

LEARNING ABOUT
INDIA
THROUGH SOME OF ITS MANY
STORIES

*A curriculum project
by Elizabeth Heisner*

Fulbright-Hays 2008 Summer Seminar

Possible menu of lessons:

BEFORE YOU BEGIN TALKING ABOUT INDIA: Important Preparatory Work

- Including: Words to preview
- A concept to discuss: DIFFERENCE
- Things of importance and value recording sheet

Introduction Lesson: The Stories Pictures Can Tell

- Including: India Images recording sheet

Learning about India Through the Lives and Stories of Children

- Including: Stories of Children in India 2008 (by Elizabeth Heisner)
- Definition recording sheet
- Question and answer recording sheet

Learning About India Through an Important Place: The Ganges River

- Including: Ganges River recording sheet

Learning About India through the life and work of an important person: Gandhi

Learning About India through an important monument: The Taj Mahal

- Including: Taj Mahal recording sheet

Learning About India through some of its many stories

- Including: Indian stories recording sheet

Possible Extensions

Book Reference List

I am setting this curriculum up as a menu of possible lessons. You may choose to do some or all of them, and you may adjust the order of the lessons to best fit your needs and the needs of your students. You may find that your class will need extra time with a particular concept, and you may stretch one lesson to delve more deeply into that concept or lesson. I am not specifying a grade level for this curriculum, as I think it could be adapted for most elementary grades, and beyond, if enriched. I trust thoughtful educators to adjust this work to fit the needs of their students. Of course, you will likely find many ways to enrich and extend lessons in ways that fit your class. For example, if someone's grandmother comes from India, you might certainly enrich your study of India by inviting her to come for an interview, to share photographs, or to share food from her region. Tapping local resources for information, music, visual artwork, photographs, etc., about India can greatly enrich this curriculum. I am sure you will find fabulous new resources and ideas to add to this curriculum. I see this "menu" of lessons as something to which you will certainly want to add your own flavor and spice.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN TALKING ABOUT INDIA:

Important Preparatory Work

Words to preview:

One way to help students get to know new vocabulary is to put the word on a sentence strip or an index card. Hold it up, and have children repeat the word after you. You may even give them a facial expression or hand gesture that fits the word, like opening your eyes widely as you say “observe,” or opening your hands around to the surrounding environment around you when you say “environment.” Then, use each word properly in a few sentences. When they start to have ideas about what it means based on context, take a few shares from students as they begin to build the word’s meaning. Then give them a child-friendly definition for the word, and ask a couple children to share a sentence which contains the word to show they understand its meaning. Encourage students to look for this word in their reading and in conversation, and to use it in their own talk.

Vocabulary word	Kid-friendly definition	Possible example sentences
Observe	To notice something carefully; to examine with your senses	The baby observed the cat before it grabbed its tail.
Rural	In the country; opposite of urban	The rural town was a great place for going apple-picking. I like how calm things seem in rural areas.
Urban	In the city; opposite of rural	Urban areas are often very noisy and crowded. I lived in an urban area for many years, then I moved away from the city.
Shelter	A home; a place to stay	The mole builds its shelter underground. I found shelter during the storm under some leafy trees.
Technology	Tools and machines	Technology is always changing! That new ipod uses cutting-edge technology.
Transportation	Something that helps people or things get from place to place	I take public transportation in New York City. When someone borrowed my bike, I needed to find a new mode of transportation.
Environment	The surrounding world	Many people work to protect our environment. Our classroom environment is calm at reading time.

A concept to discuss: DIFFERENCE

I believe that it is important to help students carefully and sensitively consider what difference means before (and as) they consider cultures foreign to their own. You might read books which treat the idea of difference in inclusive ways, but which may be closer to students' own lives, such as We are Alike, We are Different, which highlights one kindergarten class's similarities and differences. Another book (somewhat more sophisticated) which values differences, particularly among families living in America, is Families, by Susan Kuklin.

Soon before you plan to introduce India to your class, do this activity with them to think about their own culture. Ask students to think about a typical day in their life. Let them know that, every day, we all encounter so many things in the world around us. Introduce the *Things of importance and value* recording sheet. (Find the sheet on the next page of this curriculum.) Have students consider their own daily life as they fill out the first column of this chart—the “brainstorming” column. You may want to review the vocabulary in the chart, and/or give a few examples in each category. Interrupt their work to let them know they may also think about the next column, and choose a few things in each category that are most important to them.

When most students have filled in both columns, bring the class together, and discuss ways in which the things important to them may show what they value. You may also discuss the way in which our culture, geography, etc. influences what is important to us. In different places around the world, the things people encounter in their daily life, and which they value, can be different in small or vast ways.

Let students know that, in the following weeks and lessons, we will be thinking about our culture and a foreign culture. Mostly, we will be learning and thinking about India, but we should keep in mind that what we know about our own culture can help us make smart guesses and formulate good ideas and questions about India.

Name:

Date:

	Brainstorm many different kinds	List 2 or 3 that are most important to you
Food		
Clothing		
Shelter		
Technology		
Transportation		
Environment		
People and their jobs		

What does this show about what you may value?

