

The Mystery of the Tidy Town: City Rules in the Indus Valley

Subject: Civics & Ancient History

Age Group: 6-8 years old

Time Allotment: 45-60 minutes

Learning Context: Can be adapted for homeschool (1-on-1), small classroom groups, or a family activity.

Materials Needed:

- Pictures or short video clips of Indus Valley archaeological sites (Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa), focusing on the organized streets, drains, and uniform bricks. (A quick internet search will provide these.)
 - Building materials: LEGO bricks, wooden blocks, magnetic tiles, or even recycled boxes.
 - Paper and crayons/markers OR a small whiteboard and marker.
 - Optional: Play-doh and a popsicle stick to create a "clay tablet."
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Learning Objectives

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

- Explain in your own words what a rule (an ordinance) is and why cities need them.
 - Point out at least two clues from pictures that show the Indus Valley cities were organized and had rules.
 - Create a plan for a small city block and make up two simple rules to keep it safe and clean.
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Lesson Plan

1. Introduction: The City with No Rules (10 minutes)

Hook (Engage the Learner)

"Let's imagine a brand new town where anyone can do whatever they want! You can build your house right in the middle of the road. You can throw your trash out the window. You don't have to make your house strong; you can build it with wobbly sticks. What do you think that town would be like to live in? Would it be safe? Would it be clean? Would it be easy to walk around?"

(Listen to the student's ideas, guiding them to see the problems with having no rules.)

State the Objectives (Tell them what you'll teach)

"That sounds messy and dangerous! Today, we are going to be history detectives. We're going to travel

back in time almost 5,000 years to a place called the Indus Valley. We're going to look for clues to figure out if they had a **government**—that's the group of people in charge of making rules for everyone—and what kind of rules, or **ordinances**, they had to make their cities great places to live. An ordinance is just a big word for a special city rule."

2. Body: Detective Work in Mohenjo-Daro (25 minutes)

I Do: I'll Show You the Clues (Educator Explains)

"A long, long time ago, there were amazing cities in the Indus Valley. One of the most famous was called Mohenjo-Daro. Scientists and history detectives who discovered this city found some very interesting things. They didn't find a king's palace or signs of big wars. Instead, they found signs that the city was incredibly organized. This makes them think the government wasn't about a powerful king, but about making sure everyone could live together nicely and safely."

"Let's look at our first clue." (*Show a picture of the uniform bricks used in the buildings.*) "Look at these bricks. They are all almost the exact same size and shape! This tells us there was probably a rule, an **ordinance**, that said, 'Everyone must use this size of brick to build.' Why do you think that would be a good rule?" (*Guide them to understand it makes buildings strong and fair.*)

We Do: Let's Find Clues Together (Guided Practice)

"Now it's your turn to be the detective with me. Let's look at some more pictures and see what clues we can find about their city rules."

- **Clue #1: The Straight Streets.** (*Show a picture of the grid-like street layout.*) "What do you notice about the streets? Are they all twisty and messy? No! They are super straight, like a grid on a piece of paper. What kind of rule does this make you think they had about where you could build your house?" (Possible answer: "You must build your house in a straight line.")
- **Clue #2: The Drains.** (*Show a picture of the covered drains.*) "Look at this! Almost every house had pipes that carried dirty water away into drains under the streets. This was like ancient plumbing! What ordinance or rule might they have had about keeping the city clean?" (Possible answer: "You must connect your house to the drains to keep yucky water off the street.")
- **Clue #3: The Weights.** (*Show a picture of the standardized weights.*) "Detectives found these little stone cubes all over the city. They were used for weighing things at the market, like grain or cotton. And guess what? They were all made to a standard size. Why would a government make a rule that everyone has to use the same weights?" (Possible answer: "So it's fair and no one can cheat when they sell things.")

You Do: Build Your Own Tidy Town! (Independent Practice)

"You have done amazing detective work! You've proven that the Indus Valley cities had a government that made rules to keep things organized, clean, and fair. Now, you are the city planner! Your job is to build one perfect city block from Mohenjo-Daro using your building blocks (or drawing it)."

Instructions:

1. "Use your blocks or paper to design a city block. Make sure it has at least two houses and a straight street."
2. "As you build, think about the rules your little city needs."
3. "When you are done, create at least two ordinances (rules) for your city block. You can draw a picture of your rule or write it down."

Success Criteria: You'll know you've done a great job when you can show me your city block and tell me your two rules and why they are important for your citizens.

Differentiation Options:

- **For Extra Support:** Offer rule templates like, "My rule for building is _____" or "My rule for trash is _____." Build the first house together as an example.
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Ask the student to create a third rule about something new, like a public well or a marketplace. Have them write their ordinances on a flattened piece of play-doh (a "clay tablet") using a popsicle stick.

3. Conclusion: The City Planner's Report (10 minutes)

Share and Recap (Tell them what you taught)

"City Planner, it's time for your report! Please show me your city block. Tell me about the two ordinances you created for your citizens."

(Allow the student to present their creation. Praise their thoughtful rules and connect them back to the real clues from the Indus Valley.)

"That is a fantastic rule! Just like the people in the Indus Valley, you saw that having rules for building and keeping things clean makes life better for everyone. So today, we learned that even thousands of years ago, people knew that a good city needs a government to make fair rules, or ordinances, for things like building, cleanliness, and trade. Being a good citizen is all about working together and following rules that help the whole community!"

Assessment & Review Questions

Ask these questions to check for understanding.

1. What is a simple way to describe what a "government" does? *(Expected answer: It's the group that makes the rules for a city or country.)*
2. What is an "ordinance"? Can you give me an example of one? *(Expected answer: It's a city rule, like keeping the streets clean or using the same size bricks.)*
3. What was one clue we found that showed the Indus Valley people had rules for their cities? *(Expected answer: Straight streets, drains, same-sized bricks, standard weights.)*
4. Why is it important for a city to have rules? *(Expected answer: To keep people safe, to keep things clean, to be fair.)*