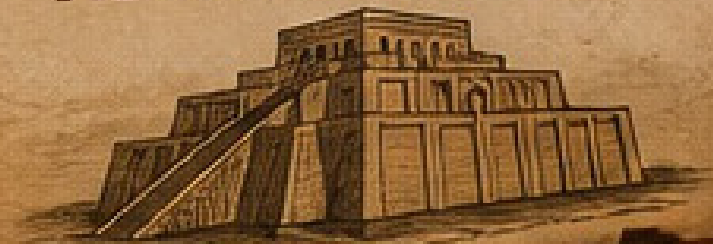




ANCIENT
MESOPOTAMIA

GILGAMESH
THE HERO
OF URUK

MESOPOTAMIA ADVENTURE BOX



ARCHAEOLOGIST

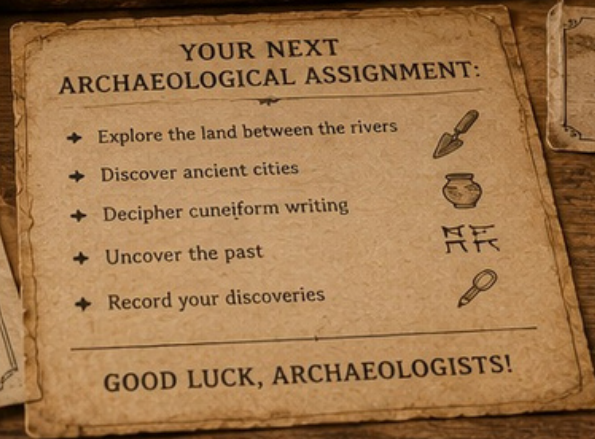


IN TRAINING

FERTILE CRESCENT







MESOPOTAMIA

LAND BETWEEN THE RIVERS



COLOUR THE MAP OF MESOPOTAMIA



THE FERTILE CRESCENT



IRAQ AND SURROUNDING COUNTRIES



CHALLENGE

Can you find
the land between
the two rivers?



Ur

Nineveh

Uruk

Eridu

Babylon

Nippur

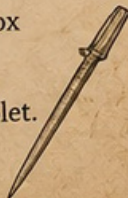


THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE BOX: CUNEIFORM!

If there is one thing I would definitely include,
it is something connected to cuneiform writing.

This is where your Mesopotamia Adventure Box
can become particularly fun.

You don't need to buy an expensive replica tablet.
You can make your own.



CUNEIFORM SIGN CHART

 A	 B	 D	 E	 G	 H	 I
 K	 L	 M	 N	 O	 P	 Q
 R	 S	 Š	 T	 U	 W	 Y
 Z	 Š	 Ġ	 Û	 É	 AN	 EN

YOU COULD BUY:

- Air-drying clay
- Modelling clay
- Polymer clay
- Clay tools
- Wooden skewers
- Bamboo sticks
- Craft sticks
- Pottery tools



AND DON'T STOP AT NAMES! CHALLENGE THEM TO WRITE:

- A shopping list
- A secret message
- A poem
- A school timetable
- A royal proclamation
- A recipe
- A letter
- A law
- A diary entry



A VERY INEXPENSIVE ALTERNATIVE

You can make "clay tablets" from homemade salt dough.
All you need is:

- Flour
- Salt
- Water



Roll it out, cut it into rough tablet shapes and use a
blunt pencil, skewer or craft stick to press wedge-
shaped marks into the surface.

They don't have to be perfect.

Actually, the slightly wonky ones are rather lovely!



CYLINDER SEALS: A MESOPOTAMIAN ACTIVITY

Cylinder seals are another brilliant Mesopotamian activity.

You can buy small craft rollers, wooden dowels or even use pieces of clay to experiment with making your own.



FOR A REALLY INEXPENSIVE VERSION,
TRY:

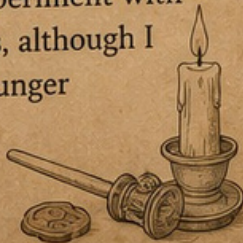
- Air-drying clay
- Wooden dowels
- Plasticine
- Old pencils
- Foam sheets
- Craft foam
- Wooden beads



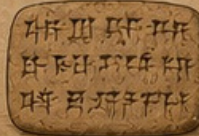
Children can create a repeating pattern and then roll it across clay.



You could also buy inexpensive sealing wax and experiment with making impressions, although I would supervise younger children closely.