Introduction Lesson: The Stories Pictures Can Tell

- Goal:** Enhance student ability to carefully observe and analyze visual information, and to synthesize what they know about cultures to formulate ideas about what they see.
- Objectives:** Students will be able to use information they glean from images to add to what they know about India
Students will be able to categorize information
Students will discuss their ideas about things important to a culture
- Background Knowledge:** Some familiarity with India, Indian people, and where in the world India is; some practice analyzing visual information, and some practice with storytelling
- Materials:** paper
Markers
Many books on India (used more for images than text)
Color images of India (from books, internet sources, calendars, and/or actual photographs, etc.)
Copies of finished recording sheets from preparatory work
Copies of India Images recording sheets (one per student)
One “whole-class” copy of the India Images recording sheet
(perhaps a large chart or transparency)
Map of the world and/or globe
We Live in India (by Philippe Godard)
I is for India (by Prodeepta Das),
Pens/pencils (student-provided)
Chart paper

Outline of possible lesson elements:

(could be added to or cut from, depending on time constraints, and the needs, interests, and abilities of your students)

1. Introduction:

Let students know that we will be learning about a country called India. Show them where India is on a globe, and point to where your school is, as a point of perspective. If kids already know some things about India, a few may share them at this time.

Tell students that, like the United States, India is a huge country. **In fact, the United States has about 300 million people total, and India has over one billion people total,** which means India has more than 3 times more people than there are in the U.S. This is important for teachers and students to remember as we study a country. We can learn a lot, but we must remember that this is a huge and diverse nation. You might talk to the class about being careful not to stereotype people in an enormous nation, just because some people follow certain customs, etc.

2. Presentation:

Put many books and color images of people and places of India out around the room, at tables, and even on the walls. Try to put out a diversity of images (rural, urban, children, people at work, animals, etc.)

Introduce the India Images recording sheet. Together, on a “whole-class” copy (you may want to chart a copy, or put it on a transparency to make it larger), model looking carefully at an image, and think aloud as you notice details about daily life. For example, you could turn to page 30 of We Live in India, by Philippe Godard, and show them what you observe. You might notice that there is an billboard for shoes, but some of the people are not wearing shoes, or only have on flip-flops. This information could be noted in the “clothing” category on the recording sheet. You can let students know that if they know the name for something (a sari, a rickshaw, etc.), they may note it down, but that there may be things they do not know, and can just describe. If they find things they notice that does not seem to fit in a category (that there are signs written in more than one language, for example), they may write about that on the back of the sheet. Also, introduce the right-hand column of this recording sheet, and model how you could make a smart guess about something you observe, and what it may tell you about India and its people.

3. Instructions:

Give each student their own copy of the India Images recording sheet. Ask students to list things they notice about India from the images on their own copy of the chart. Students can circulate around the color images at tables, observe, and note things on their recording sheet. If possible, some students may also use computers to view images and/or video of India.

You may have students work on their own, or with a partner or small group as they do this work. Each should complete their own recording sheet, if possible.

4. Practice:

As students do this work, they will be using visual information and thoughtful analysis to develop an exposure to and an understanding of India and its people. Circulate among students to discuss ideas, and to help push them towards discussion as to what things they notice may tell them about India and its people.

5. Exploration:

Bring the group together with their recording sheets, and have several students share their information, showing the image that helped them observe this, if possible. Students may add to their own charts, or revise work they did, if discussion helps them understand something in a new, deeper way.

Read parts of I is for India (by Prodeepta Das) and/or We Live in India (by Philippe Godard) to help students gain more vocabulary and facts about India and its people. As you read it aloud with the class, you may stop from time to time to add to your own “whole-class” copy of the recording sheet.

6. Conclusion:

Discuss and help students synthesize information about things they noticed about India in these images. Always be careful to steer students away from potentially stereotypical talk.

Assessment:

While circulating, consider information students are noting on recording sheets. In discussions among students, with students, and with the whole class, assess student ability to analyze and process visual information. Are they growing in their understanding of Indian geography, life, and values?

If possible, as an early assessment in this work on India, have each student choose one image, and tell a realistic story about the daily life of an Indian person in that setting. They may tell their story aloud to a partner, or could write it down. Depending on background knowledge your students already have, you may encourage them to stick to telling a story tied only to things they directly observe in the image, or you may encourage them to include other facts they know about India in their story.

Extensions:

If possible, it would be great to do a similar lesson, but with art, food, music, musical instruments, video of dance, and/or artifacts of India's history or present (not just still images of them...). You may try to see what you can find on video, on the internet, from Indian families (or people who traveled to India) in your area, or at a nearby museum.

Name:

Date:

	List what you notice in the images of India	What might this tell you about India and its people?
Food		
Clothing		
Shelter		
Technology		
Transportation		
Environment		
People and their jobs		

What does this show about what people in India may value?

Learning about India Through the Lives and Stories of Children

- Goal: Enhance student ability to gain understanding of daily life in a foreign culture, and to recognize the roles different people have in it (jobs of adults, role of children, etc.)
- Objectives: Students will learn more about life in India as they consider several stories of children in India
Students will better understand the variety of languages, customs, religions, etc., in India
Students will be able to place several cities of India on a map

Background

Knowledge: Some familiarity with India, as well as vocabulary such as rickshaw, sari, etc.

- Materials: paper and/or copies of recording sheets Pens/pencils (student-provided)
Markers Chart paper/chalkboard/whiteboard easel
Going to School in India (by Lisa Heydlauff)
A Family in India (by Tony Tigwell)
We Live in India (by Philippe Godard)
Stories of Children in India (compiled by Elizabeth Heisner)
As many books as possible about India (nonfiction at student reading level is best)
These may be available from your school and/or public library
If your students can use computers, these may be used, too.
A map of India, and a map of the world

Outline of possible lesson elements:

(could be added to or cut from, depending on time constraints, and the needs, interests, and abilities of your students)

1. Introduction:

Let students know that one way to learn more about a culture or a nation is to learn about a few specific people in it. We can learn about famous people, but we can also learn about the daily life of typical people in the country. By learning about important parts of their lives, we can learn more about life in India. Tell students that part of their job in this work is to ask questions when something is unfamiliar to them. One way to learn is to ask questions and find their answers. This should be encouraged in this work!

