LESSON TITLE: Human Rights in the Ancient World

RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL(S) FOR IMPLEMENTATION: Middle School/High School

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME OR CLASS SESSIONS REQUIRED: Two 80 Minute Block Periods

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BRIEF DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF LESSON:

In this lesson, students will wrestle with the common perception that the ancient world was a period in history that largely ignored human rights. By examining both Hammurabi’s Law Code of 1754 B.C.E. and Rome’s Law of the Twelve Tables of 450 B.C.E., the students will discover that specific opportunities, rights, and positions within society were detailed for men, women, children, slaves, and other groups, along with the limitations that one would expect to find in these documents. By conducting a thorough document analysis, comparing the two law codes, and discussing their findings in a Socratic Seminar, the students will develop conclusions about ancient notions of human rights and the changes (improvements or losses) that occurred over time.

NJ SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN LESSON:

6.2.8.A.3.b: Compare and contrast the rights and responsibilities of free men, women, slaves, and foreigners in the political, economic, and social structures of classical civilizations.

6.2.8.A.3.d: Compare the status (i.e., political, economic, and social) of groups in the Ancient World to those of people today and evaluate how individuals perceived the principles of liberty and equality then and now.

6.2.8.D.3.a: Compare and contrast social hierarchies in classical civilizations as they relate to power, wealth, and equality.

6.2.8.D.3.e: Determine the extent to which religion, economic issues, and conflict shaped the values and decisions of the classical civilizations.
COMMON CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS REFERENCED IN LESSON:

Note: The Grades 11-12 Common Core standards are specified. Obviously the expectations can be scaled back to reflect lower grade levels, but it is best to keep the end in mind.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1-Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2-Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A-Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C-Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.D-Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT CONNECTIONS IN LESSON:

A. The students will be using complex primary source documents to identify relevant information that pertains to the emergence and articulation of human rights in the ancient world. These texts require an understanding of the context, author’s perspective, audience, and purpose of the document. The students will also encounter difficult vocabulary that may have varied meanings depending on their use in modern and ancient circumstances.

B. The students will be utilizing a graphic organizer to guide their document analysis and direct the collection of evidence from the primary sources. This will encourage them to concentrate on specific portions of the documents and identify information that will be most useful as they draw conclusions and discuss their findings.
LESSON GOALS/OBJECTIVES—Students will be able to:

1. Explain the need for the development of a written code of law in ancient civilizations and the context that directly inspired this process in Babylon and the Roman Republic.

2. Identify elements from ancient law codes that address the rights of citizens, non-citizens, and others within the society as well as the role of the state in protecting and promoting these rights.

3. Compare and contrast the expression of rights and responsibilities found within Hammurabi’s Code and the Law of the Twelve Tables, identifying which civilization was more descriptive, progressive, and proactive in articulating the rights of those in their society.

4. Develop an argument based on primary source evidence and defend their position in a Socratic Seminar.

5. Assess the extent to which progress in the area of human rights was made in the millennia between the emergence of Hammurabi’s Code and the writing of Rome’s Law of the Twelve Tables.

LESSON METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES:

1. The lesson will begin with a “Do Now” activity. The students should provide a brief written response to the following question, “Did ancient societies recognize human rights? Support your response with assumptions, observations, or evidence.” The students could discuss their thoughts in a small group, or the teacher could conduct a brief, full class discussion. (5 minutes)

2. The teacher should introduce the purpose of the lesson, stating that it is important to understand how far back we can trace the origins of human rights and how they appear in the law codes that dictated the lives of those living in ancient civilizations. The students should be encouraged to leave behind their modern sensitivity toward human rights and their assumptions about how government should act to define, promote, and protect human rights. The students will be exploring documents that are related to societies that practiced slavery and included other components that are considered clear violations of human rights today. (5 minutes)

3. The students will begin by developing an understanding of the context for Hammurabi’s Code and the Law of the Twelve Tables. The class can be divided in half, one group investigating Babylon and the other the Roman Republic, or the teacher may wish to be even more specific and assign individual groups of 2-3 students to investigate specific components of the context. The students should use
the ASAP document analysis strategy to complete this task. ASAP stands for the following:

- A- Author’s Perspective/Point of View
- S- Setting/Historical Context
- A- Audience
- P- Purpose

The students should record their observations or transfer them to a shared document to allow others access to the information that they have gathered. (15 minutes)

4. The teacher should facilitate a discussion that allows the students to explain their emerging understanding of the context of both law codes. The teacher can further the conversation by drawing upon the students’ prior knowledge of Ancient Mesopotamia and the Roman Republic. Possible questions include:
   
a. Why was it necessary to create written law codes?
b. What purpose(s) do these codes appear to serve in the two societies profiled?
c. How are these societies structured?
d. What social divisions are apparent within the codes?
e. What do these societies value?
f. What guidelines are absent from these law codes? (10 minutes)

5. The teacher should distribute the graphic organizer that will be used to collect evidence from the two primary source documents. Before allowing the students to access the documents, the teacher should provide a brief overview of how the documents are organized and what steps might be necessary to locate information that is relevant to the theme of human rights. For instance, the teacher can demonstrate to students how the law codes may include a prologue or how the laws themselves are often grouped with others that fall within a certain theme. The teacher may wish to model these steps using small portions of the documents, reading them, and assisting the students as they demonstrate the analysis process. (5 minutes)

6. The students will work in small groups of 2-3 to identify evidence from the documents that address the rights held by various types of individuals in both societies. The students should paraphrase the references that they locate in the two law codes. The teacher may wish to hold a full class discussion or encourage the students to contribute to a version of the graphic organizer on the board or in a shared document as a way of introducing further evidence for all of the groups. (30 minutes)

7. Once the evidence is collected, the students should be given some time to debrief their findings as a group. They should determine to what extent rights are granted and protected for each element of society, making broad summary statements that can be supported by the evidence located in the text. The students should then move on to begin comparing and contrasting both civilizations, evaluating their areas of
strength and weakness in the process. The students should use a modern conception of rights when determining areas of strength or weakness in these ancient cultures. (10 minutes)

8. The teacher should introduce the students to the premise of the Socratic Seminar that will conclude the lesson. The teacher should reinforce the expectation that there will be no right or wrong answer that emerges from the seminar. Instead, value is placed on expressing ideas and supporting them with sufficient evidence from the textual material used. The students will be determining if progress was made in 1000+ years that separated Hammurabi’s Law Code from the Law of the Twelve Tablets. The focus question can be “To what extent were rights more clearly identified and protected in Rome’s Law of the Twelve Tables when compared to Hammurabi’s Code, and what factors might account for this evolution in rights?” An additional or alternative question could be: “Do these codes demonstrate a sense of human rights present in ancient societies (i.e. rights inherent to all individuals and not allocated based on class, race, status, gender, or other identifying features), and do they demonstrate progress over time?” Once the topic of the Socratic Seminar has been presented, the students should be provided with sufficient time to collect their thoughts, discuss the issue with their group members, and locate the evidence necessary to support their own conclusions on the issue. (30 minutes)

9. The teacher should establish ground rules for the discussion or remind the students of pre-existing ground rules. (5 minutes)

10. The class should be divided in half, with each half given approximately 15 minutes to discuss their observations. Those listening should be encouraged to take notes, identify points of agreement or disagreement, or engage with the speakers in some manner in writing. (35 minutes)

11. Closure can be achieved by having the students debrief their performance either through self-reflection or peer review and identifying some of the key elements of the conversation that helped to clarify certain points, challenge commonly held beliefs, or provide further encouragement for inquiry into the evolution of human rights through history. (10 minutes)

ASSessment of student performance:

A. The teacher should primarily use formative assessment to check for understanding throughout the lesson. As the students explore and discuss the background to each of the two documents, the teacher can monitor their research and add details when necessary. The teacher may also wish to conduct this conversation through a series of guiding questions.

B. The teacher can evaluate the students’ ability to effectively and thoroughly analyze the documents when the students share some of their conclusions either on the board or through a shared Google.DOC. The teacher can encourage the students
to locate additional information or reconsider their conclusions as necessary based on the information that is provided.

