

Name _____

Date _____

Ancient India

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. The world hasn't always looked the way it looks now. Land doesn't stay still but slowly shifts around on tectonic plates. India's plate was once part of Africa, but over millions of years, it slid off Africa, across the sea and slammed up against Asia. In doing this, it created a huge mountain range, the biggest in the world. These are the Himalayas, which is where you can find Mount Everest.

Those massive peaks make a nice wall, cutting India off from the rest of the world. India is a peninsula, jutting down between the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It's surrounded by water on three sides and the Himalayas on the fourth.

Rushing down from the mountains are the Indus and Ganges Rivers, which bring massive volumes of water to the countryside, making for great farming opportunities. For complex reasons, a big wind, called a monsoon, blows north through India every summer for a few months. It brings lots of rain and thunderstorms with it, so summers are the rainy seasons. All these factors give the area a moist, humid climate and lots of thick jungles.

Which of these is not a geographic feature of India?

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| A. dense jungles | B. enormous mountains |
| C. frozen tundra | D. flowing rivers |

2. The first people to migrate to the Indus River Valley were hunters who came from Africa, probably around 40,000 BCE. By about 2300 BCE, the large city of Harappa had been built. Harappa was one of the most developed civilizations in the world in its day. It included the city of Harappa and another big urban area, Mohenjo-daro, about 300 miles away on another section of river. Even though they were far apart, the two cities had striking similarities. Both were laid out with grids of paved streets that made right angles. People built houses out of stone, some of which were three or four stories high. Big fortresses stood near each city to provide protection.

The people had weights, measures and a currency, so they could trade. The government may have stored food in case of shortages. They were perhaps the first people to make garments out of cotton. The Harappans used pictographs, drawings and symbols that represented ideas, to write. Both cities had another great invention: sewer systems to carry all human waste out of the city. Almost no other cities had a sewer system at this time. Harappan civilization had all but disappeared by 1700 BCE for reasons that are still unclear.

The story of the Harappan civilization is most similar to which of the following?

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| A. In Ancient Greece, the Mycenaeans made huge advances in engineering and architecture and had a written language. Their society collapsed for unknown reasons in 1100 BCE. | B. The Incan empire did not have many technological advances but covered over 770,000 square miles before it was defeated by Spanish conquistadors in 1533. |
| C. The Khmer Empire, in modern-day Cambodia, was an enormous Buddhist city with advanced systems of art and architecture. In the 14th century CE it began a long steady decline. | D. The Maori people settled in New Zealand in the 13th century. They developed both a warrior culture and a system of fine and performing arts. The Maori are still around today. |

3. The Aryans were Indo-Europeans who migrated from Central Asia through Iran to the Indus River Valley around 1500 BCE. They were a nomadic and warlike people.

The Aryans rode into town on chariots and horses, which are native to the steppes of Central Asia. By about 800 BCE, they'd made their way to the Ganges River, using weapons of iron to conquer more and more territory. Many of the Aryans settled around the Ganges. They brought their culture and their language, known as Sanskrit, as well as their gods and early Hinduism. They also brought their social hierarchy, known as the caste system.

When the Aryans moved onto the Ganges Plain, they

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| A. took on the religious and social systems of the local civilizations. | B. were peaceful and acquired more land using treaties and bartering. |
| C. had chariot races and built enormous horse ranches. | D. imported their culture, language and religion into Ancient India. |

4. At first, as in other cultures, there were two classes of people in India: nobles and commoners. Indo-Aryans later added a third category, probably reserved for the darker-skinned people they conquered. But the caste system wasn't really about race. It was about dividing people into classes and making sure everyone stayed where they began.

The caste system was like a social pyramid. At the very top were the Brahmin, who were the leaders and the priests. Only the men in this caste could attend school. On the next level were the Kshatriya, the soldiers. Women couldn't fight, but the wives of soldiers still belonged to this class. Beneath the warriors were the businessmen, tradespeople and farmers — the Vaishya. This caste was able to own land. The next class, Sudra, included the servants, clerks and farmhands. There were huge numbers of these folks. Beneath the Sudra was the group known as the Dalit, or "the untouchables." They were the freemen and women who held the worst jobs in society. They existed below the caste system, and people were not supposed to have any contact with them.

