefully and answer two questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

A Secondary Source Document

By far the most remarkable of the Hammurabi records is his code of laws, the earliest-known example of a ruler proclaiming publicly to his people an entire body of laws, arranged in orderly groups, so that all men might read and know what was required of them. The code was carved upon a black stone monument, eight feet high, and clearly intended to be reared in public view. . . .

The code then regulates in clear and definite strokes the organization of society. The judge who blunders in a law case is to be expelled from his judgeship forever, and heavily fined. The witness who testifies falsely is to be slain. Indeed, all the heavier crimes are made punishable with death. Even if a man builds a house badly, and it falls and kills the owner, the builder is to be slain. If the owner's son was killed, then the builder's son is slain. We can see where the Hebrews learned their law of "an eye for an eye." These grim retaliatory punishments take no note of excuses or explanations, but only of the fact—with one striking exception. An accused person was allowed to cast himself into "the river," the Euphrates. Apparently the art of swimming was unknown; for if the current bore him to the shore alive he was declared innocent, if he drowned he was guilty. So we learn that faith in the justice of the ruling gods was already firmly, though somewhat childishly, established in the minds of men.

Source Information: The Code of Hammurabi is the best known of a number of law codes developed by the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia. This law code was enacted by Hammurabi, who ruled a Babylonian empire from 1792 to 1750 BCE according to one commonly used dating system. Hammurabi's Code consists of 282 rules covering many topics—such as contracts and commercial matters, criminal acts, and household and family relationships. This passage is shortened and adapted from an introduction written by Charles F. Horne for L. W. King's 1915 translation of *Hammurabi's Code*, available from Yale Law School's Avalon Project.

Assessment Questions

1. The central idea in this passage is the judgment it makes about the fairness of the Code of Hammurabi. What is that judgment, and what evidence is offered in support of it?

2. Do you think the author's tone and point of view in describing Hammurabi's law code is justified? Why or why not?

Assessment 2 Advanced Level The Code of Hammurabi

Key Ideas and Details

- **2. (9–10)** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- **2. (11–12)** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 2 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 2 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to summarize the central ideas in a source from the text itself without imposing ideas or attitudes external to the text. This is not easy to do. Moreover, when it comes to the unique demands of thinking historically we do also want students to use knowledge of historical context to help them interpret sources. But that sort of contextualizing also demands that students suspend their own present-day ideas while studying a source. This activity assesses the ability to read closely in order to build an overall understanding of the source out of the text itself.

X Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should be able to detect the critical tone of the passage and its overall view of the law code as one based on a principle of "grim retaliatory punishments." The evidence offered in support of this view is a listing of the very harsh punishments given for many different sorts of crimes—with seemingly little desire to make exceptions for unintentionally harmful acts. Horne expresses disdain also for the superstitious practice he mentions at the end. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question may vary. Those who find Horne's analysis thoughtful may note that he bases his mostly critical view on a detailed listing of examples from the law code. He does offer some perspective, describing the law code as the first-known attempt by a ruler to make public a system of laws (earlier codes have come to light since Horne wrote this). Others may find fault in that, out of 282 laws, Horne selects only a few. Was his selection truly representative of the entire code? He also expresses bias that may reflect modern values instead of trying to understand the code from the point of view of people at the time. This question should be discussed, as it is an opportunity to explore several aspects of what constitutes historical thinking.

The Code of Hammurabi

Directions: This exercise asks you to study one secondary source document carefully and answer two questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 2: (9–10) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text. **(11–12)** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

A Secondary Source Document

By far the most remarkable of the Hammurabi records is his code of laws, the earliest-known example of a ruler proclaiming publicly to his people an entire body of laws, arranged in orderly groups, so that all men might read and know what was required of them. The code was carved upon a black stone monument, eight feet high, and clearly intended to be reared in public view. . . .

The code then regulates in clear and definite strokes the organization of society. The judge who blunders in a law case is to be expelled from his judgeship forever, and heavily fined. The witness who testifies falsely is to be slain. Indeed, all the heavier crimes are made punishable with death. Even if a man builds a house badly, and it falls and kills the owner, the builder is to be slain. If the owner's son was killed, then the builder's son is slain. We can see where the Hebrews learned their law of "an eye for an eye." These grim retaliatory punishments take no note of excuses or explanations, but only of the fact—with one striking exception. An accused person was allowed to cast himself into "the river," the Euphrates. Apparently the art of swimming was unknown; for if the current bore him to the shore alive he was declared innocent, if he drowned he was guilty. So we learn that faith in the justice of the ruling gods was already firmly, though somewhat childishly, established in the minds of men.

Source Information: The Code of Hammurabi is the best known of a number of law codes developed by the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia. This law code was enacted by Hammurabi, who ruled a Babylonian empire from 1792 to 1750 BCE according to one commonly used dating system. Hammurabi's Code consists of 282 rules covering many topics—such as contracts and commercial matters, criminal acts, and household and family relationships. This passage is shortened and adapted from an introduction written by Charles F. Horne for L. W. King's 1915 translation of *Hammurabi's Code*, available from Yale Law School's Avalon Project.

Assessment Questions

1. What overall point does Charles Horne make about the Code of Hammurabi, and how do the details in the passage help him stress that point?

2. Do you think Horne is being careful and thoughtful as a historian in forming the judgment he expresses in this passage? Explain your answer.

Assessment 3 Basic Level Inequality in Ancient Civilizations

Key Ideas and Details

3. (6–8) Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 3 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 3 for grades 6–8. It asks students to follow the way a set of ideas or sequence of events in a text interacts together to describe a process or develop a central idea. This activity assesses the students' ability to read closely in order to understand various connections between each detail and the next in a text.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Answers to the first assessment question should see that the passage makes its central point clear at the very end of the passage. It says there is no agreement yet as to what caused growing inequality in early ancient civilizations. As the last sentence puts it, "No simple answer is possible." Answers to the second assessment question should summarize the three explanations of inequality offered in the passage. Those three explanations are that inequalities arose (1) because of a need for strong leaders and armies to provide protection, (2) because food surpluses made it possible to support and reward small wealthier elites of skilled people and leaders, and (3) because inequality is inevitable in all societies and is only more obvious in complex and wealthier societies. The passage's central point is developed by indicating how difficult it is to decide among these alternative explanations of inequality.

Inequality in Ancient Civilizations

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source document carefully and answer two questions about specific details in it. In order to better understand the document as a historical source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 3: Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

A Secondary Source Document

Roving hunter-gatherer bands were simple societies in which the very small amounts of wealth were probably shared fairly equally. This began to change about 10,000 years ago with the shift to agriculture, food surpluses, and settled life. Later, after about 3500 BCE, came complex civilizations that gave us cities, monumental buildings, irrigation and water-control systems, writing, and long-distance trade. Also, small upper class groups emerged to rule over lower classes of peasants, laborers, and slaves. In other words, sharp differences of power, wealth, and status arose. Religious practices often gave spiritual support and backing for the rulers of these more complex societies and their unequal division of wealth and power.

