



## PRIMARY SOURCE READING 1

### The Code

#### About the Selection

Hammurabi ruled as king of Babylon from 1792 B.C. to 1750 B.C. He changed Babylon from a small city-state into a very powerful state. He established strong laws. His Code contained 282 laws—a few of which are listed below—covering all aspects of society. These laws reflect the social structure and values of Babylon during Hammurabi's rule.



#### Reader's Dictionary

**Marduk:** the main God of Babylon

**oppressed:** held down or abused

**ensnare:** to take or catch

**accusation:** the charge of a crime or wrongdoing

### The Code of Hammurabi

When Marduk sent me to rule over men, to give the protection of right to the land, I did right and righteousness in . . . , and brought about the well-being of the oppressed.

#### CODE OF LAWS

1. If any one ensnare another, putting a ban upon him, but he can not prove it, then he that ensnared him shall be put to death.
2. If any one bring an accusation against a man, and the accused go to the river and leap into the river, if he sink in the river his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if the river prove that the accused is not guilty, and he escape unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death, while he who leaped into the river shall take possession of the house that had belonged to his accuser.
3. If any one bring an accusation of any crime before the elders, and does not prove what he has charged, he shall, if it be a capital offense charged, be put to death. . . .
6. If any one steal the property of a temple or of the court, he shall be put to death, and also the one who receives the stolen thing from him shall be put to death.
7. If any one buy from the son or the slave of another man, without witnesses or a contract, silver or gold, a male or female slave, an ox or a sheep, [a donkey] or anything, or if he take it in charge, he is considered a thief and shall be put to death.

Source: *The Code of Hammurabi*. Tr. L. W. King. [www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/medieval/hamcode.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/medieval/hamcode.htm)

**PRIMARY SOURCE READING 1**

**The Code (continued)**

**Directions:** Answer the questions below in the spaces provided.

1. Why did Hammurabi establish his code?

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2. What is the penalty for receiving stolen goods?

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3. What role does the river play in the Code of Hammurabi?

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4. **Critical Thinking** Why do you think that death was the penalty for so many crimes?

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**CHAPTER 1**