**Crime and Punishment in Babylon Name:**

**Date: Block:**

**Directions:**

1. **READ the introduction and the story.**
2. **ANNOTATE while you read the introduction AND the story (circle unknown words, underline important phrases, “talk back” by writing your thoughts)**
3. **ANSWER the questions at the end of the reading.**

Talk Back Below!

The city of Babylon was located near the point where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow closest to each other. Much of the trade of the civilized world of the period after 1900 BC moved through Babylon. The Babylonians created a great center of business and trade.

The power of Babylon grew, in part, because it had capable rulers. King Hammurabi was an especially able ruler. During his reign (rule), the laws were collected and organized into a written code…. **KING HAMMURABI CREATED THE FIRST WRITTEN CODE OF LAWS CALLED THE CODE OF HAMMURABI!** that covered business contracts, farming methods, debts, wages, marriage, divorce, and the treatment of women. The Code of Hammurabi also had punishments for a variety of crimes. Since the laws were written down, judges could decide someone’s guilt or innocence by looking at the written law instead of deciding for themselves what judgment should be passed.

Our story takes place during the great king’s reign. Two businesspeople, who are husband and wife, express their opinions about the punishments contained in the code. Women held a high position in Babylonian society. They were allowed to go into business, and they had the same rights in business as men did. A woman could return to her family if her husband mistreated her, and a divorced woman was allowed to keep her children.

**Our story is set in a two story mud brick home. Nabushum and Nasira are seated in the inner courtyard. The doors and windows of their large house are made of woven reeds set into wooden frames.**

**“Husband, I understand that your friend Zakir is in great trouble,” said Nasira. “Last month, he was in charge of the royal estates. Today, he is in prison.”**

**Nabushum replied, “Indeed, he is in great trouble. Zakir is going to be executed.”**

**“That’s terrible,” Nasira said, shocked. “Why?”**

**“King Hammurabi ordered Zakir to go to the city of Kish to oversee the harvest on the royal estates,” said Nabushum. “Unfortunately, Zakir fell ill and could not travel, so he hired a friend to go in his place. Someone discovered this and told King Hammurabi. The king was furious. Zakir was put on trial, was declared guilty, and was sentenced to die.”**

**“Zakir never hurt anyone!” Nasira exclaimed. “Why must he die simply because he failed to make one trip to Kish? I say he should be fined and even put in jail. But he should not be executed.”**

**Nabushum thought for a moment. “There is a good reason why Zakir is going to be executed. He violated the spirit of King Hammurabi’s law. The law says that whatever a person says he or she will do must be done efficiently, correctly, and professionally. An architect must be sure to build a house that will not collapse and hurt the owner. A doctor must not bring harm to a patient. A person who has a duty to perform – such as Zakir – cannot send someone else to do the job that is his or her responsibility alone.”**

**Nasira nodded in agreement.**

**Nabushum continued. Zakir’s fate disturbs you, Nasira. But you did not object when the thief who broke into our house last year was caught and sentenced to death.”**

**“How can you compare the two crimes?” asked Nasira angrily. “The thief stole our property. Zakir stole nothing.”**

**“All crimes must be punished,” said Nabushum. “In the future, people like Zakir will be more reliable and will carry out their superior’s orders. Others will be afraid to break into people’s houses and steal their possessions.”**

**Nasira shook her head. “I sometimes think that our code of laws is too harsh. You remember what happened when young Ingisil slapped his father. They chopped off the boy’s hand!”**

**“That will teach all people to respect their parents,” replied Nabushum sternly. “It will be a long time before anyone in this neighborhood hits a parent!”**

**“Perhaps he should have had a lighter sentence. Is it fair to mutilate a person for life for one wrongdoing?” asked Nasira.**

**“You are worried that the code is unfair,” Nabushum replied. “Under the code, all are responsible for their actions. If I am robbed and the thief is never caught, the city must repay me for my loss because it failed to protect my property. What can me more fair than this?”**

**Nasira sighed. “I know you believe that the Code of Hammurabi does everything possible to discourage crime and wrongdoing. I fear that the code is itself sometimes unfair and unjust.”**

**Understanding the Story**: Write T for each statement that is true, F for each statement that is false, and O for each statement that is an OPINION.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Babylon was a center of trade.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Babylon is located in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates.
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Babylon would be the greatest city today if it hadn’t been destroyed.
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hammurabi was a weak king.
5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Nasira and Nabushum were business people.
6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Nasira and Nabushum agreed about the fairness of Hammurabi’s Code.
7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Women in Babylon were ugly.

**Questions for Review**: Answer the questions on a **SEPARATE** sheet of paper:

1. How were people who broke the law punished, according to Hammurabi’s Code?
2. Why was Zakir to be executed?
3. Why is it important to have a written code of law?
4. How were women treated in Babylon?

**Activities**: Choose **ONE** of the following to answer:

1. As a reporter, you interview King Hammurabi. What questions do you ask about his code? What would his responses be to your questions?
2. Imagine that you are defending Zakir in a Babylonian court. What arguments would you present to save him from execution?

**Your Opinion**: Choose **ONE** of the following to answer:

1. Compare the punishments to crimes in Babylon to the punishments in the United States. Where would you prefer to live? Why?
2. Do you agree with Nasira that the Code of Hammurabi is unfair and unjust or Nabushum who thinks the Code is fair and just? Why? Do you think harsh punishments make people less likely to commit crimes?