

Welcome to Interviews with Ancient History

Introduce your students to ancient cultures with fun, easy-to-follow plays, and quiz their comprehension with vocabulary sections, "Did You Know?" facts, discussion questions, and extension activities.

Each adaptable lesson plan can be shortened or stretched to fit your classroom schedule. The plays, lessons, and activities cover several Common Core standards under Reading, Speaking and Listening, and Writing.

Ancient cultures covered include those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, and Asia (Nepal, India, China, and Mongolia). Grades 4–9.

● Contents ●

Purpose	1
Overview	2
Setup Directions	3
Egyptian and Mesopotamian Cultures	
King Hammurabi	6
Pharaoh Hatshepsut	15
Ramses the Great	24
Moses	32
Greek Culture	
Aesop	40
Pericles	48
Artemisia	56
Socrates	64
Aristotle	72
Alexander the Great	80
Hypatia of Alexandria	89
Roman Culture	
Hannibal	98
Julius Caesar	106
Cicero	115
Augustus	122

Contents

Asian Cultures

Siddhartha Gautama	130
Confucius	138
Emperor Ashoka	145
Shi Huang Ti	153
Cai Wenji	161

Teacher Feedback Form	169
------------------------------------	------------

Release Form for Photographic Images	170
---	------------

● Purpose ●

Need a change-of-pace activity for a Friday or a treat before a vacation break? Want a fun activity to incorporate into a unit of study or as a review? These biographical plays are great additions to a unit of study on ancient cultures and are perfect for students in grades 4–9. Plays on historical people cover a number of common core standards including:

- Reading informational text
- Connecting historical events, scientific ideas, or concepts in a text
- Nonfiction reading and writing
- Listening and speaking skills

Overview

Overview

The plays in this volume follow the format of a talk show host with a studio audience. A famous person is the guest, and audience members ask them questions to learn about their life and their contribution to our world.

Student handouts include a script and some **Did You Know?** facts about the guest or the time period in which they lived, along with **Comprehension/Discussion Questions** and **Extension Activities**, which the teacher can assign as a whole or in parts depending on the class schedule.

Teacher pages for every lesson include **Teaching Notes**, **Vocabulary**, and **Comprehension/Discussion Questions with Answers**. Each play can be used as a one-day lesson or can be done over several days if the teacher decides to use extensions.

Students have an opportunity to act by utilizing different voices. Although there are only about eight to ten speaking parts, more than one student can play the role of the guest, since that role has the most lines. Additionally, all students should receive a copy of the play to read along with the actors.

Vocabulary words listed on the **Teacher Page** are also identified in a bold typeface within the play. This makes it easier to preview before “acting” the play, stop and discuss while reading, or go back and review.

Please note that the neutral designations BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) are used with dates throughout the lessons.

● Setup Directions ●

Before reading the play, review with the students any prior knowledge they have of the person being highlighted and the culture in which they lived. Use a map of the world and have the students locate the areas where the cultures were/are located.

Select one student to be the host and then up to ten others for the different roles in the play. Encourage the students to act out their parts. Make sure all students have a copy of the play so they can follow along. Arrange the classroom with the host and guest at the front of the class and then a row of questioners.

Stop from time to time to ask the students comprehension questions and to make *text-to-self connections*. You may also wish to stop to review some of the different vocabulary words used in the script.

Pharaoh Hatshepsut

Teaching Notes

- Before reading the play on Hatshepsut, ask the students if they have any prior knowledge of the famous general.
- Using a map of the world, have the students locate the country of Egypt.
- Assign parts to read. You may wish to have more than one student be Hatshepsut so that more students can participate in the reading.
- Encourage the students to “act” out their parts.
- Stop from time to time to ask the students comprehension questions and to make *text-to-self connections*. You also may wish to review some of the different vocabulary words used in the script.
- After reading the play, have the students review and discuss the comprehension questions.
- Decide which extension activities, if any, to assign to students.

Vocabulary

- Canopic jars
- Fertile land
- Hieroglyphics
- Myrrh
- Nile
- Obelisk
- Papyrus
- Pharaoh
- Re
- Regent

Comprehension/Discussion Questions with Answers

1. Would you have liked Hatshepsut for a friend? Explain why or why not.
Answers will vary.
2. What is something about Hatshepsut that you found most interesting?
Answers will vary.
3. What are three facts you learned about ancient Egypt?
Egypt is in Africa, rulers of ancient Egypt were called pharaohs, among other answers.
4. What were two important contributions that Hatshepsut made as the pharaoh of Egypt?
Hatshepsut constructed many buildings, bringing prosperity to Egypt, and had peace with other areas.

A Visit with Ramses the Great, Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt

Host: Ramses II, or Ramses the Great, was born 1303 BCE and died 1213 BCE. He ruled for an amazing sixty-seven years and is considered the most powerful king of ancient Egypt. In addition to being called “the great,” Ramses was also known as the “great ancestor” to the ancient Egyptian people. A famous war leader, Ramses was renowned for his building projects as well, ranging from monuments to cities. Ramses lived to be in his nineties—an amazing age, even by today’s standards.



Ramses II Colossus inside the Luxor Temple

Host: Welcome, Pharaoh Ramses II. Or, should I say, Ramses the Great? It is a pleasure to welcome you to my talk show. I am sure my studio audience has lots of questions to ask you.

