Is Where You Live The Best Place For Your Family?

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Supporting Questions

1. Why did hunter-gatherers stop moving?
2. How did the Olmec overcome the challenges of their land?
3. What factors contribute to where modern day people choose to live?
## Is Where You Live The Best Place For Your Family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry Standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS.IS.1.6-8. Create essential questions to help guide inquiry about a topic.</td>
<td>SS.IS.6.4.6-8.LC. Determine the value of sources by evaluating their relevance and intended use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS.IS.5.6-8.LC. Appropriately cite all sources utilized.</td>
<td>SS.IS.6.6-8 LC. Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging their strengths and limitations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS.IS.7.6-8. Critique the structure and credibility of arguments and explanations (self and others).</td>
<td>SS.IS.8.6-8.LC. Analyze how a problem can manifest itself and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address it.</td>
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### Staging the Compelling Question

Students will preface this inquiry by posing these questions to their family: "Why do we live here? What reasons made you choose this town?". They will then record their conversations via Screencastify (3-5 minutes), and write a transcript from the conversation. Students will bring their stories the next day to share with their group members.

### Supporting Question 1

**Why did hunter-gatherers stop moving?**

### Supporting Question 2

**How did the Olmec overcome the challenges of their land?**

### Supporting Question 3

**What factors contribute to where modern day people choose to live?**

### Formative Performance Task

**List the factors that contributed to the development of early agrarian communities.**

**On a chart, list to identify the Olmec’s challenges and explain their solutions with supported evidence.**

**Students will evaluate an excerpt of the article, "Why People Live Where They Live", by Richard Florida, in order to conclude which factors contribute to where modern day people choose to live.**

### Featured Sources

**Source A:** Britannica-Mesopotamia Geography
**Source B:** Britannica Mesopotamia - Modified
**Source C:** Mesopotamia Agriculture Map

**Source A:** Bernal-Olmech Map
**Source B:** Note-Worthy Quotes From Bernal Source C: Olmec Geography Excerpt

**Source A:** England 2015 Analysis
**Source B:** England Figure 13 Source C: England Graphic 1 Source D: England Graphic 2 Source E: England Figure 3

### Summative Performance Task

**ARGUMENT**

Students will participate in a formal Socratic discussion to debate the different claims that are supported by evidence to answer the question, "Is where you live the best place for your family?"

**EXTENSION**

Students will take their claims, evidence and judgments to create a short 5-10 minute documentary using Screencastify.

### Taking Informed Action

**UNDERSTAND**

Students will research some geographical, social or economic challenges (pick one problem from one category) that affect Berwyn and its residents, and they may also sway future residents from residing there as well.

**ASSESS**

Students will compare Berwyn’s challenges to those of the Olmecians. They will also brainstorm and list solutions for Berwyn.

**ACTION**

Students will meet with a Berwyn public official to present a challenge and a possible solution to this threat.
Inquiry Description

Students will evaluate the geography aspects of Afro-Eurasian and Meso-American civilizations and compare it to contemporary life. They will question and answer whether or not the human race still responds to geography the same as early humans. The importance of this inquiry is to show the progression and influence of geographical features.

Structure

The formative tasks, that will be assigned, were chosen to help students identify their strengths and weakness and help teachers monitor the progress of students. The sources, that have been chosen for this inquiry, are a mix of primary and secondary sources. They were selected based by the credibility of the source.
Staging the Compelling Question

| Compelling Question | Is Where You Live The Best Place For Your Family? |

Staging the compelling question

The staging of the compelling question provides the students an opportunity to understand why the question is intellectually rigorous and relevant to students. It incorporates their family's own narrative, and it proves it is a question not easily explained.
Supporting Question 1

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  - **Source B**: Britannica Mesopotamia -Modified  
  - **Source C**: Mesopotamia Agriculture Map |
| Additional Materials |  
  - [Formative Assessment: Mesopotamia Geography.gdoc](https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/3/4/2/7/106/3427ef67302f40220ec7a5e7e9fd3b87e7f05f39.gdoc) |

Students will determine the factors that contributed to human settlement in the ancient Mesopotamian region and in contemporary human settlement.

SS.G.3.6-8.LC. Explain how environmental characteristics impact human migration and settlement.

