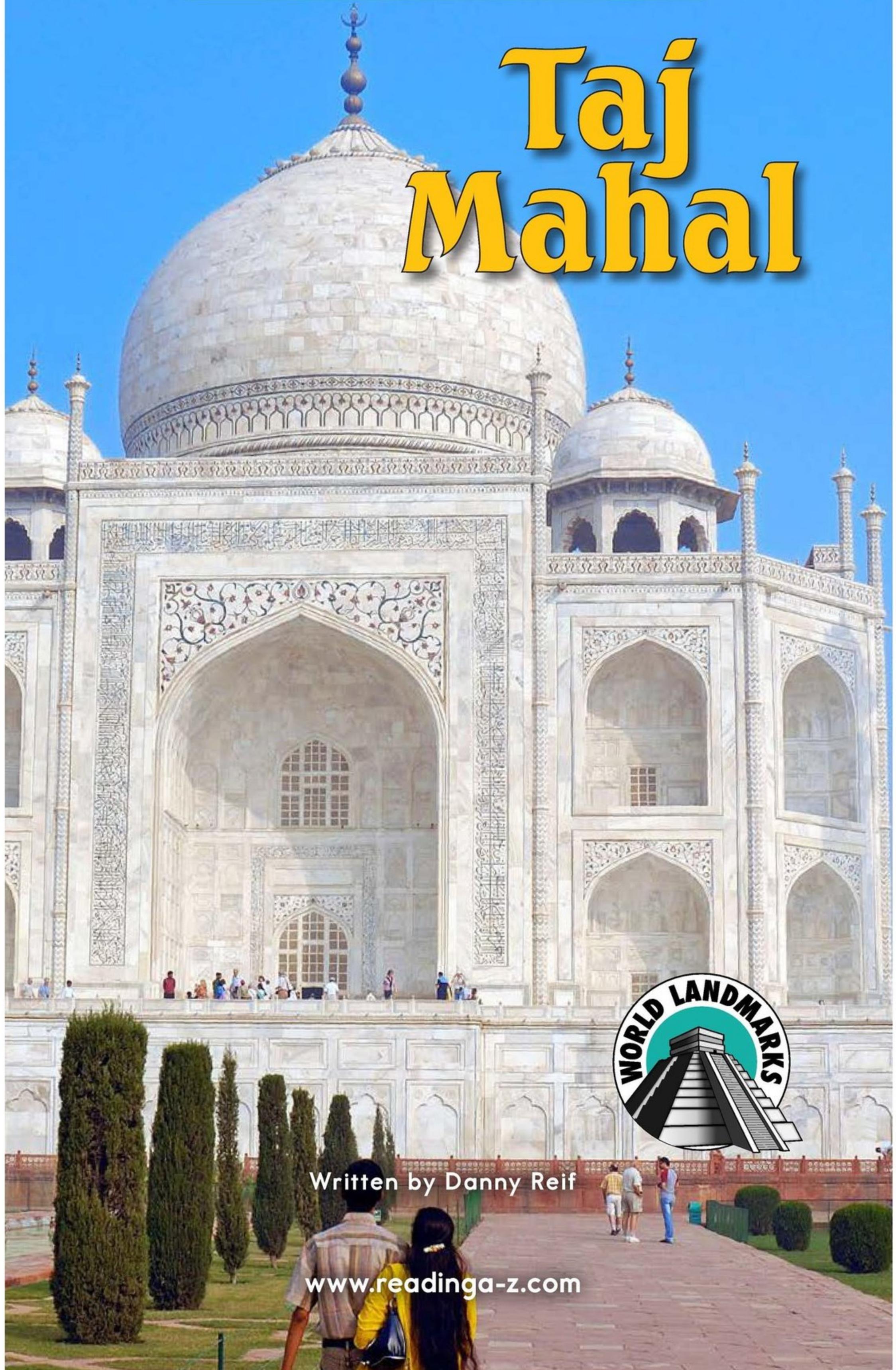


LEVELED BOOK • N

Taj Mahal



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Focus Question

What makes the Taj Mahal unique?

Words to Know

burial
coffin
memorial

peaceful
pollution
towers

Front and back cover: Thousands of visitors come to see the Taj Mahal every week.

