World History

Laying Down the LAW

To Hammurabi, “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” meant justice

Imagine that you are far from home in a strange land. Two men lead you into a dreary courtroom, where a stern judge sits behind a mammoth bench.

“The accused is guilty under Section 21 of the Official Secrets Act,” the judge thunders, pounding his gavel. “Off to prison with you!”

You have no idea what you did wrong. You have never even heard of the law you are accused of violating.

Does this sound far-fetched? Such forbidding scenes still play out in countries around the world. America’s criminal justice system, too, can sometimes fail its citizens.

In ancient societies, people didn’t even have a courtroom in which to plead their cases. Kings ruled according to their whims and desires, and ordinary people enjoyed few rights.

Hammurabi wanted to change this. The powerful king, who ruled ancient Babylon from 1792 to 1750 B.C., had a keen sense of right and wrong. He was one of the first rulers to display the laws of the land for all to see. First, he had the laws **inscribed** (carved) on a huge slab of stone.

This stone, called a **stela**, was then put in a place where townspeople could see and discuss it.

Hammurabi clearly thought a lot of himself. “Let the oppressed, who have a case at law, come and stand before this my image as King of righteousness,” he wrote. “Let him read

Web Watch: You Be the Judge

www.phillipmartin.info

/hammurabi/homepage.htm
the inscription, and understand my precious words.”

Look to me, Hammurabi seemed to say, for a model of justice. He also promised relief for the husband feuding with his brother-in-law, the son with his father. “The inscription will explain his case to him,” Hammurabi continued. “He will find out what is just, and his heart will be glad.”

At last, people had a clear explanation—however imperfect—of right and wrong. Known as the Code of Hammurabi, this system of laws set the standard for all future societies. Legal scholars call it the first great legal document of civilization. It even predates the Bible!

**Discovering the Code**

We know little about Hammurabi aside from his Code. It is a fluke that his set of rules even survived.

In 1901, French archaeologists were working at the site of Susa, an ancient Persian city. There, they made an astonishing discovery: the stela of Hammurabi’s Code. Written in cuneiform, the Code was a list of 282 legal judgments that formed the basis of Babylonian law.

With its fancy palaces and temples, Babylon was one of the greatest cities of Mesopotamia. That historical region, home to some of the earliest human societies, is often called the “cradle of civilization.” Under Hammurabi, Babylon became the dominant military and cultural power in the region. Rulers had written down laws before. Hammurabi’s were partly based on Mesopotamian traditions that were old even then. But as far as we know, never before had a system of laws been so complete, and so available to the people who lived under them.

Hammurabi’s Code touched every aspect of daily life—including bad weather and the fees for renting oxen.

**“An Eye for an Eye”**

What trouble could a Babylonian get into? Here is one example from Hammurabi’s Code: “If any one is committing a robbery and is caught, then he shall be put to death.”

That was that. Punishments were swift, to the point, and much harsher than they are today. Many of them may seem unfair to us. Some are downright inexplicable. For instance, Babylon, like many other ancient

**Words to Know**

- **code**: a system of laws.
- **cuneiform (kyoo-OH-EE-uh-form)**: an early alphabet written in wedge shapes.
- **Mesopotamia**: an area of early civilization located in present-day Iraq.
- **stela (STEE-luh)**: a carved stone slab.
- **trial by ordeal**: a way of determining a person’s guilt or innocence by performing dangerous or painful tests believed to be under divine control.

**Law 2**

“If any one bring an accusation against a man, let the accused go to the river and leap in. If he sink in the river, his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if [the accused] escape unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death.”

**Law 196**

“If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.”
societies, practiced **trial by ordeal**. "If any one bring an accusation against a man," Hammurabi wrote, "let the accused go to the river and leap in. If he sink in the river, his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if [the accused] escape unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death."

If you survived, you must have been innocent! As one historian quips: "The gods were on the side of the best swimmers."

Two of the laws in Hammurabi's Code will sound familiar. Said Law 196: "If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out." Law 200 said: "If he knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out."

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. Centuries later, this tradition re-emerged in the laws of the Jews under Moses, and became a well-known part of the Bible.

