

Lesson Plan: The Mystery of the River Cities

Subject: History & Social Studies

Topic: The Indus Valley Civilization

Recommended Age: 7-9 years old

Estimated Time: 45-60 minutes

Learning Objectives

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

- Find the Indus River Valley on a map.
- Describe two cool features of an Indus Valley city, like their straight streets or drains.
- Create a piece of art inspired by an Indus Valley artifact.
- Explain one idea about why this amazing civilization disappeared.

Materials Needed

- A world map or a simple map showing India and Pakistan
- Building blocks (like LEGOs, wooden blocks, or even sugar cubes)
- A bar of soap
- A toothpick or a plastic sculpting tool
- Play-doh or air-dry clay (optional)
- Paper and drawing supplies (crayons, markers, or colored pencils)
- Pictures or printouts of Indus Valley artifacts (e.g., the Great Bath, seals, pottery, the "Dancing Girl" statue)
- Small items for a "trading" game (e.g., cotton balls, beads, shiny rocks)

Lesson Activities

1. Introduction: The History Detectives (5 minutes)

Hook: "Imagine we found a huge, secret city that's thousands of years old! The streets are perfectly straight, and every house has its own bathroom. But here's the mystery: we can't find any palaces, we don't know who the king or queen was, and we don't know what happened to all the people! Today, we're going to be history detectives and investigate one of the world's oldest and most mysterious civilizations: The Indus Valley Civilization."

Stating Objectives: "By the end of our detective work, you'll be a super expert who can find where they lived, describe their amazing cities, make your own ancient artifact, and even share your best guess about what happened to them!"

2. Body: Uncovering the Clues (30-40 minutes)

This part of the lesson follows an "I do, We do, You do" model to explore different parts of the

civilization.

Part A: Super Smart Cities (Settlement & Architecture)

- **I do (I explain):** "Let's look at our map. A long, long time ago, around the same time the great pyramids were being built in Egypt, a group of people lived right here, along the big Indus River. They built incredible cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. They were brilliant builders! They made super-strong bricks by baking them in hot ovens, and they used them to build houses and giant public buildings like the Great Bath, which was like a huge, ancient swimming pool!" (Show picture of the Great Bath).
- **We do (We explore together):** "Look at this picture of their city. What do you notice about the streets? They're not messy and wiggly; they're straight, like a checkerboard! This is called a grid plan. They also built drains under the streets to carry away dirty water. That's like having plumbing thousands of years ago! Why do you think having straight streets and drains would be a good idea for a big city?"
- **You do (You build):** "Now you're the city planner! Using these blocks, build a small part of an Indus Valley city. Can you make sure it has straight streets in a grid pattern and a special building like a citadel (a high, important area) or a Great Bath?"

Part B: Amazing Art and Secret Writing (Art & Trading)

- **I do (I explain):** "These people weren't just great builders; they were amazing artists. They made beautiful pottery and sculptures. One of the coolest things they made are these tiny stone seals." (Show picture of a seal). "They carved animals like bulls, rhinos, and even unicorns on them! They also carved a secret code—a type of writing that we still can't read today. Isn't that mysterious?"
- **We do (We practice together):** "Let's pretend we are traders. People might have used these seals like a stamp to mark their things, like a signature. They would press the seal into wet clay to show 'This is mine!' or 'This came from me!' They traded things like cotton cloth and pretty beads with people who lived far, far away. Let's play a trading game. I have some cotton balls. What would be a fair trade for your shiny rocks?"
- **You do (You create):** "Now it's your turn to be an Indus Valley artist. Take this bar of soap and a toothpick. Carefully carve your own seal. You can carve your favorite animal or a cool symbol. This is your personal stamp!"

Part C: The Great Disappearance (Decline & Civics)

- **I do (I explain):** "What's really interesting is that even though their cities were so organized, which tells us they had rules and worked together, we haven't found any big palaces or statues of kings. Maybe they had a team of people in charge instead of just one ruler. But that leads to our biggest mystery... after hundreds of years, their cities became empty. Where did they go?"
- **We do (We brainstorm ideas):** "History detectives have a few theories. One idea is that the climate changed and it became too hard to grow food. Another idea is that a huge earthquake or flood changed the path of the river they depended on. Some even think other groups of people came and took over. Which idea do you think makes the most sense? Why?"
- **You do (You decide):** "On your piece of paper, draw a picture showing what YOU think happened to the people of the Indus Valley. You can draw a big flood, a very dry land, or anything else you imagine might have happened."

3. Conclusion: Case Closed! (5 minutes)

Recap: "Wow, Detective! We did amazing work today. We traveled back in time to the Indus River, explored their grid-like cities, saw their mystery writing on beautiful seals, and came up with our own

ideas for solving their great disappearance."

Learner Reflection: "Show me your soap seal and the city you built. Can you tell me two amazing facts you learned about the people who made them?"

Reinforce Takeaway: "Even though they lived thousands of years ago, the Indus Valley people were smart, organized, and creative—and they left us with an exciting history mystery that we are still trying to solve today!"

Assessment (How to check for understanding)

- **Formative (during the lesson):** Listen to the answers during the "We do" discussions. Observe the block city to see if the "grid pattern" concept was understood. Note the student's reasoning during the trading game.
- **Summative (at the end of the lesson):** The student's ability to explain their creations (the block city and soap seal) using at least two facts from the lesson serves as the main assessment. The drawing about the civilization's decline also shows their engagement and comprehension of the final mystery.

Differentiation (Ways to adapt the lesson)

- **For Extra Support:**
 - Provide a pre-drawn grid on a piece of paper as a base for building the block city.
 - Lightly sketch an animal onto the soap bar for the student to trace with the toothpick.
 - Offer picture cards representing the theories of decline (flood, drought, invaders) and have the student pick one to talk about.
- **For an Extra Challenge:**
 - Challenge the student to design an imaginary Indus Valley seal that includes both an animal and a few symbols for their "secret writing."
 - Ask them to write a short story or diary entry from the point of view of a child living in Mohenjo-Daro.
 - Have them research one other object traded by the Indus Valley people (like lapis lazuli) and draw the trade route on the map.