

Teachers Notes for the Premium TimeMaps Unit

Ancient India

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Section 1: Introduction

One Unit, Two Resources

This Premium TimeMaps Unit is based on a **sequence of maps** showing the story of the Ancient India between 3000 BCE and 500 CE - three and a half thousand years of history!. This sequence is presented in **two resources**, a slide show and a series of map pages, facilitating **two approaches** to covering the topic with your students: a whole-class presentation; and individual project work, for which the institution will need a multiuser licence so that the students can access the resources for themselves.

1. Slide show

The slide show is primarily designed for use as a whole-class presentation. Commentary notes are available as an *aide memoir* for the teacher when delivering the presentation. They provide talking points on each map in the slide show.

The slide show can also be used by the students for their own project work. A students' commentary is also provided.

2. Timemaps map pages

These are designed specifically for use by students in their project work.

Each map shows the Indian Subcontinent at a specific date. The maps are accompanied by information about what is happening at that date.

This combination of map and information makes it easy for students to use the map pages, though not so ideal for teachers to use as a class presentation (hence the slide show, see above).

Section 2: Using the Premium Unit

The unit can be used in one of two ways:

1. Whole-class presentation

The **slide show** is specifically designed for teachers to use as a whole class presentation, offering a visual, panoramic overview of the topic. It can be used as an introduction to the topic, or as a wrap up, or as a stand-alone resource.

A commentary is provided to help teachers cover the key points for each slide.

In Section 3 Task 2 (below), are a series of questions (which can also be found at the end of the commentary), which can be answered by a single word or short phrase. The questions aim to reinforce the learning outcomes from the presentation, and can be used as a test or reinforcement exercise at the end of the presentation.

Another way might be to print the questions out and give them to the students, and ask the students to note down the answers as the slide show progresses. They can either submit their answers for marking, or collaborate in small groups to come up with an agreed set of answers.

2. Student-based enquiry work

Students use the maps, plus linked information, to find out for themselves about the topic. In the process, they gain knowledge and understanding of the topic, whilst at the same time developing analytical and other thinking skills.

Students can use either **map pages** or **slide show**. In the map pages, the linked information is right next to the maps; in the slide show, it is in the student commentary.

In either case the institution will need a multiuser licence.

Both slide show and map pages are built around the same series of maps, following the history of Ancient India (the slide show covers the period 3000 BCE to 500 CE, while the map pages covers 500 BCE to 500 CE. All the activities below, except task 1, deal with the period after 500 BCE, as the period before that date is covered by another Premium unit, Early Civilizations).

Simple forward/back navigation buttons (and in the map pages, a timeline below the maps) make it easy to move through the map sequence.

To start the sequence of map pages, click on the map of Ancient India 500 BCE.

To start the slide show, click HERE.

Teachers may wish to combine the whole-class presentation approach with the student-based approach - for examples, see Section 4.

Section 3: Activities

In this section are some suggestions to using this Premium Unit actively in the classroom.

Students can do the activities as individuals or in small groups. They will obviously need to have direct access to this Premium TimeMap unit, for which a multi-user licence is required.

Task 1. Preparatory work - Geographical Background

Students will benefit from some preliminary work to introduce India. Some suggestions are:

1. Locate India on a world map (which could be one of the Timemaps world maps, either for 3500 BCE or for 2005 CE).
2. Discuss the region's climates and geography.

In particular, note

- the great northern plain and the Indus and Ganges rivers which flow across it;
- the Hindu Kush and Himalayas mountain ranges which form the Subcontinent's northern borders;
- the dry central/southern plateau (the Deccan); and
- the lush, tropical south (though this will hardly appear in this topic).

The Monsoon

You might also like to mention the Monsoon, that great wind system that (usually) brings masses of moisture in from the Indian Ocean between June and November and dumps it as heavy rains on the Subcontinent.

This does not really figure as a major player in this topic. It does, however, have a huge impact on the climate of the region, ensuring that, while other lands at the same latitude tend to be dry desert or scrub, the Indian Subcontinent is well watered and home to highly productive agriculture.

The exception is the Deccan, that dry plateau covering central and southern India. Here, the mountain ranges on either side of the plateau (the Western and Eastern Ghats) form a barrier to the rain coming in from the ocean.

3. Discuss the question, Why is the region referred to as a "Subcontinent"?

Make sure students understand that when we talk about "Ancient India" we are referring to the whole Subcontinent, i.e. the area covered not only by India itself, but also by Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Some also include Afghanistan within the region.

Task 2. Questions

These questions can be used with the slide show (see above; hence they also appear at the end of the slide show commentary). They can also be used in the context of student-based enquiry work, as a simple way to reinforce knowledge of the topic. If so, in place of whole class presentation, students access the slide show or map pages directly to answer the questions.

The answers are given (*in Italics*).

1. By which name is the first great urban civilization of the Indian Subcontinent known? (*The Indus Valley civilization*)
2. What were the people called who entered and spread across northern India in the millennium before 500 BCE? (*Aryans*)
3. What was the priestly caste of Ancient India called? (*Brahmins*)
4. Name one of the religions which was founded in India in c. 500 BCE? (*Buddhism or Jainism*)
5. Which great military commander invaded northwest India in the late 4th century BCE? (*Alexander the Great*)
6. Which kingdom expanded to become the Mauryan empire? (*Magadha*)
7. Which of the Mauryan rulers is often considered one of the most remarkable figures in world history? (*Asoka*)
8. From which region of Eurasia did the Saka (Scythians) and Kushana originally come? (*Central Asia*)
9. The Kushana empire was a major missionary center of which religion? (*Buddhism*)
10. What was the name of the great trade route which crossed central Asia, along which missionaries traveled to other regions? (*The Silk Road*)
11. Gandhara art as a fusion of Indian and which style? (*Greek*)
12. Which kingdom expanded to become the Gupta empire? (*Magadha*)
13. Which key mathematical discoveries occurred in India at around the time of the Gupta empire? (*Zero, the decimal system*)
14. Which people from central Asia helped to undermine the power of the Gupta rulers? (*White Huns*)

Task 3. Multiple choice questions

This is a shorter alternative to Task 2.

