

## Hammurabi's Code Background Reading

Hammurabi was the king of Babylon, a small city-state in central Mesopotamia. After conquering the rest of Mesopotamia, he made Babylon the capital of his empire. The region under his rule became known as Babylonia.

Hammurabi is best known for his code of laws, which he wrote from 1792 to 1750 B.C.E. Hammurabi used the code for laws to unify his empire and to preserve order. He based his laws not just on his own authority, but on the word of the gods. He claimed that the gods had told him to create laws that applied to everyone in the empire. The code of laws was written on a **stele** (stone tablets) and placed in a temple for everyone to see.

Hammurabi's code was very detailed. It covered many situations, such as trade, payment for work, marriage, and divorce. The code spelled out punishments for stealing, causing injury, and other crimes. For example, a builder who sold a poorly built house that collapsed and killed its owner could be put to death.

Hammurabi's code was an important achievement. Although it did not treat all people equally in terms of laws and punishments, it was the first code of laws to apply to everyone.

### Guiding Question

1. Explain the importance of the Code of Hammurabi.