2. Presentation:

Read part(s) of A Family in India (by Tony Tigwell), Going to School in India (by Lisa Heydlauff) and/or We Live in India (by Philippe Godard). Stop often to discuss the many aspects of life, religion, language, etc., which are exposed through these stories of children in India. Also, point out cities mentioned, and find them on a map/globe. Let students know that this is a little like putting a puzzle together. Each story we learn of real people is like a puzzle piece, with information about important parts of life in India. The more stories we read and think about, the more we put the puzzle together.

3. Instructions:

As you read and discuss more from the books, tell students that their questions and ability to find new vocabulary words is important for our work to learn more about India. Let them know that you will chart new vocabulary and questions that arise around Indian culture, customs, festivals, and religion, etc., as you read more from the book aloud. Students should be encouraged to help add to these lists. You may also have students write their own questions and new vocabulary on a piece of paper, in a notebook, or on the recording sheets, as they will be used for research later.

4. Exploration:

Help students find a partner with whom they will work on researching about something that was new, or led them to a question as you read aloud. Assign partnerships different “research assignments.” For example, from the reading, one partnership may research Hindi, and another may research chapattis. If students are not interested/able to research, they may read *Stories of Children in India* (compiled by Elizabeth Heisner) or look through Going to School in India (by Lisa Heydlauff), and add to their list of new vocabulary and questions.

Students should write down new information and answers they find to their questions. You may use the attached recording sheets. You could even start a class “India glossary” or an “India Word Wall,” which students add to with definitions for new vocabulary.

If there is not adequate access in your school to internet information and books about India, this might best be done as a homework assignment, if students could use internet research at home.

5. Share: *possibly done the next day...*

Bring the group together to share and present information they have learned through their research. Help guide shares to be culturally sensitive, and be sure to steer away from any possible stereotyping (“Indian women all wear saris,” etc.). If possible, compile the research notes/recording sheets together in one place (a folder, perhaps). If you choose for students to later publish information about India (in articles, posters, nonfiction books, etc.), this will be a good resource to all students.

6. Conclusion:

Discuss how much our questioning, researching, and sharing has broadened our knowledge base about India and life in India.

Assessment:

In discussions among students, with students, and with the whole class, assess student ability to question, research, analyze, and process information. Are students growing in their understanding of Indian geography, life, and values?

Extensions: You may choose to copy a story of a child you did not get to reading aloud from We Live in India (by Philippe Godard) and/or Going to School in India (by Lisa Heydlauff) to have students read and discuss in small groups, and to continue this questioning and research.

Set up pen-pal relationships with students in India (check out <http://www.epals.com/>) for first-hand, current accounts, and real answers to questions.

Stories of Children in India 2008

*(compiled by Elizabeth Heisner in July 2008,
based on composites of many interviews with children in India)*

My name is Priya.

I am a 10 year-old girl. I live in Delhi. I go to a school where we learn English. Once, a girl in my building and her family was from England. Her dad worked for the government here in Delhi, which is the capital of India. My brother loves playing cricket. I don't care so much, but I go with him sometimes to play on the lawn near the India Gate. I love to eat fresh mangoes. I even went to a mango festival when I was younger. There were over 100 different kinds of mangoes! I'd eat them all if I could!

My name is Geetha.

I am an 11 year-old girl. I live in Bangalore, which is in southern India. I walk to school with my sister and my friends every day. It is a 30-minute walk each way. We all wear our green and white striped shirts and our navy skirts to school, because we take pride in our school and our school uniform. I have long, black hair, and my sister braids it in the mornings if my mother is too busy. When we walk home from school, our backpacks are loaded with all of our books. My favorite subject is English. I like to read stories.

My name is Akshay.

I am an 10 year-old boy. I live in Noida, near Delhi. I am Hindu. In my family, we are all Hindu. I have two sisters, and we celebrate the festivals, like Diwali and Holi, together. We go to temple. I like to play sports, especially cricket and football. In America, they call football "soccer." I know because my family lived in Houston for two years, when my parents went to a university there and I was only five years old. When we were in Houston, we found other Indian people, and we celebrated Hindu festivals together with them. In school, my favorite subject is science. I love to experiment!

My name is Tarini.

I am a 16 year-old girl. I was born in Kerala, in the south of India, but now my family lives in Mumbai, which used to be called "Bombay." I take the train to school most days, because it only takes 20 minutes, but the bus can take over an hour... especially when traffic is bad, which is always! On the train, there is a special compartment just for ladies, which is where I go. It's more calm in there. I like to go to movies. My favorite actor is Shah Rukh Khan. He was great in "Om Shanti Om."

My name is Rinka.

I am an 12 year-old girl. I live in Kharagpur, which is a town near Kolkata. I go to a school where there is a hostel for kids to stay in. I live here in a hostel. I like its white walls and blue shutters. Even when it is hot at night, there is a little breeze. I've been at the same school for six years. I think it is a good school. The kids in our school are all Muslim. My father is a police officer in Kolkata. I see him when I go home every weekend. I don't have any brothers and sisters, but the other kids who live in the hostel with me are like brothers and sisters. We play together. I don't play a lot of sports, but I like to read. I read with my friend, Reena, and we tell stories and secrets. I want to be a police officer when I grow up.

