

LESSON 3

1800 B.C.

1200 B.C.

600 B.C.

1754 B.C.
Hammurabi controls
all of Mesopotamia.

668 B.C. to 627 B.C.
The Assyrian Empire is at its height.

605 B.C.
Nebuchadnezzar II is king of Babylon.

Babylonia and Assyria

PREVIEW

Focus on the Main Idea

New empires in the Fertile Crescent advanced by adopting earlier Mesopotamian culture.

PLACES

Babylon
Babylonia
Assyria
Nineveh

PEOPLE

Hammurabi
Ashurbanipal
Nebuchadnezzar II

VOCABULARY

conquest

TERMS

Code of Hammurabi

► The Ishtar Gate was built about 580 B.C. It was the main entryway into Babylon.

You Are There

Babylon (ba buh LOHN), 580 B.C.:
Babylon is under construction—again! Each year it seems the king orders a new building project. But you have to admit, the city has never looked better. The city walls are stronger than ever. You enter the city through a magnificent gateway. It's made of deep blue glazed brick and decorated with pictures of fierce animals. Inside the walls, work continues on the ziggurat. The king orders the builders to raise the top of the tower so that it might rival heaven. The "hanging gardens," however, are your favorite new sight. They're amazing! There's not much greenery around Babylon, so the king built these rooftop gardens. To keep the gardens lush and green, builders set up an irrigation system. Water is pumped from the Euphrates River to the gardens that overlook the city.



Sequence As you read, keep events in their correct time order.

The Rise of Hammurabi and Babylonia

Why was there so much construction going on in the city-state of **Babylon**? Following the fall of Ur in about 2100 B.C., people from the surrounding areas began to arrive in Mesopotamia. They remained there for centuries and adopted Mesopotamian customs, law, religion, and art styles.

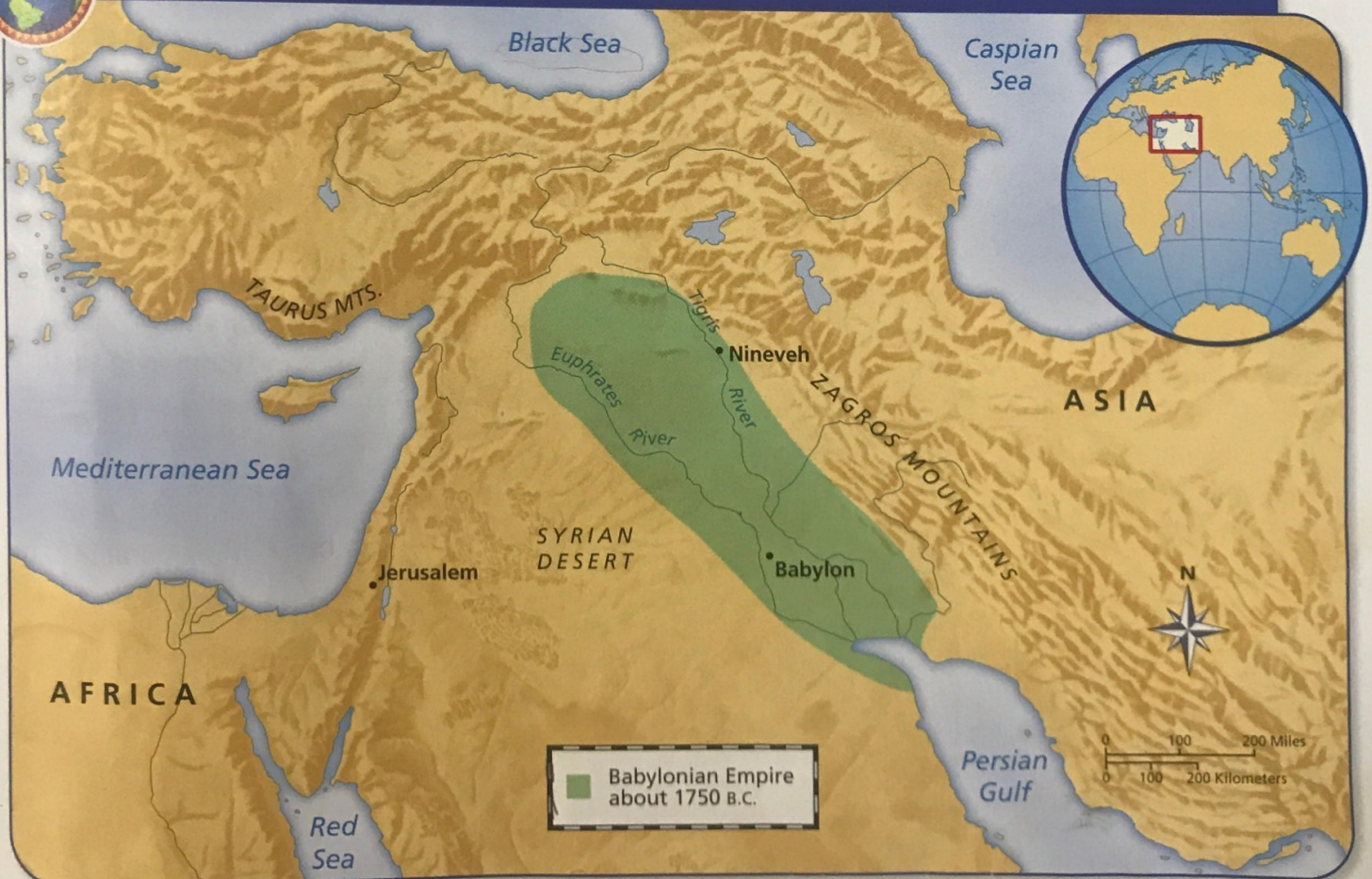
In 1792 B.C. **Hammurabi** (hah muh RAH bee) became king of Babylon, located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Read more about Hammurabi in the biography on page 51.