Ramses: I am very pleased to be here. Thanks for asking me to talk about my life as ancient Egypt’s most important **pharaoh**.

Host: Audience, I am sure you have many questions for our guest. I see lots of hands. Let’s start the questioning, shall we?

Questioner 1: Can you share some memories of your childhood with us, Ramses the Great?

Ramses: As a youngest son, I knew I wasn’t in line to become the king of Egypt. My eldest brother, Nebchasetnebet, was to become the pharaoh. However, he died. My dad, Pharaoh Sethi I, named me first commander of the army at only the age of ten. At the age of twelve, my father took me into my first of many battles. When I was only fifteen, I knew my future was to be pharaoh of all of Egypt. I was just twenty-five when my dad died and I became pharaoh.

Host: Your name became a popular one for pharaohs of ancient Egypt. How many other pharaohs took your name?

Ramses: All together, I believe nine other pharaohs after me called themselves Ramses. You see, I was very important in Egyptian history.

Questioner 2: I remember reading that you were nicknamed Sese by your people. What were some contributions you made while you were the pharaoh of ancient Egypt?

Ramses: Well, one thing I did was bring back the religion of the ancient Egyptians. We were **polytheistic**, believing in many gods. During the rule of Akhenaton, he made the people follow only one god, **Aton**. Once pharaoh, I had my people return to believing in many gods. I was a great warrior and had an army of over 100,000—quite a number for the time period—and my forces were victorious in many battles. One battle against the Hittites had the most chariots ever used in battle. I also was known as a peacemaker for forging a treaty with the **Hittites**, our longtime enemies. The clay tablet peace treaty is still preserved.

Aesop

Name: _____ Date: _____

Comprehension/Discussion Questions

1. It is thought that Aesop had a speech problem. According to legend, how did Aesop overcome this problem?
2. What is a fable, and what did Aesop often use in his fables to tell the story?
3. How did Aesop, who was probably born a slave, gain his freedom?
4. List the two ideas that began in the city-state of Athens.
5. Draco was a very harsh ruler of the city-state of Athens. List two examples of how he was a harsh ruler.

5. What does "home court advantage" mean? What were two other reasons the Greeks won the first Persian War?

6. What running event honors a Greek soldier? What did the Greek soldier do?

7. Why did Artemisia advise Xerxes not to do the naval battle?

8. Why was the outcome of the Persian Wars very important in history?

Gautama: My father didn't give me just one palace. He actually gave me a palace for each season of the year! Eventually, I went outside of the palace walls to see what was outside my palace grounds. The first time I saw a poor, old, and sick man, I was shocked. I didn't realize we all were aging and had to eventually die. It made for many sleepless nights. I began to think about human suffering and how people could be free from it. On another trip, I spotted a man in a robe. He looked happy. I was told he was a monk. I decided that I wished to be a monk and gave up all my wealth and role as a future king. I left my wife, my young child, and went off to live the life of a monk. I wanted to try to learn why there is suffering in the world and how to end such sadness in one's life.

Questioner 5: You saw people about to kill a sheep as a sacrifice. You told the people that all creatures want to live and that life is very precious. You convinced the people not to kill the sheep. You said if "one wishes to be shown mercy, one must show it in return." You became an **ascetic** for several years. Can you explain what this means?

Gautama: I led a life of strict discipline and self-denial. I thought this way of life would help me become "enlightened" and learn about suffering in the world. I begged for food and ate very little, fasting almost to starvation. I was near death. It was then that I realized that one must follow a balanced path, or the **Middle Way**. I accepted water and rice from a young girl. I believed you needed to conduct yourself in a certain behavior and that doing so would cost nothing except effort and care. This was also known as the **Eightfold Path**. I then sat under a tree, saying I would remain there until I learned the truth about life. I stayed there for days. I saw that greed and thinking we are better than others causes suffering. I realized that good deeds take our suffering away and give us peace. I saw that such learning may take many lifetimes, and that once we reach a freedom from suffering, we are at true peace, or **Nirvana**. Reaching this stage was so peaceful that I didn't wish to leave this state of being. However, the king of gods, **Brahma**, said I needed to spread what I had learned to others, so I got up from sitting under the tree and started teaching.

Questioner 6: You became known as the Supreme Enlightened One, **Buddha**, at the age of thirty-five. I read that you always slept on your right side and only slept for a couple of hours. Can you share the **Four Noble Truths** you taught your followers?

Gautama: The Four Noble Truths are the following:

- Realizing that suffering exists in the world
- Understanding the causes for suffering
- Learning that suffering can end
- Showing the pathway to end suffering and reach Nirvana, or peace

I also wanted to say that I allowed women to become disciples. I also didn't care what race or class of person you were. All were invited to become followers.

Questioner 7: Your teachings were called the **Dharma**, and you traveled for about forty-five years spreading your teachings. What did you tell your followers at your death?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Extension Activities

1. Learn more about the Terra Cotta Tomb:
http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shaanxi/xian/terra_cotta_army
2. Make paper like the Chinese did:
http://www.ehow.com/way_5828931_steps-making-chinese-paper.html
3. Pretend you are working on the Great Wall of China. How do you feel? What do you do? What do you see? Include two facts learned about the Great Wall in the writing.
4. Try this webquest: <http://www.gailhennessey.com/index.shtml?chinesedam.html>
5. Learn more about China: <http://www.gailhennessey.com/index.shtml?china.html>