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**Sixth Grade Social Studies**

**Mesopotamia Civilization (Tigris)**

**Unit Rationale**

This unit was developed using backwards design. The unit was created with the end, summative assessment in mind. Each lesson within the unit reflects the components that are to be understood in the final projects. As well as giving students the tools to be successful in completing the final projects, the everyday lessons use authentic assessments and best practices within social studies to engage the students and allow them to think critically. Students will use inquiry, collaboration skills, and experiential learning to dive into Mesopotamian culture and history and as a result will create a brochure and podcast.

**Essential Questions**

* How can our understanding of ancient Mesopotamia influence the way we live our lives today?
* What can we learn about civilizations through looking at artifacts?
* How do inventions impact the way people live and work?
* How does technology affect the way people live?
* How does geography affect the development of a civilization?

**Student Objectives**

* Students will begin to recognize various aspects of ancient Mesopotamia through the use of an overview WebQuest activity.  They will define key vocabulary terms and be able to locate this civilization on a map.
* Students will develop an understanding of the importance of pottery in Mesopotamia, as well as, the importance of the Code of Hammurabi. Students will produce a model of a Mesopotamian art form and discover how Mesopotamians developed and used their writing system.
* Students will research different inventions/technologies of Mesopotamia and note the major impact they have had on society today.
* Students will develop an understanding of ziggurats and they will be able to apply their knowledge and create their own model representation of a ziggurat.

**Unit Breakdown**

Day 1: Introductory Webquest

Days 2-3: Pottery Creation and Code of Hammurabi

Day 4: Inventions/Technologies

Day 5: Ziggurats Reading/Building

Days 6-7: Outline Creation of Podcast/Brochure

Days 8-9: Creation of Podcast/Brochure

**Social Studies Standards**

Theme: Regions and People of the Western Hemisphere

* Strand: History
  + Topic: Early Civilizations
    - Content Statement #2: Early civilizations (Indian, Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia) with unique governments, economic systems, social structures, religions, technologies and agricultural practices and products flourished as a result of favorable geographic characteristics.  The cultural practices and products of these early civilizations can be used to help understand the Eastern Hemisphere today.
* Strand: Geography
  + Topic: Places and Regions
    - Content Statement #5: Regions can be determined, classified and compared using various criteria (e.g., landform, climate, population, cultural, or economic)
  + Topic: Human Systems
    - Content Statement #7: Political, environmental, social, and economic factors cause people, products, and ideas to move from place to place in the Eastern Hemisphere in the past and today.

**Common Core Literacy Standards**

* Craft and Structure: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
* Integration and Knowledge of Ideas: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

**Math Standards**

* 6.G.1: Find the area of right triangles, special quadrilaterals, and polygons by composing into rectangles or decomposing into triangles and other shapes; apply these techniques in the context of solving real-world and mathematical problems.
* 6.G.4: Represent three-dimensional figures using nets made up of rectangles and triangles, and use the nets to find the surface area of these figures. Apple these techniques in the context of solving real-world and mathematical problems.

**Key Assessments**

Teachers will be using two key assessments to gauge students’ learning and understanding of the material in the unit. One is a travel brochure, where students are asked to develop a brochure for tourists traveling to Mesopotamia. They must use elements from the unit, such as information about the writing system, things to do and see, and maps. The second assessment is a podcast, where students are asked to create a commercial, persuading people to travel to Mesopotamia. They specifically look at the 5 themes of geography and incorporate them into their commercials.

**Teaching Methodology & Best Practices**

In this unit, there is a mixture of direct instruction as well as inquiry and hands-on activities. We chose a blend of these types of instruction because it provides students the information they need, while also giving them the opportunity to explore and gather information on their own. One best practice that we have integrated is that “Students should be involved in writing, observing, discussing, and debating to ensure active participating in learning” (Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, 2005, p.180). The closure of many of the lessons involves students writing, reflecting, and making connections to present day material. This goes along with the constructivist view, another best practice, where students seek to make connections and make information relevant to what they already know and understand. The pottery lesson is an example of authentic learning, and using real materials and ideas to create and authentic replication of pottery and cuneiform, as they would have done in Mesopotamia. When students are working on inquiry projects, or developing their podcasts, they are working together in collaboration. In this way, they are able to gain an even better understanding and see things from different points of view as they share ideas and learn from one another. Lastly, in terms of assessment, Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde note that it is essential for students to “reflect the importance of students’ thinking and help prepare students to be responsible citizens, rather than rewarding memorization of decontextualized facts” (2005, p.183). In both assessments for this unit, students are applying the information they have learned in a relative context to an audience outside of their peers or the teacher. Both assessments are aimed at informing the greater community about reasons to visit Mesopotamia and what they can do when they go there. Integrated in these assessments, students are asked to reflect on why people might choose to live in a river civilization.

**Resources**

*5 Themes of Geography Lesson Plans and Social Studies Activities*.  University of North

Alabama, Department of Geography:

[http://www.una.edu/geography/statedepted/themes.html](https://by2prd0511.outlook.com/owa/redir.aspx?C=bV19p_Tml0SWTKkJIxSmdqz3uuHvY9AIDRszkHYpjSAunjdu8K6SyMuj_JpEf_hTxhjM1Mh9TcE.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.una.edu%2fgeography%2fstatedepted%2fthemes.html)

Gandy, S. (2007). Developmentally Appropriate Geography. *Social Studies and the*

*Young Learner, 20*(2), p. 30-32.

Heacox, D. (2010) *Making Differentiation a Habit.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit

Publishing.

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2001). *Understanding by Design*. Upper Saddle River, NJ:

Prentice Hall.

Zemelman, S., Daniels, H., & Hyde, A. (2005). *Best Practices, 3rd Edition*. Portsmouth,

NH: Heinemann.