

## LIFE IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA: Law and Government

### Symbols from History: Mesopotamia Today

**Subject Area:** world studies, current events, and language arts.

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**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Meets Illinois State Goals:** 1,2,3,4,5,16,13,27.

CRI word knowledge and writing components.

**Time Needed:** 4-5 45-min. periods

**Objectives:** Students will use knowledge of Mesopotamian artifacts, culture and history to relate to current events in Iraq.

#### Materials:

Newspaper articles on Iraq

Research materials including books, video, Internet.

Artifacts observed at OI visit.

OI web site.

Individual and group worksheets.

Poster art supplies.

#### Procedure:

As part of two week unit of Mesopotamia, this culminating activity will seek to put student knowledge to use in relation to the current events in Iraq.

Already covered will be general history and culture of Mesopotamia.

#### Day 1

Class discussion exploring what symbols a nation uses to represent itself and its values. (Brainstorm session on board; expected results: flag, coat of arms, mottoes, national bird, national tree, et al.) What are the sources of these symbols? (Expected answers the Geography, history, and religion of the country, its people and cultures.) Create vocabulary list.

Class discussion of events in Iraq. Students bring in newspaper articles about Iraq to build awareness of current events there. Teacher highlights the need to rebuild cultural structures and government. What has been going on, what are the needs of Iraq, what structures should be put in place to address the needs of Iraqi people? Add to vocabulary list.

# The Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago

1155 E. 58th Street, Chicago, IL. 60637 (773) 702-9507

<http://www.oi.uchicago.edu>

Teacher sets hypothetical role for students. Suppose there is a think tank advising those rebuilding Iraq on the Mesopotamian heritage of the area. Our class will offer input to the Iraqi government and advisors on historical sources of national

Teacher sets task: Students must advise the teams of nation builders on possible symbols for the new country of Iraq. "Our responsibility is to offer possibilities for national symbols from the cultural and historical background of ancient Mesopotamia." Class will divide into groups to explore possible symbols from its ancient Mesopotamian past to represent the new nation. Structures needing such symbols might include Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of government, Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Family, Culture etc. Divide the class into working groups of 3-4.

## Day 2

Class will visit museum or do library research on Mesopotamian artifacts in books, websites, etc. Each student fills in a worksheet highlighting one artifact and its possible symbolic use. The student will link it to some cultural or social need for the new state of Iraq as brainstormed on day one.

In group conference the group members compare their findings. Each group member will present his/her artifact from the museum or from research as a symbol for the branch of government chosen or assigned to that group. Each individual is responsible to research his/her artifact and present it to the group. (Evaluation: individual worksheet)

The group then must choose the one symbol as the basis for a class presentation. The group will make a visual for a flag, a coat of arms, a motto, etc., explain its link to the current organizational need of Iraq. (Evaluation: a completed worksheet listing each group member's proposal. Group worksheet compiling, comparing the various members' proposed artifacts)

## Day 3,4

The group is responsible for a presentation to the class. Presentation will include the visual for the symbol, a short explanation to the class, where the group seeks to educate the rest of the class on the artifacts considered and the process they used to choose the "winning" symbol. (Evaluation: the visual itself, quality of class presentation based on the rubric)

## Day 4

Each student will then write an essay justifying the choice of symbol, including at least three paragraphs citing the historical background of the artifact, the need of the new nation that requires a symbol, and the link between the two justifying the choice of the group. Students will use at least five words from the vocabulary list.

The visuals and the justifications will be put in a display of student work in the library.

## Evaluation:

Individual artifact worksheet

Group worksheet

Group presentation including visual aid

Written essay explaining of the choice of symbol



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Think Tank: Suggesting symbols for Iraq

Group worksheet for \_\_\_\_\_

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Artifact/Symbol

Ancient use

Link to Iraq today

1.

2.

3.

4.



Circle the symbol your group chooses to present to class.

## Evaluation rubrics

### Symbols from History: Mesopotamia today

#### Group presentation

1. Did you explain the history of the artifact?
2. Did each group member propose an artifact?
3. Did all team members participate in the presentation?
4. Is the visual aid interesting and clear?
5. Did the oral presentation hold the interest of the class?

#### Individual Essay

1. Did you use 5 words from the class list?
2. Did you explain the historical background of the artifact chosen by your group?
3. Did you explain the part of Iraqi government or culture that requires a symbol?
4. Did you explain why the artifact would be a good symbol for Iraq?



## Searching for Symbols

Individual worksheet for \_\_\_\_\_

Describe and sketch the artifact.

What is it?

Why did people need to use it?

What government or cultural structure in Iraq today could this artifact symbolize?