This is a wonderful opportunity to talk about how people used seals to identify documents, goods and possessions.



And, of course, children absolutely adore having their own personal "seal."



SEALING
WAX



CLAY IS YOUR BEST FRIEND!

Honestly, if you are doing Mesopotamia, I would buy a lot of clay.

Clay is such a useful material for this unit.

INCLUDE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CLAY:

- Air-drying clay
- Terracotta-coloured modelling clay
- Polymer clay
- Homemade salt dough



YOU CAN USE CLAY TO MAKE:

- Cuneiform tablets
- Cylinder seals
- Pots
- Bowls
- Figurines
- Jewellery
- Beads
- Small animals
- Miniature houses
- Ziggurats
- Decorative tiles
- Trading tokens



YOU COULD ALSO ADD:

- Rolling pins
- Clay knives
- Toothpicks
- Wooden skewers
- Textured fabric
- Shells
- Beads
- Stamps



Children can press objects into the clay to see what sorts of patterns they create.



BUILD A ZIGGURAT

Now we get to one of my favourite parts.
BUILDING!

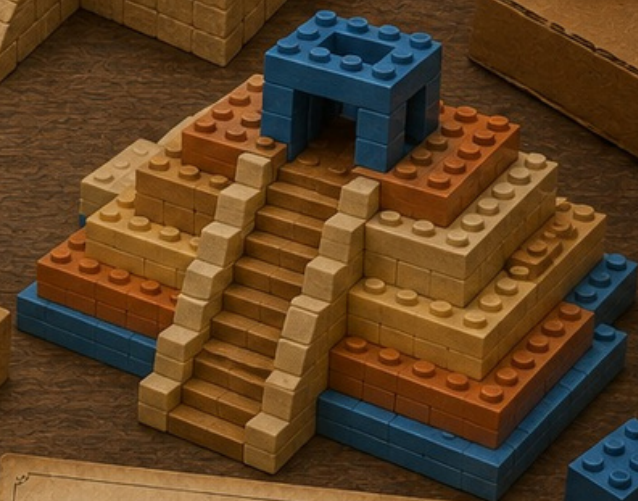
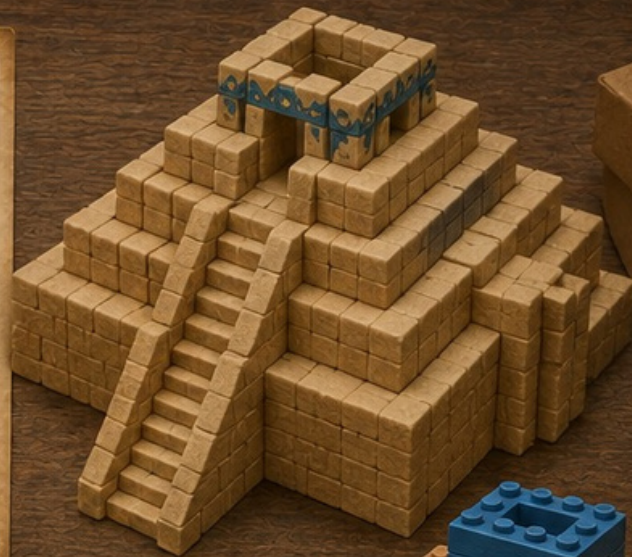
Mesopotamia is perfect for construction activities.

Put some building materials into the Adventure Box and challenge the children to build a ziggurat.



YOU COULD USE:

- LEGO
- DUPLO
- Wooden blocks
- Cardboard boxes
- Small bricks
- Jenga-style blocks
- Sugar cubes
- Recycled packaging



DESIGN YOUR OWN ZIGGURAT!

Ask them:

- How many levels will it have?
- What is at the top?
- How will people get there?
- Where will the entrances be?
- What materials will you use?
- Who is the ziggurat for?



Older children can research actual Mesopotamian ziggurats and attempt to make their model historically accurate.

Younger children can simply build!



DON'T FORGET IRRIGATION!

The rivers are one of the most important aspects of Mesopotamian history, so I would absolutely include something that allows children to investigate irrigation.

You don't need a fancy science kit.

TRY:

- A shallow plastic tray
- Soil or sand
- Water
- Small cups
- Straws
- Spoons
- Craft sticks
- Plastic tubing
- Small stones



LET THE CHILDREN CREATE THEIR OWN IRRIGATION CHANNELS.



Then pour water into the system and see what happens.

