

#9417

SOUTH ASIA: PEOPLE AND PLACES

BENCHMARK MEDIA
2000
Grade Levels: 8-12
25 minutes



DESCRIPTION

South Asia, comprised of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, and Afghanistan, is a region with diverse peoples, religions, cultures, climates, industries, and foods. After a brief history of the area, discusses each diversity, especially the main religions of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. Focus is primarily on India.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: World History

- Standard: Understands transformations in Asian societies in the era of European expansion
 - Benchmark: Understands how the spread of different religions affected various Asian countries (e.g., how and why Islam continued to expand in India, Southeast Asia, and China)
 - Benchmark: Understands the spread of different religions throughout the world (e.g., the varieties of Buddhism and Hindu practice and teaching that developed in Asia and their influence on social and cultural life; major world religions in the mid-18th century, their relative sizes, and their degrees of success at winning new converts; how the development of Buddhism in Japan compared to that in China)
- Standard: Understands how post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up
 - Benchmark: Understands nationalist movements and other attempts by colonial countries to achieve independence after World War II (e.g., the impact of Indian nationalism on other movements in Africa and Asia, and reasons for the division of the subcontinent; how World War II and postwar global politics affected the mass nationalist movements in colonial Africa and Southeast Asia; factors that enabled some African and Asian countries to achieve independence through constitutional devolution of power, while others used armed revolution; the methods used by Indians to achieve independence from British rule and the effects of Mohandas Gandhi's call for nonviolent action)

Subject Area: Geography—Places and Regions

- Standard: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place

- Benchmark: Knows the human characteristics of places (e.g., cultural characteristics such as religion, language, politics, technology, family structure, gender; population characteristics; land uses; levels of development)
- Benchmark: Knows the physical characteristics of places (e.g., soils, land forms, vegetation, wildlife, climate, natural hazards)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To observe how South Asia's cultural, economic, and religious legacies are derived from ancient invasions and religious leaders, and later British colonial exploitation.
2. To illustrate how the terrain and climate of South Asia varies widely, and how that affects regional agriculture, commerce, and the way people live.
3. To examine the region's cultural diversity.



BEFORE SHOWING

1. Using a wall map, have students locate the Indian subcontinent, and the countries which include South Asia: India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. How far is it from where they live? Note the locations of the subcontinent's major bodies of water and rivers, mountain terrain and lowlands related to climatic variations, and major cities. Note that the Himalayas, the highest mountains in the world, form a barrier between the Indian subcontinent and the rest of Asia. How do these physical geographic features and climate compare with those of the United States?
2. Discuss elements that make up a culture such as religion, language, sports and leisure activities, foods, music, art, clothes, family structure, etc. Ask students to make a list of how various cultures have shaped their lives, for example, the foods they eat, the sports they play, the language(s) they speak, the music they listen to, their religion. How would their everyday lives be different if they were not influenced by other cultures?
3. Discuss how terrain, climate and natural resources affect the way people live and work in your local area. Expand the concept to various regions of the country. When they view the video, ask students to notice the specific links between terrain and climate and the way people in different regions of South Asia live.
4. Discuss how transportation and communications have influenced life today in the students' own area. How have historic land and air transportation routes with outside regions affected the local economy, local cultural values? What changes in local commerce and culture has been the result of modern communications?

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Describe the topography of the Indian subcontinent.
2. Where are the largest cities located? Why?
3. How do the mountains of India affect where the monsoon rains fall?



Applications and Activities

1. Divide the class into two groups, and assign each group to one of these Hindu castes: the Brahmins, or the Untouchables. Ask the students to prepare a class presentation on one aspect of their group's caste, i.e., traditional livelihood, or a typical day in the life of a person. What conflicts might develop in a society with such a rigid social structure as the caste system? How else might lower castes in rural areas, where the caste tradition is stronger, escape?
2. Ask students to plan a trip to South Asia, using maps, consulate tourist information, information from the Internet, books and articles, and the video. Reports should address how they would travel, where they would choose to visit, what they would want to see and do, which time of year they would prefer to travel and why, what clothing they would bring, and what the weather and landscape would be like.

SUMMARY

One of the world's earliest settlements was created in the Indus River Valley in India, by the Dravidians. Some 4,000 years ago, the Aryans invaded from the north, laying the foundations for Hinduism. About 3,000 years ago, invading Muslim armies ended Hindu rule. By the 17th century, South Asia had a brisk trade with Europe. By force, Great Britain made most of South Asia a colony, established regional unity, and had a lasting effect on the region's infrastructure and culture, including language, sports, and education. After World War II, led by Mahatma Gandhi, India gained independence, and Pakistan and Bangladesh were split off. Indian culture remains vibrant in the performing arts.

Hinduism and Islam are South Asia's most prominent religions. Eighty percent of India's population is Hindu, which believes in the caste system; Islam, the other most important South Asian religion, unlike Hinduism, believes in a single God, Allah, and the writings of their prophet Muhammad.

Buddhism is founded on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known as Buddha. He taught that people could free themselves from suffering through the discipline and benefits of meditation, and the caring for all living things.

Sikhism, founded only 500 years ago, has revised Hindu teachings, and honors its teachers, or gurus. The followers of Jainism are so complete in their respect for all of life that Jain monks wear a mouth mask to prevent the accidental inhalation of tiny insects.

Vast stretches of fertile farmland make agriculture South Asia's most important industry. Crops vary by climate and geography. There is a substantial economy in cottage industries, and local services.

Urban air pollution from heavy traffic and trash burning has become a problem.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Faith and Belief: Five Major World Religions #8078
- Hinduism #8492
- India: History and Heritage #2398
- Just a Little Red Dot #8786
- Sikhism #8562



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **PRB ASIA/PACIFIC**

<http://www.prb.org/>

From the Population Reference Bureau, click on the “Asia/Pacific” link under the “Regions” heading in the lower left column. Read current articles online about this region.

- **CIA—THE WORLD FACTBOOK**

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/menugeo.html>

Click on one of the South Asian countries in the alphabetical country listing in the left column and much factual information will be presented, including the country’s brief background, geography, people, government, economy, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues.

- **HIMALAYAS**

<http://library.thinkquest.org/10131/start.shtml>

Presents an introduction to the Himalayas, with beautiful photographs. Explains each political boundary into the Himalayas are divided. Explore special-interest topics like geology, trekking, environmental problems, and flora and fauna.