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## HOMESCHOOL UNIT STUDY

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# Ancient Civilizations

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A 6-Week Cross-Curricular Journey Through History

Mesopotamia

Egypt

China

Greece

Rome

Integrating

History

Literacy

Art

Math

Science

- ◆ 6-Week Lesson Guide with Daily Plans
- ◆ Reading Passages for Each Civilization
- ◆ Map Activities & Geography Exploration
- ◆ Timeline Project Across All Civilizations
  - ◆ Art & Craft Extension Options
- ◆ Culminating Museum Display Project with Rubric
  - ◆ Curated Resource List

**Grades 3 – 7 | 6 Weeks**

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**UM Printables**

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# Introduction & How to Use This Guide

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Welcome to the **Ancient Civilizations Unit Study**! This comprehensive 6-week cross-curricular journey will transport your learner back in time to explore five of the most influential civilizations in human history: Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, Ancient China, Ancient Greece, and Ancient Rome.

Designed for grades 3 through 7, this unit integrates history, literacy, art, math, and science into a cohesive and engaging learning experience. Each week focuses on one civilization, building knowledge and skills that culminate in a hands-on Museum Display Project during Week 6.

## What's Inside This Resource

- ◆ **6-Week Lesson Guide:** A detailed daily plan for each week, with activities spanning all subject areas.
- ◆ **Reading Passages:** Engaging, grade-appropriate informational texts for each civilization.
- ◆ **Map Activities:** Geography explorations that build spatial awareness and map-reading skills.
- ◆ **Timeline Project:** An ongoing project where students track key events across all five civilizations.
- ◆ **Art & Craft Extensions:** Creative hands-on projects that bring each civilization to life.
- ◆ **Museum Display Project:** A culminating project with a detailed rubric for assessment.
- ◆ **Resource List:** Curated books, websites, and videos to enrich each week's study.

## How to Use This Guide

**Flexibility:** This unit is designed to be flexible. Follow the 6-week lesson guide as written, or adapt the pace and activities to suit your learner's needs and interests. Each week includes five days of activities, but you may stretch or compress the timeline as needed.

**Multi-Age Adaptation:** For younger learners (grades 3–4), focus on the reading passages, map activities, and art projects. For older learners (grades 5–7), incorporate the deeper research prompts, written responses, and more complex math and science connections.

**Cross-Curricular Connections:** Each week integrates multiple subjects. The lesson guide clearly labels which subject area each activity addresses. Look for these labels: [History], [Literacy], [Art], [Math], and [Science].

**Materials:** Most activities use common household or classroom supplies. A materials list is provided in the weekly lesson guides. The map activities require printing the map pages in this resource.

### Tip

Keep a dedicated folder or binder for this unit study. Your learner will accumulate reading notes, maps, timeline entries, and craft projects that will all contribute to their final Museum Display. Consider using a three-ring binder with dividers for each civilization.

# 6-Week Lesson Guide

Below is a comprehensive daily plan for each of the six weeks. Each day includes approximately 1.5 to 2.5 hours of instruction and activities. Adjust timing and depth based on your learner's age, interest, and pace.

## Week 1: Mesopotamia – The Cradle of Civilization

| Day | Subject                  | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | [History]<br>[Literacy]  | Read the Mesopotamia passage. Discuss key ideas. Complete vocabulary activity (cuneiform, ziggurat, Fertile Crescent, irrigation). Write a short summary (1 paragraph).                                                                                                                             |
| 2   | [History]<br>[Geography] | Complete the Mesopotamia map activity. Locate the Tigris & Euphrates rivers, Fertile Crescent, and modern-day Iraq. Discuss why rivers were important for civilization.                                                                                                                             |
| 3   | [History]<br>[Art]       | Begin the Timeline Project: add Mesopotamia entries (c. 3500 BCE – c. 539 BCE). Create a clay tablet with cuneiform-style writing using modeling clay and a stylus.                                                                                                                                 |
| 4   | [Math]<br>[Science]      | <b>Math:</b> Explore the base-60 number system. Calculate how many seconds in an hour ( $60 \times 60 = 3,600$ ) and discuss why we still use 60 for time. <b>Science:</b> Investigate irrigation — build a simple model using a tray, soil, and water to demonstrate how irrigation channels work. |
| 5   | [Art]<br>[Literacy]      | Build a ziggurat model using stacked cardboard or sugar cubes. Write a “day in the life” journal entry from the perspective of a Mesopotamian child.                                                                                                                                                |

