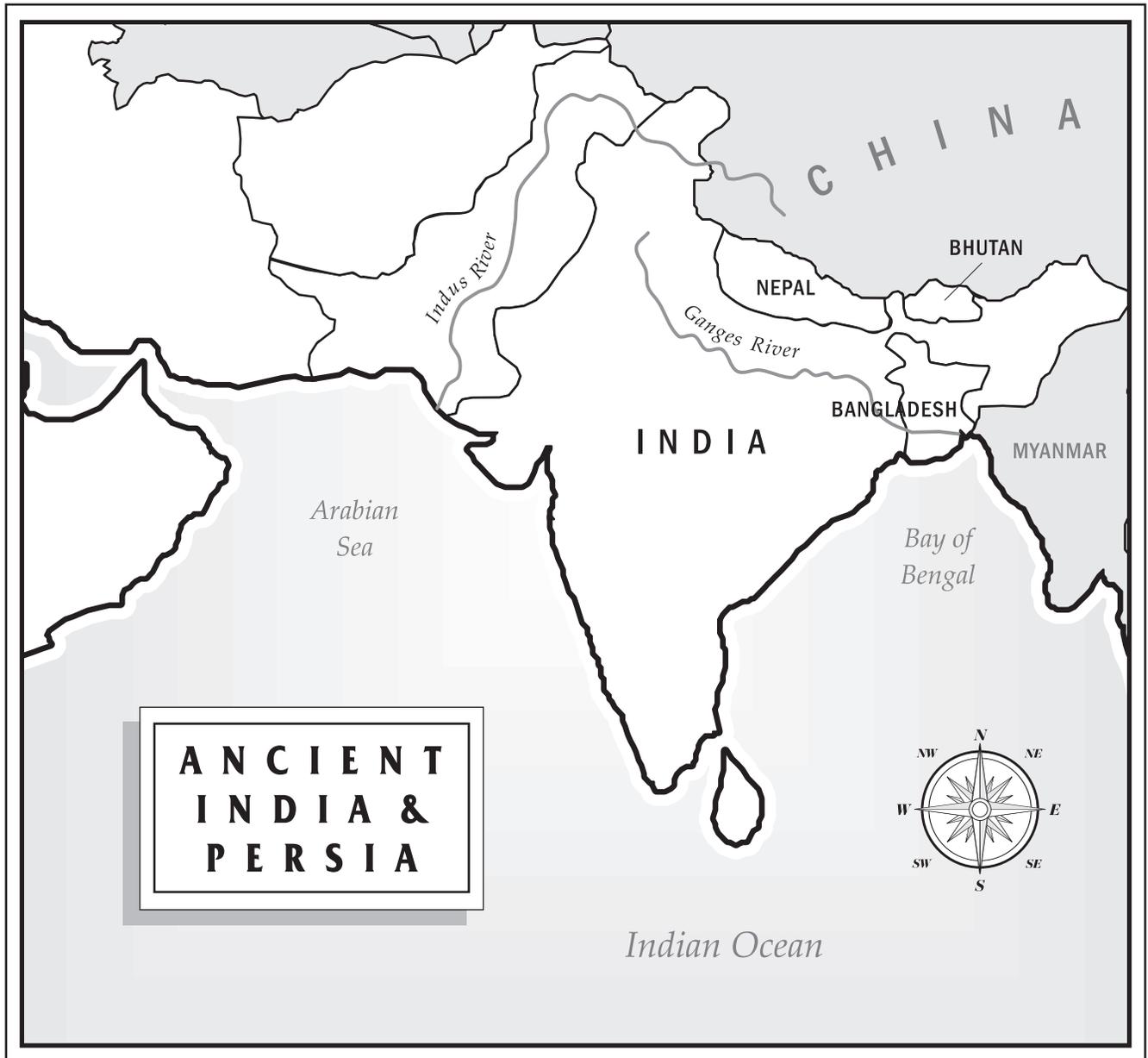


Ancient India and Persia

Map of South Asia

Name: _____ Date: _____

In this unit, you will learn about ancient India and Persia. Look carefully at the map. Put an X on the Ganges River. Put a Y on the Indus River.



