The Seven Blunders of the World

About the Show

Joe, Fred, and Sam warp to Babylon to figure out who stole *The Book* and meet King Nebuchadnezzar II and Queen Amytis, the creators of the famous Hanging Gardens. Can they recover *The Book* before all of Babylon is destroyed and Joe's evil uncle Mad Jack takes over the world?

Introduction

Since the cultures and civilizations of Mesopotamia (now Iraq) are so important today, it's useful to introduce students to events that helped shape the region. In addition, studying the history of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and other ancient wonders offers students a chance to be history detectives.

Historical Background

The city of Babylon was located in Mesopotamia, a region located between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers. It was the source of many important early civilizations. By 3000 B.C.E. the Mesopotamians had created huge cities (such as Babylon), monumental architecture, laws and government, writing and numbering systems (such as cuneiform writing), and great art.

The Babylonians first rose to power in 1894 B.C.E. The empire expanded under the leadership of Hammurabi, who established a code of laws, but Assyrian forces overcame him and controlled Babylon until 605 B.C.E., when the Babylonians re-established their empire. Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 B.C.E.) are generally credited with creating the "Golden Age of Babylon," a time when the arts, city life, and commerce flourished.

The ancient world produced many spectacular structures. About 150 B.C.E. a Greek poet named Antipater of Sidon wrote a poem naming seven wonders he had seen during his travels throughout the eastern

Curriculum Connections

- ancient civilizations
- Babylon
- Mesopotamia

Subject Areas

- art
- language arts
- social studies



Historical Background *continued*

Mediterranean world. In the 16th century, Dutch artist Maerten van Heemskerck imagined what these legendary monuments looked like in a series of engravings. These pictures helped to establish what is now a definitive list. From the oldest to the most recent, they were:

1. Great Pyramid at Giza
2. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon
3. Temple of Artemis at Ephesus
4. Statue of Zeus at Olympia
5. Mausoleum at Halicarnassus
6. Colossus of Rhodes
7. Pharos of Alexandra

According to legend, King Nebuchadrezzar II built the Hanging Gardens to please his wife Amytis. She missed her green and mountainous homeland in northern Iraq while living in the hot, dry, city of Babylon.

The gardens were made up of a pyramid-like construction of terraces that rested on stone columns so the royals could stroll about and not be bothered by the work of those who tended the five-tier gardens. The gardens were irrigated by a great water wheel bringing water from the Euphrates River.

When Mesopotamia was conquered by Persia (now Iran) and later by Greece and Rome, much of its culture continued to influence people not only in its native lands, but in Europe and the West. Our 360-degree circle, 12-hour clock, and 60-minute hour are derived from the ancient Mesopotamian number system, and much of Hammurabi's code (written to "cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and evil, that the strong may not oppress the weak") can be seen in our modern legal system.



Want students to get even more excited about history?

Check out the Ancient Babylon adventure for kids at

www.timewarptrio.com/adventures/babylon/

Put It Back, Jack! and other interactive games to play.

Plentifax 487—the ultimate time traveler's guide—gives facts about the way Babylonians lived, worked, and more!

Cool Books that kids will love.

Activity 1

Name Challenge

As Fred, Joe, and Sam learn in the show "Seven Blunders of the World," cuneiform was one of the earliest writing systems. It originated in a region called Sumer around 3000 B.C.E. Originally a way to keep records, cuneiform—pictographs and then a combination of symbols on clay tablets—was soon used for many other purposes, such as writing down laws, stories, recipes, etc. By 2500 B.C.E., schools for scribes began to emerge. The students were from the wealthy classes and subsequently received positions in the palace, the temples, the military, and other government departments. Since reading and writing were such rare skills, such an education could pave the way for a career as a political or religious leader. Cuneiform was written on moist clay tablets with a triangular shaped stick.

This activity invites students to research and learn how to write their names in different languages.

Instructions

1. If students in your class come from other cultures, ask them to write their names in their native language. Compare the alphabet or writing system they use to the English alphabet.
2. Give students a brief introduction to cuneiform writing and show students an example. (See Resources)
3. Have students visit **www.upennmuseum.com/cuneiform.cgi** to see how to write their names in cuneiform. Have them copy their names onto strips of poster board and post them in the classroom.
4. Have students visit **omniglot.com/links/yournamein**. Have them translate their name into one of the languages or writing systems presented there (Arabic, Braille, Chinese, Greek, Hawaiian, Hebrew, hieroglyphs, Inktitut, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Mayan, runes, Tagalog, or Thai).
5. Using a world map, have students locate the appropriate country or region that corresponds to the language they chose and place their name on the map.

Objectives

- to enhance multicultural understanding
- to compare symbol systems

Materials

- world map
- writing supplies

Curriculum Standards

- **NCSS**
  Culture: Students will describe instances in which language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate understanding or cause misunderstanding.
- **NCTE/IRA**
  Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

Activity 2

Wonders of the Ancient World

Students learn about the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and present their information to the class.

Instructions

1. Explain to students that the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were once considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Provide students with a description of this and the other ancient wonders. (See Resources.)

2. You may want to divide the class into seven groups. Tell students that they are going to research one of these famous structures and explain why it is such a significant achivement for the people who built it. Their report to the class can take one of the following forms:

- travel brochure or poster
- diary account of a visit (now or then)
- newspaper article or account (now or then)

3. Have students choose the format for their reports and then research their topics and complete their projects.

4. After all students have presented their information, discuss whether any of these structures should be removed from the list of ancient wonders. If so, why? Are there any ancient structures that should be added to the list?

Take It Further

After visiting **ce.eng.usf.edu/pharos/wonders/other.html**, have student teams create a list of "The Seven Wonders of the Modern World." Have each team present their nominees. Hold a class vote to determine the final list.



