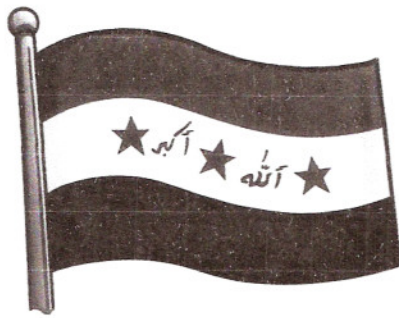


Iraq



The Middle Eastern nation of Iraq is located in what was once called "Mesopotamia." Mesopotamia means "land between the rivers." These rivers are the Tigris and Euphrates, and they were the site of many great past civilizations.

The earliest inhabitants of ancient Iraq were the Sumerians. Although they never formed a united country, they developed a civilization about 4000 B.C. that was later adopted by many conquerors. *Cuneiform* writing, a system of writing made up of wedge-shaped marks impressed mostly in clay, was a contribution of the Sumerians.

The first great empire to rule Mesopotamia was that of the Babylonians. One of their kings, Hammurabi, is remembered for his famous law code. Although Babylonian laws were extremely harsh and cruel, they represented one of the first law codes in history. A law code is a collection of rules and laws written for all to see.

Iraq in modern times has gone through almost continuous crisis. From 1980 to 1988, it was involved in a war with Iran. Then two years later, Saddam Hussein, Iraq's dictator, tried to take over the small adjoining country of Kuwait. He was stopped and his forces driven out by the United States and others. In 2003, Iraq was invaded by a group of nations led by the United States. The invasion came about because it was suspected that Iraq was producing weapons of mass destruction. No such weapons were found, but the invasion forced Saddam Hussein from power. Since then, Iraq has gone through a long period of violence and instability.



Project #1

Write your monogram (initials) in cuneiform as the ancient Mesopotamians would have written it.

Materials

- research materials
- paper
- pencil
- air-drying modeling clay
- stick for making wedge-shaped marks

Directions

1. Use the Internet or other research materials to find out about cuneiform writing.
2. Use the information that you found to make a drawing of the cuneiform tablet showing how your initials would have been written.

3. Using your drawing, inscribe (write) your initials in the clay with a small stick.
4. After your cuneiform "tablet" dries, share it with your classmates.