Here are three views about the causes of this social inequality:

Inequalities arose because of a need for protection. That is, strong leaders and armies were needed to protect the stored wealth, landed property, and other resources of these settled civilizations. Nomadic warriors and others found these things too tempting. Hence, warfare arose, and this created inequality.

Food surpluses allowed some to develop new skills, as artisans, engineers, merchants, soldiers, and priests. To encourage these skills, greater rewards had to be offered. Inequality resulted as small specialized elites gained control over society's growing resources.

Inequality is simply a part of human nature, perhaps even a necessary and beneficial part. Someone has to lead. Someone has to create or innovate. Some inequality has always existed, even in the simplest societies. The rise of civilization only enabled it to grow wider.

Historians have tried in these and other ways to account for social inequality in the complex societies that emerged starting around 3500 BCE. Debates about this central question continue. No simple answer is possible.

Source Information: This is a secondary source document about the rise of ancient societies and the increasing social and economic inequality within those more complex societies. The passage is adapted from the introduction to *Slaves, Peasants, and Scribes in the Ancient World* by Jonathan Burack, Debating the Documents (Culver City, CA: MindSparks, 2007), p. 8.

Assessment Questions

1. This passage discusses efforts to understand the causes of inequality in ancient Mesopotamia. What central claim does it make about such efforts?

2. Summarize the way the passage develops its central idea. That is, explain why the entire passage has to be understood to fully understand its central idea.

Assessment 3 Advanced Level Inequality in Ancient Civilizations

Key Ideas and Details

- **3. (9–10)** Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- **3. (11–12)** Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 3 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 3 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to follow the way a set of ideas or sequence of events in a text interacts together to describe a process or develop a central idea. The activity assesses the students' ability to read closely in order to understand various connections between each detail and the next in a complex text. It also asks them to evaluate the explanation offered in the passage and consider how adequate it is.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Answers to the first assessment question should see that the central idea of this passage is that there is no agreement as to the causes of rising inequality in early ancient civilizations. As the last sentence puts it, "No simple answer is possible." Answers should summarize the three explanations of inequality offered in the passage. Those three explanations are that inequalities arose (1) because of a need for strong leaders and armies to provide protection, (2) because food surpluses made it possible to support and reward small wealthier elites of skilled people and leaders, and (3) because inequality is inevitable in all societies and is only more obvious in complex and wealthier societies. The passage's central point is that it is difficult to decide among these alternatives. Answers to the second assessment question may vary. Most should see, however, that the three explanations are not mutually incompatible. Inequality may be inevitable in all societies, but it may also be made stronger by the existence of threats requiring strong leadership elites or by growing wealth that can then be distributed in unequal ways. The question should lead to a broader discussion about social and economic inequality in general.

Inequality in Ancient Civilizations

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source document carefully and answer two questions about specific details in it. In order to better understand the document as a historical source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 3: (9–10) Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them. **(11–12)** Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

A Secondary Source Document

Roving hunter-gatherer bands were simple societies in which the very small amounts of wealth were probably shared fairly equally. This began to change about 10,000 years ago with the shift to agriculture, food surpluses, and settled life. Later, after about 3500 BCE, came complex civilizations that gave us cities, monumental buildings, irrigation and water-control systems, writing, and long-distance trade. Also, small upper class groups emerged to rule over lower classes of peasants, laborers, and slaves. In other words, sharp differences of power, wealth, and status arose. Religious practices often gave spiritual support and backing for the rulers of these more complex societies and their unequal division of wealth and power.

Here are three views about the causes of this social inequality:

Inequalities arose because of a need for protection. That is, strong leaders and armies were needed to protect the stored wealth, landed property, and other resources of these settled civilizations. Nomadic warriors and others found these things too tempting. Hence, warfare arose, and this created inequality.

Food surpluses allowed some to develop new skills, as artisans, engineers, merchants, soldiers, and priests. To encourage these skills, greater rewards had to be offered. Inequality resulted as small specialized elites gained control over society's growing resources.

Inequality is simply a part of human nature, perhaps even a necessary and beneficial part. Someone has to lead. Someone has to create or innovate. Some inequality has always existed, even in the simplest societies. The rise of civilization only enabled it to grow wider.

Historians have tried in these and other ways to account for social inequality in the complex societies that emerged starting around 3500 BCE. Debates about this central question continue. No simple answer is possible.

Source Information: This is a secondary source document about the rise of ancient societies and the increasing social and economic inequality within those more complex societies. The passage is adapted from the introduction to *Slaves, Peasants, and Scribes in the Ancient World* by Jonathan Burack, Debating the Documents (Culver City, CA: MindSparks, 2007), p. 8.

Assessment Questions

1. Summarize the way this passage develops its central idea. That is, explain why the entire passage has to be understood to fully understand this central idea.

2. Are all the alternative explanations in the passage mutually exclusive? That is, if one is correct, does that mean the others are not? Explain your answer.



Assessment 4 Basic Level The Temple and the City

Craft and Structure

4. (6–8) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 4 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 4 for grades 6–8. It asks students to recognize that words and phrases must be understood in relation to the meaning of the text as a whole. In seeking to understand historical sources, this is an especially important challenge. Words and phrases need to be understood as they were used within their historical context. This activity assesses the students' ability to read closely in order to understand terms in these ways.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Answers to the first assessment question should define the terms somewhat as follows:

"surplus wealth"-extra wealth over and above what is needed to meet people's basic needs

"clearing house"—an organization for collecting something that must then be passed on to others

"redistributing it"-passing out something collected from one group to other groups

"capital advanced to entrepreneurs"—funds given to businesses to help them grow

Answers to the second assessment question should see that "temple" here partly means an economic institution in control of much of the community's wealth. That is, it is not merely a location for ceremonial purposes or a place to foster religious practices and beliefs.

The Temple and the City

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source document carefully and answer two questions about specific details in it. In order to better understand the document as a historical source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

A Secondary Source Document

The role of the temple [in the Sumerian city] is . . . critical, for these institutions [temples] acted as consumers of <u>surplus wealth</u>, accepting the bounty of the land as offerings to the gods, as well as serving as a <u>clearing house</u>, collecting the surplus on behalf of the gods and then <u>redistributing it</u> in the form of rations to temple-workers, for example, or as <u>capital</u> <u>advanced to entrepreneurs</u> who might then engage in commerce and long-distance trade.

Source Information: At first, the largest structures in the cities of ancient Sumer were temples. This passage briefly discusses the nature of these temples. The passage is from *The Human Past: World Prehistory* & the Development of Human Societies, edited by Chris Scarre (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), p. 438.

