**Unit: The Ancient Middle East**

**Suggested Content Overview**

The Essential Standards and Common Core Standards for Social Studies focus on skills and concepts and do not specify content; however, common expectations regarding academic vocabulary and background knowledge may better facilitate the students’ mastery of key concepts and skills. To that end, consider including the following information while covering this unit.

**Vocabulary/Ideas/Content:**

* Alphabet
* Cataracts
* City-State
* Cuneiform
* Delta
* Dynasty
* Empire
* Exodus
* Fertile Crescent
* Hammurabi’s Code
* Hieroglyphics
* Israel
* Judaism
* Mediterranean Sea
* Mesopotamia
* Monotheism
* Moses
* Mummies
* Nile River
* Palestine
* Papyrus
* Passover
* Persian Gulf
* Pharaoh
* Polytheism
* Pyramid
* Rabbi
* Red Sea
* Rosetta Stone
* Rosh Hashanah
* Sahara
* Scribe
* Silt
* Social Hierarchy
* Sphinx
* Sumer
* Ten Commandments
* Three Seasons of the Nile
* Tigris & Euphrates Rivers
* Torah
* Yom Kippur
* Ziggurat

**Student Understandings:**

* Ancient civilizations grew in the area around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers; this region is part of the Fertile Crescent which consists of arable land. This region is also referred to as the Cradle of Civilization.
* Ancient Mesopotamians and ancient Egyptians both used irrigation and canals to help water crops during the dry season. Their geographic differences, however, had a profound impact on the development of their cultures.
* Ancient Sumer was an advanced society that consisted of large city-states, fortified cities, and strong armies.
* Sumerians are credited with many advancements, including the first writing system called cuneiform (they wrote works on history, law, grammar, math, and literature), the wheel (used for vehicles and for making pottery), the plow & irrigation (which increased farm production), the clock, sewer systems, and the use of bronze to strengthen tools and weapons.
* Throughout history, numerous groups (including Jews, Christians, and Muslims) have conquered and possessed the land that is currently in dispute in the region.
* The Jews were the first monotheistic civilization. They established a kingdom in Jerusalem and built Solomon’s Temple. Over time this temple was destroyed, rebuilt, and destroyed again. The Jews were killed, exiled, or enslaved by several groups that conquered the region including the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Romans.
* The Babylonians developed Hammurabi’s Code which was a thorough set of written laws.
* Phoenicians built the world’s finest harbors to enhance trade over the waterways; they also developed one of the world’s first alphabets (on which our current alphabet is based).
* Ancient Egypt was an advanced society with a strong, theocratic dynastic system.
* The regular flooding of the Nile, coupled with the isolation of the river valley, allowed Egypt to develop a technologically advanced, economically sound, and socially stable civilization.

**Mapping Skills:**

On a map, students should be able to identify:

* The Arabian Peninsula
* The Fertile Crescent
* The Sahara Desert
* The Mediterranean Sea
* The Persian Gulf
* The Red Sea
* The Nile Delta
* The Nile River
* The Tigris River
* The Euphrates River