Discover Ancient Mesopotamia!
A WebQuest for 6th Grade Social Studies
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Context:
This is a 6th grade social studies lesson that integrates language arts and the use of technology to be taught during a unit on Ancient Mesopotamia. This lesson would be taught after the students have been introduced to the topic through readings in their textbook and constructing a picture dictionary on important vocabulary related to the unit. This lesson includes Part 1 of the webquest and will take an estimated 45 minutes. Part 2 and 3 of the webquest will be completed in lessons to follow.

This information is relevant to 6th grade students as it is important for them to understand the major characteristics and historical influences of early civilizations, and the impact of their social cultural development on our own cultural. It asks students to research cooperatively and collaboratively and meets the state's benchmarks in social studies, language arts and technology.

Objectives:
- By the end of this lesson students will be able to state the meaning of Mesopotamia.
- Throughout this lesson students will be able to list specific facts relating to the land, people and the environment of Ancient Mesopotamia.
- By the end of this lesson students will demonstrate their understanding of the Ancient Mesopotamia land and history through their written encyclopedia article.
- During this lesson students will be able to do research cooperatively and collaboratively with a peer using online resources.

The objectives above apply to all three domains of Bloom's Taxonomy. Cognitively students will have the knowledge and comprehension to state the meaning of Mesopotamia and specific facts relating to the land. From their acquired research they will apply and analyze this knowledge by writing an encyclopedia article. Students will demonstrate physical abilities (psychomotor domain) by using fine motor skills to research on the classroom computers and to draw a picture related to their assigned topic. Finally, they will receive and respond to the information (affective domain) by having an emotional response to the project through working cooperatively and collaboratively with a partner.

Benchmarks:
Social Studies:
SS.08.GE.08: Understand how changes in a physical environment affect human activity.
SS.08.HS.05: Understand the political, economic and cultural impact, and lasting influence on early civilizations on world development.
SS:08:HS.05.01: Understand the major characteristics and historical influence of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, Indus River Valley, Egypt, the America's, Greece.
Language Arts:
EL.06.WR.11: Write multi-paragraph compositions that:
- Engage the interest of the reader.
- State a clear purpose.

- Use common organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause-and-effect, similarity and difference and posting and answering a question.
- Develop the topic with supporting details and precise language.
- Provide transitions to link paragraphs.
- Conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of the composition.

EL.06.RE.17: Identify the structural features of newspapers, magazines, and online information and use the features to obtain information.

EL.06.RE.19: Identify and/or summarize sequence of events, main ideas, facts, supporting details, and opinions in informational and practical selections.

Technology:
TG.06: Extend communication and collaboration with peers, experts, and other audiences using telecommunications.

Preparation:
Materials - use of the school computer lab or classroom laptops, focus projector and tablet (not required, but helpful), student questionnaire worksheet(s), drawing paper and colored pencils
Preparation – design webquest, make sure students will have access to all chosen websites, bookmark webquest on student computers, focus projector and teacher laptop set up and ready for use, and laptop cart in classroom.

Lesson Introduction/Set: (3 minutes)
Read Introduction and Task of WebQuest: "Welcome! Today you will take your own journey of Ancient Mesopotamia, known to us as the world's first civilization. I am hoping through your exploration of this land that you and your partner will be able to tell me a variety of factual details about the geography/region, the people, their religion, and the area's trade and commerce. (Task) Here is the situation you are in, as a distinguished and well-known historical writer you have just been hired by Encyclopedia Britannica to write part of an encyclopedia submission on Ancient Mesopotamia. Each student will work with a partner of their choice to research an assigned topic pertaining to this ancient land. Once you and your partner have completed your research, each student will then write their piece to be submitted to the editor of Encyclopedia Britannica. Your final piece and picture on your assigned topic will be combined with those of the other three topics, therefore creating one final encyclopedia submission." Ask students to choose a partner of their choice and number off partners 1 through 4.

Providing a detailed and thorough introduction to students will help to set the tone for the lesson. By giving students an interesting part in the assignment they will become engaged and excited to do to the research and complete the assignment successfully.

Sharing Objectives: (2 minutes)
As you discover the land of Ancient Mesopotamia I hope that you will enjoy researching cooperatively and collaboratively with your partner using the classroom computer. I anticipate while you research that you will be able to define the word Mesopotamia and also be able to list specific facts relating to the land, people and the environment of this land. At the end of this lesson we will have a brief class discussion about what you have learned through your research, this discussion will serve as a guide in helping you to write your submission for Encyclopedia Britannica.

Sharing the objectives with the students at the beginning of the lesson will inform them of the teacher's expectations, not only what will be expected of them to learn about the topic they are researching, but also their behavior in working cooperatively and collaboratively with their partner.

Learning Activities: (time for each)
Encyclopedia Content Review (3 minutes)
A. What information would an editor of and encyclopedia be looking for about Ancient Mesopotamia? *written information about the land, people, environment and a colorful picture of the land or a map* (show example)
   Is it is important you answer all the questions on the worksheet provided as it will assist you with the writing process of your final project.

Students Independently Begin WebQuest Process (35 minutes)
PART ONE
A. Choose a partner to work with.
B. Make sure you have read through the introduction and the task for the webquest.
C. Review the list of questions, provided by your teacher to be answered throughout your Research on your assigned topic. *Each student must individually answer and complete the questions on the worksheet provided.
D. Thoroughly examine the following websites in helping you with your research.
   http://itss229.ed.psu.edu/k-12/edpgs/su96/meso/mesopotamia.html
   http://www.shrewsburyma.gov/schools/Central/Curriculum/ELEMENTARY/SOCIALST
   UDIES/Mesopotamia/ancient_mesopotamia.htm
   http://lexicorient.com/cgi-bin/eo-direct-frame.pl?http://i-cias.com/e.o/mesopotamia.htm
   http://library.thinkquest.org/J002807/Time%20and%20Time%20Again/Time%20and%2
   0Time%20Again/mesosumer.html

This lesson includes Part One of the webquest process. At the beginning students will need to see an example of an encyclopedia article and discuss the various components so they know what their finished project will resemble. During this discussion the teacher will scaffold the class with questions pertaining to what kind of information they may find in an encyclopedia, allowing the students to take part in their learning and allowing the teacher to get an idea of what the students know about encyclopedia articles. After the students have chosen their partner they may research in pairs asking for help as needed. The teacher should provide encouragement as the students research and monitor the room, providing assistance to pairs that may need help in working cooperatively by asking questions and offering helpful strategies.

Closure: (5 minutes)
Ask students to log off and turn of computers or close and turn in their laptops and return to their seats. Review the questionnaire worksheet, asking students to share their answers with the class. Some answers may be short; therefore you will need to ask other students to add any additional information that is necessary. Encourage students to listen and take notes on information that they may not have and should be included.

It is necessary to have a whole group discussion to close the lesson in order to informally assess what the students have learned. Closure is also necessary for the teacher to recognize if the students have met or exceeded the objectives set for the lesson and unit.

Student Evaluation:
Students will be evaluated on the objectives throughout the lesson and the completion of their encyclopedia article by the use of the webquest's rubric. A copy of the rubric is provided on the student and teacher pages of the webquest.

Teacher Self-Reflection:
It is essential to share your expectations of the lesson with your students and monitor the research process. Some students may not be as familiar with computers and internet use as others; therefore you will need to scaffold their work in order for them to produce quality research. It is important to the time limit of the lesson to make sure the transitions into the process of the webquest, as well as into the conclusion of the lesson are well-organized and efficient.