1. Gautama Siddhartha was A. a religious philosopher and teacher, B. A famous king, C. a successful general, D. a wise minister?
2. Asoka was A. a ruthless general, B. a pragmatic minister, C. a humane ruler, D. a religious philosopher and teacher?
3. During the third century BCE, invaders created a new kingdom in northern India. From where had its rulers come from: A. China, B. Persia, C. Greece, D. Central Asia?
4. The Gupta Empire originated in the same state as A. the Kushana Empire, B. the Maurya Empire, C. the Saka Empire or D. the Satavahana Empire?

5. During the period of the Gupta Empire, Indian civilisation made key advances in A. painting, B. mathematics, C. printing technology, D. paper making?

Task 4. Critical thinking

The aim of these activities is to develop analytical thinking skills, and in particular getting students to grapple with history-specific issues such as cause and consequence, and change and continuity.

General Instructions:

1. Students read the questions below, which either they or their teacher has chosen.
2. They then go through the map sequence or slide show (in the latter case they will have to have access to a copy of the student commentary).
3. As they do this, they carefully take notes, focusing on the questions they are answering. They should bear in mind when and where events or developments happen; why they happen; and what changes as a result of them happening.
4. Students use their notes to prepare their answers. These can be in either essay form or as presentations.

(Note to teacher: suggested answers are given in italics)

The students answer one or more of the following questions, either in written form or as a presentation.

Short questions:

1. What factors favored the rise of two new religious movements in about 500 BCE?
 - *Great changes such as the rise of trade, towns and new urban classes (eg. merchants and craftsman) for whom the old Brahman religion was inadequate.*
2. Why is the emperor Asoka regarded as one of the most remarkable rulers in world history?
 - *Because of his humanity, especially in renouncing warfare.*
3. In the period between the Maurya and Gupta empires, why was the northwest of the Indian Subcontinent so important in the development of Ancient Indian culture?
 - *The influence of Greek and Persian civilization enriched that of Ancient India.*

Extended exercises:

What were the long-term trends in Classical Indian history? Give instances of the interaction between them.

The following trends could be included:

- *cultural and technological influences from abroad - the Middle East (iron; trade and its impact - Aramaic script, rise of cities), the Greeks (art and culture - the Gandhara culture);*
- *the spread of Aryan civilization southwards;*
- *the rise and spread of Buddhism;*
- *invasions from central Asia (Alexander, Scythians, Kushana, Huns);*
- *the rise and fall of numerous kingdoms, including extensive empires (Maurya, Gupta).*

There are many instances of interaction, but some are;

- *invasions influencing Indian art;*
- *Indian belief-system (Buddhism) influencing invaders (Greeks, Kushana);*
- *economic developments (trade) influencing settlement patterns (cities) and belief systems (by encouraging rise of Buddhism and Jainism).*

Section 4: Plans of Action

Here in this section are possible strategies, plans of action you might like to follow (or adapt as you see fit) for using some of these activities.

Plan A:

This plan combines the presentation approach with the student-centered enquiry approach. Do this if you are doing this topic as a major topic with the class.

1. Complete Task 1: Geographical Background.
2. Introduce the topic by presenting the slide show to the class. Use the teacher's commentary as a guide.
3. The students complete Task 4 by answering one or more of the questions given there.

They use either the map pages or the slide show (plus student commentary) to answer the question(s).

They can do this task as individuals, for their own project work. Alternatively, they can do it in small groups.

All the students or groups can be asked to do the same questions, or all to do different ones.

4. The students then write up and submit their work in essay form for marking, or prepare a presentation for showing to the class.

Plan B:

This plan will take less time than Plan A to complete.

1. Complete Task 1: Geographical Background.
2. Show the slide show to the class, using the teachers' commentary as a guide. Tell the students that there will be a test at the end.
3. Ask the questions in Task 2 to the class as a whole, with the students calling out the answers (if they remember any!).
4. Give out the questions on printed sheets (for this, use the questions as given at the end of the students' commentary). Show the class the slide show again. This time they take notes in preparation for the same test again.
5. The students write their answers on this sheet and submit for marking.

Plan C:

This should take longer than Plan B to complete, but not as long as Plan A.

1. Preliminary work: Geographical Background.

2. The students are handed copies of the questions (use the questions as given at the end of the students' commentary).
3. The students then work their way through the map pages or the slide show (if the latter, using the students' commentary), and as they do so they note down the answers to the questions.
4. The teacher then shows the slide show to the class as a whole, using the teachers commentary as a guide. In the course of this presentation they will give the students the answers to the questions.

Further References

Here is a selected list of Timemaps articles on the topic of Ancient India.

[Ancient India](#) - an overview of Indian civilization in ancient times

[The Indus Valley Civilization](#) - a survey of the earliest civilization in the Indian Subcontinent

[Classical India](#) - a survey of Indian history from c. 700 BCE to 300 BCE

[The Mauryan Empire](#) - a survey of the rise and fall of this great empire

[Gandharan India](#) - a look at the rise and influence of the Indo-Greek culture of northwest India

[The Deccan Empires](#) - covers the most powerful states of central India, both in the ancient and medieval periods

[The Gupta Empire](#) - a survey of the rise and fall of this powerful state