My name is Imran.

I am a 12 year-old boy. I go to the same school as Rinka. I have two older brothers, and we all like to play cricket. I also stay in the hostel, but I call it a dormitory. I like to learn English. My father works at a railway workshop, and my mother stays at home. After school, I play with friends, then I go to study. My parents say I must study, and I know I must do my best. On Sunday, there is no school, so I have fun! Then we play cricket and eat sweets, if we can find someone to share!

My name is Shristi.

I am a 10 year-old girl. My name means "Creation." I go to a private school, and I live just outside Kolkata. I play the piano, and my brother is learning to play the sitar. My dad gives me a hard time about not practicing enough! I like cooking. I took a class in school. At home, we have a cook, so I don't do the cooking at home. We are Hindu, but I have friends who are Hindu, Christian, Sikh, and Muslim. I have friends in my building. Sometimes we play together on the roof. I can hear the call to prayer at lots of mosques from my rooftop.

My name is Vishal.

I am an 8 year-old boy. I live in Mumbai. I have two brothers and one sister. They are all older than me. I walk with my sister to school, but my brothers go to a different school. I like to play hide-and-peek with my friends. Sometimes my brothers and sister play with me at home, but sometimes they say they have to study. My favorite food is dal, a delicious lentil dish. When it is very hot, my favorite thing is ice cream. Yum!

My name is Anshruta.

I am a 15 year-old girl. I am at a new school in Mumbai. It takes me a half-hour to get here by school bus. I like to swim, and I like learning Indian dance and music. My younger brother is learning to play drums called tabla. They are Indian drums, and they fit on your lap. Sometimes he lets me play them, but I can't get them to make the same sounds he can! I live with my cousin, my grandparents, my parents, my younger brother, and my great-grandmother. It is a busy house!

My name is Shruti.

I am a 7 year-old girl. I live in Kovalam, which is a beach town. "Kovalam" means "grove of coconut trees." I do like coconuts. I can climb to the top of a coconut tree, but my grandmother tells me not to. She thinks I might fall. I tell her no, girls don't fall from coconut trees, coconuts do! And then she laughs. I go to a school a mile from my house. A bike rickshaw picks me up and takes me there. My sister used to go to my school, but she doesn't go any more. Now she works with my family at home. They have a lot of work to do.

My name is Amit.

I am a 12 year-old boy. Most days, I sell bananas at the flower market in my city, Kolkata. When you come down from the small bridge, there you will find me, with a big pile of yellow bananas. I try to get people to buy them for a good price, because they are good, delicious bananas. Some days, I take a break and play cards with my friends. Sometimes I give them a banana, and they give me something later. I try to get them to pay me rupees, but I remember they're my friends. I wish my family didn't have to worry about having enough rupees, but we do. But we make do.

My name is Pratibha.

I am a 7 year-old girl. I live in Varanasi. Varanasi is known for its beautiful silk. Some days, I go to school with my brothers. On Sundays, when there is no school, I help my father with his weaving. He weaves beautiful saris with the best Varanasi silk. I love when he weaves a bit of gold or silver thread in to the fabric. It makes the sari shimmer and shine. When my family needs water for cooking or bathing, I go to the water pump with the red plastic bucket and fill it up. I help my family with cooking and cleaning. I am only seven, but I can help a lot! Sometimes, when we go down to the Ganges River, my friend, Priyanka, gives me flowers to offer *puja*, or an offering, to the river. Sometimes, if I have sweets to share, I give one to Priyanka. At Holi festival, we eat burfa—my favorite—together.

My name is Nikhil.

I am a 13 year-old boy. I live in Bangalore. I go to a nice school, and I have to take some days off to give dance performances. I have been a Yakshagana dancer since I was six years old. I saw a performance, and just knew I wanted to dance. Since then, I go to my teacher's place twice a week for lessons. In Yakshagana dancing, it is important to show your emotions to the audience. I make my emotions come through my body as I dance, and from my face. I do my own make-up before each performance, and it takes me almost an hour! We are also responsible for our own costumes. It usually takes about two hours to dress myself, as each costume needs about 75 knots to stay secure. I wouldn't want a problem with my costume when I dance, so I am careful! For me, school is important, but dancing is the most important.

Learning About India Through an Important Place: The Ganges River

Goal: Enhance student ability to carefully consider the role of a river to a nation, and to consider its importance to a people.

Objectives: Students will learn new facts about India and its people as it considers the Ganges River
Students will consider the many ways the Ganges River is important to India and its people
Students will be able to find the Ganges River on a map of India

Background

Knowledge: Some familiarity with rivers and India, as well as vocabulary such as sacred, ghats, pilgrims, monsoon, etc.

Materials: paper Pens/pencils (student-provided)
Markers Chart paper/chalkboard/whiteboard easel
Ganges recording sheet (you may want to chart one of these, or make an overhead)
Sacred River: The Ganges of India (by Ted Lewin)
If your students can use computers for internet searches, these may be used, too.
(If possible) A map of India, and a map of the world
(If possible) Many color images of the Ganges River (Google "Ganges River" images)

Outline of possible lesson elements:

(could be added to or cut from, depending on time constraints, and the needs, interests, and abilities of your students)

1. Introduction:

Let students know that one way to learn more about a culture or a nation is to learn about an important place or part of its geography. You may mention the Nile River in Egypt, Mount Fuji in Japan, etc. You may ask students to share names of places they know are important to the country they are in. Let them know that today, we will be thinking more about the Ganges River, and its place of importance in the lives of people in India. Point out the Ganges on a map of India, and help students place it geographically.

