



Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

The Question of Identity: Ethnicity, Language, Religion, and Gender, Before Islam – Mesopotamia

Jennie Myers, Research Associate

Lesson Plan 2:

Migration into Ancient Mesopotamia, a Mapping Lesson.

General Description of Lesson Plan: Students will be told to think like members of the Art Department of a scholarly journal. The Editor has decided that a particular article needs something to go with it, and it is their job to produce it. Ultimately, the thing they will need to produce is a map, though this information is initially withheld from the students.

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Subject Area(s): Social Studies: Geography and History

For Grade Level(s): 6-12

Time Needed: One evening to read the passage and take notes. One full period to produce draft maps, compare them with peers, and produce a final draft of the map.

Outcomes/Objectives:

Students will practice the art of taking a written description of a place and converting that description to a visual representation.

Materials: Blank maps of the region surrounding Mesopotamia, extending from the Mediterranean and Red Seas to the West and to the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf to the East, and including rivers and mountains only, but no boundary lines, such as the one included as an appendix to this lesson.

Suggested Procedure(s):

Students are assigned a close reading of the “Ethnicity and Language” portion of this module.

For homework, each student is to create a table of four columns and eight rows. The columns will read: Who, Where, What, and When. The first column should contain the groups: Sumerians, Akkadians, Amorites, Kassites, Arameans, Gutians, Hittites, and Hurrians. The “where” column will cover whence these groups came *from* (with the

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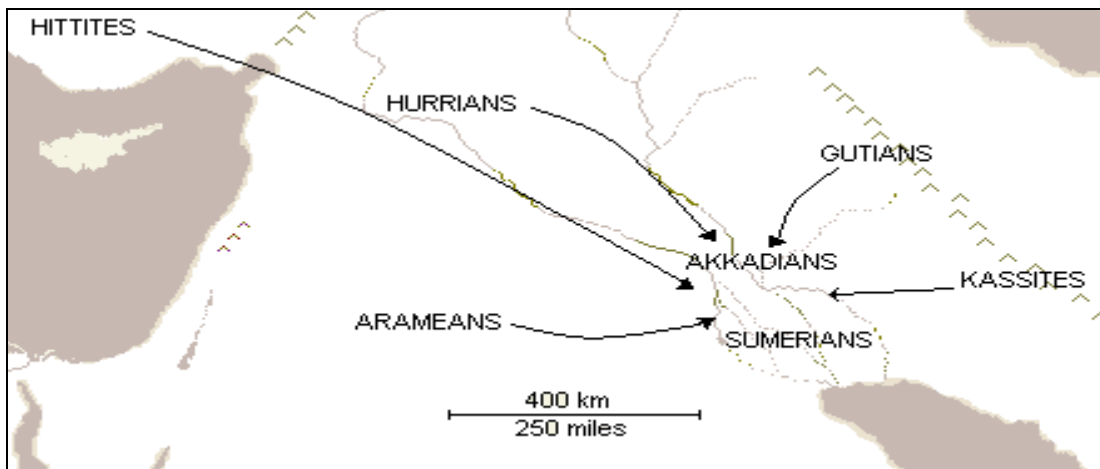
exception of the Sumerians and Akkadians—as these were the original inhabitants of Mesopotamia); to complete this column, students are encouraged to go beyond the module with brief internet searches. The “what” column is to include information on the types of written or spoken systems utilized by these groups. Since research in this area would be more difficult given the time frame for this lesson, it is acceptable for there to be one or two “N/A” responses in this column. The “when” column should include information on when each group migrated to Mesopotamia—again, this column could have some omissions.

The assignment to create a map from this table will not be assigned until they get back to class. This is so that no enterprising student works ahead and spoils the fun. Students will use their own tables to list the seven groups included in the “who” column in specific locations outside of Mesopotamia, with arrows pointing towards the Mesopotamian region.

Each student will then be required to compose an original caption for this map, highlighting a particular piece of information. This caption is not a summary of the *entire* map, but highlights one or two things. For example: “While the Sumerians may have invented writing with the creation of cuneiform, the Arameans brought the first alphabetic writing system to Mesopotamia.”

Evaluation/Assessment Strategies:

The final image should resemble this:



Each student will receive a grade for the strength of their individual table, their group map, and the accuracy and relevance of their own caption.

Rubric: Teachers generally assign their own point system to each assignment, but here is a guide for the relative weights of each assignment.

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The most important part of the initial Table Assignment is that it contain accurate “where” information, including some of the eight cardinal compass directions: N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW. Information such as “Anotolia” or “Zagros Mts” is only specific if a map is already labeled, and should be discouraged. The table assignment should cover about one third of the overall grade, for example, 7 points out a possible twenty (one for each ethnic group).