Assessment Questions

1. To fully understand this passage, you first need to understand the underlined phrases in it. Explain the meanings of these phrases as they are used here.

2. Using your definitions of these phrases and the entire passage, explain how the temple in ancient Sumer differs from the word "temple" as we commonly use it today.



Assessment 4 Advanced Level The Temple and the City

Craft and Structure

- **4. (9–10)** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- **4. (11–12)** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 4 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 4 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to recognize that words and phrases must be understood in relation to the meaning of the text as a whole. In seeking to understand historical sources, this is an especially important challenge. Words and phrases need to be understood as they were used within their historical context. This activity assesses the students' ability to read closely in order to understand terms in these ways.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Answers to the first assessment question should see that the "temple" in this passage was in part a central economic institution of the Sumerian city. It collected and redistributed much of the city's wealth, and this gave it both economic and political power. In other words, it was not merely a setting for ceremonies or a place to foster religious practices and beliefs. Answers to the second assessment question should express several key terms here using simpler language—terms such as "institution," "surplus wealth," "clearing house," "redistributing it," or "capital advanced to entrepreneurs." Assess answers mainly by how well they explain these aspects of the temple's role in simpler language.

The Temple and the City

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source document carefully and answer two questions about specific details in it. In order to better understand the document as a historical source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 4: (9–10) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science. **(11–12)** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

A Secondary Source Document

The role of the temple [in the Sumerian city] is . . . critical, for these institutions [temples] acted as consumers of <u>surplus wealth</u>, accepting the bounty of the land as offerings to the gods, as well as serving as a <u>clearing house</u>, collecting the surplus on behalf of the gods and then <u>redistributing it</u> in the form of rations to temple-workers, for example, or as <u>capital</u> <u>advanced to entrepreneurs</u> who might then engage in commerce and long-distance trade.

Source Information: At first, the largest structures in the cities of ancient Sumer were temples. This passage briefly discusses the nature of these temples. The passage is from *The Human Past: World Prehistory* & the Development of Human Societies, edited by Chris Scarre (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), p. 438.

Assessment Questions

1. Explain why the word "temple" as used in this passage differs from what most people today mean by that word.

2. Some words in this passage might be difficult for young readers. Rewrite the passage so that ordinary fifth-graders could understand the unique meaning of the word "temple" as it is described here.



Assessment 5 Basic Level The Sumerian King List

Craft and Structure

5. (6–8) Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

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Assessment 5 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 5 for grades 6–8. It asks students to pay attention to a text's "structure"—that is, to the overall pattern or organizational arrangement of its headings, sentences, paragraphs, stanzas, and chapters, as well as its various stylistic features. These formal elements can contribute to a text's meanings in many ways. This activity assesses the students' ability to read closely in order to understand the impact of the way one historical primary source is structured to present its information.

KEvaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should notice that the first Sumerian kings are given impossibly long reigns, far beyond the possible life span of any actual human being. The list then also mentions a great flood. This could have a basis in fact or could be a common myth, which is found also in the Hebrew Old Testament. After the flood, the reigns are still impossibly long, but not as long. Gilgamesh is mentioned. He is a mythical figure, but his presence here could mean he is a historical figure as well. For after his name, the reigns are all short enough to have been those of actual human kings. This could be evidence that the list is based on more accurate historical records. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should see that the main text structure is "time order/ chronology." It mainly lists the kings in the order in which they were said to have ruled. However, those choosing the "compare/contrast" option may have a case to make. The passage does break into two sections. One lists kings with enormously long life spans before and just after the flood; then the list switches to naming those with shorter and more realistic life spans. The passage does not actually call attention to this contrast, but it is there.

The Sumerian King List

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one primary source document and answer two questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 5: Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

A Primary Source Document

After kingship had descended from heaven, Eridu became the seat of kingship. In Eridu Aululim reigned 28,800 years as king. Alalgar reigned 36,000 years. Two kings, reigned 64,800 years. Eridu was abandoned and its kingship was carried off to Bad-tabira...

Total: Five Cities, eight kings, reigned 241,200 years.

The FLOOD then swept over. After the Flood had swept over, and kingship had descended from heaven, Kish became the seat of Kingship. In Kish Total: twenty-three kings, reigned 24,510 years, 3 months, 3½ days. Kish was defeated; its kingship was carried off to Eanna.

In Eanna, Meskiaggasher, the son of (the sun god) Utu reigned . . . 324 years— Meskiaggasher entered the sea, ascended the mountains. Enmerkar, the son of Meskiaggasher, the king of [Uruk] who had built [Uruk], reigned 420 years as king. Lugalbanda, the shepherd, reigned 1,200 years. Dumuzi the fisherman, whose city was Kua, reigned 100 years. Gilgamesh . . . reigned 126 years. Urnungal, the son of Gilgamesh, reigned 30 years. Labasher reigned 9 years. Ennundaranna reigned 8 years. Meshede reigned 36 years. Melamanna reigned 6 years. Lugalkidul reigned 36 years. Total: twelve kings, reigned 2,130 years. [Uruk] was defeated, its kingship was carried off to Ur."

Source Information: This excerpt is adapted from part of the Sumerian King List. It is from a version of the list found on a clay tablet dated from the reign of King Utukhegal of Uruk. This places it around 2125 BCE. The excerpt lists various kings of Sumer and the years of their rule. It suggests that Sumerian kingship was granted by the gods to different cities at different times, probably depending on which city was dominant at the time. The famous hero of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is listed here. This suggests he may have been an actual historical figure, not just a hero in a myth. This translation is excerpted from "The Sumerian King List," the Internet Ancient History Sourcebook, edited by John Paul Adams, California State University–Northridge.

Assessment Questions

1. One historian says: "This list moves from sheer myth to what might be accurate history." What about the list might lead him to see it that way?

- 2. "Text structure" refers to the way paragraphs and longer texts are organized, with different structures serving different purposes. Here are two types of text structure:
 - Compare and Contrast: A pattern showing what is similar and what is different in two events, examples, processes, etc.
 - *Time Order/Chronology:* A series of events is described in the order in which they occurred over time.

Of these text structures, choose the one you think most accurately describes the text structure of this document. Explain your choice.

Assessment 5 Advanced Level The Sumerian King List

Craft and Structure

- **5. (9–10)** Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.
- **5. (11–12)** Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

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Assessment 5 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 5 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to pay attention to a text's "structure"—that is, to the overall pattern or organizational arrangement of its headings, sentences, paragraphs, stanzas, and chapters, as well as its various stylistic features. Students should see how structure is deliberately used to enable the text to achieve certain goals. Such formal elements can contribute to a text's meanings in many ways. This activity assesses the students' ability to read closely in order to understand the impact of the way one historical primary source is structured to present its information.

