

Séquence II : MESOPOTAMIA

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Reading comprehension:

Pronunciation

Word building

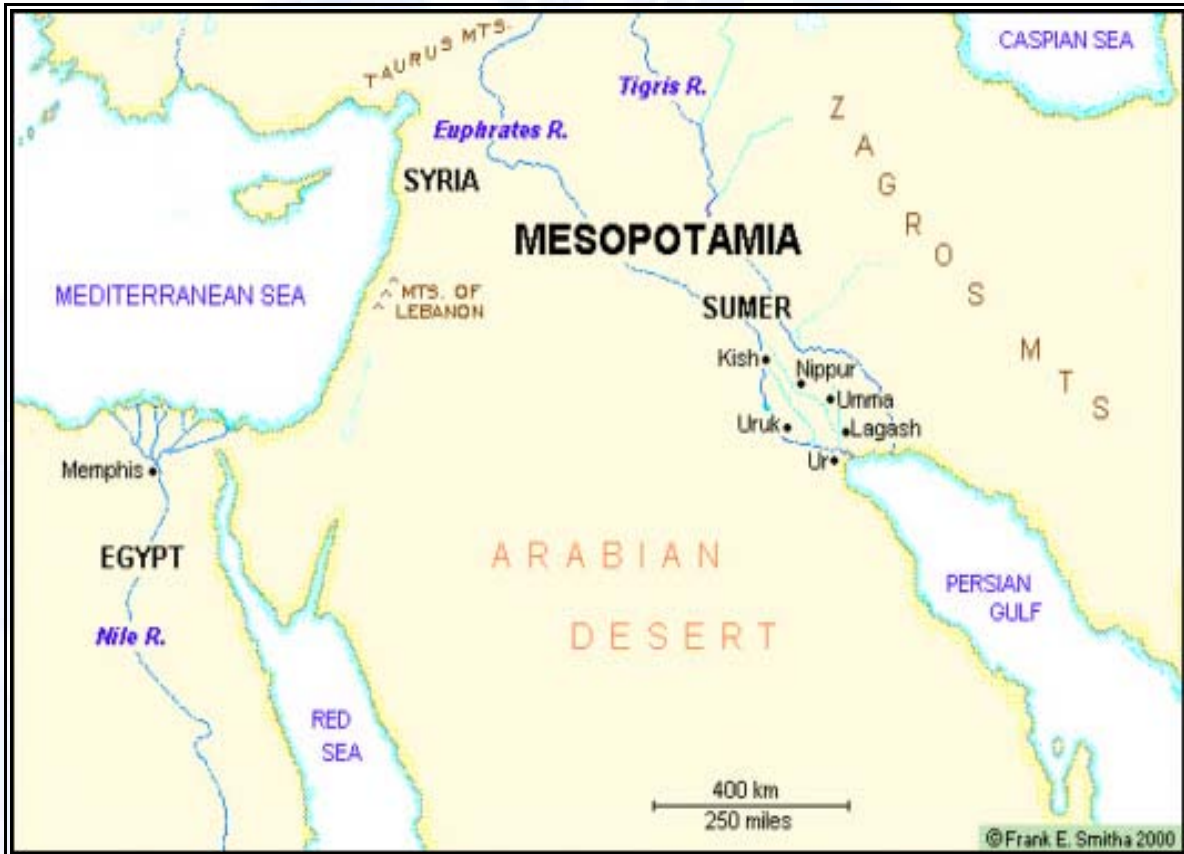
Mastery of Language

Writing



Mesopotamia

MESOPOTAMIA



Mesopotamia is now known as the country of Iraq.

The world's first civilization arose in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers around 4000-3500 BC. The Arabic term is "بين نهريين". Mesopotamia has been home to some of the world's major ancient civilizations.

The Mesopotamian culture left a deep impact on the entire ancient world. Even present-day civilization is indebted culturally to Babylonian civilization. Here are a few examples of what our modern world owes to what is known as the cradle of civilizations.