Hammurabi was a shrewd, or clever, leader who sought great power. By 1754 B.C. he controlled all of Mesopotamia, in addition to a number of neighboring city-states. His empire was known as **Babylonia** (ba buh LOH nyah). (Look at the map below.) It spread from the Persian Gulf northward and east to the Zagros Mountains. Hammurabi sent officials throughout the empire to carry out his orders and to collect taxes. Taxes paid on property often went to support Hammurabi's large army and pay for the construction projects you have read about.

REVIEW Why did Hammurabi need tax money, and how did he collect it? **Draw Conclusions**



The Empire of Hammurabi



► Hammurabi greatly expanded the Babylonian Empire.

MAP SKILL Use Map Scale About how many miles did the Babylonian Empire extend?

Babylonian Civilization

Daily life did not change much under Hammurabi. The Babylonians continued to rely on irrigation for farming and on trade. Their religious beliefs were similar. Babylonia also had a strict class system. However, the Babylonians spoke their own version of the Akkadian language.

Under Hammurabi the capital city of Babylon grew. A small village during Sumerian civilization, Babylon became a center of culture and learning. Clay tablets tell archaeologists that many advancements were made in mathematics, literature, and law.

Hammurabi is best known for a set of laws he established. These laws helped him to govern his empire in a new way. This set of 282 laws is known as the

Code of Hammurabi. Some of the laws were based on earlier Sumerian and Akkadian laws. Many of them dealt with business practices. Others related to property ownership, medical practice, marriage, and childcare.

Although the Code of Hammurabi was not the first law code written in Mesopotamia, it is the most complete law code to have survived. The Code gives us a good idea of the structure of Babylonian society and concerns of the Babylonians.

► This stone stele, or slab, contains the Code of Hammurabi. Above the Code, Hammurabi is shown standing before the god who is handing him the laws.

Hammurabi explained his purpose for the law code:

“... to render [give] good to the people, to make justice shine in the land, to destroy the evil and wicked, that the strong do not oppress [mis-treat] the weak.”

The belief that the strong should not oppress the weak is illustrated in some of the laws. For example, there were laws that tried to protect people with little political power, such as children and widows. However, some of the laws were quite harsh. Sometimes a wrongdoer would have to pay a fine.

Hammurabi's Code called for different punishments based on the class of the lawbreaker and the victim of the crime. In the Code, punishments often fit the crime by demanding an “eye for an eye” or a “tooth for a tooth.”

REVIEW What was the purpose of the Code of Hammurabi?

Summarize



Hammurabi

c. 1810 B.C.–1750 B.C.

Hammurabi became king of the city-state of Babylon in 1792 B.C., when he was a young adult. Other kings ruled the 30 or so other Mesopotamian cities. Rivalry among these rulers was great. To increase their power, rulers formed partnerships with each other.