\star Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should see that the main text structure is "time order/chronology" in that it lists the kings in the time order in which they were said to have ruled. However, the passage does also break between those with enormously long life spans before the flood, followed by shorter and more realistic life spans after it. In this sense, there is also a "compare/ contrast" aspect to the text. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question will call attention to the impossibly long life spans of the kings mentioned in the first portion of the passage. Obviously these cannot be treated as factual, and this makes any use of the list as historical evidence problematical. Mention of the flood could refer to the actual floods common in Mesopotamia, but it could also be mythical. However, toward the end, the document does list kings with plausible life spans. Historians might find this useful, especially if these kings' names can be found on other inscriptions or records about the same time periods. Moreover, even the mythological aspect of the list could be useful as evidence of the nature of Sumerian beliefs and concerns. It is at least evidence of what Sumer's literate elites considered important to record in this way. This question can be discussed as a way to explore the issue of source reliability in general.

The Sumerian King List

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one primary source document and answer two questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 5: (9–10) Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis. **(11–12)** Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

A Primary Source Document

After kingship had descended from heaven, Eridu became the seat of kingship. In Eridu Aululim reigned 28,800 years as king. Alalgar reigned 36,000 years. Two kings, reigned 64,800 years. Eridu was abandoned and its kingship was carried off to Bad-tabira...

Total: Five Cities, eight kings, reigned 241,200 years.

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Source Information: This excerpt is adapted from part of the Sumerian King List. It is from a version of the list found on a clay tablet dated from the reign of King Utukhegal of Uruk. This places it around 2125 BCE. The excerpt lists various kings of Sumer and the years of their rule. It suggests that Sumerian kingship was granted by the gods to different cities at different times, probably depending on which city was dominant at the time. The famous hero of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is listed here. This suggests he may have been an actual historical figure, not just a hero in a myth. This translation is excerpted from "The Sumerian King List," the Internet Ancient History Sourcebook, edited by John Paul Adams, California State University–Northridge.
Assessment Questions

- 1. "Text structure" refers to the way paragraphs and longer texts are organized, with different structures serving different purposes. Here are descriptions of two kinds of text structure.
 - *Compare and Contrast:* A pattern showing what is similar and what is different in two events, examples, processes, etc.
 - *Time Order/Chronology:* A series of events is described in the order in which they occurred over time.

Which of these structures best fits this passage? Defend your choice, while also explaining how both structures could be said to describe some aspects of the way this passage is organized.

2. In what way or ways could this list be useful to a historian, and what problems does it present to the historian who wants to use it as evidence about Sumer's past?

Assessment 6 Basic Level Justice and Law in Ancient Sumer

Craft and Structure

6. (6–8) Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

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Assessment 6 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 6 for grades 6–8. It asks students to note a text's point of view as expressed by looking closely at details in the text itself. These details may take the form of emotional language, distorted or exaggerated descriptions, stereotyped labeling, etc. However, even a text with a neutral tone may express bias or point of view by selectively emphasizing some facts while omitting others. Therefore, students also need to go outside the text to interpret point of view by considering sourcing information such as the author's background, purpose, and audience. In addition, students need to see that when sources express conflicting points of view they may still be reliable in certain ways—for example, by what they share in common or by backing up their claims with solid evidence.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question should note the different audience and purpose of these documents. Document 1 lists laws that Hammurabi wanted his subjects to know about and obey. He did not intend to present them for discussion or reflection. Document 2, however, does appeal to people to think about moral issues so as to live a more righteous life. Perhaps for this reason, Document 2 more than Document 1 stresses compassion and urges a change in heart in people. We are called on to be kind and charitable to those who harm us. We are explicitly urged not to respond vengefully if harm is done to us. Document 1 is likely to seem much harsher in its stress on punishment in kind for those who commit harmful acts. The principle of an "eye for an eye" seems to be its central feature. Acceptable answers to the second assessment question may vary. Some may feel these are two opposing views of how to achieve justice—compassion and empathy versus strict law and punishment. However, others may feel that both documents share a desire to base law and morality on fair principles of one sort or another. This question should be discussed thoroughly.

Justice and Law in Ancient Sumer

Directions: This exercise asks you to read two primary source documents carefully and answer two questions about specific details in them. In order to better understand these documents as historical primary sources, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Document 1: A Primary Source

- 196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.
- 197. If he break another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.
- 198. If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold mina.
- 199. If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.
- 200. If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.
- 201. If he knock out the teeth of a freed man, he shall pay one-third of a gold mina.
- 202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public..

Source Information: These are a few of the 282 rules that make up the famous law code enacted by Hammurabi who ruled the Babylonian Empire from 1792 to 1750 BCE. These laws are excerpted from L. W. King's translation of the Code of Hammurabi.

Document 2: A Primary Source

Do not return evil to the man who disputes with you. Requite with kindness your evil-doer, maintain justice to your enemy, smile on your adversary. . . . Do not insult the downtrodden and do not sneer at them autocratically. With this a man's god is angry. It is not pleasing to [Shamash], who will repay him with evil. Give food to eat, beer to drink, grant what is asked, provide for and honor. In this a man's god takes pleasure. It is pleasing to [Shamash], who will repay him with favor. Do charitable deeds, render service all your days..

Source Information: This passage is adapted from lines 41 to 65 of an ancient Babylonian text called *Counsels of Wisdom,* a collection of moral sayings. The passage mentions "Shamash," who was the Babylonian sun god and god of justice. This text is reproduced in *Babylonian Wisdom Literature,* edited by W. G. Lambert (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 101–103.

Assessment Questions

1. These documents deal with questions of right and wrong, with law and justice. How do the two documents differ in their points of view about these matters? Cite details from the documents to support your answer.

2. Despite their differences, do the documents share any common ideas about justice and how to encourage people to be more moral and just?

Assessment 6 Advanced Level

Justice and Law in Ancient Sumer

Craft and Structure

- **6. (9–10)** Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
- **6. (11–12)** Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

🗙 Using This Assessment

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Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question should note the different audience and purpose of these documents. Document 1 lists laws that Hammurabi wanted his subjects to know about and obey. He did not intend to present them for discussion or reflection. Document 2, however, does appeal to people to think about moral issues so as to live a more righteous life. Perhaps for this reason, many will see Document 2 as stressing compassion and urging a change in heart in people. Document 1, is likely to seem much harsher, stressing punishment in kind for those who commit harmful acts. These may appear to be two opposing views of how to achieve justice—compassion and empathy versus strict law and punishment. However, both documents do seek to base law and/or morality on fair principles of one sort or another. Acceptable answers to the second assessment question may vary. The principle of an "eye for an eye" will seem to some to be a call for vengeance, not justice. They may also consider it unfair to impose different punishments for the same act on the basis of the social status of the victim or perpetrator. However, others might note the careful effort in these laws to make the punishment closely resemble the crime. The punishments may be harsh, but there is a concept of balance of right and wrong implied in them. As with Assessment 2 for this set, there is a good deal to discuss here.