Title page: The walls of some of the Taj Mahal buildings are covered with flowers and other beautiful shapes.

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Correlation

LEVEL N	
Fountas & Pinnell	M
Reading Recovery	20
DRA	28

Taj Mahal



Table of Contents

The Taj Mahal	4
The Great Gate	7
The Main Building	8
A Love Story	10
The Buildings Go Up	12
The Taj Mahal Today	14
A Lasting Memorial	15
Glossary	16



To many people, the Taj Mahal is one of the most beautiful places on Earth.

The Taj Mahal

Hundreds of years ago, the Mughal (MOO-guhl) family ruled parts of India. They were rich and powerful rulers. They built many beautiful buildings that still stand today. Of all the places the Mughal people built, the most famous is the Taj Mahal (TAJ muh-HAHL) in Agra, India.

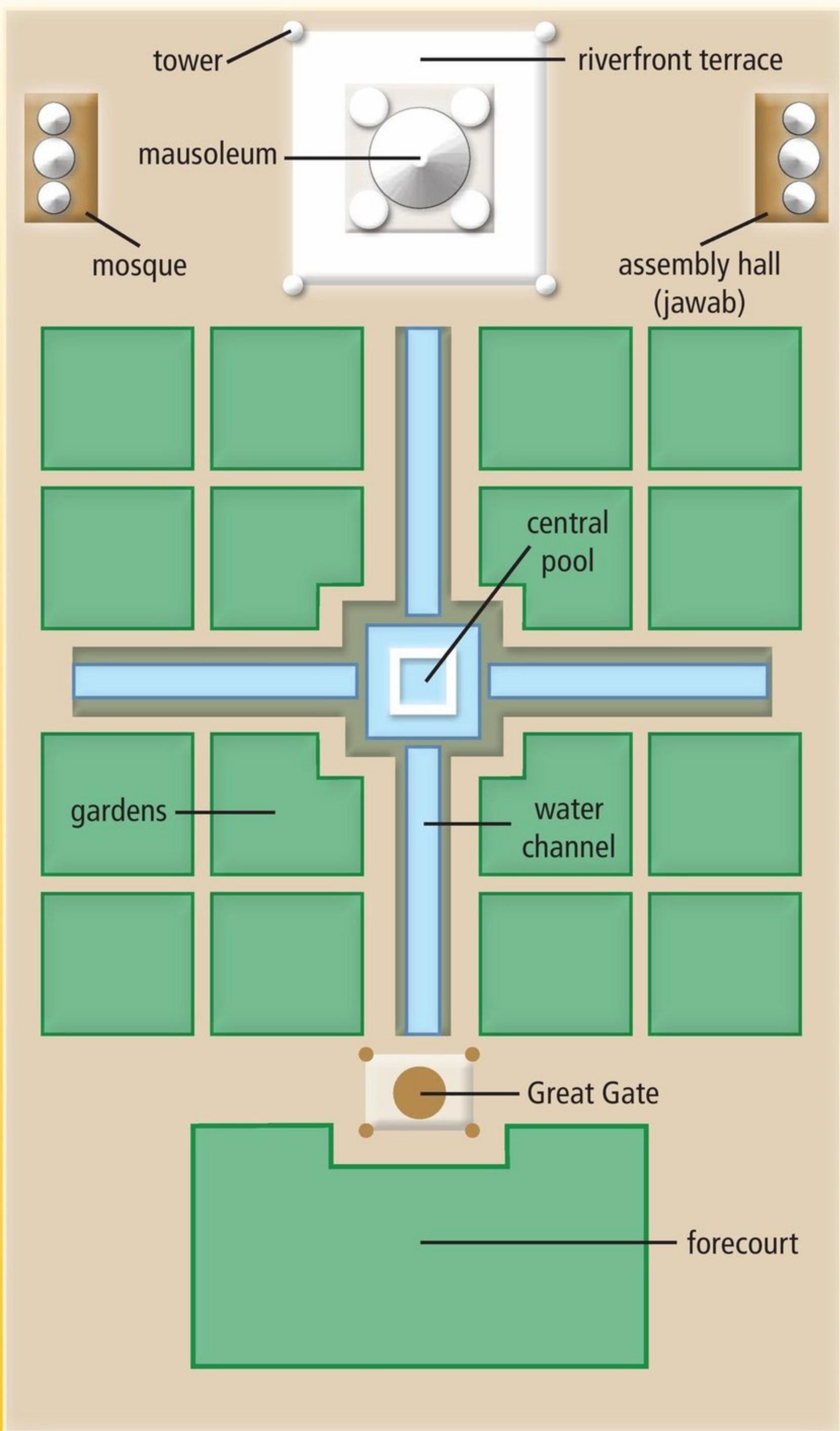
The Taj Mahal is a **memorial** with beautiful buildings, walls, and gates. It also has **peaceful** gardens and lovely pools of water.