2. Presentation:

Put several color images of the Ganges River out at students' tables.

Read the first few pages of the book Sacred River: The Ganges of India (by Ted Lewin). As you do, take time to let students carefully notice the rich, detailed drawings, and discuss things they learn about India through these illustrations, as well as the text. Discuss any possibly confusing points with students, and take questions. Have students turn to talk with each other about ideas they have about the Ganges River and India as we read this book.

Introduce the Ganges River recording sheet, and go over any vocabulary students may not know (transportation, technology, etc.). Go back and reread the pages of Sacred River, and ask students to help you add to your class copy of this chart. Be clear that students may use things they see or *read* as a source of information.

3. Instructions:

Give each student their own copy of the Ganges River recording sheet. Ask students to list things they notice about the Ganges or around the Ganges on their own copy of the chart. You may discuss that part of a river is the area just around the river...the ghats, the riverbanks, etc. Students can circulate around the color images at tables, observe, and note things on their recording sheet. If possible, students may also use computers to view images of the Ganges River and daily life, ceremonies, etc., in and around it.

You may have students work on their own, or with a partner or small group as they do this work. Each should complete their own recording sheet, if possible.

4. Practice:

As students do this work, they will also be using visual information and thoughtful analysis to gain a larger depth of understanding about the Ganges River and its importance in India and the lives of Indian people. Circulate among students to discuss ideas, and to help push them towards discussion as to possible reasons the Ganges may be so important to the people of India.

5. Exploration:

Bring the group together with their recording sheets, and have several students share their information, showing the image that helped them learn this, if possible. Students may add to their own charts, or revise work they did, if discussion helps them understand something in a new, deeper way.

Read the rest of Sacred River: The Ganges of India (by Ted Lewin). As you read it aloud with the class, stop from time to time to add to your own "whole-class" copy of the recording sheet.

6. Conclusion:

Discuss and help students synthesize information about things that make the Ganges River important to India and Indian people. You may choose to reread the introduction page of Sacred River.

Assessment:

While circulating, consider information students are noting on recording sheets as important. In discussions among students, with students, and with the whole class, assess student ability to analyze and process visual information. Are they growing in their understanding of Indian geography, life, and values?

Name:

Date:

	List things you noticed about and around the Ganges River
Food	
Clothing	
Shelter & Structures	
Technology	
Transportation	
Environment	
People and their jobs	

What does this show about the Ganges and how people value it?

On the back of this page, you may sketch something you think shows how people use or value the Ganges River.

Learning About India through the life and work of and important person: Gandhi

- Goal: Enhance student ability to carefully consider the role of an important person's life, and its influence on a culture/nation.
- Objectives: Students will learn new facts about Gandhi, and will synthesize it with what they already know
Students will consider Gandhi's influence on India
Students will place Gandhi's life and work in a larger historical framework
- Background Knowledge: Some familiarity with Gandhi and India, as well as vocabulary such as nonviolence, prejudice, independence, etc.

- Materials: paper Pens/pencils (student-provided)
Markers Chart paper
Post-It notes
A timeline from 1850 to 1950 (could be quickly written on a board)
Gandhi (by Demi), published in 2001 by Margaret K. McElderry Books
Gandhi: The Peaceful Revolutionary (by Anna Claybourne), published in 2003 by Raintree Steck-Vaughn Company
(If possible) several child-friendly biographies about Gandhi
(many are available at public and school libraries)
If your students can use computers for internet searches, these may be used, too.
<http://www.mkgandhi.org/main.htm> (a helpful website for teachers and students)
(If possible) A map of India, and a map of the world

Outline of possible lesson elements:

(could be added to or cut from, depending on time constraints, and the needs, interests, and abilities of your students)

1. Introduction:

Let students know that one way to learn more about a culture or a nation is to learn about people in its history who had an influence on its history. You may ask students to share names of people they know who were important in Indian history. Let them know that today, we will be thinking more about Gandhi, his life, his work, his influence, and his place in the history of India.

2. Presentation:

Put several child-friendly biographies about Gandhi out at students' tables.

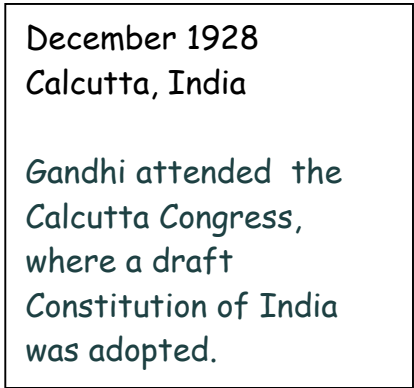
Read the first few pages of both main texts for this lesson (by Demi and by Anna Claybourne). As you do, discuss possibly confusing points with students, and take questions and have students turn to talk with each other about ideas they have about Gandhi and India as we read these texts. You may also talk about different kinds of nonfiction texts, and how we can get information from different sources.

3. Instructions:

Ask students to write important events in Gandhi's life on Post-It notes, putting WHERE (city and country) and WHEN (year, at least) it happened. Show an example, as you find a fact in a book, or on the internet.