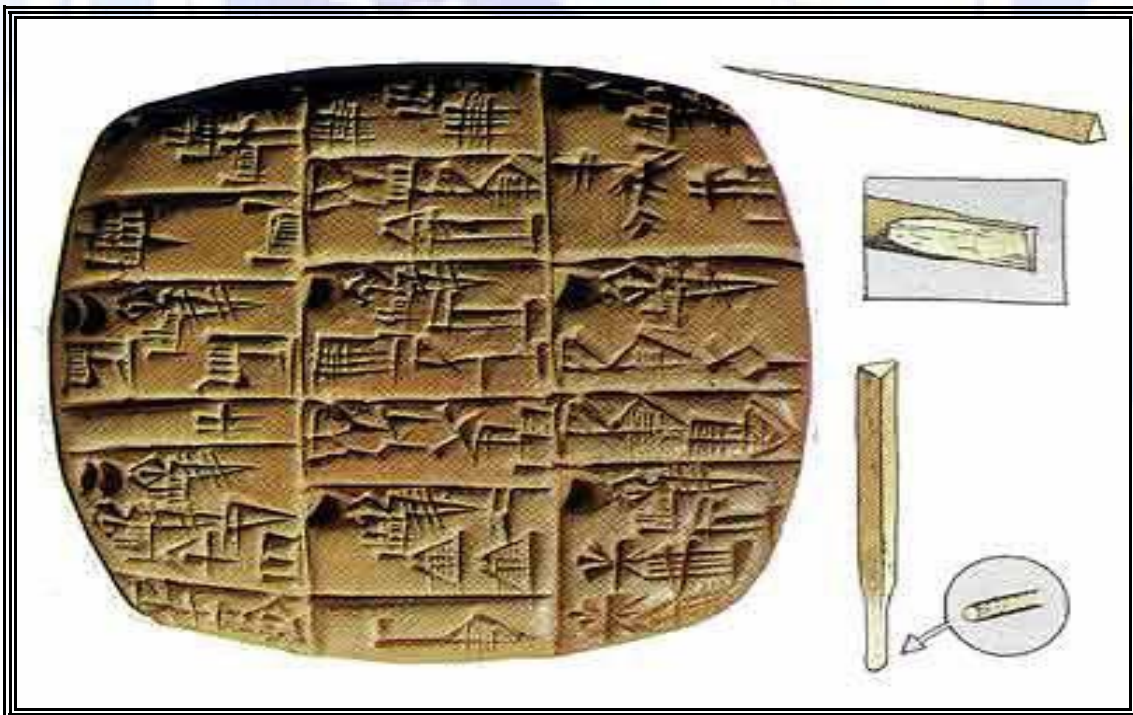
A. Reading comprehension

Read the text carefully, then do the follow-up activities

The Mesopotamian Legacy

Writing system

Writing is a key element in the growth of a civilization. Sumerian *cuneiform* emerged as the world's first writing system. The term cuneiform means "wedge-shaped." It was made up of hundreds of word signs that were "wedge-shaped" due to the shape of the pen, or *stylus*, that was used. The Sumerians wrote on *clay tablets* that would either be dried in the sun or baked to make the writing permanent. The Sumerians writing system led to today's writing.



The Sumerians also used stone *cylinder seals* as identification. For example, in order to identify himself, a Sumerian would roll his cylinder seal across a wet clay tablet. This would make an imprint on the tablet that would become permanent by sun-baking. Cylinder seals were used as signatures are used today.



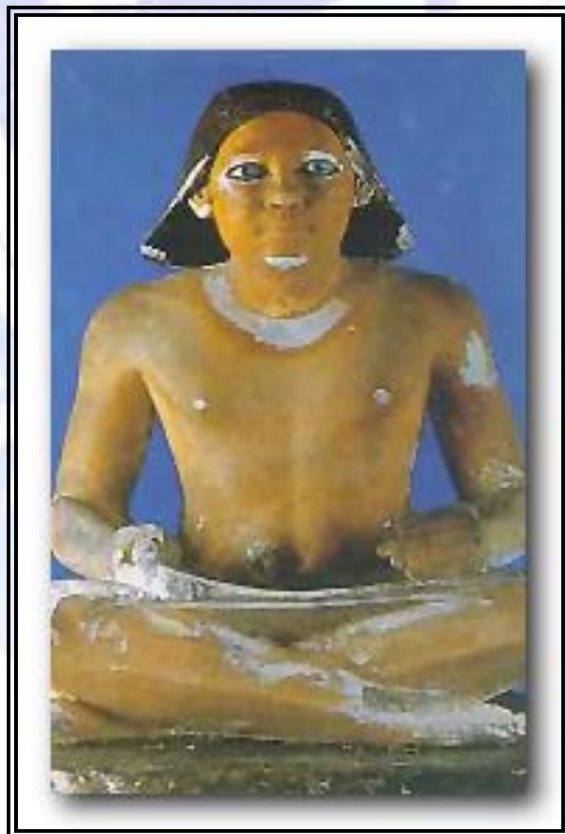
The cylinder seal is the block on the left. It has a handle shaped like a sheep. When the seal is turned over on its side and rolled across wet clay, it creates the scene you can see on the picture above.

