

Which Bronze-Age Civilization Would be Better to Live in: Egypt or Mesopotamia?

Lesson plan for group presentations

Suggested length: 3-5 class periods (45-55 minutes each)

Lesson components:

- Opener (5-15 minutes)
- Activity
 - Part A: Researching ideas (focus of 1 class period)
 - Part B: Preparing presentations (focus of 1-2 class periods)
 - Part C: Delivering presentations (focus of 1-2 class periods)
- Optional closer (2 minutes)

Assessment

Group presentations on the topic: *Which Bronze-Age civilization would be better to live in: Egypt or Mesopotamia? Give three reasons to support your choice, and explain your reasoning.* (see suggested rubric in **provided materials**)

Tips

[Google Slides](#) is an excellent platform for collaborative presentations, where students on separate devices can simultaneously view and edit PowerPoint-style presentations.

When making their decision between Egypt or Mesopotamia, encourage students to think about their values. Do students value art or technology more highly? Social stability or social mobility? How might a student's gender or other identities impact their choice?

Opener (5-15 minutes)

1. Spark student interest by posing one or both of the following questions to the whole class and conducting a brief discussion around students' answers:
 - Which do you think is more important for a society: being the best at arts, culture, and science, or being the most powerful militarily?
 - Which society would you rather live in: A freer society, or a more stable, secure society?
2. Explain that these are good questions to consider when dealing with today's topic: *Which Bronze-Age civilization would be better to live in: Egypt or*

Mesopotamia? Inform students that they will give group presentations on this topic, using:

- a. The present class period to gather ideas for presentations, by exploring a related Kialo discussion.
- b. The next 1-2 class periods to prepare the presentations.
- c. A final 1-2 class periods to deliver the presentations.

Optional extension: Activate knowledge by showing the TEDed videos "[A day in the life of an ancient Babylonian business mogul](#)" and "[A day in the life of an ancient Egyptian doctor](#)."

Activity

Part A: Explore the Kialo discussion (focus of 1 class period)

1. Distribute and go over the assignment rubric.
2. Create student groups or let students form their own groups.

TIP: To give students some agency, let them explore the Kialo discussion for 10-15 minutes before asking them to pick their civilization. They do not need to make this choice as soon as they form their groups.

3. Distribute and go over the graphic organizer.
4. Ask students to decide whether they would prefer to live in Bronze-Age Egypt or Mesopotamia. Direct students to begin consulting the Kialo discussion for ideas on the topic while taking notes and/or filling out the graphic organizers. Tell students to write down what they find the most important in the discussion for making their choice and why, as well as why their chosen civilization is better on this point than the other civilization.

TIP: Encourage students to explore the entire Kialo discussion, not just the branches whose top claims support the students' chosen civilization. Useful information can be found in all branches of the Kialo discussion.

Optional differentiation: You can direct students in need of a greater challenge to also search for information from additional sources.

Part B: Preparing presentations (focus of 1-2 class periods)

1. Direct student groups to continue consulting the Kialo discussion for ideas on the topic while taking notes and/or filling out the graphic organizers.
2. Direct students to begin preparing their presentations using the notes that they took while exploring the Kialo discussion. Advise students to use the structure of the graphic organizer as a template for the content and structure of their presentations.

Part C: Delivering presentations (focus of 1-2 class periods)

1. Students deliver their presentations.

Optional extension: Open up the floor for questions after each presentation.

Optional closer (2 minutes)

1. Invite students to consider the timespan of Bronze-Age Egypt and Mesopotamia: more than 2,000 years, or about as long as the time between Julius Caesar and today. Explain that Bronze-Age Egyptians and Mesopotamians probably thought that their incredibly old civilizations would last forever, when of course they did not. Invite students to consider that no civilization, even our own, is immune from collapse.
2. Share a quote from *The Red Pyramid*, a novel by American author Rick Riordan:

“The Ancient Egyptians were not fools, Carter. They built the pyramids. They created the first great nation state. Their civilization lasted thousands of years.”

“Yeah,” I said. “And now they're gone.”