The Group Map portion of this assignment covers the individual mapwork, peer deliberations, and the final copy. Thus it should cover about half of the available points, or 9 out of 20. The most important factor is that Mesopotamia itself is correctly situated among the rivers north of the Persian Gulf. Other key things to focus on are the labeling of the Akkadians north of the Sumerians, and then the listing of the Gutians and Kassites coming from the mountains to the northeast of Mesopotamia, the Hittites in what is now Turkey, and the Arameans to the west.

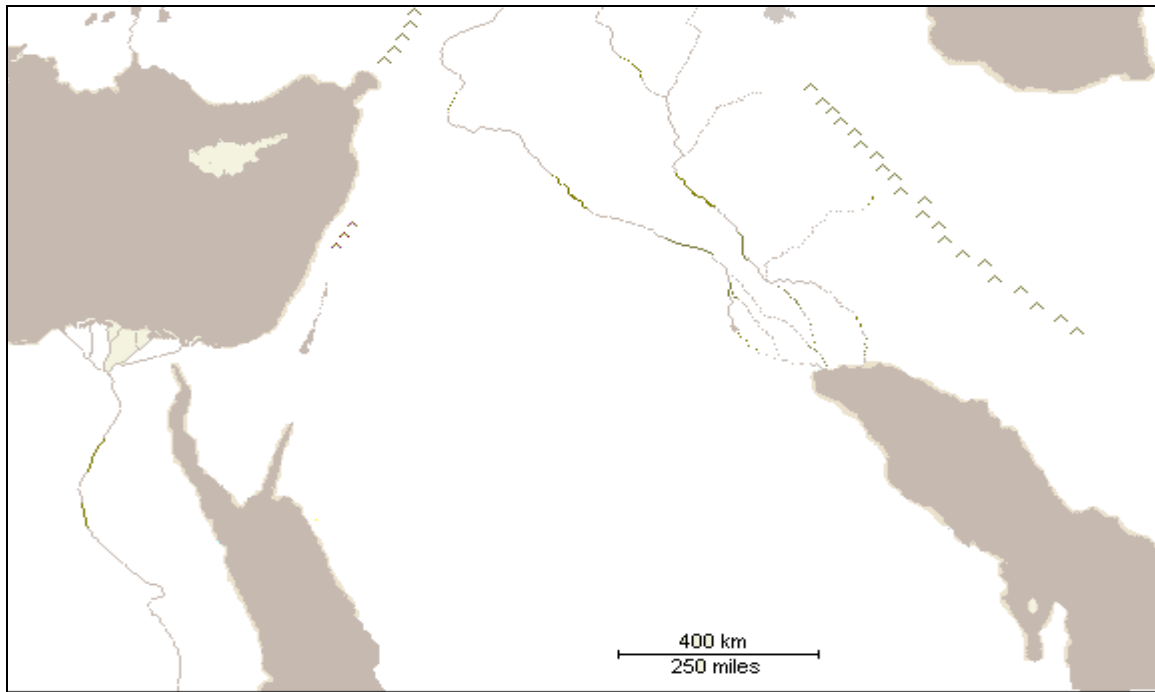
The Map Caption is a student’s final touch on this project. It should be historically accurate and relevant to the module, and should avoid platitudes such as “Many different groups migrated to the Mesopotamian region in ancient times.” Good direction for this portion would be: “Your caption should state something specific that relates to the map but cannot be figured out from the map alone.” This portion should be worth about a quarter of the total points, or 4 out of 20, for example.

Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:

1. Which groups of people inhabited the Mesopotamian region in ancient times, and from where did they migrate to the region?
2. How did new arrivals to ancient Mesopotamia impact the dominant systems of written and spoken communication?
3. How did the Empires and Kingdoms located in Mesopotamia reflect the migration of different groups to the region?

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Evaluation Rubric:

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15 points possible

Teacher Name: _____

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Accurate Labels for Sumerians and Akkadians	This category only three grades	Akkadia accurately placed North of Sumeria in the river basin	Akkadia north of Sumeria, but not in basin/or Sumer north of Akkadia in basin	Akkadia South of Sumeria and outside of river basin.
Accuracy of Labels of Groups that Moved into Mesopotamia	At least 90% of the items are labeled and located correctly.	80-89% of the items are labeled and located correctly.	79-70% of the items are labeled and located correctly.	Less than 70% of the items are labeled and located correctly.
Labels & Features - Neatness	90-100% of the labels/features can be read easily.	89-80% of the labels/features can be read easily.	79-70% of the labels/features can be read easily.	Less than 70% of the labels/features can be read easily.
Strength and Relevance of Caption	Caption is accurate, relevant, and insightful, adding information not immediately available in the visual image	Caption is accurate, but too obvious, adding little to the visual image	Caption is on topic, but is inaccurate	Caption is off topic