You may have students work on their own, or with a partner or a small group as they do this work.

information found on a chronology at:
<http://www.mkgandhi.org/main.htm>



December 1928
Calcutta, India

Gandhi attended the
Calcutta Congress,
where a draft
Constitution of India
was adopted.

4. Practice:

As students do this work, they will also be reading about Gandhi's life and works, and gaining a larger depth of understanding about his life, and the historical context. Circulate among them to discuss ideas, and clarify any confusing points. You may also help define new vocabulary they may encounter.

5. Exploration:

Bring the group together with their books and Post-Its, and have several students share their information, placing their Post-It on the timeline or the world or India map. Other students may add additional facts and ideas about certain events in Gandhi's life, as these events can initiate a thoughtful discussion about Gandhi and India.

When many students have shared their information Post-Its, you may have the rest come up to place theirs on the timeline and map.

Read the rest of Gandhi, by Demi. As you read it aloud with the class, stop from time to time to add Post-Its to the timeline and maps.

6. Conclusion:

Discuss and help students synthesize information about things that were important events in Gandhi's life, and in the history of India. Help them process the visual information, as seen on the timeline and maps. Where was Gandhi, and what else was going on in history?

Assessment:

While circulating, consider information students are noting on Post-Its as important. In discussions among students, with students, and with the whole class, assess student ability to place Gandhi's life and the events in it in a larger historical context. Are they growing in their understanding of Indian history, and values?

Learning About India through an important monument: The Taj Mahal

Goal: Enhance student ability to carefully consider the role of a monument to a nation, and to consider its importance to the nation's history and people.

Objectives: Students will learn facts about India, its history and its people as they consider the Taj Mahal
Students will consider many ways the Taj is important to India, its history, and its people
Students will be able to find the Agra on a map of India, and place where in India the Taj is

Background Knowledge:

Some familiarity with monuments and India, as well as vocabulary such as Mughals, empire, emperor, empress, stonecutters, tomb, minaret, mosque, etc.

Materials: paper Pens/pencils (student-provided)
Markers Chart paper/chalkboard/whiteboard easel
Taj Mahal (by Caroline Arnold and Madeleine Comora)
Taj Mahal (by Elizabeth Mann)
Large image of the Taj Mahal (from a book, or a poster)
Taj Mahal recording sheet (you may want to chart one of these, or make an overhead)
If your students can use computers for internet searches, these may be used, too.
(If possible) A map of India, and a map of the world
(If possible) many color images of the Taj Mahal (Google "Taj Mahal" images)

Outline of possible lesson elements:

(could be added to or cut from, depending on time constraints, and the needs, interests, and abilities of your students)

1. Introduction:

Let students know that one way to learn more about a culture or a nation is to learn about an important monument in it, and the history around its being built. You may mention the pyramids in Egypt, the Eiffel Tower in France, Mount Rushmore in the U.S., etc. You may ask students to share names of monuments they know. Let them know that today, we will be thinking about the Taj Mahal, and its place of importance in the history of India. Point out Agra on a map of India, and help students place it geographically, and understand that the Taj Mahal is in a city called Agra.

2. Presentation:

Show students the large image of the Taj Mahal (if you can't find one, make a color transparency of one of the photos from the Elizabeth Mann book, and project it). Ask students to share what they notice. Guide discussion toward shape, materials, and more sophisticated observations about design, inlay patterns, etc.

Put several color images of the Taj Mahal out around the room. (Hopefully the images you collect will include some showing inlay details.)

3. Instructions:

Introduce the Taj Mahal recording sheet, and go over any vocabulary students may not know (transportation, technology, etc.). Ask students to take some time to observe the photographs and images of the Taj Mahal.

Give each student their own copy of the Taj Mahal recording sheet. Ask students to record things they notice about the Taj Mahal on their own copy of the chart. You may let students know that there are some things they may not be sure of from these images, and that they can make their best guess.

4. Exploration:

Students circulate around the color images at tables, observe, and note things on their recording sheet. If possible, students may also use computers to view images of the Taj Mahal. Students may work on their own, or with a partner or small group as they do this work. Each should complete their own recording sheet, if possible.

5. Practice:

As students do this work, they will also be using visual information and thoughtful analysis to gain a larger depth of understanding about the Taj Mahal. Circulate among students to discuss ideas, and to help push them towards discussion as to possible reasons the Taj Mahal may be such an important monument.

6. Share:

Bring the group together with their recording sheets, and have several students share their information, showing the image that helped them learn this, if possible. Students may add to their own charts, or revise work they did, if discussion helps them understand something in a new, different way.

Read the book, Taj Mahal, by Elizabeth Mann. (This may take more than one session.) Stop to discuss the illustrations, photographs, and text. Add to the class copy of the Taj Mahal recording sheet. Point out how much we are able to learn about the history of a nation through the story of one of its important monuments.

6. Conclusion:

Discuss and help students synthesize information about the Taj Mahal and its history. You may also discuss how this monument is still important to India and Indian people.

Assessment:

While circulating, consider information students are noting on recording sheets as important. In discussions among students, with students, and with the whole class, assess student ability to analyze and process visual information. Are they growing in their understanding of Indian geography, life, and values?

Extensions:

- Read Taj Mahal (by Caroline Arnold and Madeleine Comora) and discuss
- Have students sketch/build a model of a monument they would want to build to reflect their own culture, beliefs, and country history.