Ancient India and Persia

Vocabulary

1. **Aryans**—Indus River Valley civilization from about 1500 B.C.
2. **Ashoka the Great**—leader of the Mauryan Empire in 270 B.C.
3. **Brahman**—the life-force, creator and destroyer in Hinduism
4. **Buddha**—Siddhartha Gautama after his enlightenment
5. **Buddhism**—ancient religion of India
6. **caste**—rigid social group into which a person is born
7. **Cyrus II**—great leader and founder of the ancient Persian Empire
8. **Eightfold Path**—teachings of the Buddha to help achieve happiness
9. **enlightenment**—Buddhist state of little to no suffering
10. **Four Noble Truths**—basic understandings in Buddhism
11. **Gupta Empire**—Indian Empire in South Asia from 280 A.D. to 550 A.D.
12. **Harappa**—ancient city found in the Indus River Valley
13. **Hinduism**—ancient religion still practiced by millions
14. **Indus River Valley**—location of ancient civilization in present-day India and Pakistan
15. **karma**—the consequences of a person's behavior

Ancient India and Persia

Vocabulary (cont.)

16. **Mauryan Empire**—first Indian empire in South Asia
17. **meditation**—the practice of sitting quietly and clearing the mind of thought
18. **Mohenjo-Daro**—ancient city found in the Indus River Valley
19. **monotheism**—the belief in one god
20. **nomads**—people who have no permanent home
21. **reincarnation**—belief that after death one is reborn into a new life
22. **Sanskrit**—ancient language which emerged in the Indus River Valley
23. **Siddhartha Gautama**—given name of the Buddha
24. **untouchables**—in Hinduism, people so low they had no caste
25. **Vedas**—collected stories, poems, and songs of the Aryans
26. **Zoroastrianism**—monotheistic religion founded in ancient Persia

The Aryans, Persians, and Indians

Brief #1

Focus

The Indus River Valley was the location of many ancient civilizations.

The Indus River Valley is located in South Asia. It is where the countries of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan come together. In about 3500 B.C., human beings settled there. Archeologists have discovered many artifacts from about 2500 B.C. that showed that a great civilization existed there.

The ruins of two great ancient cities were found by archeologists in the 19th century. **The cities were called Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.** Scientists found ancient writing and many statues of what might have been gods and goddesses. There were roads, brick homes, and public baths. These ancient people had domesticated cats and dogs, as well as livestock like pigs and buffalo. Agriculture was important to their way of life. They grew barley, wheat, and cotton.



The Aryans

The Aryans were a group of people who migrated to the Indus River Valley in about 1500 B.C. They came from the area that we currently call Russia. For a time, the Aryans were nomads. **Nomads are people who have no permanent home.**

The Aryans lived by herding cattle and sheep. They lived in small groups or clans and were ruled by a rajah. Like some other cultures, they rode horse-drawn chariots.

The language that the Aryans spoke is called Sanskrit. **Sanskrit is a very ancient language. The Aryans were great storytellers. Their stories, poems, and songs are collected in a book called the Vedas.**

There are four Vedas: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Athara. Veda means *knowledge* in Sanskrit.

After a time, the Aryans began to settle in one place. They farmed and traded with each other. Clans of Aryans often fought battles with one another. The Aryan culture spread over a large area of India.

Vocabulary

1. Indus River Valley
2. Harappa
3. Mohenjo-Daro
4. Aryans
5. nomads
6. Sanskrit
7. Vedas



Persians

The Aryans were not the only people who migrated to the Indus River Valley. Persians came too. People back then migrated for the same reasons people do nowadays: to find a better life.

The Aryans, Persians, and Indians

Brief #1 (cont.)



Persians (cont.)

The Persian people were from the area that we call Iran. They migrated south to the Indus River Valley.

Cyrus II is thought to be the father of the Persian Empire. He was a great leader and warrior. By conquering the Babylonians, Phoenicians, and the Assyrians, he was able to create one of the largest empires in the ancient world. The Persian Empire was at its height in about 500 B.C. and lasted until about 640 A.D.

The Persians made many contributions to the civilized world. They excelled at mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. The religion of Zoroastrianism began in ancient Persia. This religion is still practiced today. Zoroastrianism is monotheistic. Monotheism is the belief in one god.

Vocabulary (cont.)

8. Cyrus II
9. Zoroastrianism
10. monotheism
11. Mauryan Empire
12. Ashoka the Great
13. Gupta Empire



The Mauryan Empire

The first Indian empire was the Mauryan Empire. It comprised almost the whole of the area that we know as India. In about 320 B.C., an Indian soldier named Chandragupta Maurya conquered many smaller kingdoms and unified them under his rule.

Maurya's grandson Ashoka came to power in 270 B.C. He is known as Ashoka the Great. Ashoka the Great built huge columns out of sandstone. These columns were kind of like ancient newspapers. On them he would carve out important information about his political policies.

