

Defining Civilization: The Builders of the Ancient World (8 Blocks)

Materials Needed

- Large world map or digital map access
- Chart paper or digital whiteboard for tracking characteristics (The Six-Point Civilization Checklist)
- Primary source excerpts (e.g., small portions of Hammurabi's Code, Egyptian Book of the Dead)
- Modeling clay or salt dough (for Block 3: Cuneiform activity)
- Pencils, notebooks, and coloring supplies
- Access to reliable internet resources (for research on case studies)
- Index cards (for Exit Tickets)

Block 1: Introduction - What Makes a Civilization? (50 Minutes)

Focus: Hook, Objectives, and the Six Core Characteristics

Introduction (10 Minutes)

- **Hook:** "Imagine you and a group of 100 people crash-land on a deserted, fertile island. You have plenty of resources, but no rules and no established way of doing things. What are the first three things you absolutely *must* figure out to survive and thrive for the next 100 years?" (Gather answers: Food, shelter, rules.)
- **Objective Statement (Student-Friendly):** By the end of these blocks, you will be able to define the six essential traits that make up a successful civilization, and you will use those traits to analyze ancient societies like Mesopotamia and Egypt.
- **Success Criteria:** I can list and briefly explain the six core characteristics of a civilization.

Body: The Six-Point Civilization Checklist (I Do/We Do) (30 Minutes)

- **I Do (Modeling):** Introduce the concept of "civilization" not just as "advanced," but as a specific structure that allows many people to live together peacefully and productively. Introduce the Six Core Characteristics using a memorable acronym (e.g., GET SCP - Government, Economy, Technology, Social Structure, Culture, Protection/Environment).
 1. **Interaction with Environment:** How they adapt to and change the land (farming, irrigation).
 2. **Social Structure:** Layers of society (rich, poor, powerful, laborers).
 3. **Political System (Government):** Rules, leaders, and laws.
 4. **Economic System:** How people get and spend resources (trade, job specialization).
 5. **Culture:** Beliefs, arts, religion, and shared language/writing.
 6. **Technology/Innovation:** New tools and ideas (wheels, plows, writing systems).
- **We Do (Discussion):** Apply these six points to a modern example (e.g., our school, our town, or a large modern city). Where do we see evidence of Technology? Who enforces the Political System?

Conclusion & Formative Check (You Do) (10 Minutes)

- **Activity:** Quick Draw. Cora draws six simple icons or symbols representing the six characteristics.
- **Recap:** Review the importance of the six traits working together.

Block 2: Environment and Technology - Setting the Stage (50 Minutes)

Focus: Human-Environment Interaction and Agricultural Innovation

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Review:** Quickly name the six characteristics. Today we focus on #1 (Environment) and #6 (Technology).
- **Success Criteria:** I can explain why the geography of river valleys was essential for early civilizations and describe key technological advances.

Body: The River Valley Advantage (I Do/We Do) (35 Minutes)

- **I Do (Modeling):** Show a map of the Fertile Crescent (Mesopotamia) and the Nile River. Explain the concept of the "River Valley Civilizations." Why rivers? (Water, fertile soil from floods, transportation, easy fishing).
- **Concept:** Irrigation. Explain how early farmers created sophisticated systems (canals, dikes, reservoirs) to manage water, which is a major human-environment interaction.
- **Technology Deep Dive:** What inventions were necessary once farming became successful? (The plow, the wheel, advanced pottery/storage, the calendar for predicting floods).
- **We Do (Mapping Activity):** Cora identifies major rivers (Tigris, Euphrates, Nile) on the map and labels the major geographical challenge (e.g., unpredictable flooding in Mesopotamia vs. predictable flooding in Egypt) and the technological solution developed for each.

Conclusion & Formative Check (You Do) (10 Minutes)

- **Activity:** Environmental Problem/Solution. Cora writes a short paragraph answering: "If you were a farmer along the Tigris River, what would be your biggest environmental worry, and what technology would you invent to solve it?"