### Read-Aloud Suggestion

Read “The Epic of Gilgamesh” (adapted children's version) throughout the week. Discuss themes of friendship, heroism, and what makes someone legendary.

## Week 2: Ancient Egypt – Gift of the Nile

| Day | Subject                  | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | [History]<br>[Literacy]  | Read the Ancient Egypt passage. Discuss key ideas. Vocabulary: pharaoh, hieroglyphics, papyrus, mummification, dynasty. Write 3 comprehension questions and swap with a partner or parent.                                                                                                                              |
| 2   | [History]<br>[Geography] | Complete the Egypt map activity. Locate the Nile River, Upper & Lower Egypt, the Sahara Desert, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Valley of the Kings. Discuss how the Nile's flooding cycle supported agriculture.                                                                                                        |
| 3   | [History]<br>[Art]       | Add Egypt entries to the Timeline Project (c. 3100 BCE – c. 30 BCE). Create a cartouche with hieroglyphics spelling the student's name using the hieroglyphic alphabet chart.                                                                                                                                           |
| 4   | [Math]<br>[Science]      | <b>Math:</b> Explore pyramid geometry — calculate the base area of a square pyramid. If a pyramid base is 230 m per side, what is the area? ( $230 \times 230 = 52,900 \text{ m}^2$ ). <b>Science:</b> Investigate the mummification process using an apple slice and baking soda/salt mixture. Observe over 1–2 weeks. |
| 5   | [Art]<br>[Literacy]      | Create a miniature sarcophagus or design canopic jars using recycled materials. Write a “discovery narrative” imagining you are an archaeologist uncovering a tomb.                                                                                                                                                     |

### Read-Aloud Suggestion

Read “The Golden Goblet” by Eloise Jarvis McGraw or an adapted version of Egyptian myths. Discuss daily life, social structure, and religious beliefs.

## READING PASSAGE: ANCIENT GREECE

### Birthplace of Democracy

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Unlike the large empires of Egypt and China, Ancient Greece was not one united country. Instead, it was made up of hundreds of independent city-states, called a “polis” in Greek. A city-state was a city and the farmland surrounding it. Even though the Greeks spoke the same language and worshipped the same gods, the city-states often had very different ways of living and frequently went to war with one another.

### Mountains and the Sea

Greece is a very mountainous country. Rugged mountains cover nearly three-quarters of the land. These mountains made traveling by land difficult and separated the city-states from each other. Because they were cut off by the terrain, each city-state developed its own government, laws, and customs.

Because the land was rocky and not great for growing crops like wheat, the Greeks looked to the sea. Greece has a long, jagged coastline with many natural harbors. The Greeks became excellent sailors, fishermen, and traders. They sailed across the Mediterranean, Aegean (ee-JEE-un), and Ionian seas, trading olive oil, wine, and beautiful painted pottery for grain and metals.

### Athens and Sparta

Two of the most powerful city-states were Athens and Sparta, and they were complete opposites. Athens was the birthplace of democracy, a government where citizens vote to make decisions. (However, in Athens, only free adult men who were born in Athens could vote; women, enslaved people, and foreigners could not.) Athenians loved art, philosophy, and learning. They built magnificent temples, like the Parthenon on top of the Acropolis, and held the first Olympic Games to honor the god Zeus.