Justice and Law in Ancient Sumer

Directions: This exercise asks you to read two primary source documents carefully and answer two questions about specific details in them. In order to better understand these documents as historical primary sources, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 6: (9–10) Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts. **(11–12)** Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

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- 196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.
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- 200. If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.
- 201. If he knock out the teeth of a freed man, he shall pay one-third of a gold mina.
- 202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public..

Source Information: These are a few of the 282 rules that make up the famous law code enacted by Hammurabi who ruled the Babylonian Empire from 1792 to 1750 BCE. These laws are excerpted from L. W. King's translation of the Code of Hammurabi.

Document 2: A Primary Source

Do not return evil to the man who disputes with you. Requite with kindness your evil-doer, maintain justice to your enemy, smile on your adversary. . . . Do not insult the downtrodden and do not sneer at them autocratically. With this a man's god is angry. It is not pleasing to [Shamash], who will repay him with evil. Give food to eat, beer to drink, grant what is asked, provide for and honor. In this a man's god takes pleasure. It is pleasing to [Shamash], who will repay him with favor. Do charitable deeds, render service all your days.

Source Information: This passage is adapted from lines 41 to 65 of an ancient Babylonian text called *Counsels of Wisdom*, a collection of moral sayings. The passage mentions "Shamash," who was the Babylonian sun god and god of justice. This text is reproduced in *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, edited by W. G. Lambert (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 101–103.

Assessment Questions

1. Both of these documents are about justice, wrongdoing, and moral behavior. How do they differ and what do they share in common regarding these things? Cite details to support your answer.

2. Some regard Hammurabi's "eye for an eye" principle as harsh and vengeful. But according to one historian, it was an early effort to establish "fair compensation for loss." Explain what he means and why you do or do not agree with him.



Assessment 7 Basic Level The Assyrian Empire

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (6–8) Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 7 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 6–8. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in several primary sources presented in a variety of visual and textual formats.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable answers to the assessment question should see that Document 1 illustrates the dramatic growth of Assyria during this time period. That growth included the entire Fertile Crescent and all of Egypt as well. For a brief time, in other words, the Assyrians controlled nearly the entire region where the world's first complex civilizations arose. Document 2 is one example of the incredibly harsh manner in which Assyrian rulers responded to opponents, in this case the leaders of a rebellion in one city. This punitive approach could be one aspect of Assyrian rule that explains its ability to impose its will on so many other societies. Document 3 is another example of this harsh approach to foreign opponents. It suggests the complete submission that Assyria demanded of foreign peoples and their rulers.

The Assyrian Empire

Directions: This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer one question on what these sources have in common. In order to better understand the documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information located just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment question that follows.

CCS Standard 7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.



Document 1: A Secondary Source

Image source: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Source Information: Assyria grew and declined several times during its entire history. It was at the height of its power from 934 to 612 BCE. This map shows the Assyrian Empire at its greatest extent.

Document 2: A Primary Source

Ahiababa, the son of nobody, whom they had brought from Bit-Adini, I took captive. In the valor of my heart and with the fury of my weapons I stormed the city. All the rebels they seized and delivered them up. My officers I caused to enter into his palace and his temples. His silver, his gold, his goods and his possessions, iron, lead, vessels of copper, cups of copper, dishes of copper, a great horde of copper, alabaster, tables with inlay, the women of his palaces, his daughters, the captive rebels together with their possessions, the gods together with their possessions, precious stone from the mountains, his chariot with equipment, his horses, broken to the yoke, trappings of men and trappings of horses, garments of brightly colored wool and garments of linen, goodly oil, cedar, and fine sweet-scented herbs, panels of cedar, purple and crimson wool, his wagons, his cattle, his sheep, his heavy spoil, which like the stars of heaven could not be counted, I carried off.

Azi-ilu I set over them as my own governor. I built a pillar over against his city gate, and I flayed all the chief men who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skins; some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, and others I bound to stakes round about the pillar; many within the border of my own land I flayed, and I spread their skins upon the walls; and I cut off the limbs of the officers, of the royal officers who had rebelled. Ahiababa I took to Nineveh, I flayed him, I spread his skin upon the wall of Nineveh.

Source Information: This excerpt is from the records of the Assyrian Empire during the rule of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE). It tells of a revolt in Sura, a city ruled by Assyria. During the revolt, the rebels killed Hamatai, the official governor of the city. A man named Ahiababa then took control there. In this passage, Ashurnasirpal II explains what he did to put down this revolt. The excerpt can be found in *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol. 1, edited by Daniel David Luckenbill (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 144–45.

Basic

Document 3: A Primary Source



Photo source: By Stephen G. Johnson (CC-BY-SA-3.0 or GFDL, via Wikimedia Commons)

Source Information: This is one scene from the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. The obelisk is a relief sculpture commemorating the accomplishments of Shalmaneser III, who ruled the Assyrian Empire from 858 to 824 BCE. The entire obelisk shows several defeated kings bringing tribute and bowing before the Assyrian ruler. Many scholars believe this particular scene shows Jehu, King of Israel, bowing and giving his tribute to Shalmaneser III.

Assessment Question

1. Consider this statement: "During the years 934–612 BCE, Assyria became a vast, powerful, and highly feared empire." How do *all three* of these sources provide evidence in support of this statement?



Assessment 7 Advanced Level The Assyrian Empire

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- **7. (9–10)** Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
- **7. (11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 7 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in a wide variety of primary sources presented in many visual and textual formats. It also asks them to judge the relative strengths and weaknesses of visual as compared with written sources.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question should see that Document 1 illustrates the dramatic growth of Assyria during much of this time period. That growth included the entire Fertile Crescent and all of Egypt as well. For a brief time, in other words, the Assyrians controlled nearly the entire region where the world's first complex civilizations arose. Document 2 is one example of the violent and punitive approach that helps explain Assyria's ability to impose its will. Document 3 is another example of this harsh approach to foreign opponents. It suggests the complete submission that Assyria demanded of foreign peoples and their rulers. Acceptable answers to the second assessment question may vary. Some may find no grounds in these sources for explaining Assyrian decline given that they all show it acting with aggressiveness and power against all enemies. However, others may see in this very aggressiveness a sign of Assyria's inability to truly incorporate all its conquered lands into a stable and united social order. Document 1 suggests how diverse all the regions under Assyrian control were and how hard they might have been to hold together. Documents 2 and 3 are evidence of the discontent, sense of humiliation, and resentment Assyria might have fostered in its rise to power.

The Assyrian Empire

Directions: This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer two questions focused on what these sources have in common. In order to better understand the documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information located just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 7: (9–10) Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. **(11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.



Document 1: A Secondary Source

Image source: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Source Information: Assyria grew and declined several times during its entire history. It was at the height of its power from 934 to 612 BCE. This map shows the Assyrian Empire at its greatest extent.

