

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

Lesson plan for an independent writing activity

Suggested length: 1- 2 class periods (45-55 minutes each)

Lesson components:

- Opener (5-15 minutes)
- Activity
 - Part A: Exploring the Kialo discussion & filling out graphic organizer (focus of 1-2 class periods)
 - Part B: Beginning the argumentative essay (5 minutes)
- Optional closer (2 minutes)

Assessment:

Independent writing assignment on the prompt: *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

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 use this class period to prepare for and possibly begin composing an individual writing assignment on the topic.

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: Exploring the Kialo discussion & filling out the graphic organizer (focus of 1-2 class periods)

1. Explain that the writing prompt directly corresponds to the Kialo discussion topic: *Which ancient Greek city-state would be better to live in: Which Bronze-Age civilization would be better to live in: Egypt or Mesopotamia? Give three reasons to support your choice, and explain your reasoning.* Distribute and go over the assignment rubric.
2. Distribute and go over the graphic organizer.
3. Instruct students to consult the Kialo discussion resource for ideas on the topic, taking notes and/or filling out the graphic organizer.

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

Optional differentiation: Direct students in need of a greater challenge to also search for information from outside sources (i.e. those not present in the Kialo discussion).

Part B: Beginning the argumentative essay (5 minutes)

1. When students are finished exploring the Kialo discussion, direct them to begin planning and writing their essays. Students should use the information from the graphic organizer to organize and form their body paragraphs, while writing their own introduction and conclusion paragraphs.

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.”