INVESTIGATION

Defining a Research Problem

Identifying problems is the first phase of the research cycle. To start the process:

- If they have not already done so, have students browse the unit, identifying the types of information the unit contains. Have students read selection titles and headings. Draw attention to illustrations, maps, and other visuals. Tell students to read the captions.

- Explain that a specific problem or question motivates real research. Point out that a research problem is different from a research topic. Tell students that a good research problem or question is engaging, generates further questions, adds to the group's knowledge of ancient civilizations, and uses multiple sources.

- Conduct a free-floating discussion of problems and questions of interest to the students. Brainstorm ideas with the class. Record the ideas on the board. Have students discuss things they wonder about ancient civilizations. Help students think of problems that they might like to research.

- Encourage students to consider the contributions of the cultures introduced in this unit, the difficulties they may have faced, and their relationships to other groups.

- Using students' wonderings, model the difference between a research topic and research problem or question. Outline the difference between the topic "The Romans" and the problem, "How did the Romans conquer the Greeks?" Point out that if students researched the topic *Romans*, everything they looked up under the keyword *Romans* would be related to the topic. There would be too much information for them to use.

Explain that choosing a specific aspect of a topic helps to narrow the exploration. Many sources will contribute to answering the question, and information can be easily evaluated and analyzed.

- During Workshop, have students complete *Inquiry Journal,* page 20, to record research problems.

Teacher Tip INVESTIGATION ACTIVITIES Most of the research questions should be initiated by the students. If the answers to their questions are likely to be found in one encyclopedia entry, help them formulate questions that require more extensive investigation.

Formal Assessment

Use the Research Rubrics on page 114J to assess students' ability to formulate research questions and problems.

Name _____ Date _____

UNIT **2** Ancient Civilizations
Investigating a Problem

A good problem to investigate:
Answers will vary.

Why this is an interesting problem:
Answers will vary.

Some other questions about this problem:
Answers will vary.

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Inquiry Journal p. 20