

Discussion 12

Why haven't archaeologists found more evidence from the Indus Valley civilization?

Objectives: To encourage pupils to think about why archaeologists have not found more artefact evidence from the Indus Valley cities and to suggest explanations for this.

Materials: Photographs, books and/or illustrations of Indus Valley cities and archaeological sites.

Class Set-up: Whole group discussion

Vocabulary: evidence, artefacts, climate

Discussion: It is more difficult to gain an accurate picture of the lives of the people of the Indus Valley civilization because, compared with other ancient civilizations, the cities of the Indus Valley have yielded little evidence in the form of textual evidence. Despite the abundance of artefacts and objects discovered, we still know comparatively little about the details of the daily lives of these cities.

Firstly, ask the children to list some of the types of evidence we do have from the Indus Valley.

What can we definitely say we know about the people of the Indus Valley from the evidence we have found in their cities?

What evidence is missing that would tell us more about their lives and cities?

Where has the evidence gone?

Compare the Indus Valley civilization to other 'better known' civilizations such as ancient Egypt. We have an extremely good idea of the lives of the ancient Egyptians because the evidence of their lives, language and behaviour. We can only guess at many of the aspects of Indus Valley life because so much evidence is missing.

There are several theories as to what happened to the cities of the Indus valley civilization. There is no definite answer, but ideas to be considered are:

- There is some evidence of significant climatic and environmental change in the area. Many people believe that the area became untenable as a place for settlement and trade when the Indus gradually changed direction, possibly because of silting, etc.
- Because the cities were abandoned, the sites have not supported populations in perpetuity, unlike Egypt or Mesopotamia for example. While populations have continued to thrive in the general area, the city-sites remained empty. The artefacts and sites that remained were gradually stripped for use as building material, or destroyed by monsoon rains, extremes of climate and other environmental factors.

Background Information:

The end of the Indus Valley Civilization

Climate in India

Environment