Document 2: A Primary Source

Ahiababa, the son of nobody, whom they had brought from Bit-Adini, I took captive. In the valor of my heart and with the fury of my weapons I stormed the city. All the rebels they seized and delivered them up. My officers I caused to enter into his palace and his temples. His silver, his gold, his goods and his possessions, iron, lead, vessels of copper, cups of copper, dishes of copper, a great horde of copper, alabaster, tables with inlay, the women of his palaces, his daughters, the captive rebels together with their possessions, the gods together with their possessions, precious stone from the mountains, his chariot with equipment, his horses, broken to the yoke, trappings of men and trappings of horses, garments of brightly colored wool and garments of linen, goodly oil, cedar, and fine sweet-scented herbs, panels of cedar, purple and crimson wool, his wagons, his cattle, his sheep, his heavy spoil, which like the stars of heaven could not be counted, I carried off.

Azi-ilu I set over them as my own governor. I built a pillar over against his city gate, and I flayed all the chief men who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skins; some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, and others I bound to stakes round about the pillar; many within the border of my own land I flayed, and I spread their skins upon the walls; and I cut off the limbs of the officers, of the royal officers who had rebelled. Ahiababa I took to Nineveh, I flayed him, I spread his skin upon the wall of Nineveh.

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Document 3: A Primary Source



Photo source: By Stephen G. Johnson (CC-BY-SA-3.0 or GFDL, via Wikimedia Commons)

Source Information: This is one scene from the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. The obelisk is a relief sculpture commemorating the accomplishments of Shalmaneser III, who ruled the Assyrian Empire from 858 to 824 BCE. The entire obelisk shows several defeated kings bringing tribute and bowing before the Assyrian ruler. Many scholars believe this particular scene shows Jehu, King of Israel, bowing and giving his tribute to Shalmaneser III.

Assessment Questions

- 1. Consider this statement: "During the years 934–612 BCE, Assyria became a vast, powerful, and highly feared empire." How do *all three* of these sources provide evidence in support of this statement?
- 2. As powerful as this late Assyrian Empire was, it fell apart very quickly late in the seventh century BCE. Do these sources suggest reasons as to why this was so? Why or why not?

Assessment 8 Basic Level Property and Ownership in Ancient Sumer

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

8. (6–8) Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 8 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 8 for grades 6–8. It asks students to pay attention to the way a text reasons about its factual claims and to distinguish between these and expressions of opinion. This could mean paying close attention to the factual evidence offered or to the reasoning process and logic used to support a claim—as well as an ability to distinguish these from the text's biases or expressions of opinion. This activity assesses the students' ability to read closely in order to understand a text in these ways.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Responses to the first assessment question should note that the "incorrect" view is the idea that private ownership of land in the early Sumerian cities was rare and that most property was owned and controlled by the temple. According to the document, this mistake was based on evidence that Sumerian temples did play a major economic role. The evidence from one particular city, Girsu, is mentioned specifically. Responses to the second assessment question should note that the document agrees that each city's temple did control a great deal of economic activity. However, it refers to many records showing extensive private ownership as well—such as receipts, contracts between private parties, records of land sales, evidence of large private estates, activities by private merchants, etc.

Property and Ownership in Ancient Sumer

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source document carefully and answer two questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 8: Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

A Secondary Source Document

The temple was central to life in the first Sumerian cities. Many historians concluded that the temple owned the city and everything in it. This included all the agricultural lands supplying it with food and other necessities. The historians assumed that private ownership of land was rare. They based this view in part on some records from the Sumerian city of Girsu. These mention a very complete system of city administration. This system was controlled by the ruler (the ensi), or his spouse or a steward of a temple. It seemed to indicate that all economic activity was under the direct supervision of the temple.

However, this record from the temple of Girsu deals with only a small period of time. Furthermore, some historians say it is not surprising these temple records would not mention private ownership of property or other commercial activities. After all, such activities were not under temple control, so temples would have no reason to record them. However, there are, in fact, documents from Sumer such as bills of sale that indicate the importance of private economic transactions, and cylinder seals that indicate individual ownership of goods.

One historian speaks of the ongoing existence of "great households led by private landowners," or by leaders of clans. Early records did deal mainly with temples and palaces. Later, however, receipts, records of land sales, and other contracts also appear for private households, merchants, inns, etc. Historians once assumed a smooth shift from an egalitarian communal control of lands in simple agricultural communities, to control by the temple system, and later to control by the palace and its kings. However, this merely hides the ongoing role of private property in the Sumerian cities.

Source Information: This document is a secondary source about the nature of property and ownership in the cities of ancient Sumer. This particular historical account was written in 2014 specifically for use as part of this activity.

Assessment Questions

1. According to this document, historians once held an incorrect view about the temples in ancient Sumerian cities. What was this incorrect view, and what led many historians to accept it?

2. What evidence does the document use to show that these historians were wrong? Cite details from the document in your answer.

Assessment 8 Advanced Level **Property and Ownership in Ancient Sumer**



- **8. (9–10)** Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.
- **8. (11–12)** Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 8 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 8 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to pay attention to the way a text backs up or seeks to explain its factual claims. This could mean paying close attention to the factual evidence offered in the text as compared with expressions of opinion. Or it could mean attention to the reasoning process and logic used to support a claim. It may also require students to examine underlying assumptions and bias in order to see how they shape or distort the reasoning process presented by the text. This activity assesses the students' ability to read closely in order to understand a text in these ways.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Responses to the first assessment question should note that the "incorrect" view is the idea that private ownership was rare in the early Sumerian cities and that most property was owned and controlled by the temple. The document asserts that private property was actually widely held in Sumer. It refers to many records showing extensive private ownership of property—such as receipts, contracts between private parties, records of land sales, evidence of large private estates, activities by private merchants, etc. Responses to the second assessment question should see that the document acknowledges that each city's temple did control a great deal of economic activity. It points out that temple records would naturally not have been concerned with other kinds of private economic activity. The document suggests that, at first, historians only had extensive evidence about temple economic activity, mentioning specifically one era in a single city, Girsu. The document implies that only later did historians gain access to the other kinds of evidence of greater private economic activity.

Property and Ownership in Ancient Sumer

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source document carefully and answer two questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 8: (9–10) Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims. **(11–12)** Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

A Secondary Source Document

The temple was central to life in the first Sumerian cities. Many historians concluded that the temple owned the city and everything in it. This included all the agricultural lands supplying it with food and other necessities. The historians assumed that private ownership of land was rare. They based this view in part on some records from the Sumerian city of Girsu. These mention a very complete system of city administration. This system was controlled by the ruler (the ensi), or his spouse or a steward of a temple. It seemed to indicate that all economic activity was under the direct supervision of the temple.

