

World History: Prehistory

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 6–12

Curriculum Focus: World History

Duration: 8 segments

Program Description

This library of videos contains segments covering the Renaissance through the 19th century around the world.

- The Earliest Human Migration (5 min.)
 - The Ice Man Discovered (5 min.)
 - Ancient Egyptians (5 min.)
 - China's Great Wall (6 min.)
 - Ancient Trade on the Silk Road (7 min.)
 - China's First Dynasty (5 min.)
 - Petra: Ancient City of Trade (4 min.)
 - Ancient Warriors in India (7 min.)
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Create a timeline of significant events featured in the video.
- Identify different ways that archaeologists and historians learn about past civilizations.
- Write an essay describing one way that experts have learned about a past place or people, such as through artifacts, ruins, or human remains.

Materials

- *World History: Prehistory* video

Procedures

1. After watching the video, ask students to describe prehistory. (*The period before written history.*) Since this video covers such a wide span of time, you may want to take time to put the dates

into perspective. For example, to explain how far back prehistory goes, remind students of some of the important dates in the segment on early human migration.

- 80,000 years ago: Early humans left Africa because of climate changes.
 - 50,000 years ago: Humans migrated up the Tigris and Euphrates rivers along the Fertile Crescent.
 - 25,000 years ago: Groups migrated to North and South America.
 - 10,000 years ago: The first successful colonies were established in the Fertile Crescent.
2. Next, ask students to name the locations of the early civilizations described in the video. (*Egypt, China, Petra, and India.*) To put these civilizations in context, create a simple timeline on the board reflecting the following events:
- 3100 B.C.: Egypt united into one empire
 - 1650–1027 B.C.: China's Shang Dynasty (China's first dynasty)
 - 261 B.C.: Emperor Asoka leads assault on Kalinga
 - 221–206 B.C.: China's Qin Dynasty; construction of Great Wall begins
 - 206 B.C.–A.D. 220: China's Han Dynasty; Silk Road flourishes
 - 200 B.C.–A.D. 106: Nabataeans rule Petra
3. Talk about some of the challenges historians and archaeologists might have studying these past civilizations. (*For example, few, if any, written records exist; those that still exist are often in ancient forms of writing.*) Next, ask students to identify different ways that experts learn about past civilizations. The following are examples:
- Ruins of buildings and monuments, such as temples or shrines
 - Written records, such as letters or hieroglyphs
 - Artifacts, such as tools or pottery
 - Burial sites, such as tombs
 - Human remains, such as skeletons, bones, and mummies
4. List the following topics from the video on the board:
- Culture and religion in ancient Egypt
 - Daily life in Petra
 - The identity and death of the Ice Man
 - Life and challenges along the Silk Road
 - Location and rituals of China's first dynasty, the Shang
 - The influence of Emperor Asoka

5. Ask students to choose one topic and write a short essay explaining one or two ways that historians and/or archaeologists have learned about the topic. (*For example, one way historians learned about life along the Silk Road was from a 2,000-year-old letter found in a station along the route. The Buddhist shrines in the cliffs at Dunhuang reflect the culture of the travelers along the route, as well as the significance of their journey across the Taklimakan Desert. Another example is the strange markings on a bone that led historians to the location of Anyang, the capital city of the Shang Dynasty. Burial sites including bronze vessels, jade, ivory, war chariots, and evidence of human sacrifices further reveal facts about ancient civilizations.*)
6. Ask a few volunteers to read their essays to the class. To conclude the lesson, ask students to imagine themselves as archaeologists studying an ancient civilization. What would be most exciting about this job? Most frustrating? What might be some advantages and disadvantages of studying a civilization with few or no written records?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students were active in class discussions; demonstrated a strong understanding of prehistory and early civilizations; identified several ways that historians and archaeologists learn about past civilizations; wrote a clear, detailed essay describing one or two ways that experts learned about one of the subjects in the video.
- 2 points: Students participated in class discussions; demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of prehistory and early civilizations; identified a few ways that historians and archaeologists learn about past civilizations; wrote a complete essay describing one way that experts learned about one of the subjects in the video.
- 1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; demonstrated a weak understanding of prehistory and early civilizations; could not identify any ways that historians and archaeologists learn about past civilizations; wrote an incomplete or inaccurate essay describing one way that experts learned about one of the subjects in the video.

Vocabulary

archaeologist

Definition: A scientist who recovers and studies the material evidence of past cultures or civilizations

Context: Archaeologists began digging at the ancient city of Anyang in 1928.

artifact

Definition: An object, such as a tool or an ornament, showing human work and representing a culture or a stage in the development of a culture

Context: Scientists often rely on artifacts like tools and pottery to learn about the prehistoric past.



civilization

Definition: A society in an advanced state of social development

Context: Under Emperor Asoka, Indian civilization flourished.

dynasty

Definition: A succession of rulers of the same line of descent

Context: In 206 B.C. the Han Dynasty emerged in China, ushering in an age of trade, ideas, and economic prosperity.