Sparta, on the other hand, was a strict military state. From the age of seven, Spartan boys were taken from their families and trained to be soldiers. They lived in barracks, endured harsh physical training, and learned to survive with very little. Spartan girls also received physical training, which was unusual for the ancient world, because the Spartans believed strong women would bear strong children. While Athens valued thinking and voting, Sparta valued strength, discipline, and warfare above all else.

### Greek Gods and Great Thinkers

The Greeks believed in many gods and goddesses who they thought lived on Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. The king of the gods was Zeus, who controlled the sky and threw thunderbolts. His brother Poseidon ruled the sea, and Athena was the goddess of wisdom and

warfare. The Greeks told myths about these gods to explain the world around them.

Ancient Greece also produced some of the world's greatest thinkers, called philosophers, which means "lovers of wisdom." Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were famous philosophers who asked big questions about life, justice, and the universe. Their ideas still influence how we think and learn today.

### **Comprehension & Discussion**

1. How did Greece's mountains affect the way the Greeks lived?
2. What is a city-state (polis)?
3. Compare and contrast Athens and Sparta. Give at least two differences.
4. Why did the Greeks become sailors and traders instead of farmers?
5. What is a philosopher? Name one famous Greek philosopher.

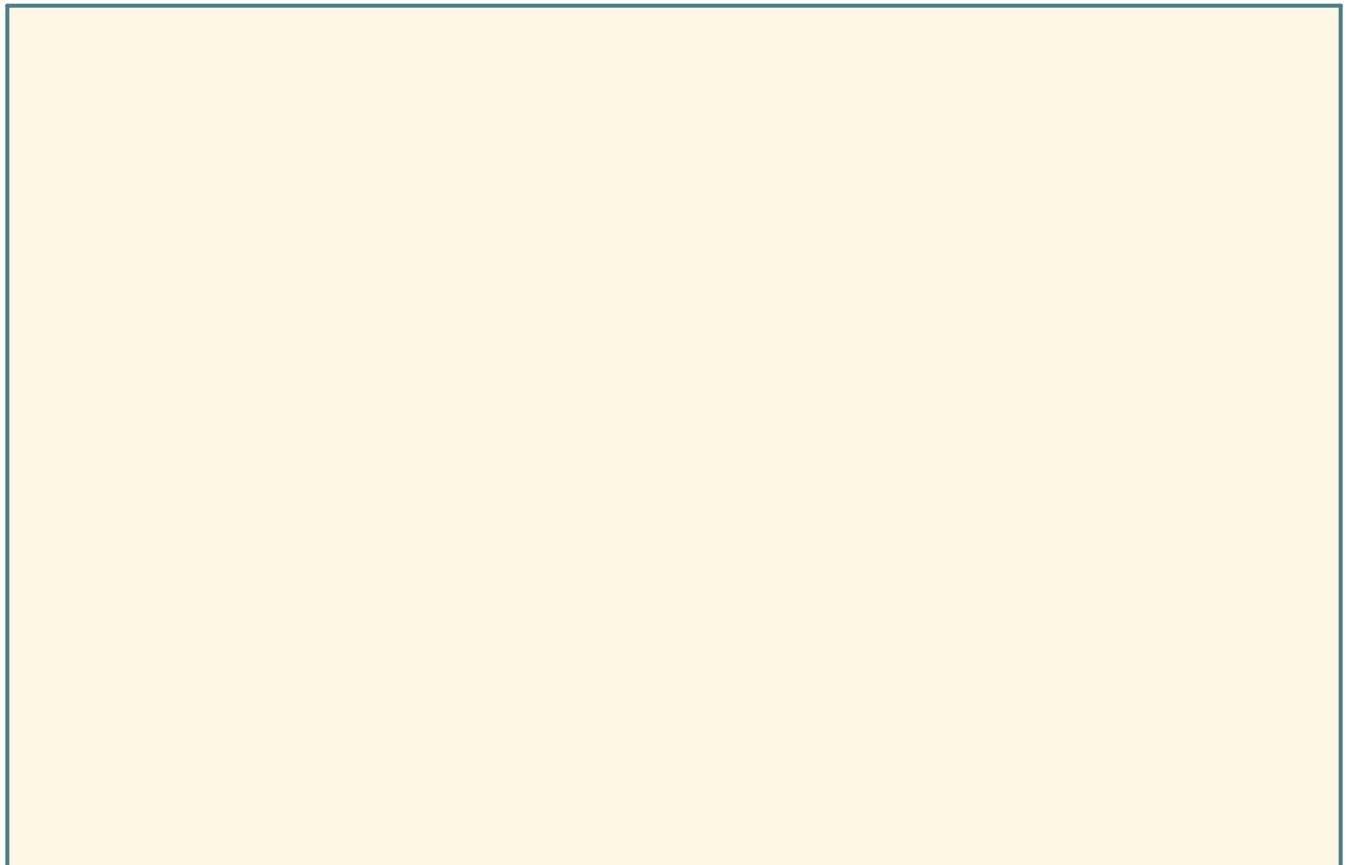
# Map Activity: The Mediterranean World

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Ancient Greece was located on a peninsula extending into the Mediterranean Sea. The southern part of this peninsula is called the Peloponnese. Because of its many islands and jagged coastline, Greece was perfectly positioned for sea trade. Map the key geographic features that shaped Greek life.

1. Using a blue colored pencil, shade and label the **Mediterranean Sea** at the bottom of the map.
2. Shade and label the **Aegean Sea** to the east (right) of Greece, and the **Ionian Sea** to the west (left).
3. Draw the outline of mainland **Greece** and the southern peninsula, the **Peloponnese**. Label both.
4. Draw a few small circles in the Aegean Sea to represent Greek **Islands** (like Crete) and label them.