SS.G.2.6-8.LC. Explain how humans and their environment affect one another

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies

**Formative Performance Task**

Students will be provided with a graphic organizer that they will have to complete. It is the student's goal to identify the factors that they have identified during their research of early agrarian community in the Mesopotamian region.
Mesopotamia is the area between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, north or northwest of the bottleneck at Baghdad, in modern Iraq. South of this lies Babylonia, named after the city of Babylon. However, in the broader sense, the name Mesopotamia has come to be used for the area surrounded on the northeast by the Zagros Mountains and on the southwest by the edge of the Arabian Plateau.

Mesopotamia is flat alluvial (fertile) land. The Tigris and Euphrates empties into the Persian Gulf. The slow flow of the water causes heavy deposits of silt. Consequently, the rivers often overflow their banks when they are not protected by high levels. The supply of water is not regular; as a result of the high average temperatures and a very low annual rainfall, the ground of the plain of latitude 35° N is hard and dry and unsuitable for plant cultivation for at least eight months in the year. Consequently, agriculture without risk of crop failure, which seems to have begun in the higher rainfall zones and in the hilly borders of Mesopotamia circa 12,000 years ago, began in Mesopotamia itself, the real heart of the civilization. Since the ground is extremely fertile and, with irrigation and the necessary drainage, will produce in abundance, southern Mesopotamia became a land of plenty that could support a considerable population. The cultural superiority of north Mesopotamia, which may have lasted until about 4000 bc, was finally overtaken by the south when the people there had responded to the challenge of their situation.

The present climatic conditions are fairly similar to those of 8,000 years ago. An English survey of ruined settlements in the area 30 miles around ancient Hatra (180 miles northwest of Baghdad) has shown that the southern limits of the zone in which agriculture is possible without artificial irrigation has remained unchanged since the first settlement.

Source:
Mesopotamia. (2016). Written by: Dietz O. Edzard
Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved from
https://www.britannica.com/place/Mesopotamia-historical-region-Asia
Encyclopedia Britannica

THE BACKGROUND

Mesopotamia is the area between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. South of this lies Babylonia, named after the city of Babylon. The name Mesopotamia comes from the area surrounded by the Zagros Mountains and the edge of the Arabian Plateau.

Mesopotamia has fertile (good for growing crops) land. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers enter into the Persian Gulf (a large body of water on the coast of the Middle East). The slow flow of the water causes heavy deposits of silt (healthy soil). Because of this, the rivers often overflow the land. As a result of warm weather and little rainfall, the land is hard and dry which makes it hard to plant or grow crops for at least 8 months out of the year rainfall with hilly land. This area became known as Mesopotamia 12,000 years ago. Since the ground is extremely fertile, people were able to grow crops to feed and support the civilization. The original people lived in Mesopotamia until around 4000 BC.

The present climate conditions are fairly similar to those of 8,000 years ago. Research was done on early settlements in the area around Mesopotamia that showed that growing crops is possible without artificial irrigation (moving water to the area to help crops grow).


Source:

**This source has been modified for students with IEPs from the original source.**
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<table>
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**Formative Performance Task**

Students will complete a graphic organizer that will list to identify the challenges that the Olmec people faced as they settled in the modern day Veracruz region of Mexico. Student’s goal is to support the Olmec solutions with evidence that it actually happened.
Excerpt

