

Hands-on History

# Ancient Civilizations

ACTIVITIES



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SHELL EDUCATION

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# Overview of Activities

## **The First Civilizations** (*lesson on pages 11–17*)

In this activity, students will explore the factors that contributed to the formation of the first human societies. In order to survive students will have to find representations of food, shelter, and water within a given time. By first attempting survival individually and then repeating the activity the next day as a group, students will experience firsthand the relative ease of societal living and will explore the reasons why humans were able to thrive as groups. They will also learn about the geographical factors that influenced the beginnings of civilizations along the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys. The total class time to complete the activity should be about three, 50-minute periods—two for the activities and one for the quiz and discussion.

## **Ancient Mesopotamia** (*lesson on pages 28–31*)

In ancient Mesopotamia, societies created surpluses of life's necessities, allowing the inhabitants to devote time to the creation of culture. Working in small groups (each representing a society), students will choose how they use their time in recreating Mesopotamian innovations in law, architecture, written language, trade, and warfare. They will experience how a society's focus on certain cultural aspects shaped the society's role in history. The activity ends (initially unbeknownst to students) when a group invents the catapult, representing that group's conquering of the other groups. The total class time to complete the activity should be about two, 50-minute periods—one for the activity and one for discussion and assessment.

## **Ancient Egypt** (*lesson on pages 44–47*)

Running the Egyptian Empire wasn't easy. In this activity, groups of students will have to prioritize their use of money they gather from collecting taxes. While the ultimate goal of the activity is to create a pyramid, students will have to keep the empire running smoothly while gathering the needed materials and power. Students will learn that you better please the people or they will rise up against you, and you must placate the gods or the natural world can exact retribution. Students will gain an overview of Egyptian culture and will experience the difficulties and tough decisions faced by rulers of the Egypt. The total class time will vary with the relative success of students during the game. On average, the activity should take two or three, 50-minute periods.

## **Ancient India** (*lesson on pages 71–76*)

Was the caste system of ancient India fair? Do we have castes in our own society? In this exploration, students will play the hand they are dealt in a caste-system card game and activity. They will be divided into different castes and will accumulate a number of daily tasks based on their social status. Students will have to complete these tasks before they can pursue noble learning and try to decode Sanskrit and earn the right to vote and create the laws of their society. Students will gain an overview of ancient Indian culture and daily life and will learn about the potential for inequality in law. The total class time to complete the activity should be about two, 50-minute periods.

# Overview of Activities *(cont.)*

## **Ancient China** *(lesson on pages 98–101)*

Help create a classroom China Museum! Working in small groups, students will role-play museum curators who are trying to match listed artifacts with the Shang, Qin, or Han dynasties. As information about each dynasty's religion and culture is provided in stages, students will revise their view of history based on changing information. Groups will then present their dynasty to the class and will place all the created artifacts in their dynasty's display in the classroom China Museum. Students will gain an overview of the achievements of the most important dynasties and will also explore the difficulties in piecing together the past from incomplete information. As many of their initial artifact guesses will be wrong, students will learn the changing nature of history and the need for historical revision as new information comes to light. The total class time to complete the activity should be about three, 50-minute class periods.

## **Ancient Greece** *(lesson on pages 129–133)*

Students will explore ancient Greece from the perspective of the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, who unearthed the city of Troy. In the course of the activity, students will gain an overview of the city-states of Athens, Sparta, and Troy, and they will explore the idea of truth contained in myth. Working individually, students will dissect clues from Homer's *The Iliad* to decide where to dig for Troy. They are led to dig at one of three sites, which will turn out to be Athens, Sparta, and Troy. Based on where they decide to dig, students form groups and create the artifacts they "find" at their site. Did they find Troy? Students will then get information about the three cultures and will vote on which society they believe their group unearthed. The total class time to complete the activity should be about three, 50-minute periods

## **Ancient Rome** *(lesson on pages 149–153)*

In this activity, students will explore personalities of ancient Romans while performing and solving a *Who Really Killed Marc Antony?* reader's theater murder mystery. Students will also experience revisionist history as they search for truth in two distinctly different versions of events offered by characters in the play. The total class time to complete the activity should be about four, 50-minute class periods.

