

MJ World History

Grade 6 / Week 3

Your Week at a Glance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Early Civilizations of India<input type="checkbox"/> Religions of Ancient India<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Contributions of Ancient India

Name

Teacher

LCS 6th Grade World History Distance Learning Assignment

Week 3: Parent Notes

Most students in 6th grade world history previously studied several of the early civilizations such as Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt. This week, students will use materials from the workbook of their adopted textbook, McGraw-Hill's *Succeeding in Early World History* to take a closer look at life in ancient India. The following state standards are addressed in this lesson:

SS.6.G.1.7: Use a map to identify bodies of water and explain ways they have impacted the development of civilizations.

SS.6.G.2.1: Explain how major physical characteristics, natural resources, climate, and absolute and relative locations have influenced settlement, interactions, and the economies of ancient civilizations.

SS.6.G.2.3: Analyze the relationship of physical geography to the development of ancient river valley civilizations.

SS.6.G.2.6 Explain cultural diffusion, and identify the influences of different ancient cultures on one another.

Learning Activities: Students should read pages 285-294 from the workbook and—to the best of their ability—answer the questions in the margin to guide their reading and understanding. If students have difficulty with any of the concepts presented in the reading, they may find it helpful to discuss the reading with a classmate or reach out to their teacher. Students may also view this 23- minute video on the history of Hindu India: <https://youtu.be/dBZRTzXARWM>. The video was produced by California State University and the editors of *Hinduism Today* for 6th grade world history classes.

Extension Activities: If you have a child who benefits from more rigorous work, encourage him or her to read *South Asia: From India to Beyond (Chapter 8 A-E)* at <https://www.ushistory.org/civ/8.asp> for a more in-depth study of life in early India.

Assessment: Once students have completed the reading and made notes in the margin, they should answer the questions presented below. This will serve as an assessment of their understanding. Students may write their answers on notebook paper or answer in a Word document. All answers should be in complete sentences.

- (1) What geographical features resulted in the development of farming and trade in ancient India? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- (2) What characteristic of India's climate¹ resulted in uncertainty for early farmers? Explain your answer in 1-2 sentences.
- (3) How did the design of India's first cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, reflect an advanced civilization? In your answer provide two examples from the text or video.
- (4) Provide one example of how the **Aryan** people changed life in ancient Indian society.
- (5) Review the four varnas that made up early India's caste system. Which of the **four varnas** do you believe was most important to early Indian society? Use evidence from the text or video to support your answer.
- (6) How could rulers and religious leaders at the top of India's caste system use **dharma** to their advantage?
- (7) What was Siddhartha Gautama's life like before he became known as the **Buddha**?
- (8) What did **Siddhartha Gautama** learn in his travels that shaped his teachings as Buddha?
- (9) What conclusion can you draw about Buddha's message based on the **Four Noble Truths**?
- (10) Review Buddha's **Eightfold Path** to stop desire. Do you think Buddha's ideas still hold true? Use an example from one of the 8 ideas in your answer.
- (11) Revisit page 299. What are two significant contributions made by ancient Indian mathematicians and scientists?

¹ The general or average weather conditions of a certain region, including temperature, rainfall, and wind.

LESSON 1 SUMMARY

Early Civilizations

SS.6.G.2.1, SS.6.G.2.2, SS.6.G.2.3, SS.6.G.4.2, SS.6.G.4.3, SS.6.E.1.3, SS.6.E.3.1, SS.6.E.3.2, SS.6.E.3.4, SS.6.W.4.1, SS.6.W.4.2