Olmec Civilization

The Olmec World by Ignacio Bernal

University of California Press, 1969

- “It is all hot country, an ample tropical coastal plain formed by alluvial land containing no stone” (Bernal, 17).
- “Since the land is flat except in the Tuztlas...flooding is peril when the great rivers of the area overflow” (Bernal, 17).
- “The region possesses an enormous volume of water— the largest in Mesoamerica.” (Bernal, 17).
- “Probably nowhere else in Mesoamerica did rivers so dominant culture as here” (Sanders, 38).
- “…which developed along the rivers which with their flooding renew the agricultural land and serve as easy means of communication with the interior” (Bernal, 18).
- “Therefore, generally speaking, the agriculture of the area suffered more from excess than scarcity of water, a unique phenomenon in Mesoamerica.” (Bernal, 18).
- “The area of Tuxtlas, with its natural drainage, is the most favorable, and it was actually there, at the foot of these mountains, that one of the early Olmec centers developed: Tres Zapotes” (Bernal, 18).
- “Olmec region possesses...not one but several great rivers. While the Old World civilizations (Mesopotamia or Egypt) had to struggle above all against the dryness of the land and therefore their great problem was irrigation, the Olmecs had to fight against the jungle and against water” (Bernal, 19).
- “Floods within the Olmec area suggest greater advantages for agriculture” (Bernal, 20).
- “The Olmec rivers run through flat jungleland, and their flooding, except in small areas, is more harmful than profitable in a society which cannot control these avalanches of water” (Bernal, 20).
- Wild animals: jaguars, boars, monkeys, tapirs, armadillos, deers, wild turkeys, pheasants, partridges, fowl.
- Fruit: guava, sapote, rubber.

Source:

**Teacher Resource-Not for student use**
...The greater part of Olmec history and development took place in the small area we have defined. To the north the ocean is a fixed boundary. To the south lie the mountains. It is true that culture can overcome geographical barriers, but the Olmec were definitely a coastal culture. To the west the rivers of San Juan and Papaloapan and the lakes connected by the Limón and the Chicique rivers form a region practically covered by water or at least by swamps which not only make expansion difficult but admit few possibilities for an indigenous economy. On the east the same is true, since the enormous swamps of Tabasco make agriculture impossible without drainage of the swamps, a feat never achieved by Pre-Hispanic cultures. It is only now that works of this type are being undertaken.

The area is limited, but possesses a basic uniformity broken only by the mountainous mass of the Tuxtlas which rises from the plain surroundings Lake Catemaco and divides the basin of the Papaloapan from that of the Coatzacoalcos. The Olmec region is no more than 300 feet above sea level. Therefore, it is all hot country, an ample tropical coastal plain formed by alluvial land containing no stone.

Since the land is flat except in the Tuxtlas and in minor spots, flooding is a peril when the great rivers of the area overflow. The region possesses an enormous volume of water—the largest in Mesoamerica. Probably nowhere else in Mesoamerica did rivers so dominant culture as here.

While I cannot elaborate on this theme, it is the highest importance to note that, although the Olmec region possesses, like others in the Old World, not one but several great rivers, on the other hand its type of rainfall, soil, and vegetation are entirely different. While the Old World civilizations had to struggle above all against the dryness of the land and therefore their great problem was irrigation, the Olmecs had to fight against the jungle and against the water. Their greatest problem was the vegetation, which when not controlled suffocated all the serious attempts at agriculture, as did the floods.

Source:

**This excerpt is modified for 6th grade general education students**
## Supporting Question 3

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<td>Students will evaluate an excerpt of the article, &quot;Why People Live Where They Live&quot;, by Richard Florida, in order to conclude which factors contribute to where modern day people choose to live.</td>
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- **Source B**: England Figure 13
- **Source C**: England Graphic 1
- **Source D**: England Graphic 2
- **Source E**: England Figure 3

### SS.G.3.6-8.LC. Explain how environmental characteristics impact human migration and settlement.

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### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies

### Formative Performance Task

Student goal is to read, analyze and conclude why the citizens of England settle where they settle. Students will come up with a general claim, in terms of modern day settlement, and support that claim with evidence and craft an interpretation of this claim.
I’ve long believed that choosing a place to live is the single most important decision we make. It has an impact on everything from our career and bank accounts to the people we meet, the relationships we forge, and where we send our kids to school, not to mention our overall happiness and well-being.

A new report from the Centre for Cities—a London-based research and policy institute—takes one of the most detailed looks at this question I’ve seen to date. It uses comprehensive survey data from urban areas across Great Britain to examine what urbanites and suburbanites value the most (and like the least) about the neighborhoods they live in, including key factors like housing costs, proximity to jobs, transit, amenities, open space, and quality of both built and natural environments. The report draws from two YouGov surveys: a national survey of more than 2,000 people across 59 cities in Great Britain and a more targeted survey of 1,725 people in Brighton, Manchester, Sheffield, and Swindon.