Hammurabi, with the help of his allies, began conquering neighboring cities. One of his main goals was to gain control of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. This meant he would have control of irrigation systems and the farming economy. By 1754 B.C. Hammurabi had conquered more than 20 cities. All of Mesopotamia came under Hammurabi's rule.

Hammurabi was a brilliant warrior, but his military tactics could be brutal. One strategy he probably used was damming a waterway and then releasing it to flood a city.

The crowning achievement of his final years was his code of laws, which he had

BIOFACT

Some women held high positions during Hammurabi's reign. Hammurabi's sister Iltani handled business matters for the gods Shamash and Aja.

British Museum



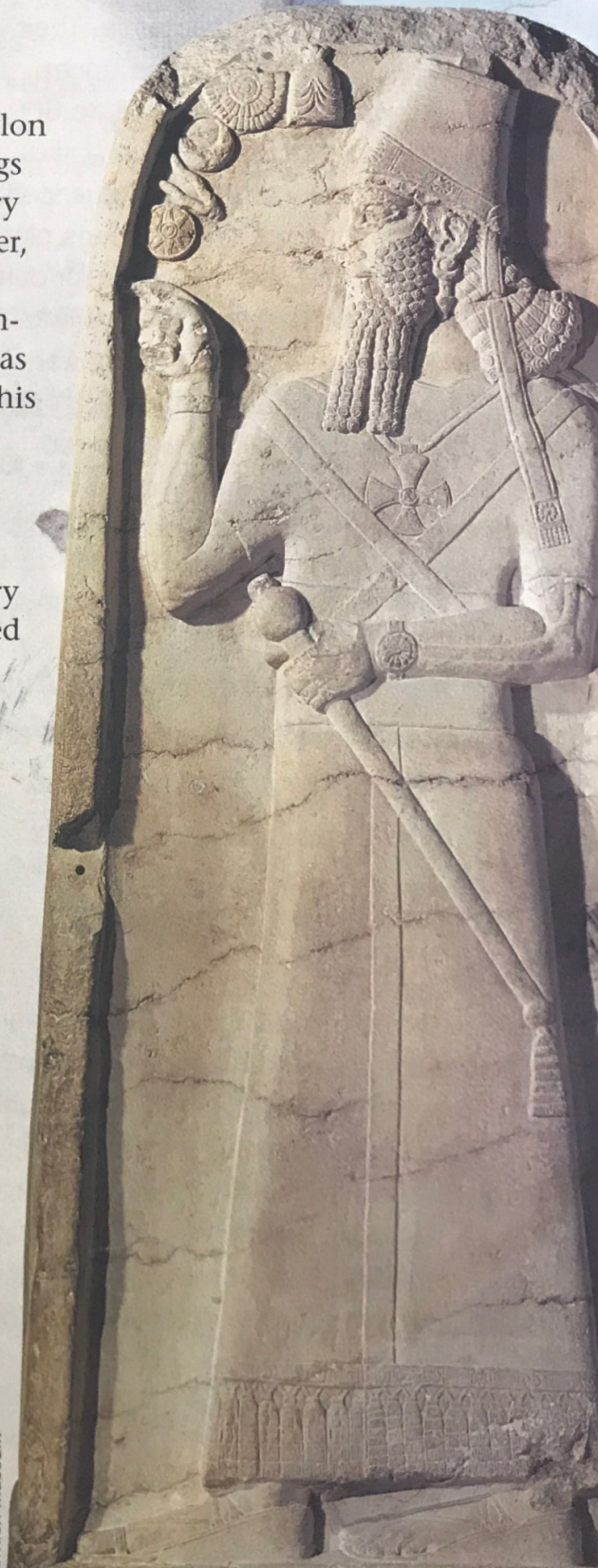
engraved on a towering stone monument. It is clear from the words on the monument that Hammurabi wished to be remembered as an able ruler and a just lawgiver:

"Hammurabi is a ruler, who is as a father to his subjects . . . who has achieved conquest for Marduk [the chief god of Babylon] over the north and south . . . and has established order in the land."

Learn from Biographies

Why do you think Hammurabi had his code of law "set in stone"? How might this have helped him rule his empire successfully?