Education

Cuneiform was learned in Sumerian schools called *edubbas*, or *tablet houses*. Only a select group of boys were able to attend Sumerian schools. The boys were usually sons of the very wealthy families.

Students worked very hard at Sumerian schools, and the school day lasted from early morning until evening. Students were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. The teachers severely disciplined the students.

Once a student successfully completed twelve years of schooling, he was an official *scribe*, or writer. This was a prestigious position in Sumerian society. The Scribes' main task was to maintain and improve the record keeping that the Sumerians valued so much.



Cities



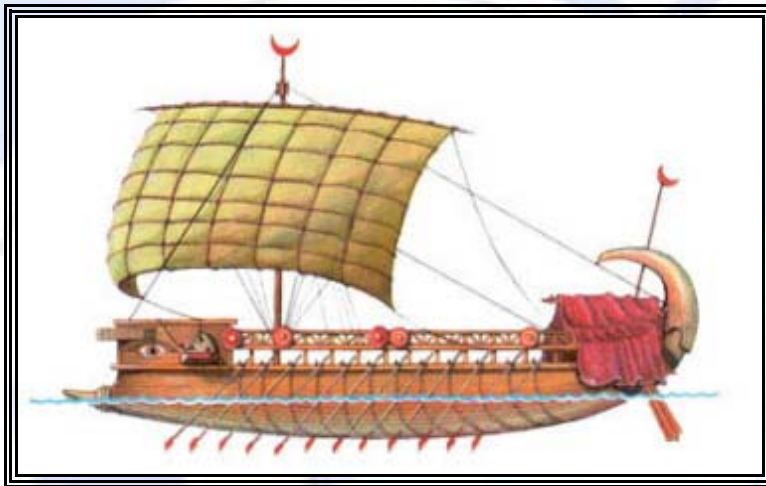
The ancient Sumerians created the world's first civilization where people settled together in one area known as the city-state. For this accomplishment, ancient Mesopotamia is often referred to as the "*cradle of civilization*."

The number of inhabitants of a city ranged from 10,000 to 50,000. The average house consisted of several rooms around a court. The first urban sanitary system dates back to that period of time.

Technology

The technological contributions affecting the modern world from our ancient ancestors in Mesopotamia are numerous.

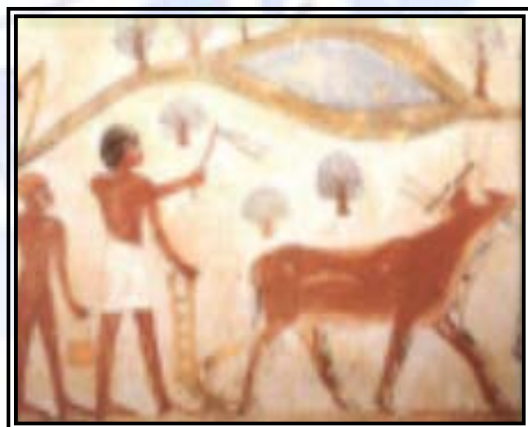
They include glass, the *water clock*, the twelve-month *calendar* based on lunar cycles, the *wheel*, the *plow*, the *sailboat* and many others.



A Mesopotamian sailboat

This seemingly never ending drive to find new ways to make our lives easier and more enjoyable continues to drive the development of new technology today and into the future.

The plough used in farming



Mathematics

The Mesopotamians used an advanced number system. They divided the day into 24 hours, each hour into 60 minutes, and each minute into 60 seconds. Their calendar also measured weeks of seven days. This form of counting has survived for 4000 years.



The Mesopotamian calendar

Legal system

The king of Babylonia Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC) created a code protecting all citizens including slaves. Hammurabi's Code, which was particularly just for its time, is one of the earliest set of laws known to exist.

During the reign of king Hammurabi, (about 1750-1712 BC), Babylonian civilization reached the zenith of its cultural development and political power.

