

Name: _____

Date: _____

Hammurabi's Code

Hammurabi was a Mesopotamian king who recorded a system of laws called the Code of Hammurabi. He ordered 282 laws engraved in stone and placed in a public location for everyone to see.

Hammurabi's Code prescribed specific punishments for citizens who broke the law. One law said, "If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out." Later historians summarized the Hammurabi's Code with the phrase, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." This means that whoever commits an injury should be punished in the same manner as that injury.

Hammurabi's code included what we today call both criminal and civil law. Criminal law consists of rules that define conduct. One law said, "if a son strikes his father, his hands shall be hewn off." Civil law settles disputes among individuals. Hammurabi's Code states, "if a man builds a house badly, and it falls and kills the owner, the builder is to be killed. If the owner's son was killed, then the builder's son is to be killed."

One exception existed to the principle of "an eye for an eye." It demonstrated that Hammurabi believed the gods had power over people and events. An accused person could jump into the Euphrates River. "If he sinks in the river, his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if



the river proves that the accused is not guilty, and he escapes unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death, while he who leaped into the river shall take possession of the house that had belonged to his accuser." We can surmise from this law that not many people at that time were able to swim.

Hammurabi reigned from 1795 to 1750 BCE in Babylon. Babylon was one of the many city-states that formed in ancient Mesopotamia. Babylon became famous for its spectacular entertainment. People still refer to a rich city with many luxuries as "a Babylon."

Hammurabi's Code helps us understand what life was like in ancient Babylon. Equal punishment existed only when the two sides were of equal rank. On the other hand, the penalty for injuring a woman or a slave would be less. One law said, "if a man strikes a free-born woman so that she loses her unborn child, he shall pay ten shekels for her loss." Another says, "if a man has caught either a male or female runaway slave in the open field and has brought him back to his owner, the owner of the slave shall give him two shekels of silver."

Hammurabi's Code is the earliest form of law that we are able to read and study because, in 1901, a French expedition to Mesopotamia uncovered a copy of the Babylonian king's laws. The stone pillar where Hammurabi had his laws engraved is on display at the Louvre, a museum in Paris, France.

Answer in complete sentences

*1. Draw a pictographic sentence that describes a phrase often associated with Hammurabi.

2. Why did Hammurabi have his laws engraved in stone and placed in a public place?

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Fill in the Blanks

Hammurabi was a B__b__l__n__an king who placed his laws in a p__b__ic place for everyone to see. Hammurabi's Code is based on the principal, "An e_____ for an e_____, a t__o__h for a t__o__h." This means that a p__n__s__m__nt would often be equal to the crime.

Hammurabi's Code covered both c__i__i__al and c__v__l law, and while punishments were harsh by today's standard, an odd exception did exist. Hammurabi's Code states that an accused person could prove his i__n__c__n__e by jumping into the E__p__r__t__s River. If the accused person survived the ordeal, the person who made the a__c__s__t__on would pay punishment. Hammurabi's Code did not treat people equally. The punishment would not be as great if the injured person was a w__m__n or a s__a__e.

We know about Hammurabi's Code because French e__p__d__t__on uncovered the a stone p__l__ar with the Babylonian k_____’s 282 laws. The pillar is now on display at the L__u__re, a m__s__um in P__r__s, France.

Answer in complete sentences

*3. Imagine that Hammurabi live in modern society. Where might he post his laws so that everyone would see them?

*4. Was Hammurabi's Code fair? Defend your answer using facts from the article.

5. Why do we know more about Hammurabi's Code than other early forms of law?

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.