

Online Book Club

The Mystery at the Taj Mahal

Bring It To Life!

1. Map it! Find India on a world map. Draw India and the countries surrounding it on a poster board. Label India, its neighbors, and any bodies of water near it. What continent is India part of? Label the continent.
2. The Moghul Empire produced some of India's most beautiful architecture. Use the Internet to find photographs of the buildings mentioned in the mystery. Print the photos and display them on a poster. Which building is your favorite?
3. Choose a room or place at Neemrana Fort Palace. It could be the human-sized chessboard, the cradle hall, or the cage in the kids' room. Write your own scene in that place. Include as many mystery characters as you can.
4. Cows are sacred in India. Research how they are treated in India, and write a story titled "A Day in My Life" from an Indian cow's point of view.
5. What's the weather like in Delhi, India? Research the average temperatures, month by month, in Delhi, India. Then, research the average monthly temperatures where you live. Create a chart comparing the two places. Do you prefer the weather in India or where you live?
6. Bring in a guest speaker! Do you know anyone from India? If so, ask him or her to speak to your group about what life is like in India. Be sure to listen closely and ask lots of questions. That's the best way to learn!



Online Quiz

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Fact or Fiction?

- _____ 1. Jet lag occurs to people who fly across time zones.
- _____ 2. In India, drivers sit on the right side of the car, which is the opposite of what drivers do in the United States.
- _____ 3. Cows are sacred in India.
- _____ 4. Delhi is a noisy, crowded city with lots of traffic.
- _____ 5. Grant finds several clues hidden inside small boxes of candy.
- _____ 6. People in India use their right hands to eat.
- _____ 7. A tuk-tuk is a horse-drawn carriage used as a taxi in India's cities.
- _____ 8. The Taj Mahal is a mausoleum, which is a large tomb or a building that houses tombs.
- _____ 9. Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal in memory of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal.
- _____ 10. The Taj Mahal sits along the banks of the Yamuna River.



Online Information

The Mystery at the Taj Mahal

Fascinating Facts

1. Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan designed the Taj Mahal and had it built in memory of his third wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died giving birth to their fourteenth child.
2. The Taj Mahal is over 350 years old. Construction of the mausoleum began in 1632 and took 22 years to complete.
3. Over 1,000 elephants were used to help transport materials used to make the Taj Mahal.
4. The main dome of the Taj Mahal is over ten stories high, is completely unsupported by pillars, and has over 30 precious and semi-precious stones inlaid in the marble covering the outside of the dome.
5. Calligraphy, which cites the Quran, can be found carved into the stone of the Taj Mahal.
6. The Taj Mahal is completely symmetrical, except for Shah Jahan's tomb, which was placed in the Taj Mahal after his death.
7. The Taj Mahal takes on different colors depending on the time of day.
8. Many of the descendants of the hundreds of artisans that worked on the Taj Mahal are still actively carving things today, like furniture and jewelry boxes.
9. Once construction of the Taj Mahal was complete, Emperor Shah Jahan became ill. He was put under house arrest in the Agra Fort by one of his sons, who forcefully took over the role of emperor.
10. During recent wars, scaffolding was used to cover the dome of the Taj Mahal to protect it from bombings from the air.



Know your SAT Words!

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SAT Words



1. abyss
2. altitude
3. incessant
4. mausoleum
5. pedestrian

Write a sensational sentence using all five SAT Words from this mystery.



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Talk About It!

1. Have you, or anyone in your family, ever experienced jet lag? If so, explain what jet lag is and how it affects people.
2. The *baolis* were used as wells. There is talk that the Neemrana *baoli*, which is over 600 years old, is to be converted into a bazaar where people can sell their goods. Do you think that is a good or bad idea? Defend your opinion.
3. Discuss the significance of the lavender scent in the story. What is happening when a character smells the scent of lavender?
4. Scientists believe that Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan never intended to build a black Taj Mahal. Use information from the story to back this claim. What do you think?
5. Would you like to travel to India? Why or why not? If your answer is yes, what would you like to see there?
6. India has the second-highest population in the world. What country has the highest population? What are some problems that could arise in a country with an extremely high population?
7. Who is your favorite character in the mystery? Explain why.
8. Think about some of the unusual means of transportation experienced by the kids in the mystery. Which would you prefer—riding in a camel cart or on top of a bus? Why?