HAMMURABI'S CODE -



The Code of Hammurabi , was unearthed at Susa, Iraq, during the winter of 1901. The restored block is now in the Louvre museum in Paris.

Medicine

Given that in Mesopotamian culture being ill meant disfavour on the part of the gods, medicine had a strong religious dimension. When a member of the community was ill, people used to recite prayers for his recovery and health. Treatments based on plants were prescribed for wounds and sores, and they are now known to have antiseptic properties.



Ancient Mesopotamian myth: The snake that stole the plant of eternal life from King Gilgamesh and shed its skin, became the Symbol of Life adopted as a Symbol by Modern Pharmacists and Doctors.

Religion

The Mesopotamian religion is the oldest religion recorded. People used to worship the gods in huge temples called ziggurats. They also used to bury the family dead in a mausoleum below the house.



*One of the world's best preserved ziggurats
built in 13th century BC near Susa Iraq*

Culture



Music and songs were a large part of Mesopotamian culture. Some were written for the gods but many were written to describe important events. These songs provided means of passing on very important information about historical events. The Oud (Arabic: العود) which is a small, musical instrument is regarded as a precursor to the European lute. (The Arabic name, with the definite article, is the source of the word 'lute'.)

**Tokens
were used
for Trade.**

Tokens were the first form of money. They came in different shapes and sizes and represented different objects. For example, a cone shape represented a bag of wheat. These tokens were placed inside clay balls that were sealed. If you were sending five goats to someone, then you would put five tokens in the clay ball. When the goat arrived, the person would open the clay ball and count the tokens to make sure the correct number of goats had arrived.



Activity1:

Choose the correct sentence a) b) or c) which has the same meaning as the original one:

1. Writing is a key element in the growth of civilizations :

- a) Writing is one of the elements in the development of civilizations.
- b) Writing is a secondary element in the development of civilizations.
- c) Writing is essential in the development of civilizations.

2. A pictographic writing system is a system based on:

- a) geometric patterns.
- b) drawings.
- c) numbers.

3. The Sumerians used stone *cylinder seals* as identification :

- a) The Sumerians used stone *cylinder seals* for printing drawings.
- b) Stone *cylinder seals* were used for signing.
- c) The Sumerians used stone *cylinder seals* as beautiful decoration.

4. Scribes` main task was to maintain and improve the record keeping that the Sumerians valued so much.

- a) Scribes were considered in the Sumerian society because they were hard working.
- b) Scribes were considered because the Sumerians thought that their task of regularly writing down information was highly important .
- c) Writing down information was the scribes` main task.

5.The ancient Sumerians created the world's first civilization where people settled together in one area known as the city-state.

- a) The concept of `city` was first created by Sumerians.
- b) Sumerians forced people to live together in a place they called `city`.
- c) People lived together before the creation of cities.

6. `This form of counting has survived for 4000 years`:

- a) We are still using this form of counting.
- b) People used this form of counting 4000 years ago.
- c) 4000 numbers were being used 4000 years ago.

7. In Mesopotamian culture being ill meant disfavour on the part of the gods, medicine had a strong religious dimension.

- a) Mesopotamian people believed that an illness was a punishment from the gods.
- b) In Mesopotamian culture illnesses were due to religions.
- c) Even strong religious people fell ill.

8. The Mesopotamian religion is the oldest religion recorded

- a) The Mesopotamian religion is the most ancient religion.
- b) The Mesopotamian religion is the earliest religion we have heard about.
- c) Old religions were recorded in Mesopotamia.

9. These songs provided a means of passing on highly important information :

- a) These songs were a way to spread very important information.
- b) Mesopotamian people were being informed about passing events through songs.
- c) Historical events were provided so that songs could be written.