**No Joke!**

Indeed, violating Hammurabi's laws was no joke. Under the Code, a man who struck his father would have his hands cut off. So would a doctor whose patient died on the operating table.

Yet, for its time, the Code was **progressive** (leading to social change). Law 48 protected farmers who borrowed money to plant their crops: "If any one owe a debt for a loan, and a storm [destroys] the grain, or the harvest fail... in that year he need not give his creditor [money lender] any grain... and pay no rent for this year."

Farmers today would love that law.

Some laws protected consumers. For instance, a builder would lose his life if his careless work led to the death of a house's occupants. Another law allowed women, who had few rights in the ancient world, to divorce their husbands under certain circumstances. Still another demanded child support from men who deserted their families. Even slaves enjoyed some rights.

**The Desire for Justice**

Hammurabi's laws did not contain many safeguards that we take for granted today. An individual could not appeal a conviction. As far as we know, judges could not give a less severe sentence than the Code allowed.

But Hammurabi's Code strove to be fair in ways that we can understand. He wanted, he wrote, "to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers, so that the strong should not harm the weak."

More than 3,500 years later, the Constitution of the United States promised to "establish justice" and "security the blessings of liberty" for the citizens of a young country. The language of our rules may have changed, but the desire to seek justice endures.

—Bryan Brown

---

**Law 48**

If any one owe a debt for a loan, and a storm [destroys] the grain, or the harvest fail... in that year he need not give his creditor any grain... and pay no rent for this year.

---

**Word Match**

1. code  
2. creditor  
3. cuneiform  
4. Mesopotamia  
5. progressive  

**A. type of alphabet**  
**B. system of laws**  
**C. leading to change**  
**D. money lender**  
**E. "cradle of civilization"**

---

**Think About It**

1. In your own words, why do you think Hammurabi established a written code of behavior?  
2. What is the difference between trial by ordeal and trial by jury? Which would you prefer? Why?
How would you find the location of an ancient city? Would you consult (a) the latest political map, (b) a travel guide, or (c) a historical atlas?

If you answered (c), stand up, and take a bow!

When reading a map, first consider the title and key (or legend). The key explains the symbols that represent rivers and other geographical features. This map comes from a historical atlas. It shows Hammurabi's empire in 1750 B.C. The empire was then at its largest. After Hammurabi's death that year, many of the places he had captured regained their independence.

Study the map, then answer the questions below. If you don't answer them correctly, Hammurabi might punish you!

Questions

1. Which river did the city of Ninevah border?
2. Leaving the city of Babylon, in which compass direction would you travel to reach Susa, where Hammurabi's Code was found?
3. What was the approximate distance between Babylon and Susa?
4. Into which body of water did the Tigris and Euphrates empty?
5. Mesopotamia included most of which present-day country?
6. Ancient Babylon was a part of which region?
7. Which present-day country is located northwest of Babylon?
8. The present-day capital of that country is shown on the map. What is that city's name?
9. Which peninsula is located between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf?
10. Susa was located in which present-day country?
USA How to Find Time! pp. 14-15

■ Objectives
Students should be able to:
• compare and contrast their time-management habits with those of the kids profiled.
• devise ways to improve how they organize time and tasks.

■ Word to Know
• academic planner: calendar, chart, or datebook with spaces to write in one's schedule (homework due dates, fun activities, etc.) to keep track of time and obligations. Various planner types can be printed off the Web, or purchased in stationery or office-supply stores.

■ Background
Today's kids juggle many activities and responsibilities. Getting everything done can be a challenge. But getting organized and setting goals and limits can help greatly.

■ Critical Thinking
FINDING SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: What, according to the article, makes today's kids "the most time-stressed generation ever"? (chores at home; various lessons and after-school programs, such as sports and clubs; time with friends; instant messaging; homework)
MAKING COMPARISONS AND INFERENCES: Of the four kids quoted (Riley, Remi, Craig, and Dana), whose time-management style is most like yours? Could your style be more effective? Explain. (Answers will vary; should be supported by reasoned examples.)

■ Activity
SAY AGAIN?: Write this statement on the board: "Procrastination makes easy things hard, hard things harder." Have students explain and discuss what the writer (Mason Cooley) meant by it. Do they agree? Why or why not?

