

Indus Valley Civilization

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KEYWORDS

Indus Valley Civilization, Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, Lothal, Indus Valley seals, Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro, granary, Priest King statue, ancient civilizations, ancient urban settlements, ancient artifacts, interpreting artifacts, archaeologist, trade, barter, medium of exchange, city-state, primary and secondary sources of data, AD/CE, BC/BCE, climate change

NCSS THEMES

Culture

Time, continuity and change

People, places and environments

Power, authority and governance

Global connections

Civic ideas and practices

Essential Questions

Think about what makes up a civilization.

-How is this shared idea of civilization reflected in the region's art, religion, philosophy and daily life?

-What survives of this civilization today?

How did the earliest civilizations begin and develop?

How has their development contributed to the world today?

How did the physical geography influence the location, success and decline of early civilizations?

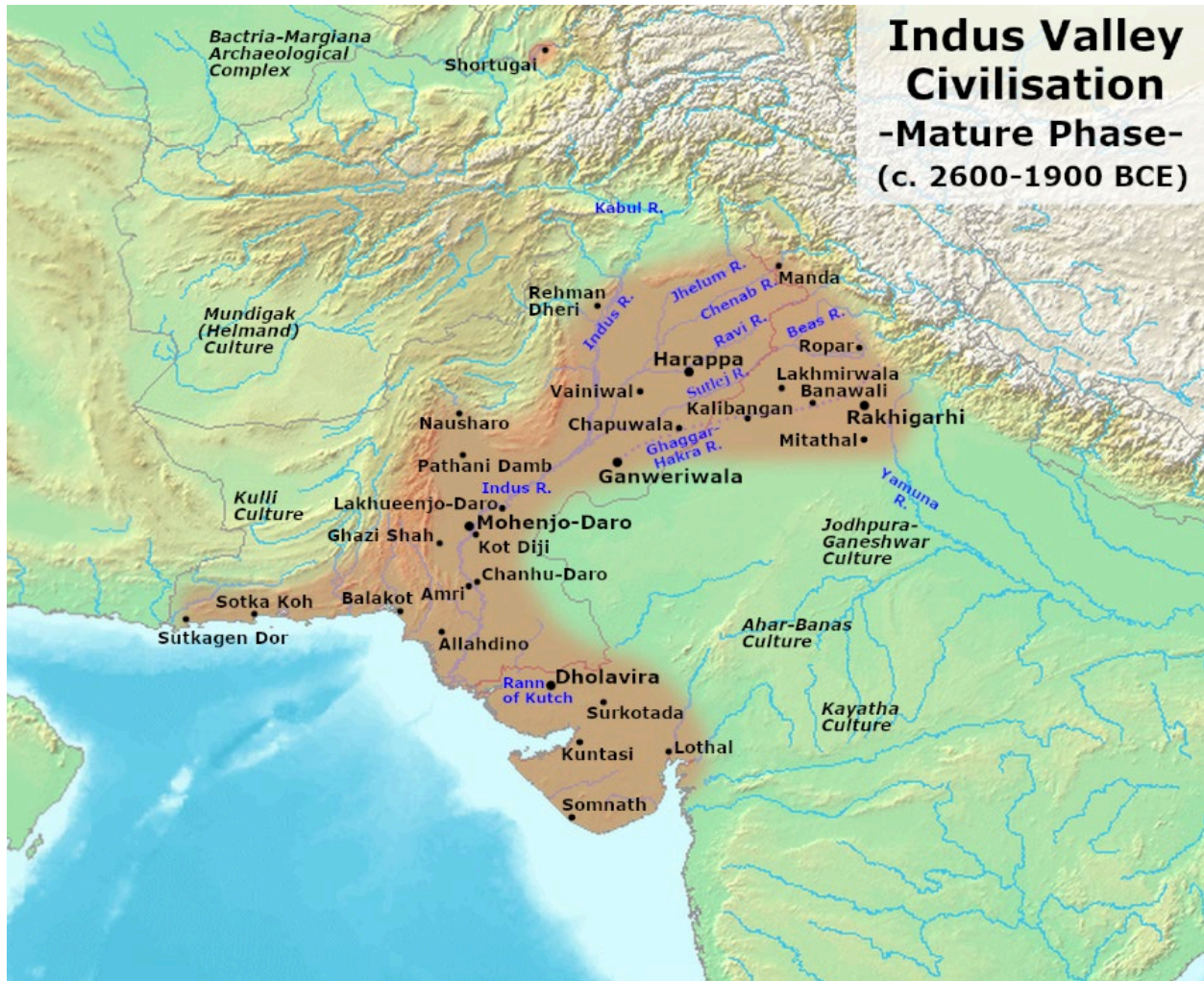
How did physical systems such as climate, weather, seasons, natural resources such as land and water influence early human populations? And in turn, what was the influence of human activity on the environment?