# Correlation to Standards

Lesson Title	NCSS Process Standard	McREL Content Standard
<b>The First Civilizations</b>	Identify and describe selected historical periods and patterns of change within and across cultures, such as the rise of civilizations, the development of transportation systems, the growth and breakdown of colonial systems, and others. (II-c)	World History—The Beginnings of Human Society Standard 2—Understand the processes that contributed to the emergence of agricultural societies around the world.
<b>Ancient Mesopotamia</b>	Examine and describe the influence of culture on scientific and technological choices and advancements, such as in transportation, medicine, and warfare. (VIII-a)	World History—Early Civilizations and the Rise of Pastoral Peoples Standard 3—Understand the major characteristics of civilization and the development of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley.
<b>Ancient Egypt</b>	Work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals. (IV-a)	World History—Early Civilizations and the Rise of Pastoral Peoples Standard 3—Understand the major characteristics of civilization and the development of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley.
<b>Ancient India</b>	Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare. (VI-a)	World History—Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter Standard 12—Understand the Imperial crisis and their aftermath in various regions from 300 to 700.
<b>Ancient China</b>	Compare similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures meet human needs and concerns. (I-a)	World History—Early Civilizations and the Rise of Pastoral Peoples Standard 4—Understand how agrarian societies spread and new states emerged in the third and second millennia BCE.
<b>Ancient Greece</b>	Explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture. (I-c)	World History—Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires Standard 8—Understand how Aegean civilizations emerged and how interrelations developed among peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asia from 600 to 200.
<b>Ancient Rome</b>	Demonstrate an understanding that different scholars may describe the same event or situation in different ways but must provide reasons for evidence for their views. (II-a)	World History—Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires Standard 9—Understand how major religious and large-scale empires arose in the Mediterranean Basin, China and India from 500 BC to 300 CE.

# Ancient Rome

## Overview

In this activity, students will explore personalities of ancient Romans while performing and solving a reader's theater murder mystery to find out who really killed Marc Antony. Students will also experience revisionist history as they search for truth in two distinctly different versions of events offered by characters in the play.

The total class time to complete this activity should be about four, 50-minute class periods. You will measure student learning through discussion, observation, and the use of a post-activity quiz.



The Colosseum  
Source: Corbis

## Objectives

- Students will realize that different scholars may describe the same event from widely differing viewpoints. (NCSS)
- Students will learn about the transition from republic to empire and will gain an overview of the personalities that made this possible (Caesar, Octavian, Cleopatra, and Marc Antony).

## Materials

- copies of reproducibles (pages 153–173) as described on page 150
- poster board
- markers
- string—9 pieces, each 18 inches (45.7 cm) long
- scissors
- 2 Styrofoam cups
- 10 craft sticks
- tape
- glue
- water
- white paper

# Ancient Rome *(cont.)*

## Preparation

Total preparation time should be about 10 minutes each day.

### Days One and Two

- Make 15 copies of the *Reader's Theater Script* (pages 154–162) and staple them.
- Make at least 10 copies of *Artists' Information* (page 163).
- Make at least 10 copies of *Artists' Mosaic* (page 164).
- Make one copy of the *Information Sheets* (pages 165–170).

### Day Three

Copy a class set of *Who Really Killed Marc Antony?* (page 171) and a class set of the *Rome Quiz* (page 172).

### Day Four

Copy a class set of the *Who Really Killed Marc Antony Quiz* (page 173). Make an overhead transparency of the *Habits of Mind Discussion* (page 174). Combine and hang the students' enlarged mosaic. Students should have written the square numbers and their names on the back of their papers.

## Directions

### Day One

1. After reading the *Read-Aloud Directions for Days One and Two* (page 152), split students into groups. You will need 9 actors and one director for the play. (The character of Octavia has only one line in the script. She might be a good part for a shy student or a student with low reading abilities. Or, you can have the students add more lines for her.) The remaining students will work on set design and props. As you assign jobs, give the director and each actor a copy of the *Reader's Theater Script* and have them go to a designated rehearsal area.
2. Have your other students gather and allocate jobs to them. Between two and five students can complete the actors nametags from the *Artists' Information* sheet, and two or three of the students can create the Roman water clock from the *Artists' Information* sheet. The rest of the students can create a backdrop for the actual play. They should read through the script to get ideas of what setting might be needed during the script.
3. Impress upon the students that time is of the essence! Ask the actors to immediately start a read-through. They will be allowed to use their scripts during the performance since this is a reader's theater, but they still need to practice and be familiar with their lines.

### Day Two

1. Allow a few minutes of preparation and time for the setting to be put up. Then, have the actors perform the play. The performance itself should take about 10 minutes.

# Ancient Rome *(cont.)*

## Directions *(cont.)*

### Day Two *(cont.)*

2. Discuss the play, focusing on which characters students thought were good or bad.
3. After performing the play, students can begin their next tasks. The actors should be given copies of the *Information Sheets* (pages 165–170). They have to read these and memorize some answers to prepare for the next day's activity. Whatever they don't finish in class should be completed as homework.
4. The director and the rest of the students need to be placed into groups. Each group will create one copy of the *Artists' Mosaic* (page 164). If necessary, students within one group can do more than one square to make up the picture.

