

UNIT 4 Southern and Eastern Asia

Chapter 12 The Geography and History of Southern and Eastern Asia



CHAPTER PREVIEW

People

Buddha, Confucius, Mohandas Gandhi, Ho Chi Minh

Places

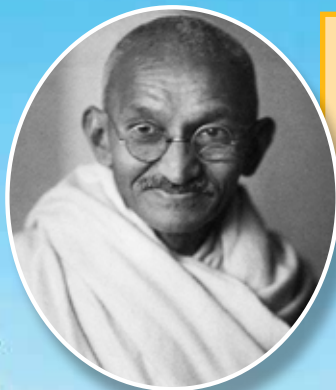
Ganges River, Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean, Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River, East China Sea, Huang He (Yellow River), Yellow Sea, Himalayan Mountains, Mount Everest, Taklimakan Desert, Gobi Desert, Korean Peninsula, Sea of Japan, South China Sea, Arabian Sea, Seoul, French Indochina

Terms

subcontinent, tectonic plate, archipelago, peninsula, ethnic group, religious group, philosophy, Hinduism, Vedas, Brahman, reincarnation, karma, caste system, Buddhism, Four Noble Truths, Nirvana, Middle Way, Tripitaka, Mahayana Sutras, Shintoism, kami, Confucianism, Analects, Golden Rule of Behavior, nationalism, communism, Cold War, containment, domino theory, armistice, demilitarized zone



Right: Hong Kong, China viewed from Victoria Peak. **Top:** Angkor Wat in Cambodia is a temple with a history of Hinduism and Buddhism. **Opposite Page, Below:** Hanoi, Vietnam, has a population density of over 5,000 people per square mile. **Inset:** Taj Mahal in India.



"Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress."