Fertile Crescent

Definition: A semicircle of fertile land along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Middle Eastern lands along the Mediterranean Sea

Context: Families in the Fertile Crescent established the first successful human colonies there, more than 10,000 years ago.

hieroglyphics

Definition: A system of picture-writing, introduced by the ancient Egyptians

Context: Scribes kept records on these papyrus sheets by using hieroglyphics.

hunter-gatherer

Definition: A member of a society in which people obtain food by hunting, fishing, and foraging rather than by agriculture or animal husbandry

Context: One theory is that hunter-gatherers pursuing the woolly mammoth into Siberia eventually came across the Bering Strait.

migration

Definition: To move from one country, place, or locality to another

Context: This was the last great journey to populate the world, and like all other migrations it was dictated by climate.

pharaoh

Definition: A ruler in ancient Egypt; sometimes called a king

Context: The pharaohs erected great buildings and monuments, such as the Pyramids of Giza.

prehistoric

Definition: Relating to or existing in the period before written history

Context: Prehistoric people had no cities, central governments, or systems of writing.

Silk Road

Definition: An ancient trading route connecting China with Persia, India, and the Roman Empire that was used frequently from 100 B.C. to the 16th century

Context: The Silk Road made China rich and powerful.

Thematic Units

Help your students evaluate and analyze what they view in the videos with the Essential Questions for each Thematic Unit.

Power

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Where were some of the earliest civilizations located? How were they organized and ruled? What were the causes of their demise?
- How did early rulers of Egypt, China, and India defend their territories? Compare and contrast the successes of each of these early civilizations in expanding and preserving their nations.
- What physical evidence exists today that allows researchers to reconstruct the military histories of the ancient civilizations of Egypt, China, and India?

SEGMENTS

Ancient Egyptians

- *Pre-viewing question*
How long is the Nile, and where does it flow?
- *Post-viewing question*
Why was the Nile important to the Egyptian pharaohs? How was it significant in the rise of ancient Egypt's civilization?

China's Great Wall

- *Pre-Viewing Question*
Use a map to find the location of the Great Wall of China. How long is the wall?
- *Post-Viewing Question*
Why did Shi Huangdi build the Great Wall of China? Was it effective? Would it be effective for the same purposes today?

Ancient Trade on the Silk Road

- *Pre-Viewing Question*
When did the Han dynasty rule China? What did this dynasty accomplish?
- *Post-Viewing Question*
How did the Han expand their territory and increase trade? How did they protect themselves from their enemies?

China's First Dynasty

- *Pre-viewing question*
When did civilization begin in China? What was the first historical dynasty?
- *Post-viewing question*
How was the Shang dynasty discovered? What has archaeology revealed about this ancient civilization?

Ancient Warriors in India

- *Pre-Viewing Question*
Why were elephants a military weapon in third-century B.C. in India? How did soldiers and commanders use them?
- *Post-Viewing Question*
How did Emperor Asoka's approach to dominating his kingdom change? What effect did the war have on him?



Art and Culture

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How were cultural ideas exchanged in prehistoric times? Cite specific examples from ancient civilizations in Asia and the Middle East.
- How were ancient communities similar to modern-day communities? How were they different?
- What artifacts from ancient civilizations in Asia and the Middle East tell stories about the cultures of those civilizations?

SEGMENTS

Ancient Egyptians

- *Pre-viewing question*
When did ancient Egyptian civilization reach its height? What aspects of Egyptian culture arose during that time?
- *Post-viewing question*
What is papyrus? What role did it play in advancing Egyptian civilization?

China's Great Wall

- *Pre-Viewing Question*
Why would the leader of a country decide to build a wall on the border of a neighboring country?
- *Post-Viewing Question*
How is the Great Wall a defining symbol of China?

Ancient Trade on the Silk Road

- *Pre-viewing question*
Where did the Silk Road run? Why was it given this name?
- *Post-viewing question*
How did the Silk Road serve as a conduit of cultural exchange?

China's First Dynasty

- *Pre-Viewing Question*
Why are legends and stories significant in a civilization's history?
- *Post-Viewing Question*
What have archaeologists learned about the Shang dynasty? What conclusions have they drawn about ancient Chinese culture?



Petra, Ancient City of Trade

- *Pre-viewing question*
Locate the Dead Sea and the Red Sea on a map. What is the physical geography of the land lying between the seas?
- *Post-viewing question*
How could the Nabataeans develop Petra as a thriving metropolis? How were Petra's services and cultural resources like those of a modern-day city?

Ancient Warriors in India

- *Pre-Viewing Question*
What are the predominant religions in India today? What do these religions teach about the treatment of others?
- *Post-Viewing Question*
Why did emperor Asoka embrace Buddhism? What role did he play in bringing religion to the East?