How are systems of power, authority, and governance that we can infer in ancient urban civilizations still present in modern government?

How did the people of the Indus Valley Civilization use innovation and technology to meet personal and community needs?

How do we learn about the past and about how the world changed and can this understanding help us understand how it might change in the future?

Map: Indus Valley Civilization Sites



Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indus_Valley_Civilization,_Mature_Phase_\(2600-1900_BCE\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indus_Valley_Civilization,_Mature_Phase_(2600-1900_BCE).png)

Introduction

Children are often fascinated by the pyramids of Egypt and many know and relish all kinds of information and facts about that era. The remains from the Indus Valley Civilization are from roughly the same period. This was the Bronze Age and societies existed in Mesopotamia and China as well.

The Indus Valley people lived from 3500 to 1700 BCE in the Indus Valley in modern day Pakistan and India and other countries of the region. The people of this region developed a sophisticated and technologically advanced urban culture. There is archaeological evidence of urban planning, a system of uniform weights and measures, city wide drainage systems in the settlements and knowledge of metallurgy. This lesson complies links to videos, slide shows, museums, online educational games along with talking points and discussion prompts about the Indus Valley Civilization.

Learning Resources

[Harappa.com](http://www.harappa.com) has been the major website on the ancient Indus or Harappan Civilization (3500-1700 BCE) since 1995. Leading scholars from India, Pakistan, the US, UK, and Europe have published their work in slideshows, essays and articles that cover the basic facts and the latest research.

A Brief Introduction to the Ancient Indus Civilization <https://www.harappa.com/har/indus-saraswati-geography.html>

Four Seals Up Close <https://www.harappa.com/blog/four-seals-close>



The archaeological ruins of Mohen-jo-Daro are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and can be explored at this link <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/138/> and at this video <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/138/video/>

The Indus Valley Civilization of ancient India
<https://www.timemaps.com/civilizations/indus-valley-civilization/>

A Bronze Age Civilization in South Asia <https://www.sahapedia.org/bronze-age-civilization-south-asia>

What was everyday life like in the Indus Valley?

Two websites with online activities –
What was everyday life like in the Indus Valley?
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zxn3r82/articles/zghy34j>

A day with a bread maker's son in an ancient city
http://www.ancientindia.co.uk/indus/story/sto_set.html

What is a civilization? Some questions and talking points.

View-Think-Ask

How can we learn about the geographic features, government, agriculture, trade, architecture, music, arts, religion, roles of men, women and children in the sites of the Indus Valley?

How do you interpret archaeological evidence when there is no written record?

Think like a scholar as you compare maps, timelines, primary and secondary sources of data and multiple cause and effect criteria to explain historical events.

Look at some pictures in the slide show about toys, clothes, jewelry, seals, drains, wells and buildings, figurines and pictures of the 'priest king'.. (Choose slides from the index <http://www.harappa.com/indus3/slideindex.html>) Look at the details of buildings, clothes, coins, toys and talk about them. Listen to your child's answers and questions.

For young children:

- What do you think their toys were like? Are they like your toys? What were they made of? Why?
- Are their houses like ours?