Ashoka the Great practiced the religion of Buddhism. (You will learn more about Buddhism in the next brief.) He sent missionaries all over his empire to teach about the religion. He also built monuments in places that were important in the life of the Buddha. Ashoka was a strong leader, but after his death, the Mauryan Empire slowly fell apart. It ended in about 320 A.D.

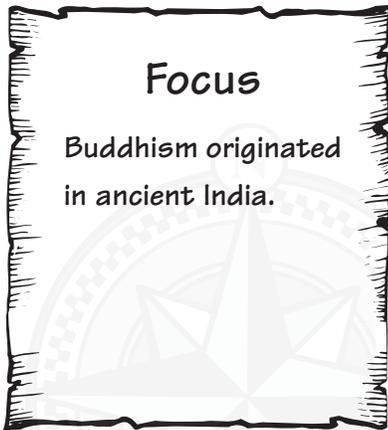


The Gupta Empire

The next great empire in ancient Indian history is the Gupta Empire (about 280 A.D.–550 A.D.) The Guptas excelled in music, mathematics, and astronomy. They invented the decimal number system that we currently use. They also made advancements in medicine. They knew how to fix broken bones and how to use herbs to help the sick.

Buddhism

Brief #2



Buddhism is a religion that originated in India in about the fourth century B.C. The religion was founded by a man named Siddhartha Gautama.

According to Buddhist texts, Siddhartha was born into a wealthy and noble family. His father wanted to protect him from the ugliness in the world, so he discouraged him from ever leaving the safety of the palace.

As Siddhartha grew older, he left the palace. He got to experience what life was like for most people. He saw that many people were sick and old. He saw much unhappiness and suffering. These experiences caused Siddhartha to leave the comfort of his privileged life and try to figure out how to ease suffering in the world.

Siddhartha traveled and met many other religious monks who were also trying to figure out how to end human suffering. He tried many different techniques. He ate and slept very little. Some monks believed that if you deprived the body of food and sleep, it would be easier for you to see the truth of what causes suffering.

But Siddhartha thought there might be a better way. According to Buddhist texts, he meditated under a tree for a long time. **Meditation is the practice of sitting quietly and clearing the mind of thought.** It was during this meditation that Siddhartha believed he found the answers to his questions. **From that point on he was known as the Buddha, or the enlightened one.** He spent the rest of his life traveling and teaching people what he had learned through his meditation.

Vocabulary

1. Buddhism
2. Siddhartha Gautama
3. meditation
4. Buddha
5. Four Noble Truths
6. Eightfold Path
7. enlightenment



The Teachings of the Buddha

The Buddha taught that if you wanted to live a peaceful life free from suffering, then you had to understand the **Four Noble Truths**:

- **Suffering is a part of life. Everyone suffers.**
- **Suffering is caused because people think that material possessions can make them happy and they spend all of their time craving these things.**
- **If you stop craving material things, you can achieve happiness.**
- **There are things you can practice that will help you stop craving things.**

Buddhism *(cont.)*

Brief #2



The Teachings of the Buddha (cont.)

The Buddha established an **Eightfold Path** that he believed could help people to learn how to live a more peaceful and happy life. **The Eightfold Path teaches people how to change their speech, thoughts, and behavior to achieve happiness. It also teaches the importance of meditation in easing suffering.**

The Buddha believed that any person, whether rich or poor, young or old, had the ability to become enlightened. **Enlightenment means achieving a state in which you have significantly reduced or eliminated suffering.**



The Legacy of the Buddha

The Buddha lived to be eighty years old. He died around 479 B.C. After his death, his followers helped to spread his teachings far and wide. Ashoka the Great was responsible for sending Buddhist missionaries to different parts of Asia to help spread the Buddhist philosophy.

Today, millions of people in nearly every country in the world practice Buddhism.



Hinduism

Brief #3

Focus

The ancient Indian religion of Hinduism has hundreds of millions of followers.

Hinduism is considered to be the world's oldest religion. It is unique among the world's religions because no one person started or founded the religions. Hinduism grew out of and evolved from the Aryan tradition of the Vedas probably about 1700 B.C.

Hinduism is a very diverse religion with many gods and goddesses, rituals and beliefs.



Brahman

In Hinduism, Brahman is the life-force; the creator and destroyer of everything. Brahman can take many forms. The three main forms, or gods, that Brahman can take are the following:

- Brahma, who is the creator
- Vishnu, who is the preserver
- Shiva, who is the destroyer



Hindu Beliefs

Hindus believe in the principals of karma. **Karma is the result or the consequence of a person's actions.** In Hinduism, karma is a powerful force.

