

## Ancient India

### Section 1



#### MAIN IDEAS

1. The geography of India includes high mountains, great rivers and heavy seasonal rain.
2. Harappan civilization developed along the Indus River.
3. The Aryan migration to India changed the region's civilization.

### Key Terms and People

**subcontinent** a large landmass smaller than a continent

**monsoon** seasonal wind patterns that cause wet and dry seasons

**Sanskrit** ancient India's most influential language

### Section Summary

#### GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA

India is home to one of the world's earliest civilizations. India is so huge it's called a **subcontinent**, which is a large landmass that is smaller than a continent. A subcontinent is usually separated from a continent by physical features, such as mountains. The world's highest mountains, the Himalayas, are in India. India also has a vast desert, many fertile plains, and rugged plateaus. The Indus River, which flows from the Himalayas and is located mainly in present-day Pakistan, is the cradle of ancient Indian civilization. As in Egypt and Kush, the flooding river created fertile plains where people first settled. India's hot and humid climate is heavily influenced by **monsoons**, wind patterns that cause wet and dry seasons.

Circle the name of the world's highest mountains.

What effect do monsoons have on India's climate?

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#### HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

India's first civilization was the Harappan civilization, which developed along the Indus River valley. Named after the ancient city of Harappa, archaeologists believe Harappans thrived between 2300 and 1700 BC. In fact, most information about Harappans comes from the ruins of Harappa and

another major city, Mohenjo Daro. Each city was well planned and built in the shadow of a fortress that could easily oversee the city streets.

The cities were very advanced. Most houses had indoor plumbing. The Harappans developed beautiful artisan crafts and a system of weights and measures. They also developed India's first writing system, but scholars have not been able to read it. Because of this, we know little for sure about the Harappan government, though it is thought that there were kings, who might have been thought of as gods. It's also unclear why the Harappan civilization crumbled.

### ARYAN MIGRATIONS

Originally nomads from Central Asia, the Aryans had moved into the Indus and Ganges River valleys by 1200 BC. Unlike the Harappans, they had no central government and they did not build planned cities. Aryans lived in small communities, each run by a local leader, or raja.

The Aryans spoke **Sanskrit** and developed a rich tradition of poems and hymns, but they did not have a writing system. Instead, their works survived from generation to generation by word of mouth. The lasting influence of these early written works made Sanskrit the most important language of ancient India. Much of what we know about the early Aryans comes to us through Sanskrit works.

**DIRECTIONS** Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

- The \_\_\_\_\_ civilization was India's first civilization.  
(Aryan/Harappan)
- Ancient writings known as the \_\_\_\_\_ include poems, hymns, myths, and rituals that have taught us a great deal about Aryan society.  
(Vedas/Sanskrit)
- The \_\_\_\_\_, which are located in northern India, are the highest mountains in the world. (raja/Himalayas)
- The leader of each village was given the title of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Vedas/raja)
- The \_\_\_\_\_ migrated into India from regions to the northwest. (Aryans/Harappan civilization)
- \_\_\_\_\_ was the language of the \_\_\_\_\_.

Why was it an advantage for the streets of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa to be viewed from a fortress?

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Why do we know so little about the Harappans?

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The early Aryans had a rich and expressive language, but they did not write. How did they preserve their poems and their history without writing?

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