Name:

Date:

	List things you noticed and learned about the Taj Mahal and India in the time it was built
Food	
Clothing	
Shelter & Structures (including materials used to make them)	
Technology	
Transportation	
Environment	
People and their jobs (including leaders)	

What does this show about the Taj Mahal and the time and culture in which it was produced?

On the back of this page, you may sketch a detail of the Taj Mahal you think shows something about Indian culture, beliefs, and/or history.

Learning About India through some of its many stories

These lessons may span several days, or could be done as reading centers.

The idea is not that every student will read every story, but that each student will get to know several stories very well, and that the class will share some texts aloud together.

Goal: Enhance student ability to understand more about a culture through close reading and careful analysis of its literature and stories.

Objectives: Students will read, think about, and discuss a variety of stories from India
Students will consider how stories reflect the culture from which they come
Students will make connections between illustrations and texts

Background

Knowledge: Some familiarity with India, written stories, legends, myths, and oral storytelling, as well as practice with / ability to determine possible “big ideas” or morals in the stories they read.

Materials: paper Pens/pencils (student-provided)
Markers Chart paper/chalkboard/whiteboard easel

Indian Stories recording sheet

a large amount of stories from India (see book reference list, or go to a library)

(Try to be sure to include stories adapted for children from the traditional ancient texts of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, etc.)

Outline of possible lesson elements:

(could be added to or cut from, depending on time constraints, and the needs, interests, and abilities of your students)

1. Introduction:

Let students know that one way to learn more about a culture or a nation is to read and think about stories that come from that place. Let students know that we will be reading some stories as a whole class, but will also have chances to read in partnerships, and even independently, perhaps.

2. Presentation:

Read the first few pages of the book The Rumor (retold by Jan Thornhill), As you do, take time to let students carefully notice the drawings, and discuss things they learn about India through these illustrations, as well as the text. Discuss any possibly confusing points with students, and take questions. Have students turn to talk with each other about ideas they have about the text and India as we read this book.

3. Instructions:

Arrange reading partnerships so students may read a story from India together. Try to pair students together with books that will interest them and are at their reading level. If you can find any, you may also have students read books of Indian stories for children that were actually published in India.

4. Practice:

As students do this reading and thinking work, they will be using visual and textual information to gain a larger depth of understanding about the kinds of stories that come from India, as well as some information about India, as seen as the setting for these books. Circulate among students to discuss ideas, and to help push them towards discussion as to what the stories can tell us about India, its values, and its people.

You may choose to have students work on the *Indian Stories* recording sheet to help them organize and hold on to their thinking.

5. Exploration:

Bring the group together, and have several partnerships share the big ideas from their stories. You may also have students share some new things they learned about India through their stories and illustrations. If students did the *Indian Stories* recording sheet, you may have partnerships share what they noticed with another group.

Assessment:

In discussions among students, with students, and with the whole class, assess student ability to read, observe illustrations, analyze, and process information. Are students growing in their understanding of Indian stories, life, and values? Are they able to determine a story's "big idea" or moral and think about how it may or may not fit with the values of the place that created that story?

Extensions:

This sort of work could be done several days in a row, with a different book read aloud to the whole class, and with partnerships (or individuals) reading different stories each day. This could also be organized as reading centers, with specific activities organized for each story.

If students have read a variety of stories, students may try writing their own story set in India, and which conveys things important in Indian culture.

If you are able to find child-friendly video adaptations of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, or other Indian tales, you may enjoy "reading" the video as a text with your class.

Name:

Date:

	List things you noticed in your story from India that fit in these categories
Food	
Clothing	
Shelter & Structures	
Technology	
Transportation	
Environment	
People and their jobs	

What might the “big idea” or moral of this story be?

What does this tell you about things that might be valued in India?

Possible Extensions

***Have students work in small groups and use information from nonfiction books about India to jigsaw (share and present) information on Indian...

Geography and Weather

Festivals

Religions

Animals

Bollywood

Foods

Clothing

Arts (especially music and dance)

Fun Facts

The book, India, by A Kamala Dalal, published by National Geographic, and others like it would be great references for children as they collect information about their topic.

***Have students write and illustrate their own tale set in India (and which includes typical Indian foods, animals, clothing, etc, and incorporates typical Indian story elements and morals)

***Organize an Indian food day

***Set up pen-pal relationships between your students and Indian students
www.epals.com

***Make Indian miniature-inspired paintings

***Geometry study of rangoli patterns / make your own rangoli patterns with chalk

***Origami lotus flowers

<http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2007/1/27/82083.html>

***Organize a visit to the Indian collection at a museum

***Organize a field trip to a performance of Indian music and/or dance

***Interview someone from India

***Use this website to come up with extensions of your own:

<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/india/index.htm>

Book Reference List

We Are All Alike...We Are All Different (by Cheltenham Elementary School Kindergarteners), published in 2003 by Scholastic

Families (by Susan Kuklin), published in 2006 by Hyperion Books

CHILDREN'S STORIES FROM INDIA:

(These titles are all available for purchase in the United States):

****Note:** A Jataka tale is a kind of tale that is meant to teach about sharing, good and evil, and compassion. Jataka tales have been passed on for over 2,500 years. In many of these tales, the Buddha appears as an animal.

The Drum (retold by Rob Cleveland), published in 2006 by August House Publishers

This is a folktale from India about how a boy gets the drum he desires.

The Little Brown Jay (retold by Elizabeth Claire), published in 1994 by Mondo Publishing

This is a pourquoi story that explains why blue jays are blue in a folktale. There are several nonfiction pages after the tale which describe India today, as well as the importance of the lotus flower in Indian culture.