Block 3: Social Structures and Culture - Layers and Beliefs (50 Minutes)

Focus: Social Hierarchy, Religion, and the Invention of Writing

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Review:** How did controlling the river (Environment) and using irrigation (Technology) lead to a surplus of food? (Answer: A surplus means not everyone has to farm, leading to specialization.)
- **Success Criteria:** I can draw and explain the hierarchy of an ancient civilization and understand the role of early writing systems.

Body: Who's in Charge? (I Do/We Do) (35 Minutes)

- **I Do (Modeling): Social Structure:** Present the structure as a pyramid (Pharaoh/King at the top, priests, nobles, craftspeople/scribes, farmers, slaves/laborers at the bottom). Explain why farming success requires complex social organization (someone needs to coordinate the irrigation projects).
- **Culture Deep Dive:** Focus on Religion and Writing. In ancient times, religion and government were often tied together (the concept of the Pharaoh as a god, or the King as chosen by the gods).
- **Innovation: Writing.** Introduce Cuneiform (Mesopotamia) and Hieroglyphs (Egypt). Why was writing invented? (Tracking grain, trade, laws, and history.)
- **We Do (Hands-on Practice):** Provide modeling clay or salt dough. Demonstrate how to make simple wedge shapes (cuneiform). Cora practices writing a few basic symbols (like the symbol for "grain" or "water") on the clay tablets.

Conclusion & Formative Check (You Do) (10 Minutes)

- **Activity:** Scenario Reflection. Cora takes on the persona of a Scribe. "Why is your job more powerful than a farmer's job, even though the farmer feeds everyone?"

Block 4: Political and Economic Systems - Rules and Trade (50 Minutes)

Focus: Government, Laws, Specialization, and Trade

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Review:** We have organized people (Social Structure) and given them beliefs (Culture). Now, how do we manage them and their resources? (Political and Economic Systems).
- **Success Criteria:** I can explain the need for formal laws and describe how specialization drives the economy.

Body: Order and Resources (I Do/We Do) (35 Minutes)

- **I Do (Modeling): Political System:** Explain the shift from small villages to city-states (Mesopotamia) or unified kingdoms (Egypt). Discuss the role of a centralized government in enforcing order, managing large projects, and defending territory.
 - *Case Example:* Introduce Hammurabi's Code (Mesopotamia) as the first written set of laws. Discuss the idea of "eye for an eye" and how laws protect the social hierarchy.
- **Economic System:** Introduce specialization (people doing specific jobs like pottery, construction, or soldiering). This leads to trade. Since Mesopotamia had resources like grain but lacked timber/stone, they had to trade with neighbors.
- **We Do (Role Play/Scenario):** Trade Simulation. Cora lists three specialized goods Mesopotamia has (grain, textiles) and three it needs (cedar wood, metal). Role-play a simple negotiation between a Mesopotamian trader and a foreign supplier.

Conclusion & Formative Check (You Do) (10 Minutes)

- **Activity:** Code Creation. Cora invents three "rules" necessary for a successful civilization and writes them down as a simple "mini-code."

Block 5: Case Study: Mesopotamia - Land Between Two Rivers (50 Minutes)

Focus: Applying the Six Characteristics to Sumer/Babylon

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Objective:** Today, we put all six pieces together by analyzing the first civilization: Mesopotamia (Sumer, Akkad, Babylon).
- **Success Criteria:** I can accurately classify Mesopotamian achievements under the six core characteristics.

Body: The Mesopotamian Six-Point Check (I Do/We Do) (35 Minutes)

- **I Do (Modeling):** Create a six-column chart labeled with the characteristics. Model filling out the chart for Mesopotamia.
 - *Example: Political System -> Hammurabi's Code, Rule by Kings/Priests.
 - *Example: Culture -> Ziggurats, Polytheism.
- **We Do (Primary Source Analysis):** Provide a brief, simplified excerpt from Hammurabi's Code or a tablet inscription. Cora analyzes the source and determines which characteristic it falls under (e.g., If it mentions penalties for destroying crops, it covers both Political System and Economy/Environment).

Conclusion & Formative Check (You Do) (10 Minutes)

- **Activity:** Exit Ticket. What do you think was the most important *invention* that came out of Mesopotamia, and why?