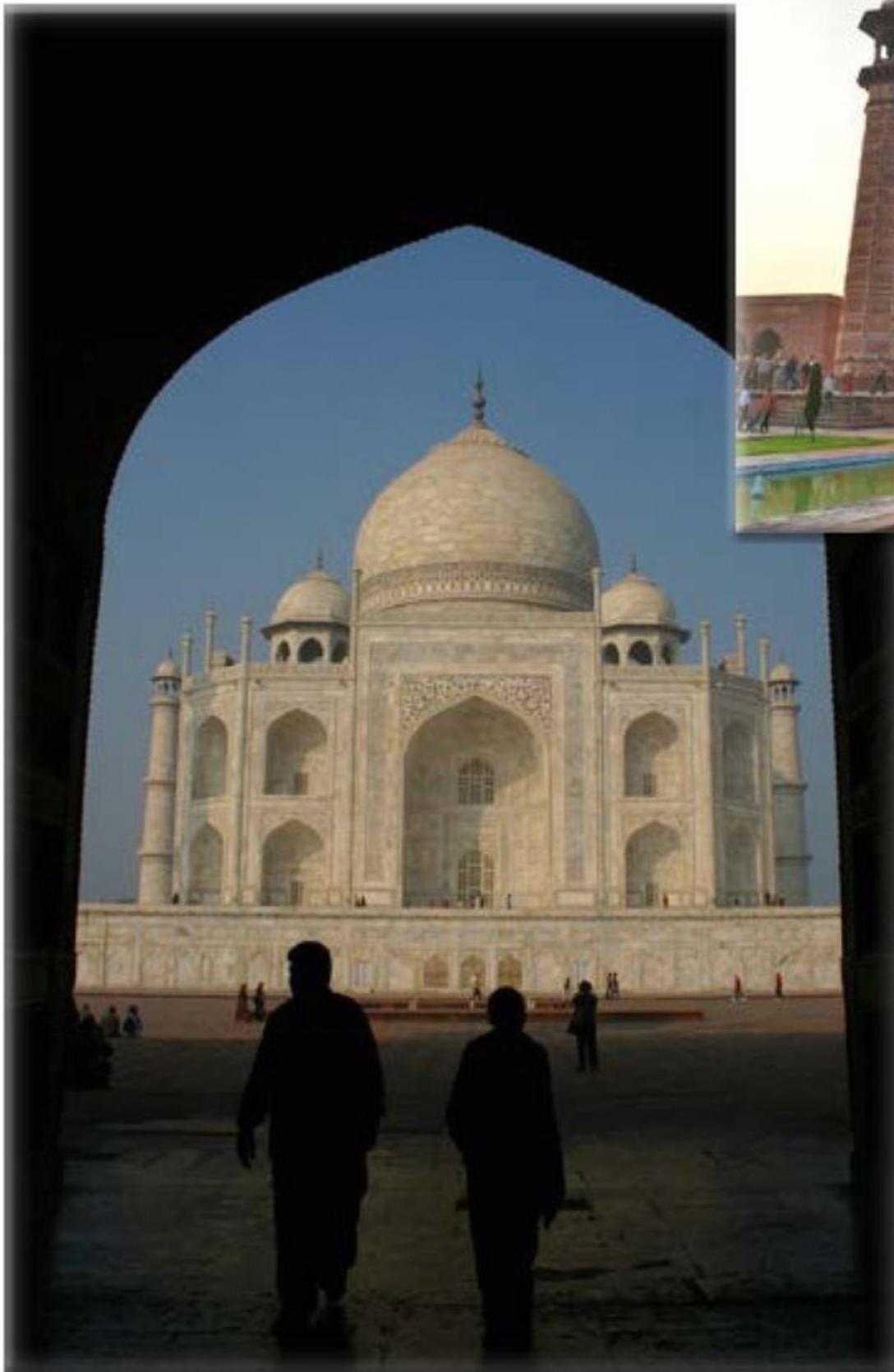
Shah Jahan (SHAH jah-HAHN) was an important Mughal ruler. He built the Taj Mahal over three hundred years ago for his wife after she died. Her name was Mumtaz Mahal (moom-TAHZ muh-HAHL). Shah Jahan wanted to make a beautiful **burial** place for her. He wanted people to remember her for a long time.