However, this record from the temple of Girsu deals with only a small period of time. Furthermore, some historians say it is not surprising these temple records would not mention private ownership of property or other commercial activities. After all, such activities were not under temple control, so temples would have no reason to record them. However, there are, in fact, documents from Sumer such as bills of sale that indicate the importance of private economic transactions, and cylinder seals that indicate individual ownership of goods.

One historian speaks of the ongoing existence of "great households led by private landowners," or by leaders of clans. Early records did deal mainly with temples and palaces. Later, however, receipts, records of land sales, and other contracts also appear for private households, merchants, inns, etc. Historians once assumed a smooth shift from an egalitarian communal control of lands in simple agricultural communities, to control by the temple system, and later to control by the palace and its kings. However, this merely hides the ongoing role of private property in the Sumerian cities.

Source Information: This document is a secondary source about the nature of property and ownership in the cities of ancient Sumer. This particular historical account was written in 2014 specifically for use as part of this activity.

Assessment Questions

1. According to this document, many historians once held an incorrect view about ancient Sumer. What was this view, and how does the document back up its claim that this view was incorrect?

2. The document also implies that it was reasonable for earlier historians to make this mistake about Sumer's temples. How does it imply or suggest that?



Assessment 9 Basic Level How "Mighty" Were the Kings of Akkad?

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

9. (6–8) Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 9 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 9 for grades 6–8. It asks students to understand the relationship between primary and secondary sources. This means students must know the difference between the two kinds of sources—that primary sources provide the evidence for secondary source claims and interpretations. This should lead them to adopt a critical approach to secondary sources themselves. That is, such secondary accounts should not be regarded as final and complete. They are interpretations of the past, not the past itself. Students should learn to weigh secondary source accounts against the relevant primary source evidence.

***** Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Answers to the first assessment question should note that the inscription was on a public building in the city of Marad, where other literate people could read it to themselves or to others. It is only possible to make inferences about its purpose, but it seems to be intended to impress citizens or possible rivals thinking of challenging Naram-Sin's rule. It does not supply much detail, but simply stresses Naram-Sin's enormous power and his close connection to the god En-lil. By mentioning his son, Naram-Sin may have wanted to depict himself as part of a dynasty. Answers to the second assessment question should note that while the document does describe Akkad as "fairly well united," it raises important questions about how strong and stable it really was. It points out how little evidence we have about this empire. It also stresses the constant warfare the kings of Akkad engaged in, as well as the internal uprisings and conspiracies they faced. This does not suggest a land fully united under one ruler. The passage concludes that what we see as a unified empire may in fact have only been a looser set of trading relationships over which Akkad was dominant, or tried to be.

How "Mighty" Were the Kings of Akkad?

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one primary source document and one secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in them. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 9: Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Document 1: A Primary Source

Naram-Sin, the mighty king of the four quarters of the earth, who subdued nine armies in one year. When he overcame those armies he made three kings captive, and brought them before the god En-lil. On that day Libit-ili, his son, the governor of Marad, built the temple of Lugal-marada in Marad.

Source Information: This is an inscription written by Naram-Sin and carved on a stone found in the ancient Sumerian city of Marad. Naram-Sin ruled the Akkadian Empire from 2254 to 2218 BCE. The inscription is quoted in full in Edgar J. A. Banks's "A Nebuchadnezzar Cylinder," in *The Open Court*, volume 29, number 12 (December 1915), p. 751.

Document 2: A Secondary Source

Sargon was the founder of Akkad, an empire that united many of Sumer's cities. The years for Sargon's rule are usually given as 2334–2279 BCE. After him, the Akkadian empire remained fairly well united through the reigns of the next four rulers, Rimush, Manishtusu, Naram-Sin, and Shar-kali-sharri.

Sargon is seemingly a very impressive figure. Unfortunately, as with much else about Akkad, all of what we know of him is based on legends or accounts from much later times. He apparently ruled for 56 years, during which he engaged in a great many battles to conquer the cities of Sumer. He is given credit for uniting an empire that may have extended through the Fertile Crescent all the way to the Mediterranean Sea.

However, Sargon never seems to have stopped fighting to quell uprisings and crush opponents. He was followed as Akkad's ruler by his two sons, Rimush and Manishtusu. They are described as maintaining the empire, yet they also had to fight constantly against other kings and uprisings. Both rulers were assassinated in palace conspiracies.

Naram-Sin seems to have been a more successful ruler. In his own accounts of himself, he described his kingship as all-powerful, even presenting himself as divine. The evidence of how extensive his rule was comes mainly from copies of the inscriptions he himself left us. Yet even these are full of reports of rebellions and of his battles to maintain control. Naram-Sin's rule ended in 2218. The Akkadian empire may then have been at its height. However, in less than seventy years, it was completely gone. Was it ever as solid and extensive as the inscriptions suggest? Or even at its height, was it mainly a system of trade arrangements with far away cities—arrangements that might be held together by force but that could also quickly fall apart? As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* puts it, it sometimes seems "as if there had never been a Sargonic empire."

Source Information: This document is a secondary source about the nature of the Akkadian Empire built up by Sargon (ruled 2334–2279 BCE). Later rulers of the Akkadian empire included Naram-Sin. This particular historical account was written in 2014 specifically for use as part of this activity.

Assessment Questions

- 1. Consider Document 1 by itself. What audience or audiences do you think Naram-Sin was trying to reach with his inscription, and for what purpose?
- 2. Naram-Sin depicts himself as ruling a mighty empire. Does Document 2 support or challenge Naram-Sin's way of describing himself and his empire? Cite details from the document to support your answer.

Assessment 9 Advanced Level How "Mighty" Were the Kings of Akkad?

🗙 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- **9. (9–10)** Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
- **9. (11–12)** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Using This Assessment

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Assessment 9 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 9 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to understand the relationship between primary and secondary sources. This means students must know the difference between the two kinds of sources—that primary sources provide the evidence for secondary source claims and interpretations. This should lead them to adopt a critical approach to secondary sources themselves. That is, such secondary accounts should not be regarded as final and complete. They are interpretations of the past, not the past itself. Students should learn to weigh secondary source accounts against the relevant primary source evidence.

Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Answers to the first assessment question should note that Naram-Sin's inscription seems meant to impress the citizens of Marad and anyone else who might doubt or challenge his rule. It stresses Naram-Sin's enormous power and his close connection to the god En-lil. While Document 2 does describe Akkad as "fairly well united" under Sargon and his heirs, including Naram-Sin, it mainly raises questions about how strong these rulers really were. It calls attention to how thin the evidence is about the Akkadian empire's actual nature. It stresses the constant warfare these kings engaged in, including the internal uprisings and conspiracies they faced. This does not suggest a land as united as Naram-Sin's inscription implies. It suggests Akkad may only have had a looser set of trading or tributary relationships with many of its cities or regions. Answers to the second assessment question should note how the tone of the inscription seems to be intended to impress readers with Naram-Sin's great, semi-divine power. Such inscriptions might in fact reveal the need rulers felt to ward off rebellion and invasion by creating an image of awesome power. However, it is hard to decide what the real purpose of such inscriptions was, so this question should be discussed thoroughly.