What matters most

Not surprisingly, the key things that matter to people about the neighborhoods they live in include a mix of housing costs, being close to family, and proximity to where they work. More than a quarter (28 percent) of respondents cited housing costs and proximity to friends as key factors in the neighborhoods where they live, followed by the size and type of available housing (22 percent), and proximity to their workplace or their partner’s workplace (21 percent).

I have long argued that people make three big moves: in our mid 20s when we complete school and embark on careers (this is the age group that is most likely to move), when we have kids and start a family, and when the kids leave home and we become empty nesters.

The study finds considerable variation by age and stage of life, as Figure 1 clearly shows.

For young people between the ages of 18 and 24, the leading factor (at 28 percent) is simply that they live in the same neighborhoods where they grew up. This make sense, of course, since many in this age group are still living at home with their parents: 17 percent said they were studying in the neighborhood. Close behind was proximity to friends and family at 26 percent, while just 17 percent said being close to their workplace or their partner’s workplace matters (which makes sense, as fewer in this age group work). But living at home has its drawbacks. This young cohort reported being dissatisfied by a lack of available public transit (19 percent) and living too far away from restaurants and other leisure facilities (17 percent). Of course, being close to schools matters little to this age group, and just 7 percent said they valued being close to green space.

People between 25-34 years of age—the group that is most likely to move to embark on their careers—are more drawn to jobs and amenities than their younger counterparts. Nearly a third of them (31 percent) valued being close to their workplace or their partner’s workplace. This is about the same as those who said they still lived in the neighborhood where they grew up (32 percent), and those for whom the cost of housing (30 percent) was a key factor. A smaller share of this age group (9 percent) said that being close to restaurants, cultural, and leisure facilities are important attributes of where they choose to live. Eleven percent valued being close to green space and 8 percent said that the quality of the natural and built environment was a factor. Nine percent said safety and security was a key factor in their choice of neighborhood.

Those in the 35-54 age group—the group most likely to have families and raising kids—placed a high value on the cost of housing (30 percent), the size and type of housing (21 percent), safety and security (17 percent), and proximity to good schools (13 percent). With kids in the household, 27 percent valued being close to family and friends. And after fully entering the working years, a quarter (25 percent) said that being close to their workplace or their partner’s workplace was important. Twenty percent said that being close to green space was important, and another 11 percent valued the quality of the natural and built environment. But considerably fewer respondents (just 4 percent) reported access to restaurants and other cultural
amenities as a factor.

People over 55—retirees and empty-nesters whose kids are out of the household—had different priorities. Topping their list was proximity to the countryside and green spaces (30 percent), followed by the size and type of housing (29 percent). Still, nearly a fifth of people in their retirement or close-to-retirement years valued proximity to their workplace or their partner’s workplace. More than a quarter (27 percent) of people in this age group said being close to family and friends was important. Many older parents, after all, value being close to their adult children. And 17 percent of older respondents said that the safety and security of the neighborhood was another key factor.

City versus suburb

What about the preferences for cities versus suburbs? What kinds of people prefer these options, and at what ages? What is it about cities and suburbs that draw people in?

The study notes that large cities have seen the biggest population growth in Britain over the past decade or so. From 2001-2011, large city centers grew by 108 percent, medium city centers increased by 35 percent, and small city centers grew by just 22 percent. The growth of large cities was driven by students and young people, with more than half the overall growth from 2001-2011 attributable to an influx of students, and another third attributable to young grads under 35 years old. In fact, by 2011, over a third of British residents in large city centers had a college degree, and most of them were between 25 and 34 years old. While residents of large city centers tended to work in high-skilled professions, residents of small and medium-sized cities tended to work in low-skilled professions, but were more likely to have a family and commute to jobs in the suburbs.

The chart below summarizes the key results for three groups: city dwellers, suburbanites, and those living in more rural hinterlands.

City dwellers placed greater importance on proximity to restaurants, leisure, and cultural facilities, public transit, local shops, and living close to their workplace. Suburbanites and those in rural hinterlands placed higher value on the cost of housing, the size and type of housing, safety and security, good schools, green space, and being close to family and friends. They were also more likely to live in the neighborhood where they grew up and were much less concerned with being close to where they worked.