Across the Yamuna River to the east is the Moonlight Garden. Experts think this was one of Shah Jahan's favorite spots to view his wife's memorial.

Map of the Taj Mahal





The Great Gate has two tall towers on each side. The towers are topped with white marble (top). The main building's onion-shaped dome is framed by the Great Gate's doorway (left).

The Great Gate

People enter the Taj Mahal through the Great Gate. Visitors can see the main building through the door of the gate. The huge white building is where Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal are buried. Four tall, thin towers are around it.

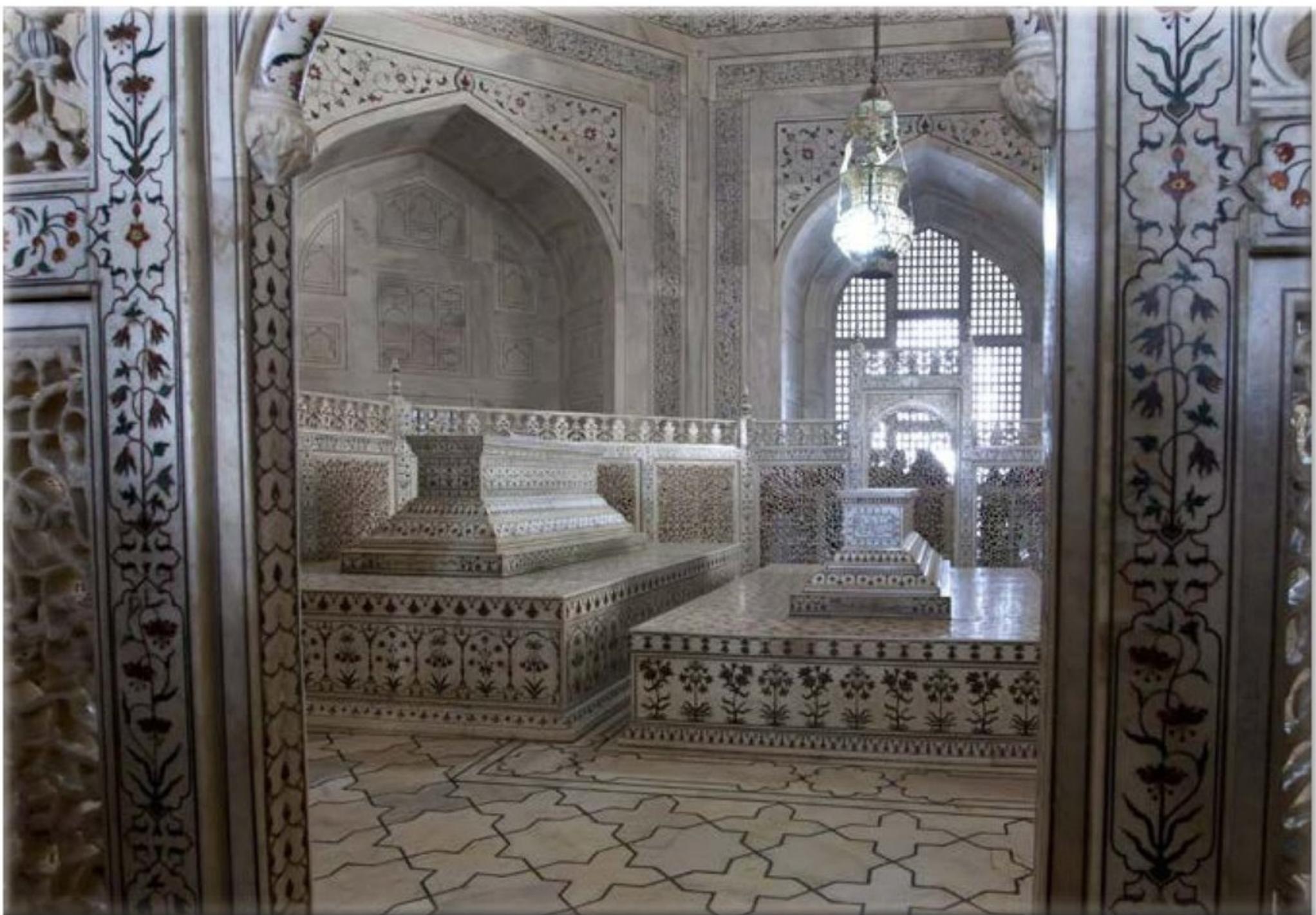


From across the Yamuna River, visitors can see the main building. They can also see the red stone assembly hall on the left and the mosque on the right.

The Main Building

Some of the Taj Mahal's buildings are made of red sandstone. The main building and the towers around it are made of white stone called *marble*.

The Taj Mahal buildings have many beautiful things, both inside and outside. Artists used thousands of colorful stones to make flowers, butterflies, and other pictures on the walls. Different kinds of shiny gems were used as well.



Thousands of visitors come every day to see the empty coffins of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal.

Visitors can go inside the main building, where Shah Jahan and his wife are buried. A **coffin** for Mumtaz Mahal is in the center of the room. Her husband's coffin is beside hers.

Both coffins are empty. They are only for people to view. The real burial places are in a room under the main floor.



Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal were married for nineteen years (1612–1631).

A Love Story

Shah Jahan met his wife-to-be when he was fifteen and she was fourteen. They were married five years later.

He gave her the title Mumtaz Mahal, which means “Chosen One of the Palace.” She was his wife and also his close friend.

When Mumtaz died, Shah Jahan was heartbroken. People said he was so sad that his beard turned white, and he cried so much, he needed glasses.



After Mumtaz Mahal died, Shah Jahan lived for thirty-five more years. He died in 1666.



Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal near a bend in the Yamuna River. The waters there are peaceful.

