

# Unit 16 How can we find out about the Indus Valley civilisation?

## ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children learn about the Indus Valley civilisation from archaeological sources. Children find out about the characteristic features of the society and period, through historical enquiry. The unit structure can be applied to studies of other non-European societies, eg *ancient Egypt, the Aztecs*.

## WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds on other units that encourage children to carry out an enquiry based on the use of archaeological evidence, eg Unit 6B 'Why have people invaded and settled in Britain in the past? – An Anglo-Saxon case study'. It complements Unit 10 'What can we find out about ancient Egypt from what has survived?' by focusing on the ways of life in a non-European society in the distant past.

## ADAPTING THE UNIT FOR A DIFFERENT AGE GROUP

Year 3 and 4 children could:

- be given guidance on how to locate the civilisation on a map and place it correctly in time. (They may need to be introduced to the concepts of BC and AD.)
- be given an introduction to the work of an archaeologist and an activity that demonstrates how archaeologists work
- be given greater assistance in drawing conclusions from their enquiry

## PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if the children have:

- used chronological conventions, eg *BC, AD, ancient*
- learnt about aspects of life in other periods and societies
- identified different representations of the past
- used artefacts to find out about the past

## VOCABULARY

In this unit, children will have opportunities to use:

- words associated with the passing of time, eg *ancient, BC, AD, century*
- words associated with archaeology, eg *archaeologist, museum, evidence*
- words associated with the Indus Valley civilisation, eg *pictograms, ideograms, seals, granary, citadel, kilns*

## RESOURCES

- maps of the world, Indus Valley civilisation, Mohenjo-Daro; street plan of the local town
- a time line showing 2,500 BC to present day
- information on the discovery of the Indus Valley civilisation
- information on archaeological evidence about Mohenjo-Daro
- pictures of artefacts, aspects of life and seals

All of the information referred to in this unit can be obtained from the Commonwealth Institute pack *Indus Valley* and many of the activities are derived from suggestions and activities in this pack. A world history time line is available from the British Museum.

## EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

most children will:

make appropriate use of dates and terms, eg *AD, BC, century*; demonstrate factual knowledge and understanding about the everyday lives of men and women in the Indus Valley civilisation and use it to describe the characteristic features; show how some aspects of the Indus Valley civilisation have been interpreted in different ways; select and combine information from a range of archaeological sources; communicate their knowledge and understanding of the Indus Valley civilisation in an organised and structured way

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

recognise some similarities and differences between the Indus Valley civilisation and other societies or periods they know about; ask and answer questions about the Indus Valley civilisation by using at least one source of information

some children will have progressed further and will:

use their knowledge and understanding of the Indus Valley civilisation to make links with other societies and periods; select and combine information from a range of sources to reach conclusions

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- to locate the Indus Valley civilisation
- about the environment of the Indus Valley and how this could have affected settlement patterns and lifestyles

- to use BC and AD appropriately
- how the Indus Valley civilisation relates to other historical periods and to the chronology of world history

- how the Indus Valley civilisation was discovered, who by, and when
- what was discovered
- the sort of questions that can be answered from archaeological discoveries

- that cities have some features in common
- about how people lived in Mohenjo-Daro

- to use pictures of artefacts to find out about a particular aspect of life in Mohenjo-Daro
- to answer a historical question in an organised and structured way
- to consider how objects are presented in museums

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

### Where was the Indus Valley civilisation?

Help the children to locate the Indus Valley on a world map and identify environmental and physical features including deserts, mountains, rivers, oceans. Use information from the map to ask and answer questions, *eg Why would people settle in the Indus Valley?*

Help the children to locate Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro on a map of the Indus Valley civilisation. Ask the children to measure the distances between sites and identify the location of the sites in relation to rivers, mountains or sites. Ask them to use this information to identify the pattern of settlement in the Indus Valley.

Ask the children to compare this settlement pattern with their own area today.

### How long ago was the Indus Valley civilisation?

Show the children BC and AD on a time line. Ask them to attach labels of the historical periods studied, *eg Roman Britain, the Tudors*, and place 'Indus Valley civilisation (c2,500–1,500 BC)' at the correct place on the time line.

Discuss with the children the relationship between different historical periods. Ask them to consider which parts of the time line we know most about and where the biggest gaps are.

### How was the Indus Valley civilisation discovered?

Provide information about the two archaeologists who discovered the Indus Valley civilisation and ask the children to use it to answer questions, *eg When were the discoveries made? What did the archaeologists find? What conclusions did they reach?*

Brainstorm the questions that archaeologists could answer after their discovery of the Indus Valley civilisation, *eg Who lived there? What was life like? What were homes like?*

### What do streets and buildings tell us about life in Mohenjo-Daro?

Use a site plan of Mohenjo-Daro to help the children locate important buildings, *eg granary, citadel, great bath*. Ask the children to compare the plan with a street plan of their locality, considering where the important buildings are located and the distances between buildings.

Provide information about houses in Mohenjo-Daro, and what was found in and around them, *eg drains, sewers, statues, kilns*. Ask the children to find out and write about life in Mohenjo-Daro. Group the results of their enquiries under the headings: 'Sanitation and hygiene', 'Occupations', 'Wealth and poverty'.

### What do pictures of artefacts tell us about life in Mohenjo-Daro?

Show the children pictures of artefacts. Ask them to focus on one and draw it. Ask the children to write a description that covers: its measurements, its decoration, why it might have been decorated, what it was used for, and questions they would like to ask about the artefact.

