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Ancient Indian Cities

Urban planners design the layout of a city, town, or neighborhood. Urban planners analyze the land and plan where homes, libraries, parks, streets, and other buildings will go. They also try to solve problems, like reducing traffic by adding lanes to a road. Urban planners also change the design of older cities. For example, if more people are moving to city, public transportation might need to be added.



Today, you will imagine you are an urban planner who is learning about how ancient cities were planned. Then, you will use this information as inspiration to make changes to a modern-day city. Follow the steps below.

Step 1: Learn About the Layout of Ancient Cities in India

Read about two cities in Ancient India. Then, answer the questions.

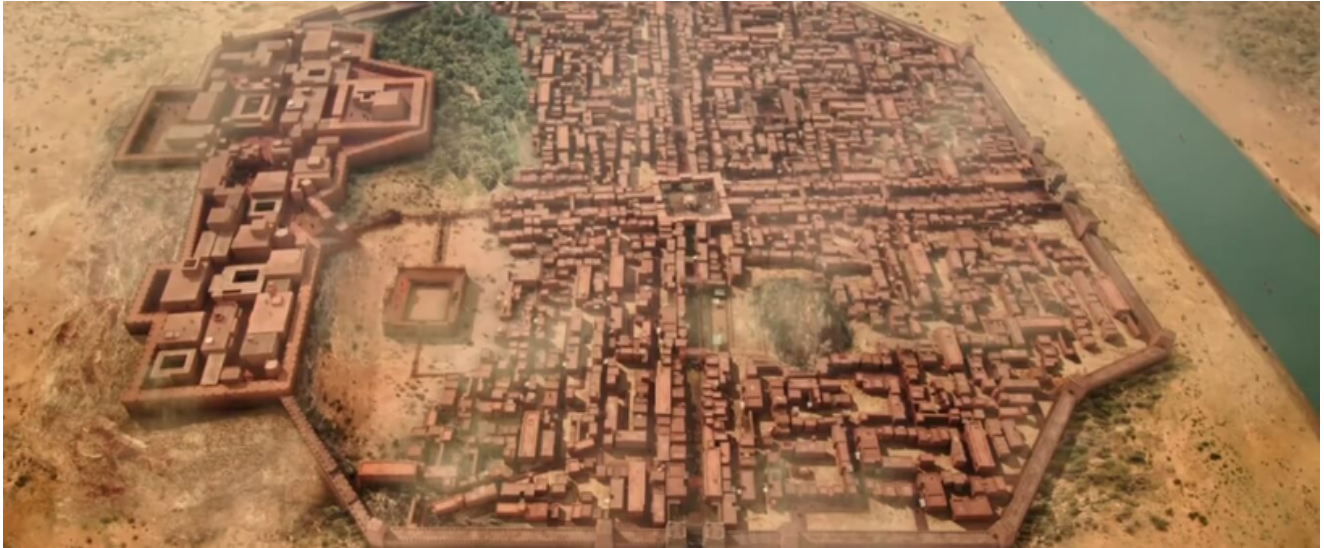
The Harappan civilization existed between 3300 and 1300 BCE in India. The civilization was named after the city of Harappa, which was located in the Indus Valley. This region is located in modern-day Pakistan. Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were two major cities in the Harappan civilization. Each city controlled large areas of land located on either side of the Indus River. Archaeologists study the ruins of both cities to learn more about the culture and daily life of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

Even though Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were located more than 300 miles apart, the cities had much in common. Both cities were divided into two areas: the Citadel and the Lower Town. The word “Citadel” means “little city.” This section of a city was used for public gatherings and religious activities. The city’s government buildings were also located in the Citadel. There were also houses in the Citadel that belonged to the priests and members of the royal family. All the buildings in the Citadel were built higher than the rest of the city to show the importance of these buildings and people that lived in them.

The Lower Town is where most people live. Along the streets were houses, stores, markets, and shops. Many of the houses were two-stories high. They also had a small courtyard area outside, a kitchen, and bathrooms. Although there were doorways, there were few windows in the houses. Typically, houses were grouped together based on what occupation people had. For example, one area was called “the crafts quarter” in Harappa. Archaeologists believe that different artisans lived in the area and created jewelry, decorative objects for the home, and stone tools. Even the neighborhoods were grouped together by occupation.

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<https://blogs.brown.edu/arch-0760-s01-2019-spring/files/2019/03/Mohenjo-Daro-2.jpg>

This image shows the city plan of Mohenjo-Daro. The walled area to the far left is the Citadel. Lower Town is to the right.

The Citadel and Lower Towns in both cities had the following features:

Fortification

Fortification is a wall or other structure that provided protection for invaders. The walls also protected cities from the floodwaters of the Indus River.

Carefully planned streets

Both cities used a grid as a layout for their streets. A grid is a pattern that is made up of lines that are evenly spaced apart and that cross at right angles to each other. The streets ran north to south and east to west. The streets were also paved, which allowed people to continue to travel on them even when it was rainy. The paved surfaces prevented the streets from becoming muddy.

Drainage systems

Both cities had some of the best drainage systems in the ancient world. A drainage system carries waste water, garbage, and sewage away from populated areas. These systems were built underground and were made of brick. There were also drains built on either side of the streets and roads. Cities also had their own sanitation workers to clean out the drains.



This picture shows an aerial view of the grid system in Mohenjo-Daro.

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Answer the questions below using complete sentences.

1. Describe two differences between the Citadel and the Lower Town.

2. What was the purpose of fortifications in cities in Ancient India?

3. Why were drainage systems important to the layout of cities in Ancient India?

4. Some archaeologists claim that Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were designed in an innovative, forward-thinking way. Based on what you read, do you think these cities were innovative? Give two examples from the text to support your opinion.

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Step 2: Design a City Layout

Imagine that you have been hired to design a layout for a new town. The town will be located outside of Las Vegas, Nevada. The layout will be inspired by the design of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

First, read the background information and requirements for the new town. Then, answer the questions and brainstorm ideas for your city layout. Finally, design your layout on a piece of paper or on a computer.

Background information:

- Towns near Las Vegas, Nevada get extremely hot in the summer. There are often excessive heat warnings, as the temperature can rise to over 115 degrees in July and August. There is not a lot of rain but there are dust storms. During a dust storm, strong winds can carry sand, large rocks, and other debris across an area and cause damage to buildings, cars, and people. There are also large lying rocks and debris. Because of this, it is dangerous to drive or be outside during a dust storm.
- Towns in Nevada are very spread out. People in the new town will need transportation options so that they can travel to other places around the state.
- During the school year, students play outside during recess and after school. However, the sun can make playground equipment very hot! Teachers, parents, and principals are worried that their students will burn their hands on hot playground equipment.
- Families are worried about their pets' safety when they are outside. They want to make sure the pets cannot run into a road or get injured by another animal, like coyotes or scorpions.