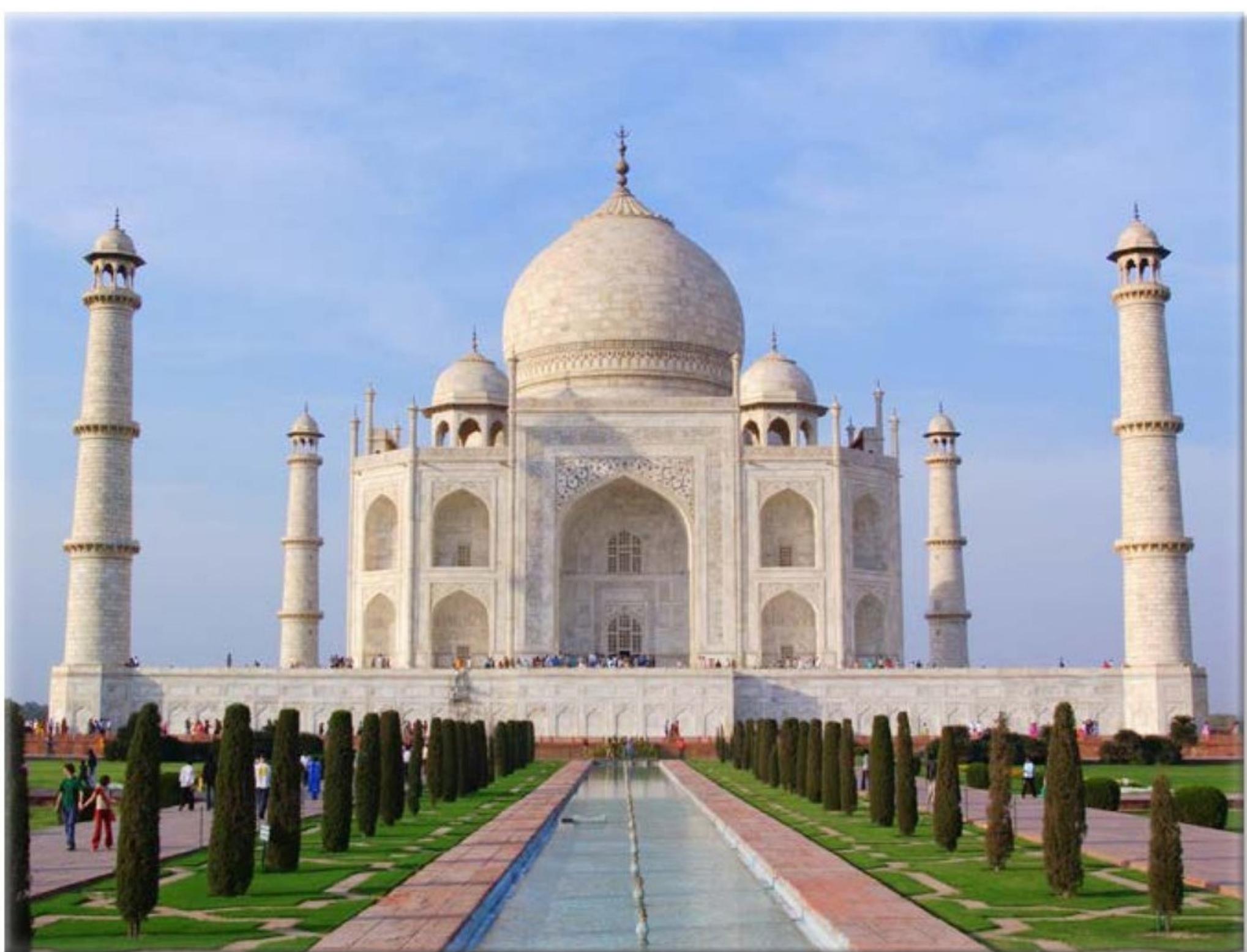
The Buildings Go Up

After Mumtaz Mahal died, Shah Jahan returned to his capital city of Agra, India. He decided to build the Taj Mahal in Agra beside the Yamuna (YAH-moo-nah) River.

Shah Jahan began building the Taj Mahal in 1632, about a year after Mumtaz Mahal died.

It was a big job. Twenty thousand workers helped build the Taj Mahal. One thousand elephants helped carry things. Builders and painters came from all over the world.

Huge pieces of white marble were pulled on carts by oxen. Workers used ropes to move the marble into place. The work was finished in 1653.



It took almost twenty-two years to build the Taj Mahal.

The Taj Mahal Today

After Shah Jahan died, the Taj Mahal was forgotten. People stole many of the gems and stones from its walls. They also took gold lamps, beautiful rugs, and other things.

Since then, people have fixed some of the damage at the Taj Mahal. Today, air **pollution** is the biggest danger. Pollution from factories damages the buildings and ruins the white marble.

People work to keep the Taj Mahal safe. They moved some factories farther away.

Groups of people work to fix harm caused by air pollution.



People work hard to fix artwork from hundreds of years ago.



In the evening, the white marble of the Taj Mahal seems to glow.

A Lasting Memorial

Shah Jahan wanted to make a place for people to enjoy forever. Today, the Taj Mahal is one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Many people visit every day to view the beautiful buildings and gardens.

Hundreds of years have passed since the Taj Mahal was built. It is still one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Glossary

burial (<i>n.</i>)	the act of placing a dead body in the ground (p. 5)
coffin (<i>n.</i>)	a long, thin box in which a dead person is buried (p. 9)
memorial (<i>n.</i>)	something that stands for the memory of a person, place, thing, or event (p. 5)
peaceful (<i>adj.</i>)	calm and quiet (p. 5)
pollution (<i>n.</i>)	the act or result of putting harmful things into the air, water, or soil (p. 14)
towers (<i>n.</i>)	tall, thin buildings (p. 7)

Taj Mahal

A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book

Word Count: 595

Connections

Writing

Write a newspaper article for students explaining the importance of the Taj Mahal. Include facts from the book in your article.

Social Studies

Research to learn more about India and create a poster highlighting at least five facts about it.



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