The Geography of India

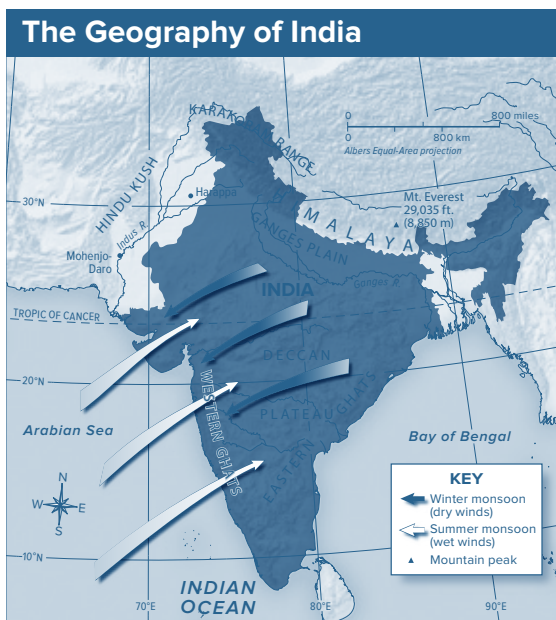
India is part of a large land mass called the Indian **subcontinent**. A subcontinent is part of a larger continent. The Indian subcontinent is part of the continent of Asia.

Mountains, Plains, and Rivers

Towering mountain systems in the north separate India from the rest of Asia. One of these systems are the Himalaya. Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, measures more than 29,000 feet high (8,800 m). Everest is a part of the Himalaya system.

Just south of the mountains there are wide, fertile plains. Three great rivers flow through the region—the Indus, the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra. India's people rely on these rivers for farming, transportation, and trade.

Further south, the landscape changes dramatically. Lush fertile lands line the west and east coasts. Rugged hills are further inland. The hills were once chains of mountains, but they have eroded over time. About two-thirds of southern India is a dry highland known as the Deccan Plateau.



Farming settlements in Ancient India were dependent on rainfall. Monsoons could provide needed water or bring disaster.

ANALYZING MAPS

Use the map to answer the following questions.

1. What were the physical land features of each area that impacted the ancient civilizations of India?

NORTH:

Desert: _____

Mountain Ranges:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Rivers:

1. _____

2. _____

SOUTH:

Plateau: _____

Bodies of Water:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. How were bodies of water used in ancient India?

LESSON 1 SUMMARY, *continued*

3. RECOGNIZING RELATIONSHIPS

Describe two different sources of water that early Indian farmers depended upon to grow their crops. Which water source was more dependable? Explain your answer.

4. CITING TEXT EVIDENCE

Underline details in the text about the ancient cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa in Ancient India. How are archaeologists able to determine these details about cities that no longer exist?

India’s civilization was shaped by climate as well as geography. The climate in India is strongly influenced by **monsoons**, or seasonal winds. In the winter, monsoon winds blow cold, dry air from the Himalaya east to west across the subcontinent. In the summer, warmer land temperatures cause the winds to reverse direction. Summer monsoon winds blow west to east from the Arabian Sea, bringing warm, wet air and pouring rains.

A good summer rain brings needed water for farming. Monsoon rains are celebrated when they arrive. Rain means a good crop season. However, too much rain can cause damage. Very heavy monsoon rains lead to flooding. Crops can be ruined, and people and animals can be killed.

When there is not enough rain, or the rains come late, there can be a long dry period called a drought. A serious drought can ruin crops. This is not only disastrous to farmers, but many people may go hungry or starve.

The Indus Valley Civilization

India’s first civilization, called the cradle of ancient India, began in the valley of the Indus River about 5,000 years ago. Similar to the other early civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Indus Valley civilization also developed near a great river system.

At first, nomads settled in a part of the valley that is now known as Pakistan. People built the first settlements in the region on the shores of the river. The rich soil allowed farmers to grow large crops of wheat, barley, and beans.

There were plenty of crops in the valley, so not all of the people needed to farm. Some made tools or constructed houses. Others traded extra food for goods. The Indus people prospered and built cities, spreading their civilization over much of western India and Pakistan.

Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa

The Indus culture thrived in the valley from about 2600 B.C. to 1900 B.C. Archaeologists have studied the ruins of two major cities of the Indus Valley civilization. The cities are called Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, and their ruins are the source of our knowledge of these people.

