

Instruction: Parents, please ensure that the student reads the given passage very carefully to answer the questions that follow. They can refer to the internet for detailed information of the topic.

Chapter 1 - The Mesopotamian Civilisation

The Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Harappan and Chinese Civilisations are called early river valley civilisations. Both archaeological and literary sources tell us about the Mesopotamian Civilisation. In Mesopotamia, the first civilisation developed in Sumer. Ur was the biggest city in Sumer. It was divided into the sacred area, the walled city and the outer town. There were many social classes in Mesopotamia. The king and the royal family held the highest position in the society. The slaves were at the lowest rung of the social ladder.

The Mesopotamians worshipped many gods. Each city had its own patron god. Temple-towers called Ziggurats were built for the gods. Farming was the main occupation of the Mesopotamian people. In addition to craftsmen and metal workers such as blacksmiths and goldsmiths, there were other artisans such as potters, weavers, sculptors, glass-makers and many others. The Mesopotamians had trade relations with the Harappan Civilisation.

Major achievements of the Mesopotamians include :-

- a) the use of architectural forms such as arch, vault, column and so on.
- b) ziggurats
- c) the Hanging Gardens of Babylon
- d) prediction of eclipses
- e) names for different stars and planets
- f) writing, and
- g) Hammurabi's Code of Laws

Script: The Sumerians invented writing almost 5500 years ago. The Mesopotamian system of writing is known as 'cuneiform'

Hammurabi's Code of Laws: The earliest complete record of laws found in Mesopotamia. A Babylonian king called Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE) compiled these laws. Hammurabi's Code is carved on a huge stone slab. It lists 282 laws governing trade and commerce, family, civil and criminal disputes. It prescribes punishments depending on the severity of the offense, the circumstances of the offence, and the status of the offender.

Exercise – 1

1. Name four early river valley civilisations
2. What were the social classes in ancient Mesopotamia?
3. Mention the occupations of the people of Ancient Mesopotamia?
4. What do you know about Hammurabi's Code of Law?
5. Fill in the blanks-
 - (a) ___ was the biggest city in Sumer.
 - (b) ___ was the main occupation.
 - (c) The Mesopotamian system of writing is known as ___.

END