- Can they get water from the river to the fields?
- Can they stop the water flooding the city?
- Can they design a better irrigation system?



This is one of those activities where the children can be learning engineering, geography and history without feeling as though they are "doing school."



ADD SAND AND SENSORY MATERIALS

Mesopotamia also lends itself beautifully to sensory play.

You could include a small container of of:

- Play sand
- Kinetic sand
- Dried lentils
- Dried chickpeas
- Rice
- Small pebbles



Obviously, you don't need to include all of these. A little tray of sand can be particularly useful for younger children.



YOUR SENSORY PLAY IDEAS:

- Draw cuneiform signs
- Make river channels
- Build tiny cities
- Bury "archaeological artefacts"
- Sort objects
- Create patterns



ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION CHALLENGE:

You could even bury little clay tablets and give your child an archaeological excavation challenge.



SENSORY PLAY HELPS CHILDREN:

- ✓ Explore textures
- ✓ Develop fine motor skills
- ✓ Build concentration
- ✓ Spark creativity
- ✓ Connect with the past in a hands-on way.



MAKE AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG

This would make a wonderful surprise tucked into the bottom of the box.

You could make your own little excavation kit containing:

- Paintbrushes
- Small wooden tools
- Tweezers
- Magnifying glass
- Notebook
- Pencil
- Measuring tape
- Small containers
- Labels
- String



CREATE YOUR OWN ARTEFACTS

You could bury:

- Clay beads
- Small pottery pieces
- Homemade tablets
- Coins (modern ones are fine for play)
- Small stones
- Tiny figurines
- Broken pieces of terracotta pots



A REMINDER...

This is a pretend archaeological dig rather than encouraging children to dig up real archaeological sites!



DISCOVER
EXPLORE
LEARN

HISTORY
LIVES IN
THE DETAILS



BOOKS FOR YOUR MESOPOTAMIA ADVENTURE BOX

Books are one of my favourite things to add to an Adventure Box.

I would include a mixture rather than buying ten books which all say essentially the same thing.



REFERENCE BOOKS

An encyclopaedia or children's ancient history book.



NON-FICTION

Books about:

- Mesopotamia
- Sumer
- Babylon
- Ancient Iraq
- Cuneiform
- Archaeology
- Ancient inventions
- Ancient mathematics
- Ancient astronomy



MYTHS

Children's retellings of:

- The Epic of Gilgamesh
- Stories of Inanna
- Mesopotamian creation stories
- Flood traditions
- Stories of ancient kings



ACTIVITY BOOKS

Look for:

- Ancient history activity books
- Cuneiform activities
- Archaeology activity books
- Ancient civilisation colouring books
- Ancient history sticker books



And don't forget the second-hand bookshops!



This is one of those subjects where older children's history books can often be picked up very cheaply.



The Ancient World A Children's Encyclopedia



MESOPOTAMIA The Land Between the Rivers



CUNEIFORM Decoding the Ancient World



ANCIENT INVENTIONS How the Mesopotamians Changed the World



MESOPOTAMIA ACTIVITY BOOK



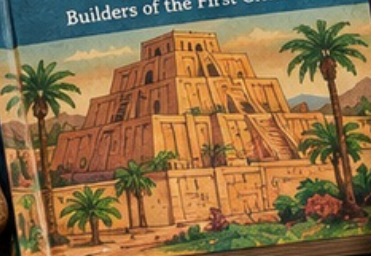
PUZZLES
COLOURING
STICKERS
& MORE!

Sumer

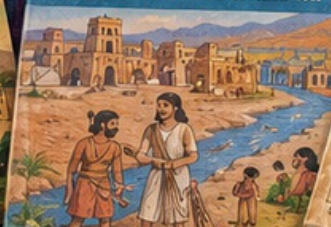
Babylon

Ancient Iraq

The Sumerians Builders of the First Cities



Ancient Mesopotamia Life in the Cradle of Civilisation



Exploring Cuneiform Write Like the Ancients



Ancient Civilisation Sticker



THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

A story of friendship, adventure and the search for immortality.

Choose a version that suits your children's ages. You can explore the themes of the epic and ask big questions about what it means to be a hero.

KEY THEMES

- Kingship
- Friendship
- Mortality
- Courage
- Pride
- The gods
- The natural world
- What makes a hero?



THE GILGAMESH CHALLENGE

Is Gilgamesh a hero, a villain or something in between?