C. Although it is encouraged that students be assessed informally during the Socratic Seminar, this can be used as an opportunity to conduct a discussion that is formally evaluated. Either way, students can be assessed using a discussion rubric. Afterwards, time should also be allotted for students to engage in self-assessment so that they can evaluate their ability to use evidence to support their conclusions, speak persuasively and authoritatively, and participate in a polite discussion, among other attributes that the teacher may wish to emphasize and measure.

**LEARNING RESOURCES:**


3. ASAP Category Description and Hammurabi’s Code/Law of the Twelve Tables Graphic Organizer

4. Socratic Seminar Guidelines & Discussion Questions

**EXTENSION RESOURCES:**


MODIFICATIONS OR ADAPTATIONS OF THE LESSON FOR DIFFERENTIATED LEARNERS:

1. Some groups of students may need to be presented with modified primary source documents. Because these are rather lengthy documents, the teacher could select a portion of each law code to share with the students instead of using them in their entirety. When providing the text of the codes, some students would also benefit from being provided with a glossary of unfamiliar terms particular to the ancient world or terms that are used specifically in a legal context.

2. While the Roman law code is organized thematically, the divisions within Hammurabi’s Code are less obvious. The teacher may wish to group the laws for the students or take the time to lead the class through this step as a large group.

3. Modeling could be used to assist students through the process of interpreting and analyzing the individual statements within the law code. The teacher could take a few minutes to read a few examples, paraphrase them, and then determine what the code is stating.

4. For older or more advanced students, the teacher could incorporate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into the discussion, especially if the students are familiar with the content of this document. The students could identify similarities or differences between ancient and modern notions of law and rights. The students could be asked to determine which of the two codes more closely approximates the standards set by the UDHR.

5. To extend the lesson and further the discussion of rights in the ancient world for advanced students, the teacher may wish to introduce The Cyrus Cylinder into the conversation, either as a third component to discuss throughout the activity or as a confounding element as the lesson concludes. The Cyrus Cylinder, the Persian emperor’s statement of rights for the Hebrews living in exile in Babylon, is often considered one of the first coherent statements of human rights in human history. Cyrus issued his decree in approximately 539 or 538 B.C.E., placing it much closer to the Roman law code than Hammurabi’s. This document can serve as a counterpoint for those students that argue human rights were disregarded or not clearly defined in the ancient world.
## ASAP Document Analysis Protocol

### Author’s Perspective/Point of View

**WHO** produced the document and **HOW** that might have impacted what they wrote?

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Social Status
- Religion
- Political Beliefs

### Setting/Historical Context

**WHEN** was the document produced?

- Location/Place
- How does the document relate to the specific time period (especially for Contextualization questions)
- What major events can this document be linked to (especially for Continuity and Change or Comparison questions)

### Audience

**WHO** or **WHAT** was the intended audience?

- Was this produced for a public or private audience?
- Who is expected to listen to or conform to the directives in the document?
- How would the audience respond to the document?

### Purpose

**WHY** was the document created/written at this time?

- Inform?
- Persuade?
- Entertain?
- Criticize?
- What is the central argument?
- What evidence is used to support the thesis?
Law Code Graphic Organizer

**Directions:** Locate evidence from Hammurabi’s Code that addresses the rights and protections enjoyed by each segment of society listed below. Include specific references to the number of each law so that you can cite this information later. In the space provided, construct a summary statement for each group, as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Human Rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Citizens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Citizens</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Citizens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Directions: Locate evidence from the Law of the Twelve Tables that addresses the rights and protections enjoyed by each segment of society listed below. Include specific references to the number of each law so that you can cite this information later. In the space provided, construct a summary statement for each group, as well.

<table>
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<td>Summary:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Advanced Proficient</td>
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<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for Peers</td>
<td>All statements, body language, and responses were respectful and used appropriate language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>All information presented in this discussion was clear, accurate, and thorough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuttal/Response</td>
<td>All counter-arguments were accurate, relevant, and strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Facts/Statistics</td>
<td>Every major point was well-supported with several relevant facts, statistics, and/or examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>All arguments and points were clearly tied to an idea and organized in a tight, logical manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Topic</td>
<td>Topic was understood in depth and the information was presented forcefully and convincingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Style</td>
<td>The student consistently used gestures, eye contact, tone of voice and a level of enthusiasm in a way that keeps the attention of the audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: ___________/ _______