

Introduction to India

By Joan Boyle

Introduction:

India is a land rich in tradition. It is also a land of contrast. Let's start our journey through this remarkable country in southern Asia by researching some important baseline data.

Grade Level:

3rd grade

CA Social Studies Standard 3.1

Lesson 1 – Basic Geography

Objective:

Students will learn about the geography of India so they can compare and contrast it with similar regions in California .

- a) In your chosen grouping format (performing pairs (2), tricky trios (3) or questioning quads (4) use the supplied black line master of India and locate the towns, rivers and mountains found on the attached worksheet. You may search via the internet or use the supplied map of India.

Attachment from: <http://enchantdelearning.com>

- b) What questions do you have about these physical features? Research and report some interesting facts about each geographical feature (for example: Himalayas or River Ganges) you placed on the map. Use a **Tree Thinking Map** to organize your categories and information. Display your Tree Thinking Maps near the location of their nearest cities when you display the posters in the following lesson

- c) Now research in small groups/performing pairs one town/city and report on the importance of your chosen location to the economy, history or culture of India. Produce a poster of your town/city including your pertinent information with graphics to support it. Display the posters around the classroom and do a Gallery Walk to learn more about this fascinating country. (For example: Varanasi is known by several names and is the desired burial place for most Hindus.) Attach the Tree Thinking Map prepared in the lesson above beside the town to which it is the nearest.

Lesson 2 – History of India

Objective: Students will learn about the history of India/

- a) Using a timeline or log on to **www.timeline.com** research and input in chronological order, information about the rulers of this amazing subcontinent region, both past and present.

- Guptas
- Jawaharlal Nehru
- The British
- Aryans
- Indira Gandhi
- Moguls
- Manmohan Singh
- Maurya

***www.Wikipedia.com is a great site

- b) Research one important thing that these rulers brought to India.
- c) After reading several books from the attached bibliography, compare and contrast using a **Venn diagram**, the colonization by the British, of India and the USA.

Lesson 3 Hindu Deities and Festivals

Objective: Students will learn about cultural festivals and the gods that are the foundation of the Hindu faith.

To be able to understand the folktales of India, one must get to know the important deities that envelope these stories. One book I have enjoyed sharing with my students is entitled “The Little Book of Hindu Deities” by Sanjay Patel. The lighthearted drawings and descriptions of the gods provides a fun insight into what could become an overwhelming burden to remember who is whom and who did what! Here are some of my favorites, and probably necessary introductions so your students can get the most out of this unit of study. Have your students research the answers to my questions and then choose another god and ask the own questions for their peers:

Ganesha – Lord of all living things and eldest son of Shiva and his wife, Parvati.

? Ganesha has the head of an animal. Do you know which one? How he got it?

? Ganesha carries an axe. Do you know why?

?Ganesha has a sweet tooth and a favorite candy. What is it called?

Shiva - one of the oldest gods in India. He is part of the trinity of gods.

? Who are the other two gods making up the trinity?

? Shiva loves to dance. Some people think if he stops dancing that the world will come to an end!! He carries a weapon with him always. Do you know what it is? What does it represent?

Brahma – the second god of the trinity. He is the creator of the world and all living things upon it. It is said that he created a goddess out of his own blood when he started the creation of the world. He then could not take his eyes off her so when ever she moved he sprouted a head so he could watch her in all directions.

?How many heads does Brahma have?

?What is the purpose of the carafe of water which he carries with him always,?

Vishnu – the last of the trinity and his role is the protector of the universe. He has 10 incarnations, or avatars, which he transforms into when he comes to Earth to fight evil. Buddha, Krisna and Rama are the most famous.

?What color is Vishnu?

?How many arms does he have?

?On which animal does he usually sleep?

Rama – The seventh avatar of Vishnu and one of the hero and one of the most important people in the epic tale of the Ramayana. This is one of the most favorite stories in India. He came to Earth to destroy the evil king Ravana. He is seen as the ideal man and is worshipped daily at altars throughout India.

?Who is the wife of Rama?

?Apart from loyalty, what other symbol does he represent?

? What is the festival called that celebrates his return to his kingdom after rescuing his wife from Ravana and celebrates his coronation as king?

Now it is your turn to find out more about the gods below.

?Who are they?

?Why are they important?

?What are they famous for?

Sita
Lakshmi
Ganga

Nagas
Garuda
Sarasvati

Hanuman
Lakshmana

Lesson 4 – Literacy

Objective: Students will take information gleaned from the folktales of India and write/adapt their own tales into a Reader's Theater.

CA Social Studies Standard 3.1.1

Describe National Identities, religious beliefs, customs, and various folklore

CA Language Arts Standard 3.2

Comprehend basic plots of classic fairy tales, myths, folktales, legends, and fables from around the world.

Creative writing

Make up your own god or goddess just like the ones you have read about today. Be creative! Use good descriptions both in words and art. Have fun! Put all of your stories and creations in to a book of your own deities.