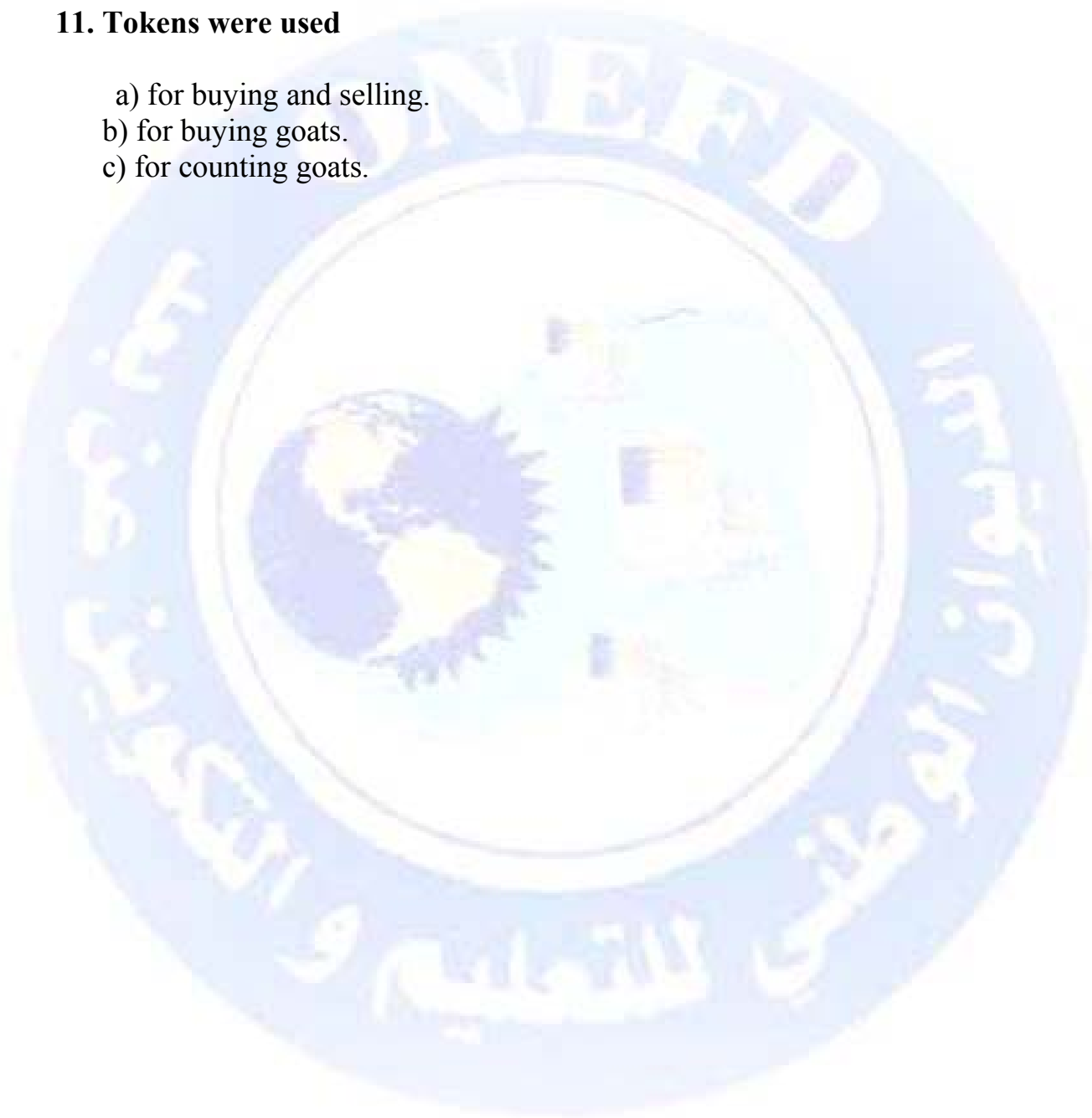
10. Hammurabi's Code is one of the earliest set of laws known to exist:

- a) Hammurabi's Code was invented by lawyers.

- b) Hammurabi's Code is the oldest system of laws we have heard about.
- c) Hammurabi's Code exists as a known system of laws.

11. Tokens were used

- a) for buying and selling.
- b) for buying goats.
- c) for counting goats.



B. Pronunciation

a)- Pronunciation rules:

The final **ed** is pronounced:

- **/id/** after the sounds **d** or **t**.

They recorded the Mesopotamian religion as the oldest one.

- **/t/** after the sounds **p, k, s, f, tf**

In ancient times people worshipped statues

- **/d/** after the sounds **b, g, l, m, n, r, v, y**, and the **vowels**.

A long time ago people believed the earth was flat.