Science and Technology

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are examples of technological advancements from early civilizations in Asia and the Middle East? How did they improve life for people?
- How do archaeologists conduct their work, make inferences, and draw conclusions about past cultures?
- How did ancient peoples adapt to climatic changes? What tools and behaviors did they adapt to survive?

SEGMENTS

The Earliest Human Migration

- *Pre-viewing question*
On what continent do scientists believe human life began? Why do you think humans migrated from continent to continent?
- *Post-viewing question*
How did climate influence early human migration? What role does archaeology play in revealing the patterns of human migration?

The Ice Man Discovered

- *Pre-Viewing Question*
What is archaeology? Why are archaeologists interested in mummies?



- *Post-Viewing Question*
Who is Ötzi? How did researchers determine that he was not a shepherd?

Ancient Egyptians

- *Pre-viewing question*
What is irrigation? Why is it important for people who live near rivers?
- *Post-viewing question*
What advancements in managing the Nile floodplain did ancient Egyptians develop? How did these inventions aid in the growth of Egyptian civilization?

China's Great Wall

- *Pre-viewing question*
How long would it take to build a wall four thousand miles long without heavy machinery? How many people would need to work on it in that amount of time?
- *Post-viewing question*
When was the Great Wall of China built? What materials were used to make it? How many laborers worked on it?

China's First Dynasty

- *Pre-viewing question*
What types of artifacts do archaeologists look for to learn about the past?
- *Post-viewing question*
What evidence did archaeologists find in China to reveal the true history of the Shang dynasty?

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit link:

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – Human Systems: Understands the patterns of human settlement and their causes; Environment and Society: Understands how geography is used to interpret the past
- History – Historical Understanding: Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns, Understands the historical perspective
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media



The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
 - Time, Continuity, and Change
 - Power, Authority, and Governance
 - Production, Distribution, and Consumption
 - Science, Technology, and Society
 - Global Connections
 - Civic Ideals and Practices
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Support Materials

Related Lesson Plans

You can find hundreds of lesson plans online at <http://www.discoveryschool.com>. The following lesson plans work well with the video segments in this library collection.

- **Ancient Egypt** (grades 6-8)
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/tutankhamen/>
- **Archaeology** (grades 6-8)
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/unearthingsouthamerica/>
- **Hidden History of Egypt** (grades 6-8)
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/hiddenegypt/>
- **Mummy Tales** (grades 6-8)
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/mummytales/>
- **Neanderthals** (grades 6-8)
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/neanderthal/>
- **Toward Civilization** (grades 9-12)
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/towardcivilization/>

Other Resources



Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the DiscoverySchool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How To Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video—This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index—Here the video is divided into eight parts (see below), indicated by video thumbnail icons. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. Brief descriptions and total running times are noted for each part. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Thematic Units—This option groups segments by curricular units. Videos that fall under the themes of Power, Art and Culture, and Science and Technology are regrouped as such. Click on a picture to select a unit; onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions also appear below in this guide.

Standards Link—Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources—This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. The Earliest Human Migration (5 min.)

Climatic changes were catalysts for the first human migration. Archaeological evidence reveals the patterns and causes for movement from Africa to the Middle East and Europe, then to Asia, and finally to the Americas.

II. The Ice Man Discovered (5 min.)

Hikers discovered a 5,000-year-old naturally preserved mummy in 1991 while hiking in the Alps. Archaeological studies and re-creations have revealed details about this man's life and death.

III. Ancient Egyptians (5 min.)



~~The Nile was ancient Egypt's most precious resource. Pharaohs used it to unite and rule all of Egypt, and the Egyptians mastered its many resources to advance their civilization.~~

IV. China's Great Wall (6 min.)

The Great Wall of China is actually a series of walls built and rebuilt by rulers over a period spanning two thousand years. Hundreds of thousands of people constructed this barrier between China and their "barbarian" neighbors.

V. Ancient Trade on the Silk Road (7 min.)

Named the Silk Road after China's monopoly on the precious fabric, this ancient route hosted caravans of traders and travelers from the East and the West seeking to exchange goods, services, and culture.

VI. China's First Dynasty (5 min.)

Until the 19th century the oldest Chinese civilization existed only in the legends of the Chinese people. Thanks to a discovery in 1899, archaeologists continue to learn more about the real Shang Dynasty.

VII. Petra: Ancient City of Trade (4 min.)

Ancient Arabs known as Nabataeans once populated the thriving city of Petra, located between the Dead Sea and Aqaba, a port on the Red Sea. Petra's location made it ideal for a spice trade to thrive from the Arabian Peninsula to Mediterranean seaports.

VIII. Ancient Warriors in India (7 min.)

In the 3rd century B.C. the emperor Asoka brought most of India under a single ruler for the first time. He relied on a keen military strategy that included a large well-organized army supported by 9,000 elephants.