For 2-5 graders:

- Where is the Indus Valley?
- How long ago did these cities exist?
- What can we learn from the artifacts found there? e.g. the seals tell us that they had a written language.
- What did they do with the seals?

Grades 6 and Up:

- Encourage the older child to read the essay <http://www.harappa.com/indus3/e1.html>
- What can we infer about the people and their way of life from the buildings, city planning and absence of weapons?
- What can we infer about trade and their contact with the rest of the world from the seals and weights and measures found?

How the Indus Valley Civilization sites were discovered

In the village of Harappa (in modern day Pakistan) there was a very old ruined castle built on a hill. Nobody knew who had lived there but local legend said that it had been the home of an evil Rajah (a kind of king), who had been punished by the gods for the bad things he did, by a huge fire that burned down his castle. The ruins had stood for hundreds of years and children used to play on them. Whenever visitors came they were shown the ruins. In 1826 an English visitor called Charles Masson saw the ruins. Some years later another visitor, an archaeologist named Sir Alexander Cunningham, visited Harappa, but the ruins had been knocked down and all that was left was a huge mound of stones and rubble. Four hundred miles away from Harappa was a large area of ruined brick mounds. The people who lived nearby thought that it was a very old burial site, and called it Mohenjo-Daro or 'Mound of the Dead'. Historians used to think that the oldest cities in India and Pakistan were built in 500BCE.

Charles Masson was an English traveler who visited North West India in 1823. He wrote about the things he saw: 'In Harappa a ruined brick castle with very high walls and towers, built on a hill'. In 1853 Sir Alexander Cunningham went to study the ruins in Harappa. The buildings had been completely knocked down, but he looked very carefully through everything he could see. He found some small square stones that were very polished. They had engravings of animals and designs that no-one in India had found before. In the 1920s R D Banerji found polished stone seals just like the ones at Harappa. He was excavating at Mohenjo-Daro, which was miles away near the Indus River. He found these seals in the remains of a large city and it was at least 3500 years old.

Since these early excavations more and more archaeological work has been done in the Indus valley area. Thousands of settlements and some cities have been found. They all have the stone seals and artifacts just like the ones at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

When the British ruled India they built railways to make their lives easier. An engineer called Robert Brunton ordered workers to knock down some old walls and empty buildings. They laid the railway tracks on the stones. In 1921 the Indian government paid an archaeologist named Daya Ram Sahni, to find out more about Harappa. A trench was dug along the top of a mound. In the bottom were lots more of the stone seals like the ones Sir Alexander had found. Mr. Sahni dug further down and found seven or eight layers of houses, one on top of the other. It was an enormous city. It was also a very old city, from about 2500 BCE. This meant that it was as old as the pyramids in Egypt. The cities at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro had streets, baths and storage for grain. In the houses, archaeologists found gold and silver objects, toys made from stone and jewelry made from precious stones. Nobody knows much about the people who lived in the Indus valley 4500 years ago, but we do know they were some of the first people on earth to live in cities.

Extension activities

Examples of extension activities for students in elementary, middle, and high school grades.

Elementary	Middle	High
How was the life of people in Indus Valley Civilization similar to and different from those of people in your neighborhood today?	What role did time and place play in the development of Indus Valley Civilization?	How can the methods of inquiry of anthropology, sociology, history, economics, and geography contribute to the understanding of the Indus Valley Civilization?
Write a short story describing one aspect of the life of people in Indus Valley Civilization.	Develop an exhibit of toys, clothes, jewelry, seals and figurines from Harappan civilization for the class museum.	Write a historical account of development of Indus Valley Civilization based on evidence from primary and secondary sources.
Create one artifact of your choice from the Harappan Civilization. Use that artifact to give a 5 minute presentation to the class explaining about the life in Harappan Civilization	Construct a map depicting the different sites where Indus Valley remains were discovered.	Present a media documentary about the cultural contribution of Indus Valley Civilization.

Bonus Activity – Devised by Judith Evans at Rosebery School in Loughborough - <http://www.collaborativelearning.org/indusvalley.pdf>