

Taj Mahal Lesson Plan

Objective

Students will investigate the historical, architectural, and cultural importance of the Taj Mahal, while practicing observation skills through art and critical analysis of myths versus facts.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas of a primary or secondary source and provide an accurate summary.

NGSS MS-ESS3-1: Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence for how resource availability has guided human activity.

C3 D2.His.14.6-8: Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.

Materials

- Images of the Taj Mahal (print or digital)
- World map or globe
- Pencils, rulers, erasers
- Drawing paper
- Colored pencils or markers
- Optional: Video tour of the Taj Mahal

Introduction

Show students an image of the Taj Mahal and ask what they know about it. Clarify that it is not a mosque but a mausoleum, built out of love and grief by Shah Jahan for Mumtaz Mahal. Introduce it as both a personal love story and an architectural masterpiece.

Activity

1. Share the story of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal.
2. Locate Agra, India, and Makrana marble quarries on a map.
3. Discuss myths and truths about its construction and purpose.
4. Guide students in sketching a simplified Taj Mahal, emphasizing perspective and symmetry.
5. Use light shading and color to suggest marble texture.

Assessment

Students will write a short summary of the Taj Mahal's significance.

Students will complete their drawing with attention to perspective and symmetry.

Students will answer worksheet questions drawn from the 9 Fun Facts.

Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Content Understanding	Detailed, accurate, insightful	Mostly accurate, minor errors	Partial understanding, gaps	Minimal or incorrect
Discussion Participation	Detailed, accurate, insightful	Mostly accurate, minor errors	Partial understanding, gaps	Minimal or incorrect
Worksheet Completion	Detailed, accurate, insightful	Mostly accurate, minor errors	Partial understanding, gaps	Minimal or incorrect
Technology Connections	Detailed, accurate, insightful	Mostly accurate, minor errors	Partial understanding, gaps	Minimal or incorrect

9 Fun Facts

1. The Taj Mahal was built as a mausoleum

Shah Jahan began construction in 1632 after the death of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. It took more than 20 years and tens of thousands of artisans, engineers, and laborers to finish. Today it stands as one of the most admired examples of Mughal architecture and a symbol of devotion.

<https://www.history.com/topics/india/taj-mahal>

2. The name “Taj Mahal” literally means “Crown of Palaces”

It comes from Persian and Urdu, where taj means crown and mahal means palace. The name reflects the monument’s role as the crowned jewel of Mughal architecture, embodying both imperial grandeur and personal love.

<https://www.tajmahal.gov.in/taj-story.aspx>

3. Mumtaz Mahal’s original name was Arjumand Banu Begum

Before marriage she was known as Arjumand Banu Begum. After marrying Shah Jahan she was honored with the title Mumtaz Mahal, meaning “Chosen One of the Palace.” Her death in 1631, while giving birth to their fourteenth child, inspired the emperor to build the Taj Mahal.

<https://www.tajmahal.gov.in/the-cause-of-the-taj.aspx>

4. Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal are entombed together

At the heart of the Taj Mahal is the main chamber containing both of their tombs. Mumtaz Mahal lies at the center, while Shah Jahan was buried beside her after his death in 1666. Their resting place remains a powerful reminder of their story, drawing millions of visitors each year.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/252>

5. The Taj Mahal is not the largest marble structure in the world

Although it is the most famous marble monument, it does not hold the record for size. St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City, built in the Renaissance and clad with Carrara marble, is far larger and is considered the largest marble-domed church on Earth.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saint-Peters-Basilica>

6. The white marble of the Taj Mahal comes from Makrana, India

Makrana, in Rajasthan, is home to some of the oldest marble quarries in the world. The marble is renowned for its bright white color, durability, and resistance to seepage. It is officially recognized by the International Union of Geological Sciences as a Global Heritage Stone Resource.

https://iugs-geoheritage.org/geoheritage_stones/makrana-marble/

7. Marble is limestone transformed by heat and pressure

Marble begins as limestone, often full of shells and fossils. When tectonic activity subjects it to extreme heat and pressure, the calcite grains recrystallize into interlocking crystals. This process creates the durable, beautiful rock polished for monuments like the Taj Mahal.

<https://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/acidrain/4.html>

8. Limestone is made from the remains of ancient sea life

Marine organisms such as corals, clams, and algae produce shells and skeletons of calcium carbonate. Over millions of years, their remains compact and harden into limestone. Many limestones preserve fossils, making them a record of ancient ocean ecosystems.

<https://geology.com/rocks/limestone.shtml>

9. The Taj Mahal cost about 32 million rupees to build

Mughal records put the construction cost at roughly 32 million rupees in the 1600s. Modern estimates suggest this would be equivalent to more than ₹4,000 crore (about US \$500–800 million) if built today, showing the vast wealth and labor invested in the project.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/travel/what-if-the-taj-mahal-was-built-today-the-cost-might-shock-you/articleshow/120309925.cms>

Worksheet

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Review

1. Who commissioned the Taj Mahal, and for whom was it built?
2. What does the name "Taj Mahal" mean?

Discussion

3. How does the Taj Mahal's origin as a love story compare to other monuments built for power or religion?
4. Why might myths about its construction still be told today?

Data Analysis

6. The Taj Mahal took about 20 years to complete. Compare this to a modern building project of similar scale. What does this say about labor and technology?
7. How does the geology of Makrana marble and limestone connect the Taj Mahal to Earth's natural history?

Reflection

8. What does the Taj Mahal teach us about cultural memory and devotion?
9. How does learning about the materials of the Taj Mahal change your view of its beauty and endurance?