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# DOCUMENT-BASED ACTIVITIES ON ANCIENT INDIA

## TEACHER INTRODUCTION

### Description:

In this unit, students study the civilizations of ancient India beginning with the Indus River Valley people circa 2500 BCE and continuing up through the Maurya Empire in the third century BCE. This study includes the founding and early development of two of India's major religions—Hinduism and Buddhism. The origins of the caste system are discussed in the context of the development of Hindu beliefs, and the character of the Maurya Empire is revealed through the edicts of one of its rulers, Asoka. Students will use primary sources to investigate each of these topics, not only to gain a general knowledge of the history and culture of India during ancient times but also to understand the antecedents of modern-day Indian culture.

### Unit Objectives:

Knowledge: students will

- describe aspects of daily life for the Indus Civilization
- paraphrase beliefs and values of early Hinduism
- describe the caste system and explain its origin
- identify and describe the tenets of Buddhism
- examine the edicts of King Asoka and draw conclusions about this beloved ruler

Skills: students will

- investigate, analyze, and interpret primary sources
- communicate effectively the results of their analysis in spoken and written form
- use relevant and adequate evidence to draw conclusions

### Prior Knowledge Required:

Students should know the basic geography and climate of the Indian subcontinent, including the location of the Indus and Ganges rivers, and the Hindu Kush Mountains. In some cases, the lessons in this book require a basic introduction to the topic to set the stage before students focus on analyzing the primary sources. This is noted in the “Strategies” section of the lesson to which it applies.

Lesson Format:

Each lesson consists of two parts: a teacher page containing an introduction, objectives, URL(s) used in the lesson, teaching strategies, wrap-up activity(ies), and extension activity(ies); and a reproducible student page with a brief introduction which sets the context for the lesson, URL(s) used, and questions to be answered about the source.

Assessment:

Based on the time available, you may want to select which answers you want to assess in each activity. Most questions require short answers. For most activities, students are asked to write a paragraph or short essay, or present their findings to the class. These assignments are ideal for assessment. Suggested rubrics are included in the Appendix.

Additional Resources:

The Appendix contains answer keys, evaluation rubrics, primary source documents, an annotated list of Web sites on ancient India, and supplementary materials available from [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com).

## See What You Can Dig Up Teacher Page

### Overview:

India's first civilization existed in the fertile valley surrounding the Indus River. For years scientists and historians speculated about the nature of this civilization. Then in the 1920s ruins of several cities were discovered at multiple locations along the Indus, now located mainly in Pakistan. Most notable of these cities are Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

Archaeologists have learned a great deal from the artifacts found there, which are still under excavation. Their findings have been exhibited at museums and published on the Internet. They reveal a well-organized agrarian civilization, probably with a central government, and very advanced, judging by the presence of indoor plumbing and other amenities unusual for the time (2500-1500 BCE).

### Objectives:

Students will:

- use visual literacy skills, modeled by their teacher, to study period artifacts
- investigate Indus Civilization artifacts
- draw conclusions about aspects of daily life for the Indus Civilization

### Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

- William Penn Charter School's Virtual Museum: <http://www.penncharter.com/Student/index.html>
- A Walk Through Mohenjo-Daro: <http://www.harappa.com/har/moen0.html>
- Embodying Indus Life: <http://www.harappa.com/figurines/index.html>
- The Unicorn Seal: <http://www.harappa.com/seal/1.html>
- Around the Indus in 90 Slides: <http://www.harappa.com/indus/indus0.html>

### Strategies:

Set up one Internet-capable computer in your classroom with a projector so that the whole class can see.

Start the lesson by introducing only the most basic information about the civilizations of the Indus Valley. You may use the information provided in your social studies text, but be careful not to give students too much detail, as the goal of this visual literacy exercise is for them to uncover the information themselves.

Go to the Web site for William Penn Charter School's Virtual Museum and explain to your class that this Web site is an exhibit created by a group of sixth-graders. Click on "India" and have a student read the introduction. Next, click on "Geography" and do the same.

Now, tell students that you're going to take them on a virtual tour of the ancient city of Mohenjo-Daro. In this part of the lesson, you will be modeling visual literacy skills for your students and having them practice this skill with you.

Go to the Web site called "A Walk Through Mohenjo-Daro." If you wish, you can take the complete tour, but the lesson will work equally well if you and your students look at the following images:

- City View
- Great Bath
- Well
- Stupa View

Discuss these questions with the class:

1. Describe the layout of the city of Mohenjo-Daro.
2. What building materials were used?
3. Look carefully at the bricks in all of the pictures. What do you notice about them?
4. At the William Penn School's page, we learned that Mohenjo-Daro was located next to the Indus River. This means it would have plenty of water. Why do you think the city would need a well? What might be its purpose?
5. Does the Great Bath remind you of anything? Why?
6. What do you think it was used for?

Next, hand out the worksheet and organize the class into small groups depending on the number of computers you have available. If you have a full lab, students should still work in pairs. They will have better observations this way, since some are naturally more watchful than others. Regardless of the group size, each student should write his/her own paragraph at the end of the worksheet.

### Wrap-Up:

Have students read their paragraphs as you record their key findings as a graphic organizer on the board. Ask them to reflect on how much they learned simply by looking carefully and making intelligent guesses about what they saw. Remind them that this is how archaeologists work.

Finally, return to the William Penn Virtual Museum to see what those sixth graders have learned about Indus Civilization.

Extension Activity:

Have students select a topic or piece of information presented by the students at William Penn. Then have them explore the student Web sites located at the end of this booklet to find objects that provide evidence showing whether the William Penn information is accurate.

For example, the William Penn site (“Industry” link) describes two other types of toys from Mohenjo-Daro: a bird-shaped whistle and a cow with bobbing head. Images of these artifacts can be found at <http://www.harappa.com/indus/indus0.html> (click on the slide index).

## See What You Can Dig Up Student Worksheet

### Introduction:

Have you ever wondered how historians work? How can we know anything about people who lived long ago, before there were books or photographs? One of the ways we learn about ancient people is from objects. Special historians, called archaeologists, study objects people have left behind. Archaeologists dig up ancient cities. They then study the buildings, tools, art and other objects found there.

Your teacher has already shown you some information about the Indus Civilization. Now you are going to be an archeologist. See what you can learn by studying objects from the ancient cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

All Web links for this lesson can be found at: <http://www.socialstudies.com/ancientlinks.html>

### Directions:

#### **Embodying Indus Life: TerraCotta Figurines From Harappa**

Go to <http://www.harappa.com/figurines/index.html> and look at the figure of the woman. Answer these questions:

1. What does the woman have on her head? Why do you think she is wearing it?
2. What else is she wearing?

Next, look at pictures number 2, number 69, and number 55.

Answer these questions:

3. Notice how small the cart is. What do you think it was used for?
4. In picture 69, there would be wheels where the two holes are. What do you think this object was used for?

5. What is the figure in picture 55? What can you guess about Indus people and dogs? Why?

Go to <http://www.harappa.com/seal/1.html>.

Look carefully at the object and answer these questions:

6. Describe this object.

7. Does it look like something you have seen before at home or at school?

8. What do you think it was used for?

III. Now think about everything you have seen. Write a paragraph describing what you think life was like in an Indus city. Use the information you learned just by looking.