

What does Hammurabi's Code reveal about Mesopotamian society under the Babylonian empire?**Objective:**

- Describe what Hammurabi's Code reveals about Mesopotamian society under the Babylonian empire.

Introduction**➡ Directions:** Respond to the questions below. Then, turn to your partner and share your responses

	Your response:	Partner Response:
1. Are laws and rules necessary? Explain.		
2. Are punishments for laws necessary ? Explain.		
3. Who should be able to write laws and rules?		
4. Who should be able to enforce laws?		
5. Are all laws and rules fair? Explain.		
6. If a law or rule is unfair, what should happen?		



What is Hammurabi's Code?

Source



[P1050771 Louvre code Hammurabi bas relief rwk.JPG](#) by Mbzt is published under the [CC BY 3.0 Unported](#) license



Watch the [Turning Points in Law: Hammurabi's Code of Law](#), video and respond to the questions below. (0:00-1:55)

What did you learn about the Code of Hammurabi from you video excerpt?

➔ **Directions:** Read the excerpt below, then respond to the questions.

literate: able to read

scribes: a person who copies out documents

offense: an illegal act

Hammurabi is best known for The Code of Hammurabi. This was one of the first codified or written law codes. It was written around 1754 BC. It was written on a stele, or a large stone monument, and placed in a public place so that all could see it. Even though it was visible for all to see, few were literate enough to read the cuneiform writing. A carving at the top of the stele shows King Hammurabi receiving the laws from the god Shamash. The inscription states that King Hammurabi was chosen by the gods of his people to bring the laws to them.

The code of Hammurabi contained 282 laws. These laws were written by scribes on 12 tablets. The Code consists of rules and the punishments for if those rules were broken. The structure of the code is very detailed: each offense receiving a particular punishment.

Hammurabi's law code set the standard for future codes because it dealt with the evidence of the crime.

What decided one's guilt or innocence was something called the Ordeal. During the Ordeal, the accused person was sentenced to perform a certain task such as being thrown into a river or swimming a certain distance across a river and, if they succeeded, they were innocent. If they did not survive the ordeal, they were considered guilty.

Adapted by New Visions from [Hammurabi](#) by Joshua J. Mark which is published on Ancient History Encyclopedia under the [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 Unported](#) license

Who wrote *The Code of Hammurabi*?

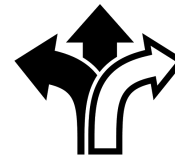
When was *The Code of Hammurabi* written? **Where** was *The Code of Hammurabi* written?

What type of source is *The Code of Hammurabi*?

Where was *The Code of Hammurabi* placed? Why was it placed there?

Why was *The Code of Hammurabi* written?

Who gave Hammurabi the authority to write and enforce *The Code of Hammurabi* written?



Predict

How might the *Code of Hammurabi* be useful evidence in determining what life was like under the Babylonian empire in Mesopotamia? How might it be not useful?

➡ **Directions:** Examine the image below, then fill out the chart with what you see, think and wonder about society in the Babylonian empire.

See

List three things you *see* in the image to your left.

Think

Based on your observations, why do you *think* the Code of Hammurabi was this size?

Wonder

Write two questions you have about the image to the left.



6 foot tall stele

Citation [1](#)



Top Quarter / Fingernail

Citation [2](#)



Lower Portion / Inscription

Citation [3](#)



What can we as **historians** learn about Babylonian society from the *Code of Hammurabi*?

Close Read



Citation [4](#)

Document 1: The Code of Hammurabi—Economy

Context: Babylonia was located in the **Fertile Crescent** between the **Tigris** and **Euphrates** Rivers. This land was excellent for **agriculture**. Society depended on these crops for **trade** and feeding the people.

1	53. If any one be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it; if then the dam break
2	and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the
3	money shall replace the corn which he has caused to be ruined.
4	
5	54. If he be not able to replace the corn, then he and his possessions shall be divided among the farmers
6	whose corn he has flooded.
7	
8	59. If any man, without the knowledge of the owner of a garden, fell [cause to fall] a tree in a garden he shall
9	pay half a mina in money.

Source: "Code of Hammurabi." Translated by L.W. King. *The Eleventh Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 1915. Found on the Fordham University's Ancient History Sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/hamcode.asp>

1a. What were the occupation(s) [jobs] of the Babylonians mentioned in Document 1?

1b. Who was punished for the damage caused by flooding if a dam breaks?

1c. Based on Document 1, identify one consequence for damaging someone else's property in Babylonia.

1d. *Explain* what this excerpt of Hammurabi's Code suggest about the economy in Babylonia.



Citation [5](#)

Document 2: The Code of Hammurabi—Social Classes

1	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
2	value.
3	202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an
4	ox-whip in public.
5	
6	203. If a free-born man strike the body of another free-born man or equal rank, he shall pay one gold

7	mina.
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Source: "Code of Hammurabi." Translated by L.W. King. *The Eleventh Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 1915. Found on the Fordham University's Ancient History Sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/hamcode.asp>

2a. What is the difference between a free-born man and a slave?

2b. What is the punishment if a free-born man "strike the body" of "another free-born man?"

2c. What is the punishment if a man "strike the body" of a "man higher in rank than he?"

2d. How do the punishments differ if a man "strike the body" of "another free-born man" or a "man higher in rank than he?" Which punishment is more severe?

2e. According to this document, was everyone equal in Babylonia? Explain.

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Document 3: The Code of Hammurabi—Women

Citation [6](#)
Citation [7](#)

1	138. If a man wishes to separate from his wife who has borne him no children, he shall give her the amount of her purchase money and the dowry which she brought from her father's house, and let her go.
2	
3	
4	
5	141. If a man's wife, who lives in his house, wishes to leave it, plunges into debt, tries to ruin her house, neglects her husband, and is judicially convicted: if her husband offer her release, she may go on her way,
6	

7	and he gives her nothing as a gift of release. If her husband does not wish to release her, and if he take
8	another wife, she shall remain as servant in her husband's house.
9	
10	143. If she is not innocent, but leaves her husband, and ruins her house, neglecting her husband, this woman
11	shall be cast into the water.
12	
13	148. If a man take a wife, and she be seized by disease, if he then desire to take a second wife he shall not
14	put away his wife, who has been attacked by disease, but he shall keep her in the house which he has built
15	and support her so long as she lives

Source: "Code of Hammurabi." Translated by L.W. King. *The Eleventh Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 1915. Found on the Fordham University's Ancient History Sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/hamcode.asp>

3a. According to law 141, what happens if a woman wants to leave her marriage but her husband refuses to release her?

3b. According to law 138, what happens to a dowry if a man leaves his wife?

3c. How do the punishments differ for a man and a woman?

FA

SQ 20: What does Hammurabi's Code reveal about Mesopotamian society under the Babylonian empire?

➡ **Directions:** Based on what you have learned, complete the task below.



Part I

The Babylonian Empire was a growing kingdom that conquered new lands and absorbed new people. How might *The Code of Hammurabi* have helped Hammurabi maintain and consolidate power?

Source



Explain what Hammurabi's Code reveals about Mesopotamian society under the Babylonian empire.

Close Read



Explain whether you'd want to live in the Babylonian Empire under the Code of Hammurabi.

Construct Argument