How "Mighty" Were the Kings of Akkad?

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one primary source document and one secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in them. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 9: (9–10) Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources. **(11–12)** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Document 1: A Primary Source

Naram-Sin, the mighty king of the four quarters of the earth, who subdued nine armies in one year. When he overcame those armies he made three kings captive, and brought them before the god En-lil. On that day Libit-ili, his son, the governor of Marad, built the temple of Lugal-marada in Marad.

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Sargon is seemingly a very impressive figure. Unfortunately, as with much else about Akkad, all of what we know of him is based on legends or accounts from much later times. He apparently ruled for 56 years, during which he engaged in a great many battles to conquer the cities of Sumer. He is given credit for uniting an empire that may have extended through the Fertile Crescent all the way to the Mediterranean Sea.

However, Sargon never seems to have stopped fighting to quell uprisings and crush opponents. He was followed as Akkad's ruler by his two sons, Rimush and Manishtusu. They are described as maintaining the empire, yet they also had to fight constantly against other kings and uprisings. Both rulers were assassinated in palace conspiracies.

Naram-Sin seems to have been a more successful ruler. In his own accounts of himself, he described his kingship as all-powerful, even presenting himself as divine. The evidence of how extensive his rule was comes mainly from copies of the inscriptions he himself left us. Yet even these are full of reports of rebellions and of his battles to maintain control. Naram-Sin's rule ended in 2218. The Akkadian empire may then have been at its height. However, in less than seventy years, it was completely gone. Was it ever as solid and extensive as the inscriptions suggest? Or even at its height, was it mainly a system of trade arrangements with far away cities—arrangements that might be held together by force but that could also quickly fall apart? As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* puts it, it sometimes seems "as if there had never been a Sargonic empire."

Source Information: This document is a secondary source about the nature of the Akkadian empire built up by Sargon (ruled 2334–2279 BCE). Later rulers of the Akkadian Empire included Naram-Sin. This particular historical account was written in 2014 specifically for use as part of this activity.

Assessment Questions

- 1. Does Document 2 challenge Naram-Sin's depiction of himself and his empire in Document 1? Cite details from both documents in support of your answer.
- 2. Many rulers in ancient Mesopotamia inscribed messages like Naram-Sim's in public places around their realms. How do these two documents help you better understand why they did this?



Writing Assessment 1 Mesopotamia

🗙 The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

This standard is the basis for the corresponding No. 1 Common Core Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

XUsing This Assessment

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their ancient history coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Writing Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing 1. The Anchor Standards are the basis on which the various Common Core History/Social Studies Standards are based. This assessment asks students to write an essay that makes meaningful claims and that develops those claims using relevant evidence and sound reasoning. The essay should make clear the strengths and limitations of the claims it makes while also considering possible challenges or counter claims.

Evaluating Student Responses to Writing Assessment 1

- Essays for this assignment should be scored according to these criteria.
- How well does the essay state a claim addressing all elements of the prompt?
- Does the essay use evidence from all or most of the documents assigned for this task?
- Is the evidence explained effectively using careful reasoning and a logical flow of one idea to the next?
- Does the essay defend the claim in relation to any relevant alternative claims?
- Are ideas presented using precise language, effective transitions, and domain-specific vocabulary?
- Does the essay include an effective conclusion supporting its claims?
- How well does the essay follow rules of usage, spelling, and punctuation?

Mesopotamia: Writing Assessment 1

The Standard: Write a brief essay that presents a well-reasoned argument focused on historical content.

The Question

Using your background history knowledge and the primary and secondary source documents listed here, explain why you do or do not agree with the following statement:

"Mesopotamian societies were all deeply flawed—rising social inequality, aggressive tyrants, constant warfare among cities and empires. How can we find anything in this to admire?"

Documents: Base your essay on your general background knowledge and all of the primary and secondary source documents in Mesopotamia assessments.

Instructions

- Write a brief, well-organized essay that includes an introduction, one to three internal paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- Introduce a specific claim that you can defend in response to the question.
- Support your claim with an argument based on evidence from the documents and sound reasoning about that evidence.
- Consider other possible claims that may differ from your own.
- Include related outside information based on your background knowledge of history.
- Use transitions and a logical arrangement of ideas to connect all parts of your essay to the claim you are making.
- Write a conclusion that follows from the argument your essay has made.



Writing Assessment 2 Mesopotamia

The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

This standard is the basis for the corresponding No. 2 Common Core Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

Using This Assessment

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their ancient history coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Writing Assessment 2 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing 2. The Anchor Standards are the basis on which the various Common Core History/Social Studies Standards are based. This assessment asks students to write an essay that uses sources effectively to provide strong support and evidence clarifying and explaining a central idea or set of ideas and concepts.

Evaluating Student Responses to Writing Assessment 2

- Essays for this assignment should be scored according to these criteria.
- How well does the introduction address the prompt with a clear, well-defined central idea and a preview of supporting ideas?
- Does the essay use evidence from many of the documents assigned for this task?
- Is the evidence used effectively to support the essay's key ideas and concepts?
- Does the essay engage in careful reasoning and a logical flow of one idea to the next?
- Are ideas presented using precise language, effective transitions, and domain-specific vocabulary?
- Does the essay include an effective conclusion supporting its key ideas?
- How well does the essay follow rules of usage, spelling, and punctuation?

Mesopotamia

The Standard: Write an informative/explanatory essay clearly describing and explaining historical events and trends.

The Question

Long periods of stable rule were typical of much of ancient Egyptian history. This was not nearly as true about ancient Mesopotamia. From the rise of the first Sumerian cities, one empire followed another. Assyria, for example, rose and fell several times from between about 2300 BCE to 612 BCE. Why was the region so much less stable than ancient Egypt? Some historians stress geography. Others stress the role of individual cities and their kings. Others stress cultural differences among the many groups in the region. Your task is to write an essay offering your own explanation for why the region was relatively unstable in this way.

Documents: Base your essay on your general background knowledge and on your selection of sources from all the primary and secondary source documents in the Mesopotamia assessments.

Instructions

- Write a brief, well-organized essay that includes an introduction, one to three internal paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- Introduce the topic with a clear, well-defined central idea, and preview in a general way other key ideas your essay will develop.
- Support each of your key ideas with evidence from many of the documents and with sound reasoning about that evidence.
- Include related outside information based on your background knowledge of history.
- Use transitions and a logical arrangement of ideas to connect the major parts of your essay.
- Write a conclusion that follows from and summarizes the main points your essay has made.

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