



RICK RIORDAN PRESENTS

# City of the PLAGUE GOD

BY SARWAT CHADDA



Cover Art © Kerem Beyit

EVENT KIT

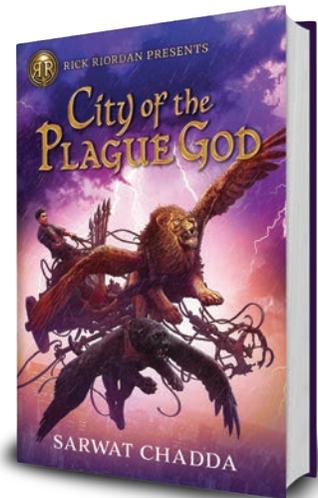
Disney • HYPERION

## GETTING READY TO CELEBRATE

# City of the PLAGUE GOD

### Decor

New York City is at the heart of the action in *City of the Plague God*. To prepare for your event, use the book cover and epic adventure as inspiration, filling your space with imagery plucked from Sikander's grand adventures. Using dark butcher paper and chalk, create your own backdrops of the skyline of Manhattan's skyscrapers, along with the chariot as a means to get attendees into the spirit of the journey Sikander takes to defeat the Nergal, the plague god, and be sure to re-create some of the beauty of Gilgamesh's gardens in Central Park.



### Food

Whole grains and wheat were staples in the diet of the ancient Mesopotamians. In putting together your *City of the Plague God* event, serve up some whole wheat crackers or pita bread and hummus dip. Fruits and vegetables were also widely consumed, so for a healthy snack, think about trays of apple slices, grapes, melon, pears, and plums, as well as veggies like carrot sticks plus vegetable dip and pita to enjoy! And feel free to add a touch of modern flair with some elements Sikander's family's deli and the best street foods of New York City—fruit kababs, pizza, pretzels, and mini hot dogs. For refreshing, thirst-quenching beverages, consider offering attendees Gilgamesh's Gatorade.

### Getting to Know YOU (and the Mesopotamians)!

As an icebreaker activity, ask your guests to do some research before coming to your *City of the Plague God* event. Ask them: Did they know that the ancient Mesopotamians were the inventors of the first wheel? The chariot? Have guests arrive to your event with one item or an image of an item that was invented by the ancient Mesopotamians. Gather attendees and have each of them introduce themselves, share a fact about themselves, and then have them share their chosen object with the group and explain a bit of history behind it.

# ACTIVITIES AND CRAFTS TO GET THE PARTY STARTED!

Get your *City of the Plague God* event started right by using the following activities and crafts to get readers into the *City* spirit!

## Get Your Hands Dirty!

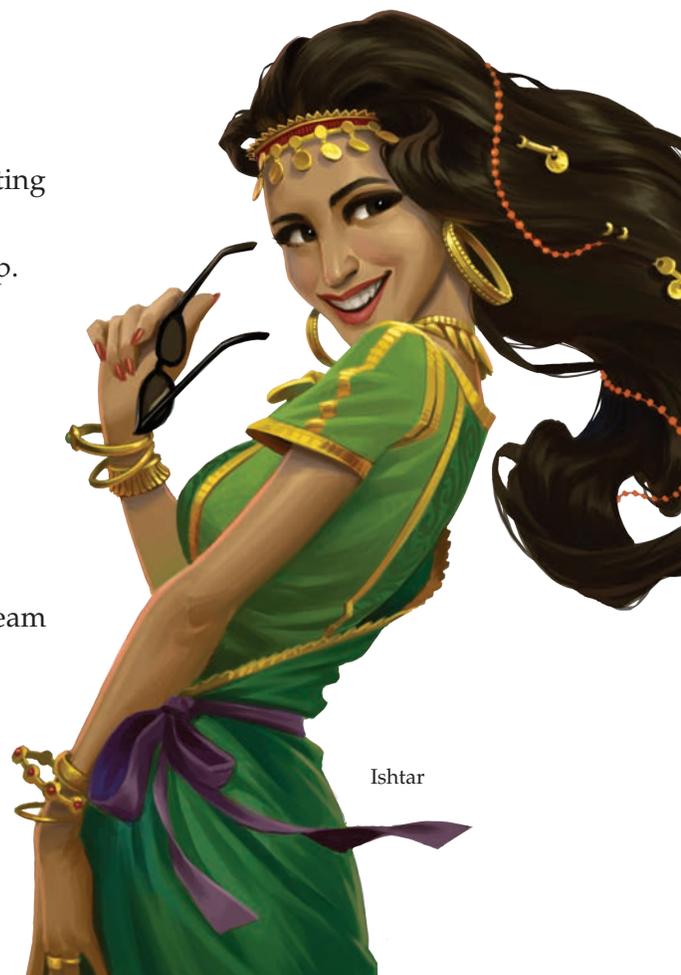
Mo's love of gardening is evident through the memories shared by Sik of his brother. Contact a local garden center to come to your *City of the Plague God* event to do a short, hands-on presentation with attendees, allowing readers to feel and sample soil, learn more about garden care, and, as an added bonus, plant a budding seedling or small plant to take home to grow.

## Race Ishtar's Chariot!

In *City of the Plague God*, Sik (with a bit of Belet's help) gets to drive Ishtar's chariot, led by four majestic lamassus. Divide your event attendees into small groups and assign them a wagon or tricycle as their chariot. Before they race, offer each group butcher paper, markers, and tape to personalize and adorn their chariots. Afterward, have each group member participate in chariot races, again awarding points for their place of finish.