At their peak, each city had more than 35,000 residents. The cities were almost identical in design. Each had dozens of streets, and larger streets were paved with tan-colored bricks. The smaller, crossing streets were often unpaved. A fortress stood at the west end of each city. It was built on a brick platform and was surrounded by strong, thick walls.

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LESSON 1 SUMMARY, *continued*

The Indus Valley people baked mud bricks in ovens to build their homes. Houses usually had flat wooden roofs and enclosed courtyards. Some houses were several stories tall.

Highly skilled engineers and builders constructed large buildings to store grain for the entire population. Water was available in wells, and every house had at least one indoor bathroom. Wastewater flowed outside the city walls through pipes. Houses even had garbage chutes connected to bins in the streets.

What Was Life Like?

By studying Indus Valley ruins, archaeologists have learned that royal palaces and temples may have been enclosed in fortresses in each city. This is an indication that religion and government were important in the Indus Valley settlements.

Most people resided in farming villages near the two cities. They grew rice, barley, wheat, peas, and cotton. Inside the city walls, merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans made and sold copper and bronze tools, clay pottery, and cotton cloth. Artisans also used ivory, shells, and gold to make jewelry. Archaeologists have even found toys among the ruins.

Merchants in the Indus Valley traded with Mesopotamia. Some made the difficult trip through the mountains. Other merchants probably reached Mesopotamia by sailing along the southern coast of Asia.

Aryan Migrations and Settlements

The people of the Indus Valley began to abandon their cities and settlements sometime around 1900 B.C. Archaeologists suggest several possible reasons why people left. During this time, a severe drought, which lasted hundreds of years, destroyed crops and caused starvation. Many more people were killed in earthquakes and floods, which changed the course of the Indus River. While the Indus Valley civilization declined, groups of people called Aryans **migrated** to India. A new civilization began to **emerge**, or become known, on the subcontinent.

The Indo-Europeans

The Aryan people were not a race or ethnic group, but they all probably spoke a language that was part of the Indo-European **language family**. A language family is a group of similar languages. The Indo-European language family is very large. It includes Hindi, the language that is spoken in India today, and many European languages, including English.

5. MAKING INFERENCES

Give a well-reasoned explanation for each of the provided details.

Detail: Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were similar in design.



Inference: _____

Detail: A fortress was built in each city.



Inference: _____

Detail: The cities had sewage and garbage systems.



Inference: _____

LESSON 1 SUMMARY, *continued*

6. SUMMARIZING

How did the lives of Aryans change when they settled in India? Make sure to also include how they changed the land itself.

Indo-Europeans migrated from central Asia and moved in all directions. They went west to Europe and south to Iran. The Aryans also came over the mountains into India. Aryans raised cattle for meat, milk, and butter. They were horse riders, hunters, and strong warriors. Sometimes they raided nearby villages for food.

From about 1500 to 1000 B.C. Aryans guided their herds through India in small bands. They mixed with the descendants of the Indus Valley people and created a new culture. Over time, the Aryans settled and adopted farming as a new way of life, although they still raised cattle. As time went on, the Aryans began to see their herds as sacred. Eventually, they banned the use of their cattle as food.

The Aryans made iron tools, cleared forests, and built irrigation systems. Slowly they turned the Ganges River valley into fertile farmland. Farmers grew wheat, millet, and barley in the north. Rice was also planted in the fertile river valleys. Farmers in the south grew cotton, vegetables, pepper, ginger, and cinnamon.

The Aryans lived in tribes led by a **raja**, or prince. Each raja created a small, separate kingdom. These small kingdoms fought over cattle, treasure, and land.

Early Aryans had no written language. This was typical of nomadic people. After settling in villages, however, a written language called **Sanskrit** developed. Sanskrit was used to record sales, trade, and land ownership. Sanskrit allowed Aryan hymns, stories, poems, and prayers to be written down. Later these writings were collected and recorded into **Vedas**, or sacred texts.

