Text 1.1: Geography of the Indian Subcontinent

Topic 3: Ancient India and China (2600 B.C.E. - A.D. 550)
Lesson 1: Early Civilization in South Asia
How do monsoons affect India?
OBJECTIVES

Identify the main features of geography of India

Describe the Indian subcontinent geography

Evaluate how the geography of India affects the culture

Analyze how India is unique from other civilizations we have studied
Geography of the Indian Subcontinent

In 1922 archaeologists made discoveries while digging in the Indus River Valley.

They unearthed bricks, small statues, clay seals, and other artifacts unlike any they had seen before.

They had uncovered a "lost civilization" that flourished almost 5,000 years ago.
The Indus Valley is located in the region known as South Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.

The Indian subcontinent is a huge, wedge-shaped peninsula extending into the Indian Ocean.
Today, it includes three of the world’s ten most populous countries: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Also includes the island nation of Sri Lanka and the mountain nations of Nepal and Bhutan.
Snow-covered mountain ranges mark the northern border, including the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas, which limited contacts between India and other lands.

Helped its people develop a distinct culture.

Steep passes through the Hindu Kush served as gateways to migrating and invading peoples for thousands of years.
Mountains, Plateaus, and Plains of India

The subcontinent is divided into three major zones:

The northern plain

The dry Deccan plateau

The coastal plains on either side of the Deccan
The northern plain lies just south of the Himalayas; are fertile land watered by mighty rivers

The Indus (from which India gets its name), the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra

These rivers and their tributaries carry melting snow from the mountains to the plains, making agriculture possible.
To the people of the Indian subcontinent, rivers are sacred, especially the Ganges.

An Indian name for river is *lok mata*, or "mother of the people".
The Deccan Plateau

The Deccan is a triangular plateau that juts into the Indian Ocean.

The Deccan generally lacks the melting snows that feed the rivers of the north and provide water for irrigation.

This makes the region arid, agriculturally unproductive, and sparsely populated.
The Coastal Plain

The coastal plains are separated from the Deccan by low-lying mountain ranges, the Eastern and Western Ghats.

Rivers and heavy seasonal rains provide water for farmers.

People used the seas for fishing and as highways for trade.
A defining feature of life in the Indian subcontinent is the monsoon.

In October, the winter monsoon blows from the northeast, bringing hot dry air that withers crops.

May and June of each year, the wet summer monsoon blows from the southwest.
The winds pick up moisture over the Indian Ocean and drench the land with daily downpours. The monsoon has shaped Indian life; each year, people welcome the rains that are desperately needed to water the crops. Late rains caused famine and starvation occurred; heavy rains caused floods.
India's great size and diverse landscapes made it hard to unite.

Many groups of people, with differing languages and traditions, settled in different parts of India.

Ambitious rulers conquered much of the subcontinent, creating great empires.
Despite their conquests, the diversity of customs and traditions remained