## Chaos Race!

In *City of the Plague God*, Nergal loves nothing more than creating chaos for Sik, Belet, and the people of Manhattan as a whole. First, divide attendees into small groups (4 to 5) for each group. Next, explain the rules. Players must travel from point A to point B and back again, in turns, until the whole team has participated, but there's one catch—they have to creatively and chaotically move around. No one player on the team can travel in the same manner as a teammate (one runs, one jumps, one crab-walks, one hops, one skips, and so on). For added fun and a nod to the flower of immortality, purchase inflatable flowers online and distribute one to each team. As team members work their way to and from, have them bring their "immortal flower" along with them and then use it to pass on to the next relay team member.



Ishtar



## Write Like a Mesopotamian!

The ancient Mesopotamians used cuneiform, a symbols-based writing system made up of wedge-shaped characters, as a means to communicate. Print out a cuneiform chart found online and offer them to attendees so they can design their own cuneiform clay messages. Be sure to provide clay (Sculpey works well) as well as wooden styluses. After preparing the clay, distribute it to and allow readers to work independently or in teams to write their own message or story in cuneiform. Alternatively, purchase premade cuneiform tablets, and after providing the cuneiform charts to assist in decoding, have attendees work together to decipher what they believe the message on the provided tablet is.

## Design Your Own Fragrance

In *City of the Plague God*, Daoud gives Sik a quick lesson on how to create an original fragrance, explaining to Sik that designing fragrances isn't all that different than cooking. After leading a quick discussion with some general facts about fragrances (including what makes something a perfume), give readers a chance to create their own fragrance! Place your event attendees in pairs and allow them to design their own fragrances, being sure to provide herbs, flowers, citrus fruits, food coloring, and water. Easy step-by-step instructions can be found online by searching for "Make your own fragrance with kids." Provide take-home bottles and consider awarding prizes for best fragrance smell, name, etc.

## Flower Power: Pressing Flowers

In *City of the Plague God*, the walls of the Aziz family deli are adorned with pressed flowers crafted by Mo, Sik's brother. Give attendees a chance to learn more about how flowers can be pressed in books and all the other ways to press them, as well as the science behind it by sharing info found here: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/family/2020/07/flower-power-science-and-art-get-kids-exploring/>. After discussing the various options for pressing flowers, allow readers to select a flower or two from dried flowers ready for this process (Tip: Look for volunteers that can offer cuttings from their gardens or, alternatively, purchase flowers from a local garden or floral shop). Since book-pressed flowers are a best option for home, consider using the ironing method (making sure the actual ironing is done by an adult). After pressing, flowers can be glued onto boards or even placed in inexpensive frames found at dollar stores and taken home as a memory of your event.



Belet

# GETTING TO KNOW GILGAMESH

Gilgamesh plays a central role in *City of the Plague*, and in this activity, guests will learn more about Gilgamesh's past before Sik meets him in Central Park.

1. His tales are recorded in the \_\_\_\_\_, the earliest surviving great work of literature.
2. After a fierce duel, Gilgamesh and \_\_\_\_\_ become best friends.
3. Gilgamesh and his best friend complete a quest to find and kill \_\_\_\_\_, the demon of the Cedar Forest.
4. This heroic feat attracts the attention of \_\_\_\_\_, the goddess of love, who tries but fails to seduce Gilgamesh.
5. In a fit of rage because he has rejected her, the goddess of love sends the \_\_\_\_\_ down to destroy him.
6. Gilgamesh sets out to find \_\_\_\_\_, who give him two tries at gaining eternal life.
7. After two lost attempts at immortality, he is rowed home by the ferryman \_\_\_\_\_, and Gilgamesh starts to write his story, all his old vanity and pride cast away.

## WORD BANK

- Utnapishtim
- Bull of Heaven
- Enkidu
- Humbaba
- Urshanabi
- Epic of Gilgamesh
- Ishtar



Gilgamesh

**ANSWER KEY:** 1. Epic of Gilgamesh, 2. Enkidu, 3. Humbaba, 4. Ishtar, 5. Bull of Heaven, 6. Utnapishtim, 7. Urshanabi

# MESOPOTAMIAN FACT OR FICTION

Just like Sikander’s adventures traveling through the New York City and the Sea of Tiamat to defeat Nergal, learning and discerning what’s fact and fiction about Mesopotamian history, culture, and mythology, as well as Arab accomplishments will make the reading of *City of the Plague God* an even greater epic adventure.

**Working together, ask readers to decide—is this FACT or FICTION?**

- Mesopotamia is known as “the cradle of civilization” because it was where civilization first developed. **(TRUE)**
- Arabs invested perfume-making technology. **(TRUE)**
- The Sumerians are often credited for inventing the hamster wheel. **(FALSE)**  
*Answer:* The Sumerians are credited with inventing the first wheel.
- The Code of Hammurabi (the Babylonian law created by King Hammurabi) is often believed to be the oldest written law in the world. **(TRUE)**
- Known as “two-thirds divine and one-third mortal,” Gilgamesh is often claimed to be the first hero. **(TRUE)**
- The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are each about 100 miles long. **(FALSE)**.  
*Answer:* They are each well over 1,000 miles long.
- Southern Iraq is the heart of Mesopotamia, as it lies between two rivers. **(TRUE)**
- Much of what is known about the history of Mesopotamia is from thousands of clay tablets found in the library in Nineveh, an Assyrian city. **(TRUE)**
- Mesopotamia is part of a larger area known as the Fertile Pinwheel. **(FALSE)**  
*Answer:* Mesopotamia is part of a larger area known as the Fertile Crescent. **(FALSE)**



Sikander