

Mysteries of the Indus Valley: Exploring an Ancient City

Materials Needed

- Paper and pencils/crayons
- Modeling clay (or homemade salt dough: 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 1 cup water)
- A small, blunt carving tool (like a toothpick, popsicle stick, or the back of a paintbrush)
- A small box, tray, or piece of cardboard to serve as the city base
- Building materials: LEGOs, wooden blocks, recycled cardboard boxes/tubes, or sugar cubes
- Optional: Tablet or computer to view pictures and short videos of Indus Valley artifacts

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Describe three important features of an Indus Valley city.
2. Create your own model of an Indus Valley seal and explain what it might have been used for.
3. Explain one of the great mysteries about the Indus Valley Civilization that archaeologists are still trying to solve.

Lesson Plan

Part 1: Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Hook: The City of Mysteries

"Imagine you're an explorer who just discovered a hidden city that's almost 5,000 years old! The streets are perfectly straight, the houses are made of baked bricks, and some even have their own bathrooms with drains. It's one of the most amazing cities you've ever seen. But then you find their library... and you can't read a single word of their writing! No one can. Would you want to solve that mystery? Today, we are going to become archaeologists and explore one of the world's first great civilizations: the Indus Valley Civilization!"

Stating the Objectives

"Our mission today is to uncover the secrets of these ancient people. By the end of our adventure, you'll be able to:

- **Build** a model of one of their super-organized cities.
- **Create** a special stamp, called a seal, just like they used.
- **Tell** me one big secret about them that we are still trying to figure out!"

Part 2: The Lesson Body (30-40 minutes)

Activity 1: The Amazing City Planners ("I do, We do, You do")

I DO (Educator Explains - 5 mins):

"Let's look at one of their biggest cities, called Mohenjo-Daro. (*Show pictures if available*). The people who lived here were amazing planners. Look at these three cool things:

1. **Grid Layout:** Their streets weren't messy and winding. They were straight and crossed each other to make perfect squares, like a checkerboard! This made it easy to get around.
2. **Two Parts of the City:** They had a 'lower town' where most people lived in brick houses, often with courtyards in the middle. They also had a 'citadel,' which was a raised area like a big hill with important buildings, maybe for leaders or special ceremonies like a giant pool called the Great Bath.
3. **Awesome Plumbing:** They were experts with water! Many houses had wells for fresh water, and they built drains under the streets to carry dirty water away from their homes. They were some of the first people in the world to have city-wide plumbing!"

WE DO (Guided Practice - 5 mins):

"Okay, fellow archaeologist, let's plan our own Indus Valley city. Let's grab a piece of paper and a pencil. First, how should we draw the streets? That's right, in a straight grid! Now, where should we put the citadel? On a high place, good idea! We'll draw a big square for it on one side of our map."

YOU DO (Independent Practice - 10-15 mins):

Instructions: "Now it's your turn to be the master builder! Using your box as the land and your building blocks or cardboard, build your own Indus Valley city based on our map. Remember our mission is to make it look authentic."

Success Criteria: "Your amazing city will be complete when it has:

- At least two straight streets that cross each other.
- A raised area for the citadel.
- A few houses in the 'lower town'.

Activity 2: The Secret of the Seals ("I do, We do, You do")

I DO (Educator Explains - 5 mins):

"The Indus Valley people didn't use coins. So how did they mark their stuff to show it was theirs? They used special stamps called seals! They were usually small stones with pictures of animals carved into them, like bulls, rhinos, and even a 'unicorn'! They also had symbols—their mysterious writing. They would press the seal into wet clay to leave an impression, maybe on a tag for a bag of grain, to say 'This is from me!'"

WE DO (Guided Practice - 5 mins):

"If you were a trader in the Indus Valley, what would be on your personal seal? Let's think. What is your favorite animal? What special symbol could represent you? A star? A lightning bolt? Let's sketch an idea for your personal seal."

YOU DO (Independent Practice - 10 mins):

Instructions: "Take your modeling clay and flatten it into a small square or circle. Now, use your carving tool to carefully carve your animal and your special symbols into it. Remember, you're pressing down into the clay. Don't worry about making it perfect—ancient seals were all unique!"

Success Criteria: "You've made a fantastic seal when:

- It has a picture of an animal on it.
- It has at least one secret symbol that you invented.
- You can press it into a leftover piece of clay to make a print!

Part 3: Conclusion (5 minutes)

Recap and Share

"What an incredible expedition! Let's review what we discovered."

- **Show and Tell:** "Show me your city! Tell me about two features that make it like a real Indus Valley city." (Formative Assessment)
- **Seal of Approval:** "Show me the print your seal makes. What does your animal and secret symbol mean?" (Summative Assessment)
- **The Big Mystery:** "So, after all we've learned, what is one of the biggest mysteries about the Indus Valley people?" (Answer: We can't read their writing! Another mystery is we don't know for sure why their cities were abandoned). (Summative Assessment)

Final Takeaway

"Even though they lived thousands of years ago, the people of the Indus Valley were smart, organized, and creative. They left behind amazing clues in their cities and artifacts, but also big mysteries that make history an exciting puzzle to solve. Great work today, Chief Archaeologist!"

Differentiation and Extensions

- **For Extra Support:** Provide a pre-drawn city map on the cardboard base for the learner to build upon. Use simple animal cookie cutters to gently press a shape into the clay seal before adding symbols. Focus on just one city feature, like the grid streets.
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Research the types of goods the Indus Valley people traded (like cotton, beads, and pottery). Create a "trade good" out of clay to go with the seal. Write a short story about a day in the life of a child living in your model city. Research and propose your own theory for why the civilization might have disappeared.