Ancient Indian Society

Aryan towns sprang up along the Ganges River. Most people still farmed, though some specialized in crafts, such as carpentry or weaving. Trade increased in the subcontinent. As the economy grew in the new culture, social classes gradually developed throughout India.

What Were the *Varnas*?

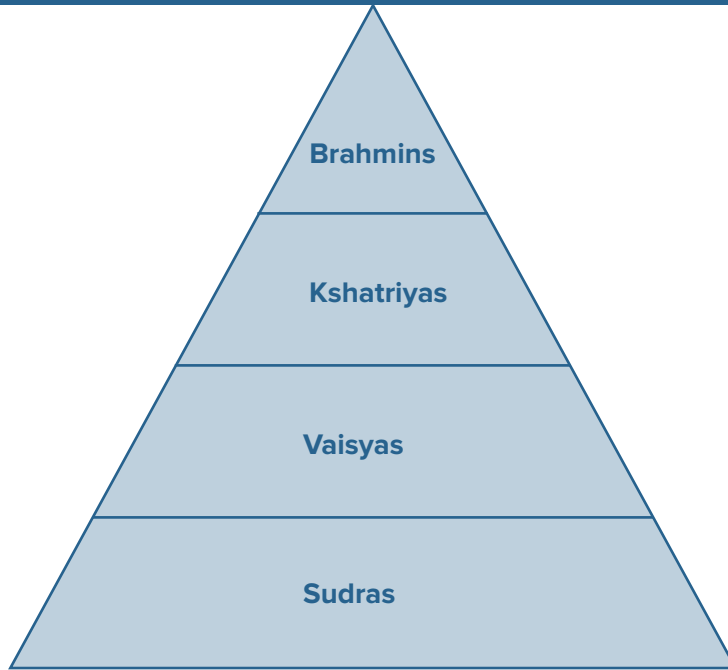
The social classes of ancient India are called *varnas*. Scholars refer to the *varnas* as a **caste** system. In such a system, people are born into a certain social class, and they remain in that class for life. People’s caste determines their social groups, the work they may do, and the skills they may learn. Caste also affects people’s choice of marriage partners.

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LESSON 1 SUMMARY, *continued*

There were four *varnas* in Indian society. The most powerful were the Brahmins, who were priests. They performed religious ceremonies. Then came the Kshatriyas who were warriors. They ran the government and the army. Then there were the Vaisyas. They were usually farmers, craftspeople, or merchants. The Sudras were manual workers and servants and were on the bottom of the class system.

Early India’s Social System



—the Untouchables—

Most people in India belonged to the Vaisya and Sudra *varnas*.

Each *varna* was divided into thousands of smaller groups known as *jati*. *Jati* were formed by the type of work a person did. There were strict rules and social customs for each *jati*.

The people at the lowest level of society were known as the Untouchables. They were not a part of any *varna* or *jati* and did the work no other Indians would do. For example, they collected trash, skinned animals, and carried dead bodies.

In ancient India, grandparents, parents, and children lived together in the same house. Family was important and elder family members were respected. The household was run by the oldest male in the family. Only males inherited property, unless the family had no sons. Men could attend school or become priests. Women were educated at home.

7. CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Read the following statement: “The strict rules of the *jati* prevented conflict.” Then, construct an argument for or against this idea.

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LESSON 2 SUMMARY

Religions of Ancient India

SS.6.G.2.6, SS.6.W.4.2, SS.6.W.4.4

Origins of Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest and largest religions. The only religions that have more followers than Hinduism are Christianity and Islam.

Hinduism developed out of the Aryan faith. It does not have just one founder or just one holy book. The Vedas, or sacred texts, were memorized and recited by Brahmin priests. The Vedas teach the main ideas of Aryan religion. Over time, the beliefs described in the Vedas were blended with other beliefs in India, and this mix of beliefs became Hinduism.

What Is Hinduism?

There are many beliefs and practices in Hinduism. However, the core belief that exists for all Hindus is that there is one universal spirit called **Brahman**.