### Day Three

1. Ask students to pass in their homework (the *Information Sheets* and the *Artists' Mosaic*) while you read the *Read-Aloud Directions for Day Three* (page 152).
2. Pass out and preview the *Who Really Killed Marc Antony?* sheets. Students will use these sheets to organize the information presented throughout the second day.
3. Have characters come to the front of the room one at a time and ask them the three questions to which they should have memorized answers as per their homework. If you like, keep track of time with the Roman water clocks that the artists made yesterday.
4. Students will fill out their *Who Really Killed Marc Antony?* sheets as they listen.
5. When all characters have answered their questions, give students the remainder of the class period to finish the sheet and to vote using the ballot included at the bottom.
6. As students return their ballots, tally the results on the board.
7. Give each student a copy of the *Rome Quiz* (page 172) to complete as homework.

### Day Four

1. Today will be used for discussion and assessment.
2. Begin the session by grading the *Rome Quiz* the students completed for homework. Answers are provided on page 153.
3. Distribute and then give students time to complete the *Who Really Killed Marc Antony Quiz* (page 173). Then, grade these using the answers provided on page 153.
4. Put the *Habits of Mind Discussion* (page 174) questions on the overhead and follow the *Closure Discussion for Day Four* (page 153) to complete this activity.



# Ancient Rome *(cont.)*

## Directions *(cont.)*

### Things to Consider

1. Choose your student director carefully as he or she will be responsible for organizing rehearsal for the play.
2. For the third day to run smoothly, actors will have to memorize the answers included on their homework sheet. If you feel that students will be unable to memorize their answers, let them read from the homework sheets instead of memorizing them.

## Read-Aloud Directions

### Days One and Two

When you watch a basketball game and a player scores with one second left on the clock, is it a good thing or a bad thing? It depends on which side you're rooting for. This event can be seen two very different ways.

Today and tomorrow, we will be creating props and performing a play to find out who really killed Marc Antony. While the play shows one set of events, characters may have different points of view as to what exactly happened.

Tomorrow night, the actors will learn more about their characters so that they are able to answer specific questions. We all have to stay sharp in order to catch Marc Antony's killer!

There will be actors, a director, and expert artists. We will be performing the play tomorrow so there won't be much time to rehearse and create your scenery. This is a reader's theater, so that means the actors don't have to memorize their parts. But, actors should be very familiar with their lines and the director should help determine some basic stage directions so that the play is interesting.

### Day Three

So, who do you think did it? Yesterday we saw some interpretations of a famous event in history and met some important Roman characters. Today, we'll give the characters a chance to speak on their own and will gather information that might lead to Marc Antony's real killer.

# Ancient Rome *(cont.)*

## Closure Discussion for Day Four

The origin of the note that Marc Antony received about Cleopatra's death remains a mystery. It is the job of every historian to make the best guess possible based on the information at hand.

1. Does every problem in history have a solution?
2. How did this activity help you understand past events as they were experienced by the people of the time?
3. Did you empathize with the characters? If so, whom?
4. Was justice served from Marc Antony's perspective?
5. Was justice served from Octavian's perspective?
6. We're only talking about one event here. How can justice depend on who tells the story?
7. How did the personal characteristics of Marc Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavian influence history?

## Answer Key

### Rome Quiz

1. The order in which the people died is: Julius Caesar, Brutus, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavian.
2. The answer to this question will really depend on who the students choose to describe. Make a chart on the board with the positive and negative behaviors of the men and women in the play. Students can brainstorm the answers and then check their responses.
3. Octavian could have had a number of reasons for wanting to kill Marc Antony. He had the personal reason that Antony had left Octavian's sister for another woman. Most likely, though, Octavian wanted to kill Antony as a power play so that he could have complete control of Rome.
4. People's points of view color every part of history. The way that someone looked at the facts of a situation determined how they acted and why they behaved the way they did. Students should indicate that people can only react to the events in their lives based on their experiences. Many times, this causes problems among people.

### Who Really Killed Marc Antony Quiz

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. C  |
| 2. A | 7. A  |
| 3. B | 8. C  |
| 4. C | 9. C  |
| 5. D | 10. A |

# Reader's Theater Script

## Plot Summary

A student has to write an essay about who killed Marc Antony but doesn't understand the assignment. The class has just learned that Marc Antony killed himself. If he killed himself, then how can someone write a whole essay on the subject. There isn't that much to say! The student wants to just meet Antony to ask him what happened and falls asleep thinking the assignment is hopeless.

Marc Antony magically appears and says he will show the student the true story. Characters from ancient Rome enter to re-enact the events that led up to Marc Antony's suicide. Octavian is shown as a villain.

The Octavian in the play hears the bad comments made about him and leaves the play to debate with the student, pushing Marc Antony offstage and telling the student that he, Octavian, will show the true events.