HERO

Brave, loyal, protective, seeks to do what is right.



IN BETWEEN

Both good and bad, with flaws and strengths.



VILLAIN

Selfish, proud, causes harm, ignores others.

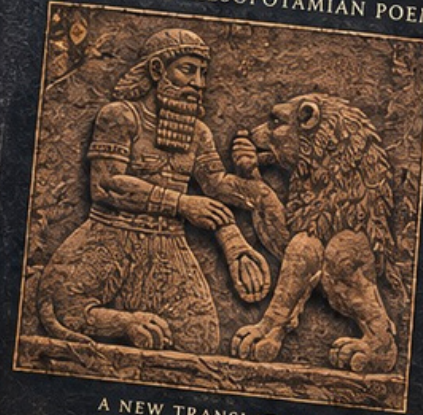


Use the themes and your own thoughts to decide where you think Gilgamesh belongs.



THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

AN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIAN POEM



A NEW TRANSLATION FOR YOUNG READERS

THINK ABOUT...

- What kind of leader is Gilgamesh?
- How does his friendship with Enkidu change him?
- Why does he fear death?
- What does the story tell us about the gods?
- What can we learn from Gilgamesh today?



ART SUPPLIES

Now for the bit I particularly enjoy!
Fill the box with things the children can make.

I would include:

- Brown card
- Cream card
- Kraft paper
- Watercolour paper
- Paint
- Metallic paint
- Gold paint
- Black pens
- Pencils
- Coloured pencils
- Oil pastels
- Chalk
- Paintbrushes
- Sponges
- Glue
- Scissors
- String
- Twine
- Beads
- Raffia
- Fabric scraps



CREATE SOMETHING INSPIRED BY MESOPOTAMIA

You could challenge the children to make:

- A cylinder seal
- A clay tablet
- A royal headdress
- A wall decoration
- A city gate
- A mythical creature
- A patterned pot
- A mosaic
- A king's robe
- A jewellery design



Cylinder Seal



Carve your own design
or use clay.

Clay Tablet



Use clay or cardboard
to make a tablet.

Royal Headdress



Use card, beads and
bright colours.

Wall Decoration



Try repeating patterns
and motifs.

City Gate



Use cardboard, paint
and collage.

Mythical Creature



Let your imagination
run wild!

Patterned Pot



Use paint, clay or
mixed materials.

Mosaic



Try small pieces
and simple shapes.

King's Robe



Use fabric, paper
and embellishments.

Jewellery Design



Use beads, string,
raffia and found objects.

Mesopotamian art
lends itself beautifully
to modern art.



MAKE A MESOPOTAMIAN HEADDRESS

Dress up, get creative and step into the world of ancient Mesopotamia!

You could include:

- Gold-coloured card
- Fabric scraps
- Ribbon
- Beads
- String
- Sequins
- Metallic paper
- Foil
- Craft wire

You could make:

- Crowns
- Headbands
- Necklaces
- Bracelets
- Belts
- Decorative collars

Then have a Mesopotamian royal day!



IDEAS FOR YOUR HEADDRESS



Crown



Headband



Necklace



Bracelet



Belt



Decorative collar



Have a
Mesopotamian
royal day!

Imagine yourself
in history...



REMEMBER...

It doesn't need to be
historically perfect.

The point is to
imagine yourself
into history.



WEAVING MATERIALS

Textiles are another wonderful addition to your Mesopotamia Adventure Box.

You could include:

- A small children's loom
- Fabric scraps
- Yarn
- Embroidery thread
- Wool
- Raffia
- String



Children can experiment with simple weaving. Older children can investigate how textiles were made and traded. You could also discuss the importance of wool, farming and trade.

And if you have a child who loves making things with their hands, this can easily become one of the most popular parts of the box.



TRY SIMPLE WEAVING

Use your loom and materials to create your own design.



What patterns can you make?

ANCIENT TEXTILES

Textiles were made from wool, linen and other natural fibres. They were often dyed with plants and minerals.



They were traded across long distances.

WOOL, FARMING AND TRADE

Wool was very important in Mesopotamia. It came from sheep, and helped people make clothing, blankets and textiles to trade.



Farming and trade helped Mesopotamia grow and prosper.

PATTERNS AND DESIGNS

Look for repeated patterns and geometric shapes in ancient textiles.



Can you create your own Mesopotamian-inspired design?



MESOPOTAMIAN MATHEMATICS

One of the really fun things about Mesopotamia is that it isn't just kings and battles.