Activity 1:

- **Classify these words according to the pronunciation of the final -ed-**

created - booked - appeared - based - measured - existed - survived -
developed - recited - divided - prescribed - watched - passed - regarded -
considered -

| /d/ | /id/ | /t/ |
|-------|-------|-------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

b)- Spelling rules:

- The consonant, at the end of a word that ends in a vowel + a consonant (V + C), is doubled (-p/ -g/ -t etc. → -pp/ -gg -tt etc)

Vowel letters: a e i o u

Consonant letters: b c d f g k l m n p r s t n

| | V + C | | | | |
|------|-------|---|--------|----------|--------------------|
| Stop | STO | P | P → pp | Stopping | Stopped |
| Run | RU | N | n → nn | Running | |
| Get | SWI | T | t → tt | Getting | |
| Swim | BI | M | m → mm | Swimming | |
| Big | HO | G | g → gg | Bigger | |
| Hot | | T | t → tt | Hotter | |
| | | | | | Biggest Hottest |

-y changes in **-ied** in :

study **studied**

marry **married**

-y does **not** change to -i if the word ends in :

-ay/-ey / oy/ -uy/ -w:

enjoy / **enjoyed** - snow/ **snowed** - stay / **stayed**

- Now, Write the past form of these verbs:

1. destroy 2. plan 3. play 4. try

5. copy 6. help 7. worship..... 8. sew

C. Word building

The prefix **-dis** is used to form opposites of verbs:

e.g. to appear to **dis**appear
to approve to **dis**approve

Activity 1:

Which negative verb fits each of the following definitions?

qualify - connect - agree - believe -
like - credit - approve - appear -

e.g. to disappear: to stop existing.

- a) : to have a different opinion from someone else.
- b) : to think that something is bad or wrong.
- c) : to think that something isn't true or doesn't exist.
- d) : to remove the supply of power to something such as a telephone line.
- e) : to make people stop trusting or having respect for someone or something.
- f) : to stop someone from taking part in a competition, usually because s/he has done something wrong.

Activity 2:

**Now, use a negative verb from the box above
in each sentence and put it in the correct tense:**

e.g: Many species of plants and animals **disappear**
every year.

1. His phone was because he didn't pay his last bill.
2. The runner was after a blood test.
3. He enrolled in the army but his parents his choice.
4. I am sure he is lying. I his story.
5. The newspapers are trying the senator.
6. Something she really is doing the housework.
7. Jill doesn't like anybody who with her.

D. Mastery of language

- *Past tense: Wh-questions and answers.*

1. Regular verbs:

- To form the simple past of a regular verb, add – **ed**.
- To make a question, use the auxiliary **did + infinitive**.
- To form the negative form, use : – **did + not + infinitive**.
- To get more precise information, use **Wh-words**.

- **Where did** writing first **appear**?

- It first **appeared** in Mesopotamia.

- **How did they manage** to improve their way of life?

- They **did not stop** searching new technologies.

- **What did** songs **describe**?

-They **described** important historical events.

2. Irregular verbs:

- Some common **verbs in English are irregular. For a full list see page - - and learn them by heart.**
- ***When did the first civilization arise in Mesopotamia?***
- The first civilization **arose** around 4000 BC.
- **What did `being ill ` mean in Mesopotamian culture?**
- *Being ill` **meant** disfavour on the part of the gods*

3. Used to + stem :

Used to refers to something that you **regularly did in the past but don't do anymore.**

- **Did Persian women use to run** ceremonies in temples?
- No, ordinary women **didn't use to run** ritual ceremonies in temples. Only Persian princesses **used to run them.**

(+) **Subject + used to + stem.**

(?) **Did + Subject + use to + stem ?**

(-) **Subject + Did not + use to + stem.**



Sumerian princesses dressed in colourful clothes. Their jewellery was made from gold, silver and precious stones.

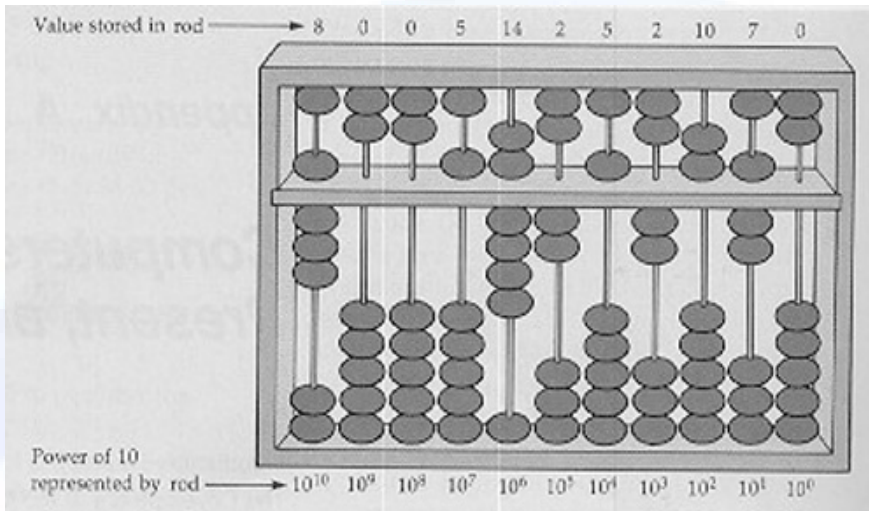
Activity 1:

Now, supply the correct form of the verbs between brackets:

Mesopotamian people (build) cities,
(create) writing systems, (learn)
to make pottery and (domesticate) animals.
They (develop) technologies such as
metalworking and glassmaking. They (be) also
one of the first Bronze Age people in the world who (use)
..... copper, bronze, gold, and iron to make

tools and weapons. Another aspect of their skills (be)

..... the construction of tables to aid calculation.



The Abacus

*The number,
which was the*

*ancestor of the computer, can
be dated back to the Sumerians time at about 4000 BC.
Babylonians invented the Abacus, at about 3000 BC.*

Activity 2:

Ask questions according to the underlined words:

1.?

1. Writing first appeared in Mesopotamia.

2.?

2. The Code of Hammurabi was unearthed in 1901.

3.?

3. There were about 50,000 inhabitants in a city.

4.?

4. Songs were a large part of Mesopotamian culture because they were a means of passing on highly important information.

Activity 3: Complete the sentences below with the correct form of 'used to' :

1. In ancient Mesopotamia, Astrologers (consult) stars for predicting the future.

2. They (observe) constellations for determining the planting and harvesting of crops.

3. People (worship) the gods in huge temples.

4. They (bury) the family dead in a mausoleum below the house.

5. What they (do) when a member of the community was ill?

6. People (recite) prayers for his recovery.

7. In ancient times, Egyptians (no bury) the dead. They (mummify) the corpses so as to preserve them for an afterlife.

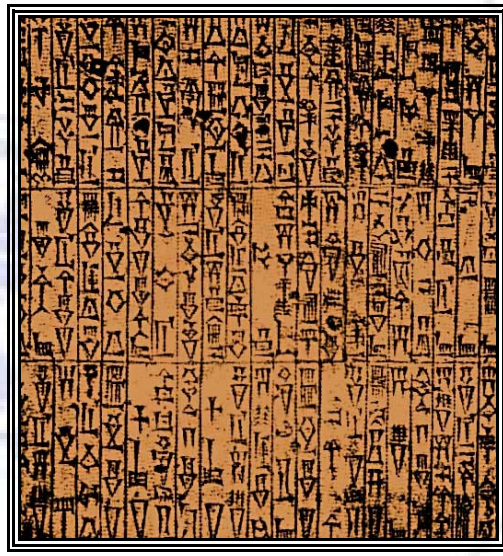


Photo of an Egyptian mummy – Science museum, London

E. Writing:

1. Below are the words that end Hammurabi's Code: Supply the underlined phrases with the equivalent ones from the box so as to get a modern version of the statement:

“Let any oppressed man who has a cause come into the presence of my statue as king of justice, and hear my precious words, that my stele may make the case clear to him; may he understand his case, and may his heart be set at ease!”



Box:

to see me as a judge - listen to my verdict - he feel relieved - persecuted - suffers from an injustice - oppressed - investigation - may clarify.

e.g.: **oppressed: persecuted.**

1. has a cause:

2. into the presence of my statue as king of justice:
.....

4. my stele may make the case clear:
..... the case.

5. his heart be set at ease!:

Now, write the full version of Hammurabi's Code. Start like this:

Let any *persecuted* man who

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Answer the questions and use the joining words between brackets to write a paragraph about Hammurabi's Code.

1. What is Hammurabi's Code? (first legal system)

1. Who was it created by? (King Hammurabi of Babylon) (*who*)

2. When *did* he reign over Mesopotamia? (1792-1750)

3. Who did it protect? (all classes of Babylonian society)

4. Why is it significant?(because) (allowed everyone to understand the laws)

.....
.....
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