The Upanishads are part of the Vedas. They describe the search for Brahman. According to the texts, Brahman is something every living thing shares. When a living thing dies, its soul is joined with Brahman.

It is also said that a soul that becomes one with Brahman is like a lump of salt thrown into water. While the lump of salt disappears, the water tastes salty. The salt has become part of the water.

The idea of Brahman was difficult for most ancient Indian people to understand. They held ceremonies for many different deities and built temples and statues in their honor. They believed their deities were like individual people. Three deities eventually emerged as the most important: *Brahma* the Creator, *Vishnu* the Preserver, and *Shiva* the Destroyer. Eventually, many Hindus came to think of these three deities as different parts of the one universal spirit—Brahman.

1. EXPLAINING

How was Hinduism affected by the religious beliefs in India that came before?

2. IDENTIFYING EVIDENCE

Identify each Hindu deity by their description. How are the roles of each deity related?

_____ the Creator
_____ the Preserver
_____ the Destroyer

LESSON 2 SUMMARY, *continued*

forests. They wanted a simpler life. People trained themselves to focus and think in positive ways. This training was called meditation. Some of these seekers became religious teachers, and new ideas spread through India. A man named Siddhartha Gautama was one of these teachers. He became known as the Buddha, and founded a new religion called **Buddhism**.

The Buddha

Buddhism is one of the major religions of the world today. Most Buddhists live in southeast Asia and east Asia. Only a few Buddhists remain in India, where Buddhism was born. Siddhartha Gautama was born around the year 563 B.C. He grew up as a wealthy prince in a small kingdom near the Himalaya. Today, this area is in southern Nepal.

Siddhartha appeared to have everything as a young man. In addition to wealth, he was known to be handsome. He was happily married with a newborn son. Then one day he decided to learn about the life of ordinary people in the kingdom. When he left the palace, Siddhartha was shocked by the poverty and misery of the people. He came to understand that the world was filled with suffering.

Siddhartha became a monk and gave up all he had. He traveled through India, stopping to meditate. He gathered followers by preaching his message wherever he went. Siddhartha Gautama became known as the Buddha, and his teachings became known as Buddhism.

What Did the Buddha Teach?

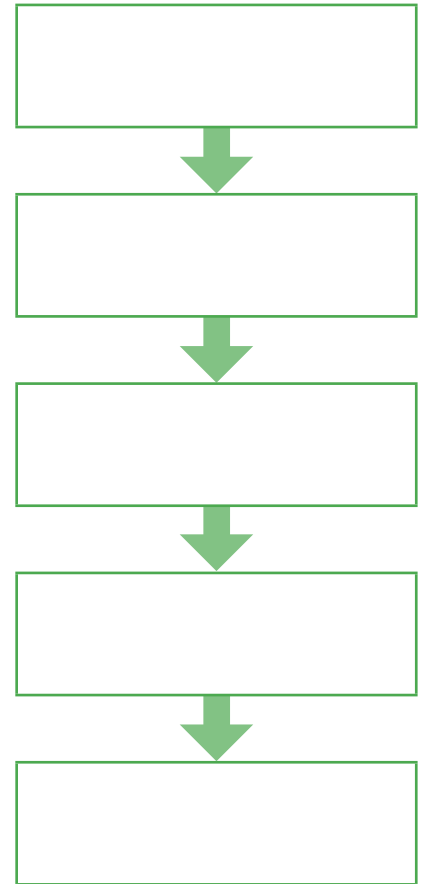
The Buddha had been a Hindu and followed some of its ideas. Like Hindus, he believed that the physical world was not as important as the world of the spirit. The Buddha taught that people often suffered because they cared too much for things that are not really important. He said that anger and greed came from wanting things like fame, money, and personal possessions. The Buddhists believed that inner peace could only be found by seeking spiritual truth.



This figure of the Buddha shows him sitting in meditation, which is an important aspect of Buddhist practice.