A caste system is a

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| A. way of dividing society into classes with hard boundaries. | B. social ladder that allows people to change their class freely. |
| C. method that separated classes purely based on race. | D. way of finding the best job for each person in society. |

5. The Vedas were ancient Indian texts that became the basis for the Hindu religion. There were four major ones: the Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda. The Rig-Veda is one of the oldest pieces of literature that still exists, dating back to between roughly 1700 and 1100 BCE. It has the earliest mentions of astronomy, astrology and many other metaphysical "sciences." As a group, the Vedas explored the relationship of the human soul to the material world. In them can be found the earliest mentions of yoga, meditation and mantras.

In cultures that believe in god or gods, as nearly all do, there are nearly always people who claim that they alone can speak with their god or interpret the messages of the gods. These people become priests. As the doorway to the gods, they usually become very powerful and often very rich. This is exactly the situation for the Brahmin in India. They interpreted the Vedas and guided the customs of Hinduism.

Which of the following best describes the Vedas?

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| A. scientific treatises on ancient medicine and the movements of the stars | B. instructional texts for Brahmins, teaching them how to lead the Hindu people |
| C. modern books that outline how ancient Indian traditions have changed over time | D. ancient texts that discuss astronomy, the soul, yoga, meditation and mantras |

6. Hinduism is the world's oldest major religion that is still practiced. A group of diverse beliefs and traditions, Hinduism has no single founder. It is the world's third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam, with approximately one billion adherents, most of whom live in India and Nepal.

Brahman is the unchanging, infinite reality that exists in all matter, energy, time, space, being and everything beyond in this universe. To achieve enlightenment, most Hindus believe that you must realize that you are and always will be made of pure energy—pure Brahman.

Your karma is the energy you create when you do something that is either right or wrong. Doing something wrong, like lying, creates bad karma, while doing something good, like helping someone, creates good karma.

In Hinduism, karma is important because it determines what you will come back as in your next life. Hindus believe in reincarnation, the idea that a person's soul is reborn again and again into different bodies, including animals. You might come back in your next life as a squirrel or a king, but you have to live life right in order to reach enlightenment.

In Hinduism, which of the following would most likely create good karma?

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| A. taking a walk on a summer day | B. volunteering at an animal shelter |
| C. complaining about your strict teacher | D. getting in a fight with your brother |

7. Siddhartha was a young, rich Indian prince born in about 560 BCE. He wasn't happy with his life as a Hindu; he sought more answers than he felt Hinduism could offer. One day he left his family and his riches behind and decided that the secret of life was not to be reincarnated over and over but to find enlightenment, the state of being free from suffering.

Siddhartha wandered around India looking for life's answers but not finding any. He stopped and sat under a big, beautiful tree on the Ganges River and meditated. For seven weeks he sat under that tree—until he became enlightened. After that, he was known as the Buddha, or "enlightened one." He spent the rest of his life sharing his ideas with people, founding a whole new religion: Buddhism.

Nirvana is the highest goal of a Buddhist. Some people simply call it enlightenment. Nirvana happens when a Buddhist is finally free of suffering and all worldly problems—he or she has broken the cycle of reincarnation and is in a state of peace.

Which of these statements would Siddhartha most likely agree with?

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| A. The secret of life is finding a state of peace and being free from suffering. | B. The secret of life is reincarnation, so you'll be alive forever in different forms. |
| C. The secret of life is having good karma so you're reincarnated as a prince. | D. The secret of life is ultimately unknowable, and we should be at peace with that. |

8. In 326 BCE, Alexander the Great invaded India and spread his huge empire all the way to the Indus River Valley. But when he returned to Babylon in 324 BCE, an Indian ruler named Chandragupta overthrew a bunch of Alexander's generals in the Punjab area and set up the largest Indian kingdom yet, called the Mauryan Empire. Ashoka was another famous ruler of the Mauryan Empire. He expanded the kingdom of India—but at a terrible cost. They say his battlefield victories were so brutal and bloody that he eventually renounced war altogether. He became a Buddhist and was instrumental in spreading the faith to millions of others across Central Asia.

Which leader played a major part in spreading the Buddhist faith across Central Asia?

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| A. Mauryan | B. Alexander the Great |
| C. Ashoka | D. Chandragupta |