## HAMMURABI'S LAWS



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Stele, made of diorite, containing Hammurabi's Laws. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. The original artifact is maintained at the Louvre, in Paris.

In about 1780 B.C., at the height of his power, Hammurabi codified 282 laws on an eight-foot-high stele made of black basalt. Although the Code of Hammurabi is not the first legal code, it is the best preserved ancient law the world has today.

Using 51 columns of <u>cuneiform script</u>, Hammurabi's <u>stele</u> is engraved in the Babylonian language of Akkadian. It originally stood in Babylon's temple of Marduk.

At the top of the stele is <u>Hammurabi</u>, standing on a sacred mountain before Shamash, the sun god and patron of law and justice. Hammurabi's right hand is raised in front of his face, in prayer. Note the flames (of the sun) on the shoulders of Shamash as he gives Hammurabi the laws.

<u>Hammurabi's Laws</u> codify prior Sumerian traditions. The Code is notable for enlightened laws that exist side by side with <u>barbarous punishments</u>.

Aside from the well-known "eye for an eye" (law 196) and "tooth for a tooth" (law 200), the Code includes other pronouncements (like whoever builds a shoddy house will be put to death). At the same time, Hammurabi includes judicial procedures where a man's oath is everything (even when it is ultimately proven to be false).

While several web locations contain Hammurabi's Code, Yale Law School provides the best site. You can <u>read</u> the laws and the definitions (of unfamiliar words) on the same page.

## See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HAMMURABI-S-LAWS-Hammurabi-and-His-Code-of-Laws

## See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HAMMURABI-S-LAWS-Hammurabi-and-His-Code-of-Law

Media Stream



<u>Hammurabi's Stele</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: <a href="http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Hammurabi-s-Stele">http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Hammurabi-s-Stele</a>



<u>Stele - View of the Upper Portion</u>

Image online, courtesy Project Gutenberg (as described above).

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Engraving of Hammurabi at the Top of the Stele Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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