

The Taj Mahal & Shah Jahan **History Happened Here Series**

Subject Areas: Social Studies, World History

Synopsis: Dramatic reenactments tell the story of the Taj Mahal, built by Shah Jahan as a monument to the love he shared with his beloved wife, Mumtaz. Reveals the cultural and religious traditions of the Moghuls in India, and describes the arduous process of constructing this beautiful structure.

Learning Objectives:

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to tell the story behind the design and construction of the Taj Mahal
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to describe the cultural and religious traditions of the Moghuls in India
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to discuss the architectural style of the monument

Vocabulary

Yamuna River, mausoleum, craftsmen, reflecting pools, Koran, monument, beloved, emperor, fast, mourning, epic, Mecca, Islam, Moghul

Pre-Viewing Questions and Activities:

- 1) Display a picture of the Taj Mahal. Ask students to discuss the building. Where is it located? When was it built? What was the building's purpose? What thoughts or feelings come to mind when you look at the Taj Mahal?
- 2) Locate Agra, India on a map. Review students' knowledge of India and the Moghuls' presence in India. When did the Moghuls arrive in India? What religious beliefs did they observe?
- 3) Have a class discussion on love and the expression of love. What kinds of things do we do for people we love?

Post-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) What does Shah Jahan's name mean? What was his position in society?
- 2) What was Mumtaz's dying wish? Do you think the Taj Mahal is an appropriate monument to their love? Why or why not?
- 3) How long did Shah Jahan mourn for his wife? What did this time of mourning involve? How does this compare with the process of mourning in American culture? How was Shah Jahan changed after his week long fast following his wife's death?
- 4) How long did the construction take for the Taj Mahal? How many craftsmen worked on the Taj Mahal? According to legend, how did Jahan prevent the artisans from creating another masterpiece?

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- 5) What words are written on the entrance to the Taj Mahal? What direction does Mumtaz's tomb face? Why? How did Jahan and Mumtaz's religious beliefs influence their lives and deaths?
- 6) How did Shah Jahan lose his position as emperor? What became of him?
- 7) An Indian poet wrote that the Taj Mahal reminded him of "a solitary tear suspended on the cheek of time". What do you see when you look at the Taj Mahal?

Additional Activities:

- 1) Compare the architecture of the Taj Mahal with architectural styles from different parts of the world. Some suggestions are the San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane in Rome; Imperial Villa Katsura in Kyoto, Japan; The Capitol at Williamsburg in Virginia; the Cathedral of St. Basil in Moscow; Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey; St. Peter's of Rome; and Chartres Cathedral in France.
- 2) Discuss different types of monuments and their purposes. Display pictures of other monuments, such as the Washington Monument, the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, and the Crazy Horse Memorial. Discuss the styles and meanings of each monument. Have students design or build a monument for an individual or group of people.

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