4. SEQUENCING

Complete the chart to describe the sequence of events that led to Siddhartha Gautama becoming a religious teacher known as the Buddha.



LESSON 2 SUMMARY, *continued*

5. MAKING CONNECTIONS

Summarize the Buddha’s message, and explain why it might be appealing to the Untouchables and Indians in the lower *jatis* or *varnas*. How is the Buddha’s message different from the Hindu idea of dharma?

The Buddha believed that the Four Noble Truths would guide people to spiritual truth.

The Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is full of suffering.
2. People suffer because they desire worldly things and want to satisfy themselves.
3. The way to end suffering is to stop desiring things.
4. The only way to stop desiring things is to follow the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path:

1. Know and understand the Four Noble Truths.
2. Give up worldly things and do not harm others.
3. Tell the truth, do not gossip, and do not speak badly of others.
4. Do not commit evil acts—killing, stealing, or living an unclean life.
5. Do rewarding work.
6. Work for good and oppose evil.
7. Make sure your mind keeps your senses under control.
8. Practice meditation to see the world in a new way.

According to Buddhist teaching, when people were free from all earthly concerns, they would reach **nirvana**. Nirvana is not a physical place, but rather a spiritual state. It is a feeling of perfect peace and happiness.

Like Hindus, the Buddha believed in reincarnation. Unlike Hindus, however, Buddha did not think a person’s *varna* or *jati* was important, and he welcomed people from all walks of life. He thought people’s place in life depended on their behavior today, not their birth status. Indians in lower *jati* or Untouchables heard for the first time that they too could reach enlightenment.

Hindus believed that following dharma, their personal duty, would lead to a better life when their soul was reborn. The Buddha taught that anyone could achieve nirvana and end the cycle of rebirth. This could be done by following the Eightfold Path rather than following dharma.

The Buddha taught his ideas for more than 40 years until his death. His followers disagreed over the meaning of some of the Buddha’s ideas. Two groups of Buddhists formed over these disagreements: Theravada Buddhists and Mahayana Buddhists.

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Culture in Ancient India

The Literature of India

The first works written in the Sanskrit language were the Vedas. Hindus also wrote epics and considered them to be sacred texts. The *Mahabharata* is an ancient religious epic that has about 90,000 verses. That makes it the longest poem in any written language. The *Mahabharata* tells an exciting story about the great heroes of an older Indian kingdom. Hindu people have been greatly influenced by the *Mahabharata* ever since it was first created. The most famous part of the *Mahabharata* is the ***Bhagavad Gita***, or “Song of the Lord.” It tells the story of the god Krishna riding into battle with a troubled prince.

INDIAN CULTURE

Mathematics

Important contributions to the study of mathematics were made in ancient India. The Indian scientist Aryabhata was one of the first people to use algebra. Indian thinkers also explained the idea of infinity, or something without an end.

Gupta mathematicians created the symbols for the numbers 1 to 9 that we still use today. This system of number symbols is known as the Indian-Arabic numerical system. But even more interesting is the Indian invention of the symbol “0” and its connection to the idea of nothing. Though it may seem obvious to modern thinkers, the invention of zero had tremendous effects on science and mathematics. Without the concept of zero, modern technology such as computers and electronics would not be possible.

Science

Ancient Indian scholars also made leaps in astronomy and technology. They mapped the movements of planets and stars. They even proposed a theory that Earth was round and revolved around the sun. Indian scientists advanced metalworking. One impressive structure from this period is the pillar of iron of Delhi, dating from around a.d. 400. Despite its age, the pillar still stands and is hardly rusted.

Medicine

Indian doctors treated dental problems using tools, such as the bow drill. The doctor drilled teeth using the bow drill, a tool usually used to make fire. Doctors were very advanced for their time. They set broken bones, sewed wounds, and performed complicated surgeries. They were also skilled in making tools and medical instruments, such as scalpels and needles. Indian doctors were not simply focused on treating the symptoms of a disease. They searched for the causes of disease, and sometimes used special herbs to cure illnesses.