

The Code of Hammurabi

Hammurabi's laws are often called the Code of Hammurabi. Hammurabi's Code was written in cuneiform, a kind of writing that, to us, might seem like a secret language. Cuneiform was not written with paint or ink on a flat surface. Instead, people wrote cuneiform by pushing a chisel into wet clay or stone. The word cuneiform means "shaped like a wedge" in Latin. The English language can be written using about 64 symbols-the 26 capital letters, the 26 lower case letters and about a dozen punctuation marks. Cuneiform writers used more than 2,000 different symbols, which made it difficult to learn and to write. The writers carefully carved records of business deals and other everyday matters into tablets of wet clay. These tablets were then baked hard, like pottery, to preserve the writing. Very important records, like Hammurabi's Code, were often carved directly into hard stone. Hammurabi's Code was meant to help govern a vast empire. Copies of his code, written in clay and stone, have been found all over Mesopotamia.

I Set Truth and Justice Throughout the Land

The Code of Hammurabi begins with a long introduction. The king names all the city-states he's conquered. He boasts about his victories. It's clear his laws are made for a mighty empire. Finally, he says: "The Great God Murduck commanded me to give justice to all the people of the land. I let them have good government. I set forth truth and justice throughout the land and made the people prosper. At that time, I issued the following decrees." A list of

statement. The laws are about the same subject are laws is about witchcraft. It tells and punished. Since the demons and the supernatural, thought the witchcraft laws of laws described different perjury (lying in court) and harshly punished. The penalty death. People who bought Babylonian methods of drowning, burning, beheading against stealing and their owning property had become



important in Babylon. Many of Hammurabi's laws described rules for trading, establishing prices, and setting standards on workmanship. Builders in Babylon had to be especially careful. If a house collapsed and killed the owner's son, the builder's son was put to death. Barbers, doctors, salespeople, farmers and slaves were told how to behave. Hammurabi even set wages for some jobs. A Babylonian shepherd was to receive 33 bushels of grain a year, no more and no less. The code says something about almost every aspect of Babylonian life. There are laws about marriage and families, about borrowing and lending money, about irrigating fields. Hammurabi's Code ends with a stern warning. In a long curse, Hammurabi describes what will happen to anybody who does not respect his laws. "May the mighty gods in heaven and earth curse him," says the king, "and his children, and his land, his people, his nation."

282 decrees, or laws, followed this arranged in groups, so that all the laws listed together. The first group of how witches should be tried, judged Babylonians strongly believed in it isn't surprising that Hammurabi should be listed first. The next group kinds of crimes, like kidnapping, stealing. Crimes against property were for almost any kind of stealing was stolen property were also killed. execution were harsh. They included and impaling. The number of laws service penalties show how important to the Babylonians. Trade was also

The Code of Hammurabi

LAWS OF HAMMURABI

1. If a man is married and his wife becomes ill, he may marry a second wife. However, he may not divorce his first wife, who should live in his home and be supported by him until she dies.
2. If a man adopted an infant as a son and raised him and later has children of his own and wants to disown his adopted son, he must first give his adopted son one-third of the possessions (wealth) of his son.
3. If a man destroyed the eye of a free man, his own eye should be destroyed.
4. If a doctor operates on a man for a severe wound or a tumor and causes the man to die, his hands shall be cut off.
5. If a man opens his irrigation ditch and through negligence, it floods his neighbor's field, he shall pay his neighbor in corn according to how much he would have raised.
6. If a man breaks into a house, he should be killed.
7. If a man steals an ox, sheep, donkey, pig, or goat he must pay 10 times the worth. If the thief has nothing to pay, he shall be killed.



The Code of Hammurabi

Questions:

1. Why are laws created? (give 3 reasons)

2. How should punishments for breaking laws be decided?

3. Who do you think should be responsible for creating laws and punishments? (Explain your answer)

Notes on Hammurabi's Code:

A. Hammurabi → King of Mesopotamia 1792 BC – 1750 BC

B. The Code of Hammurabi:

1. Written in Cuneiform
2. 282 laws → witchcraft, stealing, murder, trade, and marriage
3. Punishments very harsh → “an eye for an eye”
4. First Civil Law → deals with private rights and matters

C Significance of the Code of Hammurabi:

1. First written code – people could see it, it increased literacy (ability to read)
2. Treated women fairly
3. Harsh punishments made civilization safer
4. Reinforced class structure – punishments were different for different classes

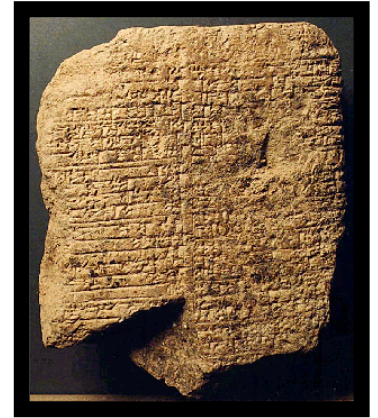


THE COUNSELORS OF HAMMURABI

Group Activity

Directions:

Imagine that you are a counselor to the mighty king of Babylon. He reigns today, in your community. He has asked you to help him write his laws. Each of the eight statements below describes a situation in which one person injures the other. Identify the injured party and the wrongdoer. Then create law by completing each sentence and describing what should happen to the person who caused the injury. In the last space provided, you are to create your own classroom crime and just punishment for that crime. Your laws should be fair. The wrongdoer should be punished. The injured person should feel that justice has been done, that he or she has received an "eye for an eye."



Crime & Punishment	Injured Party	Wrongdoer
1. If one boy tears another boy's shirt in a fight, then...		
2. If a girl kicks a soccer ball through a neighbor's window and the flying glass cuts the neighbor's arm, then...		
3. If a boy tells a lie about his sister and, because of that lie, their parents punish the girl by taking away a month's allowance, then...		
4. If a young boy is killed in a car accident because the driver failed to see him chase a ball into the street, then...		
5. If a student is late to class several times without an excuse, then...		
6. If the teacher is speaking to the class and a student is disruptive and disrespectful, then...		
7. If a student cheats on a test and scores an "A", then...		
8. If a teacher is disrespectful to a student, then...		

Name: _____

The Code of Hammurabi

1. List 2 facts about Hammurabi's Code.
2. Why was the Code of Hammurabi significant/important?
3. How is a scale like justice?

Name: _____

The Code of Hammurabi

1. List 2 facts about Hammurabi's Code.
2. Why was the Code of Hammurabi significant/important?
3. How is a scale like justice?