



Teacher's Guide

The Taj Mahal & Petra and the Silk Road **14 Wonders of Our World Series**

Grade Levels:

6-12

Subject Areas:

Social Studies

World History

World Geography & Cultures

Synopsis:

In the midst of the bustling city of Agra, India stands the serene Taj Mahal, the first new Wonder of the World. This episode dramatizes the story of Shah Jahan, the 17th century Muslim ruler, who built the mausoleum to honor his beloved wife after she died in childbirth. The beauty of the Taj Mahal's architecture and decoration are filmed in detail. The second episode explains how Bedouins led modern-day adventurers to the hidden city of Petra, a canyon city carved out of red sandstone. The sequence provides a history of the Silk Road and Petra's essential role in the journey to and from China. The industrious Nabataeans who built the city, extracted huge tolls from travelers because the city's residents devised methods to store water from flash floods that occurred in their desert environment.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Appreciate the cultural significance of these Wonders of the World.
- Describe the inspiration and Mughal-inspired beauty of the Taj Mahal.
- Describe the route of the Silk Road and Petra's importance in the movement of trade goods across the desert.

Vocabulary:

serenity, elegy, ruthlessness, basks, idyll, testament, diminish, artisan, minarets, trellises, mosaics, inlaid, portal, jasper, overthrown, Bedouins, bonanza, hewn, deluge, cultural exchange, mercantile, transcontinental, gorge, colossal, cameos, parched, infrequently

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

Why is the story of Romeo and Juliet so well known? Have there been similar love stories throughout history or are love stories like this merely fictional?

Where is the Taj Mahal located? Why was it built?

Does anyone know of a mysterious desert city that was only recently discovered? How can entire cities be lost and then rediscovered?

If you could visit either a beautiful marble building surrounded by exotic water gardens, or a desert city carved entirely out of red sandstone, which would you choose? Why?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

Why was Shah Jahan the right person to build a mausoleum as beautiful as the Taj Mahal? Do you think his wife might have had other reasons beside the quest for fame, to make her deathbed request? What eventually happened to her husband?

What was engraved on her tomb? Why were these the only engravings on the tomb?

Why do so many tourists visit the Taj Mahal today? Describe what you think makes it beautiful or impressive.

Why did Petra become such an important stop over on the Silk Road? Why did it take so long for archaeologists to find the ruins of the city?

Why do you think modern historians agree that the lost city of Petra should be a New World Wonder?

Further Activities:

To understand why a son would imprison his father, further investigate the political situation in 17th century India.

The tradition of Indian love stories and Indian love poetry is a very strong one. Investigate the poets and stories that are beloved by the people of India.

Further investigate the discoveries that archaeologists have made at the lost city of Petra.

Lawrence of Arabia is a renowned historical figure. Investigate his biography to find out why he likely knew of the existence of the lost city of Petra.

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