WORLD HISTORY Laying Down the Law, pp. 16-19

■ Objective
Students should be able to:
• make the connection between the ancient written laws of Hammurabi and law in society today, especially as exemplified by the U.S. Constitution.

■ Words to Know
• conviction: a declaration of guilt made in a court of law.
• oppressed: crushed by abuses of power or authority.

■ Background
Since the discovery of Hammurabi's Code in 1901, archaeologists have found evidence of codes of law older than Hammurabi's. The oldest is from Ur in Sumer (birthplace of Abraham, patriarch of the Jews), and dates from the mid-21st century B.C. None of the codes uncovered have been nearly as complete as Hammurabi's. But they do show that the concept of law was accepted in other ancient societies.

■ Critical Thinking
RECALLING DETAILS/COMPREHENSION: What is a trial by ordeal? (determining guilt or innocence by subjecting the accused to dangerous tests in order to determine "guilt" or "innocence")
FORMING SUPPORTED OPINIONS: The Eighth Amendment forbids "cruel and unusual punishments." Do you consider Hammurabi's Code "cruel and unusual"? Explain. (Answers will vary.)

■ Activity
PUT IT IN WRITING: Write a sentence or short paragraph explaining why having written laws available to everyone is an improvement over unwritten laws.

STANDARD
SOCIAL STUDIES, GRADES 5-8
• Individual development and identity: Learning to balance needs and wants is a sign of growing maturity.

RESOURCES
PRINT
• Covey, Sean, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens (Simon & Schuster, 1998). Grades 6-12.

WEB SITES
• It's My Life (PBS) pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/time
• Organizing From the Inside Out organizedteens.com

STANDARD
SOCIAL STUDIES, GRADES 5-8
• Power, authority, and governance: Hammurabi's Code is the most complete known ancient standard of people's rights and responsibilities.

RESOURCES
PRINT

WEB SITES
• Ancient Mesopotamia: Law and Government oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/ED/TRC/MESO/law.html
• The Code of Hammurabi yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/medieval/hamframe.htm

JUNIOR SCHOLASTIC • TEACHER'S EDITION • SEPTEMBER 18, 2006 T-3
NEWS SPECIAL: HOW SAFE ARE YOUR SECRETS? PAGES 6-8

Match each person in the left column with the correct description in the right column.

1. Dick Cheney
   A. onetime King of Britain

2. Benjamin Franklin
   B. current U.S. Vice President

3. George III
   C. Republican U.S. Representative from Michigan

4. Peter Hoekstra
   D. Chief Justice of the U.S.

5. John G. Roberts Jr.
   E. signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution

USA: HOW TO FIND TIME! PAGES 14-15

Decide whether each sentence is true, false, or an opinion. Write your answer on the blank line provided.

11. Remi Gibba says that she does a lot of her homework on her way home from soccer practice.

12. Doing homework before spending time with friends is better than doing it any other time.

13. Riley Sexton should get better organized.

14. Getting an academic planner is the only way to organize time.

15. “Chinking” is scheduling all your weekly chores for the same day.

WORLD: CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, PAGES 10-13

Write the letter of the correct answer on the line before each question.

6. Which of the following did not take part in this summer’s fighting in Lebanon, Israel, and the Gaza Strip?
   - A. Israeli Defense Forces
   - B. Hamas
   - C. Hezbollah
   - D. U.S. Army

7. In June 2006, Hamas militants in Gaza struck which region?
   - A. northern Israel
   - B. southern Israel
   - C. southern Lebanon
   - D. western Syria

8. Hezbollah was founded in 1982, after which of these events?
   - A. Israel’s invasion of Lebanon
   - B. Iran’s invasion of Iraq
   - C. Syria’s war with Lebanon
   - D. U.S. invasion of Iraq

9. This summer, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke in defense of which of the following?
   - A. Iran
   - B. Israel
   - C. Hamas
   - D. Hezbollah

10. According to the August cease-fire plan, soldiers from the United Nations and which of the following would patrol a buffer zone between Lebanon and Israel?
   - A. Britain’s Royal Air Force
   - B. Israeli Defense Forces
   - C. Lebanese Army
   - D. Palestine Liberation Organization