- a) Reading folktales from India can inform you about the culture, history or beliefs of this country. Use the book titles from the bibliography section complete the attached matrix which will highlight the important information about India.

- b) Writing a folktale can be fun. By using the information you have learned about this country so far, write your own folktale making it as realistic to the culture of your chosen region of India as you can.
- c) **Attached you will find a couple of Indian Reader's Theater** websites. Have the students use these for practice and then encourage them to write their own versions, or a unique one from one of the folktale books they have read. These can be performed for parents or the lower grades in your school.

<http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE07.html>
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- d) Show the students the attached clips of video taken in India of a performance of the Ramayana which is one of the popular epic stories of India. Encourage the students to try and put their folktales into a musical rendition of their story. Alternatively, they could add music to their Reader's Theater plays.

Research writing

Using the attached website

<http://www.famous-india.com/people-in-india/>

or books from your library to choose one of these famous people and complete a biographical written sketch to share with your class. I have enclosed a sample from a very famous Indian, Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi.

<http://enchantedorlearning.com>

Lesson 5 – Art

Objective – Students will make their own shadow puppets to use in their Reader's Theater or Shadow Puppet play. They will understand the complexity and popularity of this ancient form of Indian art.

Diversity of the Visual Arts

3.4 Identify and describe objects of art from different parts of the world observed in visits to a museum or gallery (e.g., puppets, masks, containers).

3.5 Write about a work of art that reflects a student's own cultural background

Background Information

a) Shadow puppets are very popular by way of entertainment in India and other countries in Southern Asia. This was more so before the advent of television and movies where puppeteers would travel the country performing epic plays like Ramayana or Mahabharata which could take several nights to perform.. They are also one of the oldest art forms to be found in India with many oral stories being passed down from father to son. Shadow puppets are traditionally flat and are made from leather and held or moved by attached bamboo cane. They are then lightly pressed on a translucent screen with a bright

Use the photographs of shadow puppets (see attachment named Shadow Puppets) which were taken from The Art of Puppetry picture cards I purchased in India and from ones that I took (with permission) in the museums in various parts of India., for models of puppets that your students can use to make for their own folktales from India. Below you will find directions of How to Make a Shadow Puppet.

Hands on activity

What you will need:

Thick A4 high quality tracing paper

Colored markers

Variety of hole punches in different sizes

Scissors

Pencil

Clear tape

Pencil

A laminator (you will need strips of stiff clear plastic if you don't have a laminator)

An overhead projector and clear A4 OHP sheets (or a strong desk lamp and a sheet of white cotton or thin white paper such as blank newsprint)

Planning your story

Choose one of the stories from the folktale books in the bibliography or write your own. You can either do traditional or your own modern version.

Write a list of all the characters and all the puppets you will need to make. Sometimes more than one puppet is needed, if the character is doing something different, such as sitting or fighting. (Working in a small group works well.)

Also plan any scenery you may want in your story, such as mountains, water, forests, gardens or cities. Decide where your story will take place and use the information in Lessons 1 and 2 to make it realistic.

Making your scenery

Indian shadow puppets are normally made from thin leather so that some light can come through them. You will be making yours on tracing paper, colored with felt tips. Work out how big your stage will be and use the scenery to make the space where the play will happen.

Draw out the scenes on tracing paper and color them in with felt tips. Include plants, flowers, buildings and dress that can be found in your area of choice for the setting of the story

Making your puppets

Draw out your characters on tracing paper using strong black lines around the edge and in any features such as faces, clothes or jewelry. Color in the characters with felt tips and cut them out carefully. Use the attached photo file for ideas.

If you have a laminator, laminate each character at the top of an A4 sheet and leave a blank laminated space at the bottom so you can move the puppet around the stage without your hands showing.

For older students they can attach bamboo sticks and brads at joints to make the limbs of the puppets move. They can also hole punch designs on the puppet to allow more light to shine through.

Putting on the play

Tell the story, or choose a narrator to do so as the puppets are moved around on the surface of the projector, showing the play on a wall. A more traditional Indian way is hold up the puppets in front of a strong light having the shadows being seen onto a sheet of white cotton or paper. Either way is sure to please the audience.

Play Indian music quietly in the background to provide an atmosphere.

This website provides information about the other types of puppets used in various regions of India.

<http://www.puppetryindia.org/types.htm>

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"Time for Kids." India. <<http://www.timeforkids.com/india>>.

CULTURES OF INDIA MATRIX FROM FOLKTALES READ

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTERS	SETTING	GODS OR GODDESSES	ECONOMICS	AESTHETICS	CULTURE

I hope you have enjoyed participating in this project as much as I did visiting the country of India and writing this curriculum. I have not yet tried this unit with my students but they are very excited for me to get it finished so we can continue with our travels around the world. There is so much more to learn about this country, India, and I hope this will just whet your appetite and you and your students will delve even deeper into this wonderful culture. Enjoy! If you have any questions or comments contact me at:-

joanboyle@cox.net