The Monkey and the Crocodile (by Paul Galdone), published in 1997 by Clarion Books

This is a Jataka tale from India about a clever monkey.

One Grain of Rice (by Demi), published in 1997 by Scholastic Press

This mathematical tale highlights the cleverness of a girl named Rani who is granted a reward from the raja for one of her good deeds. Rani requests one grain of rice to be doubled every day for thirty days. The illustrations for this book, done by Demi, are inspired by Indian miniature paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Rumor (retold by Jan Thornhill), published in 2002 by Maple Tree Press

This is a Jataka tale from India about a rumor spread among animals in a grove of palm and mango trees, as well as about the importance of finding the truth.

COLLECTIONS OF STORIES FROM INDIA:

Indian Tales (by Shenaaz Nanji), published in 2007 by Barefoot Books

This is a collection of Indian stories, organized by region. Before a tale from a particular region, there is a two-page description of that region, with details relating to the tale one is about to read. Illustrations by Christopher Corr are bright and engaging.

Stories from India (retold by Anna Milbourne), published in 2005 by Usborne Publishing

This is a collection of retold traditional Indian stories, from "A hundred questions" to "Rama and Sita" to "The story of the stories."

Indian Children's Favourite Stories (retold by Rosemarie Somaiah), published in 2006 by Tuttle Publishing

This collection will give children insight into traditional culture and history of India, with particular emphasis on Hindu tales.

BOOKS ABOUT LIFE IN INDIA:

India (by A. Kamala Dalal), published in 2007 by the National Geographic Society

This is a beautiful book, filled with facts and amazing photographs. It is organized into five main sections: geography, nature, history, people and culture, and government and economy. There are good resources at the end of the book, including a timeline and glossary.

Living in India (by Anne Singh), published in 1987 by Young Discovery Library

This is a small but fact-filled book about life in India, from clothing to Indian music and dance to the importance of cows to Hindus. Titles in this series were created by the author and illustrator in collaboration with elementary school teachers and an academic specialist.

A Family in India (by Tony Tigwell), published in 1985 by Lerner Publications Company

This book follows typical family life through a Muslim village girl's experiences in Takukibowli, a village near Benares. Through Sakina's story, the book touches on many elements of Indian culture, from schooling, farming, and weaving to a trip to the Ganges.

We Live in India (by Philippe Godard), published in 2006 by Abrams Books for Young Readers

This is an amazing book which discusses important topics in India through the stories of three Indian children: Jyoti, a ten year-old in Kolkata who speaks English and Bengali; Shubha, an eleven year-old practicing to become a classical dancer from the southern Indian town of Thanjavur; and Bhagat, a twelve year-old boy speaks Hindi and who wishes to get an education, but who is in a family of poor farmers in Norangpur, in the north of India. Although this book may be difficult for younger students to access independently, it would be a rich text to read aloud and discuss. Parts of the text could be read out of order. For example, you could discuss the marriage and the caste system through the pages devoted to these topics before or after you read the part devoted to Indian religions.

Going to School in India (by Lisa Heydlauff), published in 2005 by Charlesbridge

This is an engaging text that includes a huge variety of information about school in India. It also includes student profiles. This book touches on transportation to school, lunchtime foods, a variety of educational statistics, and regional highlights. It notes that there are 348 million children in India (under age 15), and that 156 million of them go to school. It also notes that there are 950,000 schools and 3 million teachers in India. There are pages with actual photos and quotations from Indian children about their dreams for their futures.

I is for India (by Prodeepa Das), published in 1996 by Franklin Lincoln Children's Books

This book is organized alphabetically, introducing one vocabulary word for each letter. Rich photographs accompany definitions of things important to India and its people, from D (Diwali) to P (Peacock) to V (Veena).

BOOKS ABOUT INDIAN FESTIVALS:

Lighting a Lamp: A Diwali Story (by Johnny Zucker), published in 2004 by Frances Lincoln Children's Books

This is a simple picture book highlights the traditions (rangoli patterns, lighting diyas, etc.) of Diwali as a family celebrates together. The last two pages of the book are more specific and detailed in discussing what Diwali is about.

Holi (by Uma Krishnaswami), published in 2003 by Children's Press (a division of Scholastic)

This book highlights the Hindu celebration of Holi, which reminds Hindus that good wins over evil, and which marks the beginning of spring. This book has many current photographs which show Indian people celebrating Holi. It also has a photo glossary of words including tika, gulal, and mithai.

BOOKS ABOUT GANDHI:

Gandhi (by Demi), published in 2001 by Margaret K. McElderry Books

Gandhi: The Peaceful Revolutionary (by Anna Claybourne), published in 2003 by Raintree Steck-Vaughn Company

BOOKS ABOUT THE TAJ MAHAL:

Taj Mahal (by Caroline Arnold and Madeleine Comora), published in 2007 by Carolrhoda Books

Taj Mahal (by Elizabeth Mann), published in 2008 by Mikaya Press

BOOK ABOUT THE GANGES RIVER:

Sacred River: The Ganges of India (by Ted Lewin), published in 1995 by Clarion Books

*****NOTES*****

There is a huge wealth of information on India in child-friendly websites, books, and other publications. This list is just a place to start.

Beautiful educational resources on India are also available from the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) in India. These include slides, print images, sound recordings, and texts. etc. To find out more, go to: <http://ccrtindia.gov.in/>