Objectives

- to practice research skills
- to expand students' knowledge of ancient civilizations

Materials

- art and writing supplies

Curriculum Standards

- **NCSS**
  Science, Technology, & Society: Students examine and describe the influence of culture on scientific and technological choices and advancement.
- **NCTE/IRA**
  Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Resources

Recommended Books

For Teachers

The Babylonians: An Introduction by Gwendolyn Leick. (Routledge, 2002)
A survey of the people of Babylon and the city in which they flourished.

Cuneiform (Reading the Past, Vol 3) by C. B. F. Walker. (University of California Press, 1987)
Learn about the history and usage of this ancient form of writing.

Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia by Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat. (Hendrickson Publishers, 2002)
A look at the food, games, religion, and other aspects of society, from 3100 B.C.E. to the fall of Assyria and Babylon.

Everyday Life in Ancient Babylonia by Jean Bottéro. (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001)
An introduction to Babylonian society's customs, traditions, and values, from a noted scholar.

The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Daily Life, Volume 1 edited by Joyce E. Salisbury. (Greenwood Press, 2004)
A comprehensive look at the lives of ordinary people in ancient times—their clothes, food, culture, customs, beliefs, etc.

For Students

Fiction

Gilgamesh the Hero by Geraldine McCaughrean. (Eerdmans, 2002)
The Epic of Gilgamesh has been called the world's first great work of literature. Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu fight monsters, survive earthquakes, and face the ultimate enemy. For older readers.

Gilgamesh the King retold by Ludmila Zeman. (Tundra Books, 1992)
The story of how Gilgamesh and Enkidu meet and become the closest of friends is retold for younger readers.

My Nine Lives by Clio by Marjorie Priceman. (Aladdin, 2001)
This journal tells the story of one cat's nine lives, beginning with her first life in ancient Mesopotamia and ending with her most recent in Wisconsin in 1995. Historical notes about each time period are included.

Quests and Journeys by Don Nardo. (Lucent Books, 2002)
Discovering Mythology series.
Details six epic searches, including Gilgamesh's search for immortality.

Seven Wonders of the Ancient World by Mary Hoffman. (Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2003)
Philip, a fictional slave to the real poet and librarian Callimachus, narrates the story of their trip to visit the wonders of the ancient world.

The Winged Cat and Other Tales of Ancient Civilizations by Deborah Nourse Lattimore. (HarperTrophy, 2002)
Three tales, all set in ancient times, tell about a clever Egyptian servant girl, a Babylonian slave who struggles to be free, and a prince from the earliest kingdom in Crete.

Nonfiction

1001 Things to Spot Long Ago by Gillian Doherty. (Usborne, 1999)
Can you find the 79 objects in the busy marketplace in Mesopotamia? For younger readers.

Ancient Mesopotamia: The Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians by Virginia Schomp. (Franklin Watts, 2004)
The stories of the people who lived in the area that became known as the Cradle of Civilization unfold in words and photographs of artifacts, ruins, and the land as it looks today.

The Ancient Near East by Rebecca Stefoff. (Marshall Cavendish, 2005)
World Historical Atlases series.
The history of Mesopotamia, from its beginnings as an agricultural center through its rise to power and eventual fall to Persia.

First Civilizations by Dr. Erica C. D. Hunter. (Facts on File, Inc., 2003)
Maps, drawings, and photographs of treasures and artifacts illustrate brief sections about the lives and culture of the people of Mesopotamia and other ancient civilizations.

Resources

Great Wonders of the World
by Russell Ash.
(Dorling Kindersley, 2000)
Ancient wonders, including the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and modern wonders, such as the Japanese *Shimkansen* (bullet train) are described in detailed pictures, photographs, and captions.

Mysteries of Lost Civilizations
by Anne Millard.
(Copper Beech Books, 1996)
What is merely the stuff of legend and what has its roots in the truth? Where, exactly, were the Hanging Gardens? This is the story of how archeologists discover answers to our questions about the past.

Seven Wonders of the Ancient World
by Diana Bentley. (Oxford University Press, 2001)
Printed in association with the British Museum, the ancient wonders are described and depicted in drawings. Each section includes photographs of a comparable modern structure.

Seven Wonders of the Ancient World
by Lynn Curlee. (Atheneum, 2002)
Why were these spectacular structures built and what purpose did they serve? The author shows them as they might have been used with strikingly realistic paintings.

Writing in Ancient Mesopotamia
by Jil Fine. (PowerKids Press, 2003)
Cuneiform and its historical importance is described in simple language for younger readers.

Web Sites

ANCIENT HISTORY: MESOPOTAMIA
www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/mesopotamia_gallery.shtml
Find out more about ancient Mesopotamia by exploring topics such as early writing and more.

ANCIENT WONDERS
library.thinkquest.org/J002388/ancientwonder.html
Individual links to information about the seven ancient wonders.

THE HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON
www.unmuseum.org/hangg.htm
Take a virtual field trip through time to learn about the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, as well as the other wonders of the ancient world.

SEVEN WONDERS: GET CLUED IN
www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sunken/wonders
Play this interactive game about the seven ancient wonders of the world.

THE SEVEN WONDERS: OTHER MONUMENTS
ce.eng.usf.edu/pharos/wonders/other.html
The Civil and Environmental Engineering department of the University of Florida lists the seven ancient wonders, the seven modern wonders, the seven forgotten wonders, and the seven natural wonders of the world, with links to photographs and information about each selection.

WRITE LIKE A BABYLONIAN
www.upennmuseum.com/cuneiform.cgi
See your monogram in cuneiform, the way an ancient Babylonian might have written it.

Please note:
Although these sites were verified at the time of publication, Web site addresses and content are frequently subject to change.

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