Ask the children to find out about a particular aspect of life in Mohenjo-Daro, *eg fashion, food, work*, using pictures of artefacts. Give them questions to structure their enquiry, *eg Which artefacts can you use to find out about fashion? What does each of these artefacts tell you about fashion? What other questions would you like to ask?*

Ask the children to select, arrange and label pictures of artefacts for a 'museum display' about the aspect of life they investigated. Ask them to produce a 'museum guide' explaining the background to their enquiry about Mohenjo-Daro and what they found out.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### CHILDREN

- locate places on a world map
- identify environmental and physical features and how these might affect settlement and lifestyle
- measure distances in scale on maps and make comparisons with their own area

- use BC and AD correctly
- sequence the historical periods they have studied from the Indus Valley civilisation to present day
- talk about key features of past societies and compare them with others

- ask and answer questions about the archaeological discoveries made in the Indus Valley
- ask appropriate and relevant questions about the Indus Valley civilisation

- describe how Mohenjo-Daro was organised and make comparisons with a town today
- select information from sources
- write about key features of Mohenjo-Daro

- give an accurate and detailed description of one artefact
- select sources and infer information that is relevant to their topic
- use sources to describe an aspect of everyday life in Mohenjo-Daro
- arrange a display and/or make a presentation that provides information about an aspect of life in Mohenjo-Daro

## POINTS TO NOTE

These activities provide an opportunity to make links with 'Unit 14 – Rivers' in QCA's scheme of work for geography.

This activity can be linked with what children have learnt about life, *eg in Tudor or in Victorian times*. This will enable links and connections to be made throughout the unit. For instance, wealth and poverty can be compared across historical periods to develop children's understanding of progress.

The questions should be displayed and used later to link to the later activity 'What have we found out about the Indus Valley civilisation?'

Mohenjo-Daro means 'mound of dead'. There are opportunities to link this work with prior learning on place names, *eg Unit 6C*.

To extend this activity, an important building could be investigated in depth, *eg children could focus on the great bath, its purpose and who might have used it*. Children could be encouraged to explain their choices.

A possible out-of-school activity to prepare for this activity is 'What am I?' Children choose one artefact at home and describe it without using the name of the artefact. For example, 'I am plastic. People keep pencils in me...' Children could read out their 'What am I?' descriptions in the next lesson. Other children could work out what their artefact is.

Pictures of artefacts are available in the Commonwealth Institute pack *Indus Valley*. These could be photocopied onto card and laminated.

For the 'museum display', each group could present their findings to the class or travel around the class 'visiting' all the 'museums'.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- how and why artefacts are classified
- to group pictures of artefacts into categories

- about the written evidence of the Indus Valley civilisation
- how people wrote before alphabets

- what an ideogram is
- that there can be more than one interpretation of the past, *eg because of limitations of evidence*

- to summarise what they have found out about the Indus Valley civilisation
- that there are gaps in evidence from the past

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

### How and why do we classify evidence in history?

Use the 'museum displays' to focus on classification of artefacts from the Indus Valley civilisation, *eg Did more than one group use the same artefact pictures in their display? Which pictures of artefacts were used most? In what other ways could artefacts be classified?*

Ask the children to classify (group together) their pictures of artefacts into two categories that are different from the headings used for the enquiry on streets and buildings in Mohenjo-Daro.

Discuss with the class the reasons for different classifications and why museums and archaeologists use them.

### What sort of written evidence is there of the Indus Valley civilisation?

In pairs or small groups, play a 'Pictionary'-type game, drawing a picture to communicate a word. Discuss the children's drawings, focusing on why they chose to make them simple or complicated, *eg Which words were easier to communicate and which words were harder?*

Give the children pictures of seals from the Indus Valley civilisation. Provide a list of questions about the seals, *eg Why do you think so many seals show animals? What do you think seals were used for? Who might have used them?* Ask the children to use these questions to describe the seals.

### How can the fish ideogram be interpreted?

Ask the children to identify all the fish signs on the seals.

Collect two or more interpretations of the meaning of the fish ideogram. Give different interpretations to different sections of class without revealing what you are doing. Ask the children questions about the interpretations, *eg What does a fish show? What reasons are given for the way it looks?* When the children have realised that there is more than one interpretation, discuss the similarities and differences between interpretations.

### What have we found out about life in Indus Valley civilisation?

Brainstorm what the children have found out about the Indus Valley civilisation. *What are the most important things you found out about life in the Indus Valley civilisation? How did you find out? What do you still want to know?*

Remind the children of the list of questions they produced for the activity 'How was the Indus Valley civilisation discovered?' Ask the children to select and answer questions from the list.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### CHILDREN

- work out why artefacts have been grouped together
- suggest reasons for different classifications

- communicate with each other through pictures
- suggest how seals could be translated
- write about how the Indus Valley civilisation used pictures and suggest the reasons why

- pick out what is the same and what is different in two explanations of the fish ideogram
- suggest reasons why there are different interpretations

- select questions and use relevant information to answer them
- suggest why they can answer some questions more fully than others

## POINTS TO NOTE

At least 24 pictures of seals are available. These could be photocopied onto card and laminated. Seals are on display in the British Museum and Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Referring to the game discuss what pictures on seals might be for. You will need to establish that Indus Valley civilisation script moves from right to left.

Bilingual children may know about linguistic variation and languages that are written from right to left.

Exploring the spiritual significance of animals in cultures could lead to links with religious education.

This activity could be adapted by giving children sentences from two interpretations on card and asking them to complete a sorting exercise.

For this activity you will need to revisit the questions identified by the children at the beginning of the unit.

The class 'museum displays' can also be used as a source of information for this activity.



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