There is mathematics!

Include:

- Number cards
- Counters
- Dice
- Beads

- Small stones
- Graph paper
- A ruler
- Measuring tape

You can introduce the idea of ancient counting systems and explore the importance of 60 in Mesopotamian mathematics.



WHY 60?

Why are there 60 minutes in an hour?

Why 60 seconds in a minute?

Why 360 degrees in a circle?

Mesopotamia can suddenly be sitting right there on the kitchen table!



TRY SOME MATHS...

- Use the number cards to make different numbers.
- Count with counters and explore groups of 60.
- Measure objects with your ruler and measuring tape.
- Create your own patterns with the beads and counters.



THE ANCIENT COUNTING SYSTEM

▼	= 1
▼▼	= 10
▼▼▼	= 60
▼▼▼▼	= 360
▼▼▼▼▼	= 1,800

The base 60 system is still used today!



60 = ?

▼▼▼

▼▼▼

60 minutes = 1 hour

60 seconds = 1 minute

360 degrees = 1 circle



ASTRONOMY AND THE NIGHT SKY

The Mesopotamians were also keen observers of the heavens.

Include:

- Glow-in-the-dark stars
- A star chart
- Black card
- White pens

- A small torch
- A simple astronomy book
- A constellation activity
- A moon phase chart

Let the children create their own night sky.

You could also encourage them to keep an ancient astronomer's journal for a week, recording what they see in the night sky.



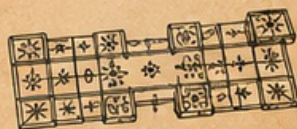
MAKE A MESOPOTAMIAN GAME

Games are always a winner!

One particularly interesting option is *The Royal Game of Ur*.

You can either buy a replica game or make your own version from:

- Cardboard
- Paint
- Wooden counters
- Dice
- Buttons
- Small stones



If your children enjoy board games, this could become a wonderful way of bringing ancient Mesopotamia into family game night.



It also gives you an opportunity to talk about how archaeologists learn about ordinary people's lives – not just kings – from the objects they leave behind.

THE ROYAL GAME OF UR



An ancient game for curious minds.



GAME PIECES



Counters



Dice



Buttons



Small stones

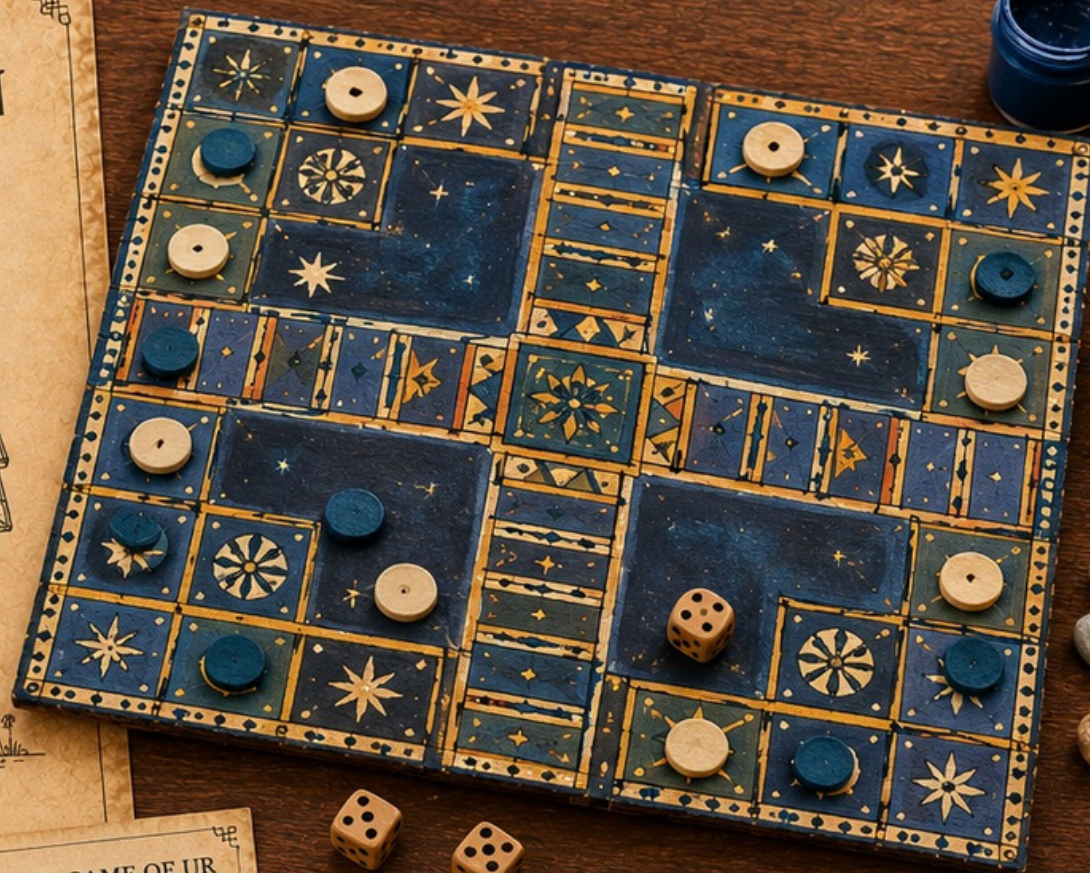
YOU COULD ALSO...