Block 6: Case Study: Egypt - Gift of the Nile (50 Minutes)

Focus: Comparison and Contrast with Mesopotamia

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Review:** What made Mesopotamia successful? Today we shift our focus to Egypt, a civilization that developed around the same time but in a very different way.
- **Success Criteria:** I can compare and contrast the ways Egypt and Mesopotamia managed their environment and government.

Body: Comparing Two Giants (I Do/We Do) (35 Minutes)

- **I Do (Modeling):** Discuss key Egyptian features, focusing on differences from Mesopotamia:
 - Environment: Predictable Nile flooding (less defensive walls needed).
 - Political: Centralized, unified kingdom under the divine Pharaoh (unlike scattered Mesopotamian city-states).
 - Culture: Focus on the afterlife (Pyramids, mummification).
- **We Do (Venn Diagram or T-Chart):** Cora uses a comparison tool (physical or digital) to sort

features specific to Mesopotamia, specific to Egypt, and common to both (e.g., both had specialization and writing; Egypt had Pharaohs, Mesopotamia had City-States).

Conclusion & Formative Check (You Do) (10 Minutes)

- **Activity:** Debate Prep (Self-Reflection). If you had to be born into one of these civilizations, which would you choose, and based on which characteristics (e.g., better government/laws, or better environment)? Justify your choice.

Block 7: Synthesis and Planning - Build-a-Civilization Project (50 Minutes)

Focus: Project Introduction, Planning, and Research

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Objective:** Now that you know the rules, you are going to become the architect of your own civilization.
- **Summative Assessment Introduction:** The "Build-a-Civilization" Project. Cora must design a *detailed fictional civilization* or *analyze a modern organization (e.g., a large corporation or a specific country)* and demonstrate all six characteristics in action.
- **Success Criteria:** I will have a complete, well-researched plan that incorporates all six characteristics creatively and logically.

Body: Project Planning (I Do/We Do/You Do) (40 Minutes)

- **I Do (Modeling):** Provide an example scenario (e.g., a civilization built underground or on the moon). Model how to brainstorm details for one or two characteristics (e.g., *Environment: Underground cave system; *Technology: Bioluminescent moss for light, geothermal power).
- **We Do (Q&A/Idea Brainstorm):** Cora chooses a setting (e.g., the desert, the arctic, a swamp, a floating city). The educator guides Cora through linking the environment to the necessary Technology and Economic System.
- **You Do (Detailed Planning):** Cora spends the rest of the block creating a detailed outline for their civilization, ensuring every characteristic is addressed:
 - Name of Civilization:
 - Environment: (Geography/Challenges)
 - Political System: (Type of leader, 3 key laws)
 - Economic System: (Main product, trade partners)
 - Technology: (3 major inventions)
 - Social Structure: (Layers of society)
 - Culture: (Main religion/belief system, form of writing)

Conclusion (5 Minutes)

- **Homework/Next Steps:** Gather materials or finalize research for the presentation next block.

Block 8: Project Presentation and Final Assessment (50 Minutes)

Focus: Summative Assessment and Final Review

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Objective:** Today you will present your civilization and demonstrate mastery of the six characteristics.
- **Success Criteria:** I will clearly and confidently present my "Build-a-Civilization" project, showing how all six components work together.

Body: Presentation and Feedback (You Do) (40 Minutes)

- **Activity: Build-a-Civilization Presentation.** Cora presents her civilization using her chosen method (e.g., poster, slide deck, verbal report, physical model).
- **Assessment:** The educator uses the six core characteristics as a rubric to ensure all elements were included and logically connected (Summative Assessment).
- **Q&A and Feedback:** After the presentation, the educator asks clarifying questions: "How does the structure of your government (Political System) specifically help you deal with the challenge of your environment?"

Conclusion (Closure & Recap) (5 Minutes)

- **Recap:** Review the entire journey, from defining civilization to building one. Reiterate the importance of interdependence—how the environment influences technology, which influences the social structure, and so on.
- **Final Thought:** "Every society, from the oldest river valley to our world today, is built on the same six basic pillars. You now have the checklist to analyze any group of people throughout history."