5. Using a black dot, mark the city of **Athens** on the mainland. Draw a red dot for **Sparta** on the Peloponnese peninsula.
6. Using a green colored pencil, draw a small triangle in the northern part of Greece to represent **Mount Olympus** and label it.
7. Draw a compass rose in the bottom left corner showing **North, South, East, and West**.

## Student Map Workspace



# Timeline Project: Ancient Civilizations

One of the best ways to understand history is to see when events happened in relation to one another. Throughout this 6-week unit, you have been adding events to your Timeline Project. This section provides a master list of key dates to ensure your timeline is complete and accurate.

## How to Build Your Timeline

- 1. Choose Your Format:** You can use a long roll of paper, a trifold poster board, or tape several pieces of cardstock together.
- 2. Draw the Main Line:** Draw a thick horizontal line across the center of your paper. Leave extra space on the left for older dates (further in the past).
- 3. Mark the Centuries:** Starting from 4000 BCE on the far left, mark every 500 years (3500 BCE, 3000 BCE, etc.) up to 500 CE on the right.
- 4. Color Code:** Use the colors assigned to each civilization (Mesopotamia = Dark Yellow/Brown, Egypt = Gold, China = Red, Greece = Teal, Rome = Dark Red). Write or draw each event in that civilization's color so you can easily see overlaps.
- 5. Add Events:** Write the date and a short description above or below the line, connecting it to the main line with a smaller vertical line.

## Mesopotamia (c. 3500 BCE – c. 539 BCE)

| Date        | Event                                                       |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| c. 3500 BCE | Invention of the wheel and early cuneiform writing in Sumer |
| c. 3100 BCE | First ziggurats are built in Mesopotamian cities            |
| c. 1754 BCE | King Hammurabi creates his famous code of laws in Babylon   |
| c. 539 BCE  | The Persian Empire conquers Babylon; Mesopotamian rule ends |

## Ancient Egypt (c. 3100 BCE – c. 30 BCE)

| Date        | Event                                                  |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| c. 3100 BCE | King Narmer unifies Upper and Lower Egypt              |
| c. 2560 BCE | The Great Pyramid of Giza is built for Pharaoh Khufu   |
| c. 1279 BCE | Ramesses II begins his long reign; builds many temples |
| c. 30 BCE   | Cleopatra VII dies; Egypt falls to the Roman Empire    |