- Design your own board.
- Paint your own counters.
- Use buttons or stones instead of dice.
- Make a simple set from recycled materials.



Think about...

- What did people do in their free time?
- What games might have been popular?
- What can games tell us about ancient people?



ADD A MERCHANT'S BAG

This is a fun one.
Put together a little "merchant's bag"
containing things which represent trade.

You might include:

- Beads
- Fabric
- Wool
- Spices
- Dried grains
- Small stones
- Shells
- Clay tokens
- String
- Little baskets



For older children, introduce the idea
of supply, demand, taxation and trade routes.

You can then set up a pretend
marketplace.

Give your children different roles:

- Farmer
- Weaver
- Potter
- Merchant
- Scribe
- Builder
- King
- Priest

They can trade goods and
negotiate prices.



FARMER



Grows food
and supplies
the community.

WEAVER



Makes cloth
and textiles.

POTTER



Creates useful
and beautiful
pots and jars.

MERCHANT



Buys and sells
goods.

SCRIBE



Records information
and keeps accounts.

BUILDER



Builds homes,
Temples and cities.

KING



Leads and makes
important decisions.

PRIEST



Looks after the gods
and the people.



FOOD FOR YOUR ADVENTURE BOX

Now, obviously, fresh food isn't going to sit happily in a box for six weeks!

But you can include some shelf-stable ingredients or a little card directing you to a recipe you plan to make.

You might include:

- Dates
- Dried figs
- Lentils
- Chickpeas
- Barley
- Sesame seeds
- Honey
- Flatbread ingredients
- Spices

You could make a Mesopotamian feast at the end of the unit. The children could help plan the menu and make decorations for the table.



FLATBREADS



Simple, tasty and perfect for sharing.

DATE BALLS



Sweet, chewy and full of energy.

LENTIL SOUP



Hearty and full of goodness.

BARLEY DISHES



Nutritious and filling.

HONEY CAKES



A sweet treat for special occasions.

DATE-AND-NUT TREATS



A delicious combination.

MESOPOTAMIAN FEAST



Plan the menu.
Make the decorations.
Enjoy your feast!



Dates



Dried figs



Lentils



Chickpeas



Barley



Sesame seeds



Honey



Spices



Flatbread ingredients



LITTLE THINGS MAKE THE BOX MAGICAL

Some of my favourite things to put into an Adventure Box cost almost nothing.

For example:

A FIELD JOURNAL

Give each child a small notebook. Tell them it is their Mesopotamia Archaeological Field Journal. They can use it to record:

- New words
- Drawings
- Maps
- Questions
- Facts
- Cuneiform
- Archaeological discoveries
- Favourite myths



SECRET MESSAGES

Put a sealed envelope into the box containing a message written in cuneiform. The children have to decipher it.



A MUSEUM LABEL

Put an "artefact" into a little bag with a museum-style label. Can they work out what it is and what it was used for?

A CHALLENGE CARD

Give them a challenge such as:

"Build a city that can survive a flood."

"Invent a way to transport grain."

"Design a seal that identifies your family."

These little additions can turn an ordinary collection of craft supplies into an adventure.



MESOPOTAMIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD JOURNAL



Name: _____

Can you decipher this message?

CHALLENGE CARD

Build a city that can survive a flood.



Think • Plan • Create • Test

Museum Label

Object: Stone bead

Material: Agate

Date: c. 2000 BCE

Use: Jewellery

What do you think it is? What was it used for?



MUSEUM