The same ancient Roman characters enter to redo the plot from Octavian's point of view. When all is over, the student wakes up more confused than when he went to sleep, and asks the class for help in solving the mystery.

## Characters

Student	Caesar
Marc Antony 1	Brutus
Marc Antony 2	Cleopatra
Octavian 1	Octavia
Octavian 2	

**Student:** *(A student sits miserably at his or her desk at home.)* How can I write a full page on who killed Marc Antony when we just learned in class that he died by falling on his own sword? I mean, if he fell on his own sword, that means he killed himself, right? I wish I could just ask him: "Hey, Marc, buddy . . . Who killed you anyway?" This is totally hopeless. *(The student puts his or her head down on the desk and goes to sleep.)*

*Enter Marc Antony 1, who taps the student on the shoulder to wake him or her up.*

**Student:** Whoa, this is weird! I gotta stop eating sugar before I go to bed.

# Reader's Theater Script *(cont.)*

**Antony 1:** Hey, don't blame me! You're the one who wanted to talk to me.

**Student:** What do you mean!?

**Antony 1:** I'm Marc Antony! You said you needed to talk to me about some school paper?

**Student:** Yeah, well. I need to know who killed you—beside yourself, I mean.

**Antony 1:** Ah, yes. Quite a story. Well a picture is worth a thousand words, or something like that, wait. Just watch.

*Enter Marc Antony 2, Caesar, Octavian 1, and Brutus.*

**Caesar:** Friends! Romans! Countrymen! Lend me your ears!

**Antony 1:** *(to student)* Caesar loves saying that. Ooh look! There's me *(points to Antony 2)*.

**Antony 2:** Caesar, I've been your loyal general since we fought in Gaul, that weird land up north where it rains too much. Now, I'm the commander and chief of your army and your true friend! Hail Caesar!

**Octavian 1:** Hail Caesar, my great uncle! Marc Antony is a big goober, who drinks olive oil through his nose. When you're gone, I will dissolve this silly Republic and become Grand Emperor High-Head-Poohbah of Rome . . . Oh wait—did I say that out loud?

**Antony 1:** *(to student)* That's Octavian. I never did like him much . . .

**Student:** *(to Antony 1)* Yeah, he seems like a bad guy. And who are the other two?

**Antony 1:** *(pointing)* That's Brutus, supposedly Caesar's friend . . . . Just watch.

*Brutus walks up behind Caesar and stabs him.*

**Caesar:** *(dying in Brutus' arms)* Et tu Brute?

**Brutus:** Huh?

**Caesar:** *(exasperated)* It means "you too, Brutus." It's Latin . . . I mean, we are in Rome here.

**Brutus:** Oh . . .Yeah

*Caesar dies spectacularly*

**Antony 1:** *(to student)* Now watch what I say to the Roman people.

# Reader's Theater Script *(cont.)*

**Antony 2:** Friends! Romans! Countrymen! It is written here in Caesar's will (*pretend to hold a scroll*) that upon his death, each citizen of Rome will receive 300 bucks, and Caesars' gardens are now a public park. Now that I have your support, join with me to kick the gluteus maximuses of Brutus and all of Caesars' other killers!

*General chaos ensues with all characters running around. Exit all except Antony 1 and student.*

**Antony 1:** Brutus and his followers ran off before we could catch them. They gathered an army that was almost strong enough to take over Rome. I had to make a deal with Octavian—we put our armies together with the army of this other dude called Marcus Lepidus and beat up on Brutus and his army when he tried to come back.

**Student:** Wow!

**Antony 1:** The three of us—Octavian, Lepidus, and I—shared power in something we called the Second Triumverate. I got Egypt, Octavian got Rome, and Lepidus got Gaul. Now, with me all the way down in Egypt, I was pretty worried about what Octavian was up to in Rome. Watch this . . .

*Enter Octavian 1.*

**Octavian 1:** Hmmmm. Let's see here. I had to make a deal with that loser Marc Antony, but now that he's down in Egypt, I'll find some way to take his power so that I can become the Grand-Ruler-High-Head-Poohbah of Rome. Ah hahahahahahaha (*evil laugh*).

*Exit Octavian 1.*

**Antony 1:** See what I mean?

**Student:** Yeah, I guess so. What did you do?

**Antony 1:** Well, we did things a little differently back then . . . I married his sister Octavia. I figured if he tried to take over my power, Octavia would really let Octavian have it. She was mean with a rolling pin.

**Student:** Sounds like a good plan!

**Antony 1:** Well, there was only one problem—Cleopatra.

*Enter Antony 2 and Cleopatra.*

**Cleopatra:** Hey, handsome, I really respect your mind and all that. I feel like I can really talk to you. There are not many people who understand what it's like being the queen of Egypt.