WORLD HISTORY: LAYING DOWN THE LAW, PAGES 16-19

Use a word or phrase from this list to correctly complete each sentence.

after the Bible, after the U.S. Constitution, before the Bible, British historians, cuneiform, French archaeologists, Indiana Jones, Iraq, Mesopotamia, Palestine, stela, tough sentencing, trial by fire, trial by ordeal

16. Hammurabi’s empire was in an area of the Middle East once known as _____________________________.

17. The Code of Hammurabi was a set of laws written _____________________________.

18. The original Hammurabi’s Code was inscribed on a _____________________________.

19. Determining guilt or innocence by performing painful or dangerous tests is known as _____________________________.

20. We know about Hammurabi’s Code today because it was found in 1901 by _____________________________.

NAME

JUNIOR SCHOLASTIC • TEACHER’S EDITION • SEPTEMBER 18, 2006 T-5
**GeoSkills, p. 13**
1. Israel
2. Arab
3. Egypt and Jordan
4. Hamas
5. Iran and Iraq
6. Sunni Islam
7. Lebanon
8. Iraq
9. Lebanon
10. Lebanon

**Word Match, p. 18**

**GeoSkills, p. 19**
1. Tigris
2. east
3. 280 miles
4. Persian Gulf
5. Iraq
6. Mesopotamia (or Hammurabi’s empire)
7. Syria
8. Damascus
9. Arabian Peninsula
10. Iran

**Some Fun, p. 20**

**Crossword**

**Quick Quiz, p. T-5**
1. B
2. E
3. A
4. C
5. D
6. D
7. B
8. A
9. B
10. C
11. true
12. opinion
13. opinion
14. false
15. false
16. Mesopotamia
17. before the Bible
18. stela (carved stone slab)

**3. Trial by ordeal**
4. Population density (which measures people per square mile)
5. The Palestinian Territories have 719 more people per square mile (1,609 minus 890).
6. Percentage of natural population rise
7. Palestinian Territories
8. gross national product (GDP)
9. $24,000,000 (Israel’s $24,600, minus the Gaza Strip’s $600)
10. Answers will vary; in general, should include that overcrowding will mean greater competition for jobs and housing, lower standards of education; lower personal incomes put strain on all areas of life.

**Political Cartoon**
1. civilians [noncombatants] in the clash between Israel and Hezbollah [Answers factoring in Hamas and Gaza in the following are also acceptable.]
2. It was bombed by either an Israeli warplane or a Hezbollah rocket. (Both are flying overhead.)
3. No. It could be Israel or Lebanon; both sides have been attacked.
4. Who is winning the war?
5. For civilians harmed on both sides, it doesn’t matter who is winning the war. Either way, the civilians are hurt most, through loss of life and property.

**Word Find**

**Spread the Word About Scholastic MATH Magazine!**

If your friend orders 20 or more subscriptions, you’ll both get a FREE Steel Thermos!

To order call 1-800-SCHOLASTIC

IMPORTANT: Mention code 3729

269-SDM-MA


POSTMASTERS: Send notice of address changes to JUNIOR SCHOLASTIC, 2931 East McCarty St., Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710.

PUBLISHING INFORMATION: U.S. prices: $2.75 each per year, $4.00 per semester for 10 or more subscriptions to the same address. 1-9 subscriptions, each: $14.95 student, $24.95 teacher’s edition, per year. Single copy: $4.50 student, $9.95 teacher’s edition. Communications relating to subscriptions should be addressed to Junior Scholastic, 2931 East McCarty St., Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710. Communications relating to editorial matters should be addressed to Editor, Junior Scholastic, 555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Canadian address: Scholastic Canada Ltd., 175 Hillmount Rd., Markham, Ontario L3C 1Z7. All inquiries should be sent to the publisher. 1-888-752-4690. Indexed in Children’s Magazine Guide. Available on microfilm through Xerox University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Also available on microfiche through Bell & Howell Photo Division, Old Mansfield Rd., Wooster, OH 44691. Printed in U.S.A., Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Copyright © 1996 by Scholastic Inc. Scholastic, Junior Scholastic, and associated designs are trademarks/registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc. All Rights Reserved. Materials in this issue may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or manner without special permission from the publisher.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.