Hindus also believe in reincarnation. **Reincarnation is the belief that after a person dies, he or she is reborn into a new life.** The kind of life a person is reborn into is determined by his or her karma. If a person lives a good life and creates good karma, then the life he or she will be reborn into will be good. If a person lives a bad life, and creates bad karma, then the life he or she will be reborn into will be bad.



The Caste System

Hinduism is the main religion in India. If you are a Hindu, then you are born into a caste. **A caste is a rigid social group.** The castes were written about in the Vedas. The caste into which you are born decides the kinds of job you will have and whom you are allowed to marry.

Vocabulary

1. Hinduism
2. Brahman
3. karma
4. reincarnation
5. caste
6. untouchables

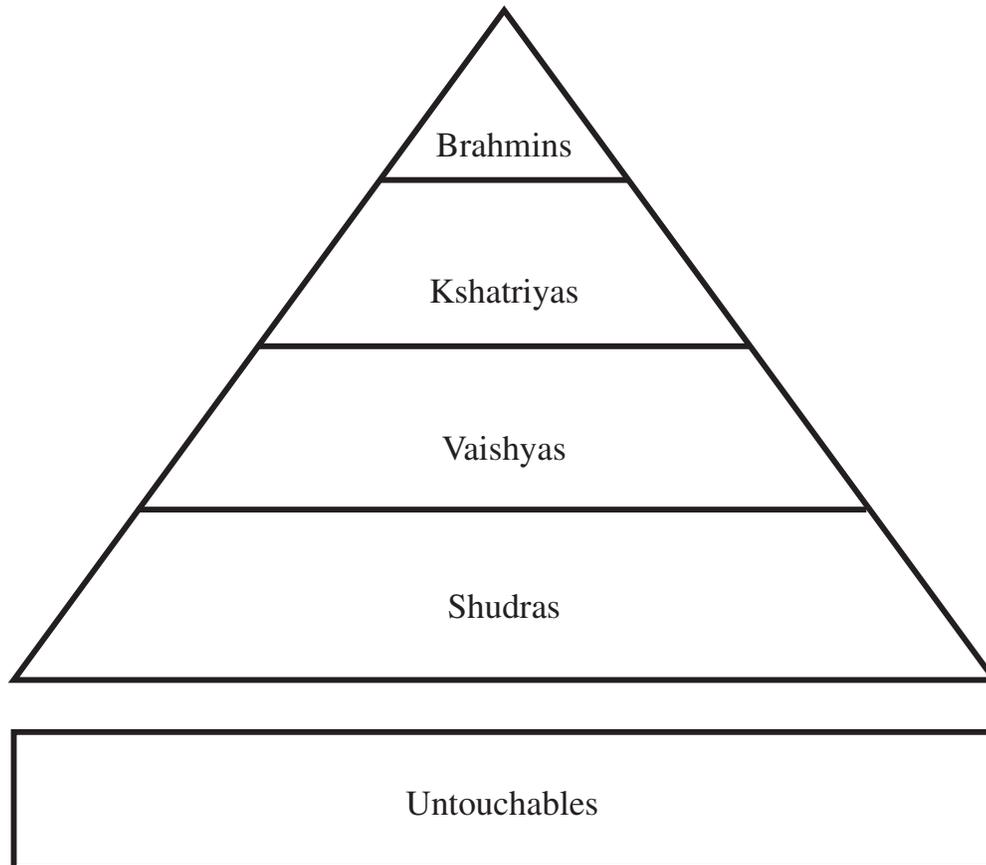
Hinduism

Brief #3 (cont.)



The Caste System (cont.)

In Hinduism there are four main castes.



The Brahmins were priests, teachers, and scholars. Kshatriyas were the warrior class, or soldiers, and also the politicians. Vaishyas were merchants and farmers. Shudras were people who did manual labor or who were the servants of the people in the other castes.

The untouchables were people considered to be so low that they were not even in a caste. These were people who traditionally did work that was considered unclean. The Hindu belief in reincarnation and karma helped to keep the caste system entrenched for centuries. But since the 1950s, it has been illegal to persecute people due to their caste.



Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism is a widespread practice in Hinduism. Many Hindus believe in nonviolence toward both people and animals. There is also a belief that nonvegetarian foods like meat and fish can dull the mind and interfere with the practice of meditation.