## Ancient China (c. 2070 BCE – c. 220 CE)

# Museum Display Project Rubric

Use this rubric to ensure your project meets all expectations before your Grand Opening. Each category is scored on a 4-point scale.

| Criteria                                 | 4 – Exemplary                                                                                     | 3 – Proficient                                                                              | 2 – Developing                                                                | 1 – Beginning                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Historical Accuracy</b>               | All facts, dates, and cultural details are 100% accurate. Deep understanding is evident.          | Most facts are accurate (1–2 minor errors). Solid understanding is shown.                   | Several factual errors present. Basic understanding is inconsistent.          | Many factual errors. Shows little understanding of the civilizations.          |
| <b>Visual Appeal &amp; Creativity</b>    | Exhibit is highly engaging, exceptionally organized, and creatively displayed with great effort.  | Exhibit is neat, organized, and visually appealing with good effort.                        | Exhibit is somewhat disorganized or visually plain. Minimal effort shown.     | Exhibit is messy, hard to follow, or incomplete. Lack of effort is apparent.   |
| <b>Written Components (Cards/Labels)</b> | All cards/labels are present, highly detailed, neatly written, and error-free.                    | All cards/labels are present with adequate detail; 1–2 minor spelling errors.               | Some cards/labels are missing or lack detail; several spelling errors.        | Many cards/labels are missing or illegible; frequent errors.                   |
| <b>Oral Presentation (Guided Tour)</b>   | Speaker is loud, clear, and enthusiastic. Speaks without reading notes. Answers questions easily. | Speaker is clear and mostly enthusiastic. Relies slightly on notes. Answers most questions. | Speaker is quiet or reads entirely from notes. Struggles to answer questions. | Speaker is inaudible or unprepared. Cannot answer questions about the exhibit. |

|                     |            |               |       |
|---------------------|------------|---------------|-------|
| <b>Total Score:</b> | _____ / 16 | <b>Grade:</b> | _____ |
|---------------------|------------|---------------|-------|

# Resource List

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Enhance your Ancient Civilizations unit with these curated books, websites, and videos. These resources are highly recommended for grades 3–7 and align perfectly with the content covered in this guide.

## General Ancient History

- ◆ **Book:** *The Story of the World: History for the Classical Child, Volume 1: Ancient Times* by Susan Wise Bauer (Excellent core text or audiobook for the entire unit)
- ◆ **Website:** [Ducksters.com/history/](https://www.ducksters.com/history/) – Easy-to-read articles and quizzes for all ancient civilizations
- ◆ **Video:** Crash Course Kids / Crash Course World History (YouTube) – Engaging, fast-paced overviews

## Mesopotamia

- ◆ **Book:** *Gilgamesh the King* by Ludmila Zeman (Beautifully illustrated picture book adaptation of the epic)
- ◆ **Website:** [britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/mesopotamia](https://britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/mesopotamia) – Explore virtual artifacts from Sumer, Assyria, and Babylon
- ◆ **Activity:** Write your name in cuneiform using the “Cuneiform” app or the UPenn online cuneiform translator tool

## Ancient Egypt

- ◆ **Book:** *The Golden Goblet* by Eloise Jarvis McGraw (A great historical fiction read-aloud for older students)
- ◆ **Book:** *Mummies in the Morning* (Magic Tree House #3) by Mary Pope Osborne (Perfect for younger readers)
- ◆ **Website:** [dkfindout.com/us/history/ancient-egypt/](https://dkfindout.com/us/history/ancient-egypt/) – Interactive facts and visual dictionaries
- ◆ **Video:** “The Pyramids of Egypt” by SciShow Kids (YouTube) – Explains how the pyramids were likely built

## Ancient China

- ◆ **Book:** *The Emperor’s Silent Army: Terracotta Warriors of Ancient China* by Jane O’Connor
- ◆ **Website:** [kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/terracotta-warriors](https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/terracotta-warriors) – Great article with photos

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for choosing UM Printables

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## UM Printables

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