

STUDYING ANCIENT HISTORY

Teacher notes

Introduction

- Introduce the workshop, class, or lesson (*original content designed for a survey of the Ancient Near East → adjust content to fit your program*)
- **Ancient History**
 - Disciplines
 - Philology, archaeology, art history, anthropology
 - Sources
 - Texts, material culture, landscape, ethnographic data
 - Prehistory vs History; BC and AD versus BCE and CE
- **Near/Middle East**
 - Terminology
 - Near? Middle? East?
 - Why not Western Asia?
 - Use in past and present
 - Near East originated with the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-19th c.
 - Varied use geographically, politically, and scientifically

- Middle East originated in British-American diplomatic correspondence at the beginning of the 20th c.
 - Even current government organizations include different countries under this umbrella
- **Scope**
 - Geographical (*change to fit your lesson*)
 - Mesopotamia (Iraq, Syria), Levant (Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria), Anatolia (Turkey), and Persia (Iran); extensions into the Mediterranean, Egypt (sometimes more of North Africa – Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco), and Arabia
 - Chronological (*change to fit your lesson*)
 - Usually end with conquest of Alexander, but we will continue until the rise of Islam
 - Class organized chronologically from Neolithic to Late Antique periods
 - Caveat (*change to fit your lesson*): this is a survey, so we will target case studies in various regions during major periods, but we will absolutely not cover everything!
- What's around it? (*change to fit your lesson*)
 - Mediterranean, Central Asia (steppe, silk road, beyond), (Sub-Saharan) Africa
- **Early investigations**
 - Antiquities acquisition; support for Biblical narrative; search for origins
 - Egyptomania at the end of the 18th c. CE beginning with the French
 - Napoleon (Battle of the Pyramids), Champollion (Rosetta Stone – EH, Demotic, Greek)
 - British and French, then German excavations in Mesopotamia followed in the 19th c. CE

- Layard at Nimrud and Nineveh, Rawlinson at Behistun (Iran); Warren and Wilson at Jerusalem; 20th c.: Woolley at Ur and Alalakh, Schliemann at Troy, Andrae at Assur, Koldewey at Babylon
- **Orientalism**
- **How do we study history before the invention of writing?**
 - Archaeological Excavations – on land and below the sea
 - Pottery – from cups and bowls to massive storage jars
 - Artwork – figurines, paintings, rock-cut monuments, etc.
 - Lithics – obsidian, ground stone, etc.
 - Metals – raw and crafted, for trade, use, or display
 - Bone and shell – human, animal, and in any form
 - Archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological remains – seeds, charcoals, animal bones, etc.
 - Landscapes – settlement mounds, agricultural space, mountain fortresses, monuments, etc.
 - Experimental Archaeology – recreating past practices
- **The Invention of Writing**
 - Proto-Cuneiform – developed for accounting – recording amounts of goods, parcels of land, and labor expenditures, as well as related transactions; signed/certified by individual through signature or seal
 - Circles and lines impressed in clay; later developed into impressed wedges
 - Numbers, ideographic and logographic signs designating individual words
 - Probably developed by Sumerian speakers
 - Phonetic values understood through lexical lists which provide translations and information
 - Grammar added through combinations of signs

- Signs became more abstract as it developed; used throughout Near East for various languages until about the end of the 1st millennium BCE
 - Proper cuneiform was a logo-syllabic script
 - Cuneiform “provided a new way to signify the physical word surrounding its users, and organized that world as a logical system that could be expressed through writing” (Van de Mieroop 2016: 37)
- Rebus writing – homonymy; eye heart U = I love you
- Phonetic complements – reading aids; KA = mouth, but modified by sign ME tells you to read EME (tongue), not the nonexistent *KAME*
- Semantic complements – KA + NINDA (bread) = GU₇ (to eat)
- Determinatives – semantic classifiers; nonverbal; i.e. god, city, land, etc.
- Tablets – rounded rectangular slabs of clay; writing can be on all sides; can be sealed in clay envelope
 - Bullae – hollow clay spheres enclosing clay or stone tokens; marked with seal of guarantor
- **How do we study History once writing is invented?**
 - Linguistics
 - Philology
 - History