British Museum



For more information, go online to Meet the People at www.sfsocialstudies.com.



The Assyrians

While the Babylonian Empire flourished under Hammurabi in southern Mesopotamia, a people known as the Assyrians (us SIR ee uhns) began to gain strength in northern Mesopotamia. Their heartland lay in the valley of the Upper Tigris River. From about 1900 B.C. to 600 B.C., **Assyria** expanded its territory.

Assyrian culture was greatly influenced by Babylonian culture, but the Assyrians placed higher value on war and **conquest**, or defeat, of another group. The Assyrians were known as great and sometimes merciless warriors. Their heavy, wheeled battering rams quickly reduced a city wall to rubble. The soldiers then stormed the city, forcing the people to surrender. One observer said of the Assyrians:

"Their arrows are sharp . . . their bows bent, their horses' hoofs are as hard as flint, and their wheels like the whirlwind. They growl and seize their prey; they carry it off and none can rescue it."

From 688 B.C. to 627 B.C., the Assyrian Empire was at its largest and most powerful under King **Ashurbanipal** (ah soor BAH nuh pahl). During his reign, the Assyrians controlled nearly all of the Fertile Crescent. Like other Assyrian kings, Ashurbanipal personally led his armies into battle. However, he also was a very educated man. He could read and write ancient Sumerian as well as Akkadian. He built a great library at



► This statue of a winged lion is from Ashurbanipal's palace.

Nineveh (NIN uh vah), his capital. There he collected many Sumerian, Akkadian, and Babylonian writings. His library contained works of literature, as well as writings on history, mathematics, and astronomy. Tablets from Ashurbanipal's library have helped historians learn about the peoples of Mesopotamia.

REVIEW When did the Assyrians expand their empire? 🔁 **Sequence**

Babylonia Grows

After 627 B.C., Babylon again began to expand its influence and wealth. In 605 B.C., **Nebuchadnezzar II** (neh buh kuhd NEHZ uhr) was crowned king of Babylon. He took over much of the former Assyrian Empire and the desert land west of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar II ordered massive building projects to make Babylon great and glorious once again. He built walls to protect the great temples of Babylon. He also finished building the great ziggurat.

Several of his projects have become legendary. Some historians think that the enormous ziggurat at Babylon might have been the inspiration for the Tower of Babel, which is mentioned in the

► The Hanging Gardens of Babylon are considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Gift of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1932/Metropolitan Museum of Art



► This reconstructed glazed brick bull is on the Ishtar Gate of the city of Babylon.

Bible. Some historians believe that Nebuchadnezzar II built the Hanging Gardens you read about earlier in this lesson. Others believe that they were the project of Queen Sammu-ramat, who reigned about 200 years earlier.

Babylon was a wealthy trading city and an important center of learning. The Babylonians made great advancements in mathematics. For

example, they determined that place value refers to the position of numerals. The numerals 5, 55, and 555 all have different values. Babylonian astronomers, or scientists who study the sun, moon, stars, and planets, made important advancements. They were able to accurately predict, or estimate, when eclipses of the sun and moon would occur. When Nebuchadnezzar II died about 562 B.C., the new Babylonian Empire declined. In 539 B.C. the Persians invaded and conquered Babylon.

REVIEW What was Babylon like during Nebuchadnezzar's reign? **Summarize**

Summarize the Lesson

- **1754 B.C.** Hammurabi formed the first Babylonian Empire.
- **668 B.C. to 627 B.C.** The Assyrian Empire reached its height.
- **605 B.C.** Under Nebuchadnezzar II, Babylon became the center of a wealthy and powerful empire.

LESSON 3 REVIEW

Check Facts and Main Ideas

1. **Sequence** The following events are not in the correct order. On a separate piece of paper, list them in the correct order.

 - Nebuchadnezzar II starts a series of building projects in Babylon.
 - Hammurabi establishes his code of law.
 - Ashurbanipal builds his library at Nineveh.
2. Who was Hammurabi?
3. What was the **Code of Hammurabi**?

4. How did Assyrian culture differ from Babylonian culture? Use the word **conquest** in your answer.
5. **Critical Thinking: Make Generalizations** What contributions did the Babylonians make to civilization?

Link to



Reading

Read Up on a Ruler Which one of the rulers you have read about in this lesson most interests you? Go to the library or use the Internet to read more.