The next chart shows the factors or qualities that urbanites, suburbanites, and rural dwellers found least favorable about their neighborhoods. For urbanites, their least favorite qualities were housing costs (31 percent), followed by pollution (25 percent), and distance to the countryside and green space (21 percent). Also high on the list of urbanites’ least favorite things were living too far from family and friends, poor safety and security, and the size and type of housing.

Suburbanites and rural dwellers had fewer complaints about their neighborhoods. They were more likely than urbanites to identify the availability of public transit and being too far away from restaurants and amenities as their least favorite things about their neighborhoods. They also cited housing costs and being too far away from family and friends as among their least favorite things about where they live.

The case of London

London is not just the UK’s most dominant city. Alongside New York, it is one of the world’s two leading superstar cities. London has grown substantially in recent years, drawing in young, talented, and skilled residents (by 2011, 48 percent of its residents had college degrees, according to the report), in addition to becoming a choice location for the global super-rich. At the same time, it has developed a vibrant tech economy to complement its long-established finance and media clusters. All of this has put considerable pressure on its housing prices.

The chart below shows the main reasons why Londoners chose the neighborhoods where they live. Access to public transit was the top-ranked factor overall. This makes sense, given that 90 percent of workers in central London either use public transit or walk or cycle to work and 30 percent of London’s jobs are located in its core. Next in line was cost of housing in that neighborhood. Other factors that matter include being close to family and friends, proximity to their workplace, and—perhaps surprisingly—having grown up in that
Changing priorities

While some of us are inherent urbanites or suburbanites, our preferences change over the course of our lifetimes. Many young people may prefer big cities, with their vibrant job and dating markets and abundant amenities and things to do. Those with families prioritize bigger homes with better schools and more parks and green space. Ultimately, we look for the cities and neighborhoods that fit us best at the time. That said, most of us put the same things at the top of our lists: housing we can afford, being close to family and friends, and living not too far away from where we work. As much as our preferences may differ by who we are or the stage of life we’re in, all of us—urbanites, suburbanites, and country-dwellers alike—tend to value the same basic things in the places we choose to live.

Source:
**Figure 13:** The main reasons why Londoners chose to live in their neighbourhood

- Availability of public transport in the neighbourhood
- The cost of housing available in the neighbourhood
- To be close to my friends/family
- I grew up in the neighbourhood
- To be close to my workplace
- The safety and security of the neighbourhood
- The size or type of housing available in the neighbourhood
- To be close to local shops
- To be close to restaurants/leisure or cultural facilities
- The quality of the built or natural environment of the neighbourhood
- To be close to countryside/green spaces
- To be close to good schools
- To be close to my partner's workplace


Supporting Question 3

Featured Source C  England Graphic 1

Supporting Question 3

**Featured Source D**

England Graphic 2

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**Figure 3: The main reasons why respondents chose to live in their neighbourhood**

- To be close to restaurants / leisure or cultural facilities
- Availability of public transport in the neighbourhood
- To be close to local shops
- To be close to my workplace
- The cost of housing available in the neighbourhood
- The size or type of housing available in the neighbourhood
- To be close to my friends / family
- The quality of the built or natural environment of the neighbourhood
- To be close to my partner’s workplace
- The safety and security of the neighbourhood
- To be close to countryside / green spaces
- I grew up in the neighbourhood
- To be close to good schools

Source: YouGov, 2015, 1725 residents from four city regions.

Arguments

Is where we live the best place for your family? After researching video clips and texts on the ancient Mesopotamian, Olmec geography and contemporary British settlement have an oral argumentative Socratic discussion in which you argue if the if where we live is best for our families using examples and comparisons to Mesopotamia, Olmec and contemporary England. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.

Extensions

Is where we live the best place for your family? After researching video clips and texts on the ancient Mesopotamian, Olmec geography and contemporary British settlement create a short 5-10 minute documentary in which you argue if the if where we live is best for our families using examples and comparisons to Mesopotamia, Olmec and contemporary England. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.
# Taking Informed Action

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<td>Action</td>
<td>Students will meet with a Berwyn public official to present a challenge and a possible solution to this threat.</td>
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Students will research one social, geographical or economic challenges that might push future residents away from choosing Berwyn as their home today. Students will brainstorm some possible and realistic solutions to these challenges. After creating a short Google Slides or presentation then the students will present the challenge and possible solution informally to a elected public official.