- Mohandas Gandhi

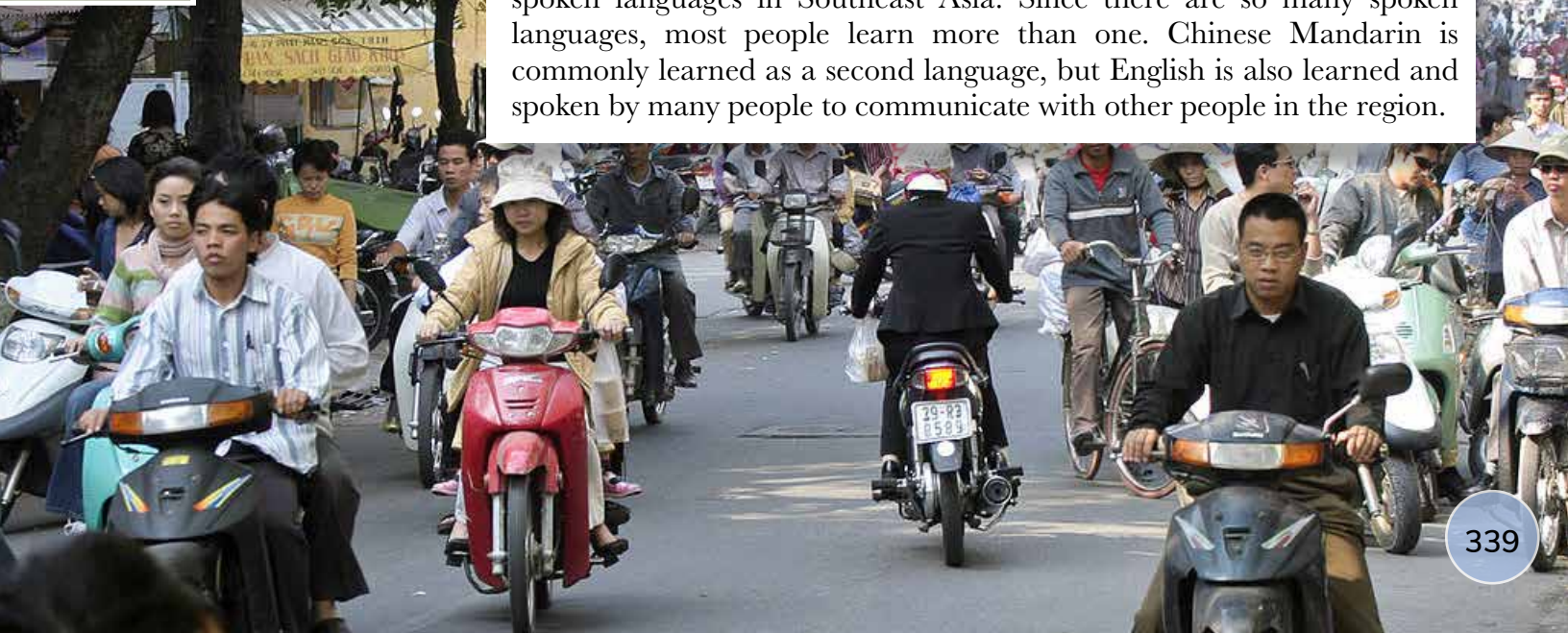
Leader of Indian independence

Asia is a continent of contrasts. The tallest snowcapped peak (Mt. Everest) in the world can be found in this region along with lush, dense, tropical jungles (fifth largest in the world). Half of the world's ten longest rivers are in Asia as well as extensive deserts such as the Gobi (third largest). Among its people there is both extreme poverty and fabulous wealth. There are fast-paced modern cultures alongside ancient cultures that hold to their traditional character.

In the first book of this series, the Russian Federation was investigated. This massive country covers the northern part of Asia, as well as part of Europe. In Unit 2 of this book, Southwest Asia was investigated. Asia is a large and diverse continent. To more fully explore and understand its richness and importance, more time and space are needed. So this portion of the book series explores the southern and eastern portions of Asia.

This part of the world has many densely populated cities and countries. Asia covers about one-third of the land surface of Earth, but it has about 60 percent of the people (4 billion). Seven of the ten most-populated countries are in Asia, with India topping the list at more than 1.44 billion people. China follows with over 1.43 billion people. Tokyo, Japan is one of the most densely populated cities in the world with 16,480 people per square mile! To compare, Atlanta's population density is 3,685 people per square mile.

Diversity can also be found in the languages of these regions. Researchers have estimated that there are 289 spoken languages in East Asia and 1,245 spoken languages in Southeast Asia. Since there are so many spoken languages, most people learn more than one. Chinese Mandarin is commonly learned as a second language, but English is also learned and spoken by many people to communicate with other people in the region.





MAP 12.1 SOUTHERN AND EASTERN ASIA

Map Skill: Mount Everest is on the border of which two countries?



Figure 12.1

TIMELINE: 1941-2013

1940

- 1941 Japanese attacked the US base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, causing the United States to enter World War II
- 1945 Japan surrendered in World War II after two atomic bombs were dropped on its cities
Cold War begins
- 1947 India gains independence
- 1949 China became a communist country
- 1950 Korean War begins
- 1953 Cease-fire declared in Korea
- 1954 Vietnam divided; Ho Chi Minh became president of North Vietnam
- 1958 Great Leap Forward begins
- 1965 American troops began fighting in Vietnam
- 1966 Cultural Revolution begins
- 1969 Ho Chi Minh died
- 1971 War results in East Pakistan becoming Bangladesh
- 1975 Vietnam War ended and Vietnam was reunited
- 1982 China's population reaches 1 billion
- 1989 Tiananmen Square protests
- 1997 Handoff of Hong Kong from the UK to China
- 2000 India's population reaches 1 billion
- 2004 Major earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean kills more than 220,000 people
- 2013 China begins building islands to increase its military presence in the South China Sea

2000

Background: Wat Plai Laem is a modern Buddhist Temple in Koh Samui, Thailand.

SECTION 1

The Geography of Southern and Eastern Asia

AS YOU READ, LOOK FOR...

- » the most important rivers in Asia;
- » how the Himalayas influenced the history and culture of China and India;
- » how Japan's geography is different from other parts of Asia;
- » the involvement of the U.S. military in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts;
- » countries: India, China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam;
- » bodies of water: Ganges River, Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean, Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River, Huang He (Yellow River), Yellow Sea, Sea of Japan, South China Sea;
- » landforms: Himalayan Mountains, Mount Everest, Taklimakan Desert, Gobi Desert, Korean Peninsula;
- » terms: **subcontinent, tectonic plate, archipelago, peninsula.**

In Other Words

Eastern Asia has sometimes been referred to as the “Far East” or the “Orient.”

Location of the Countries of Southern and Eastern Asia

The vast region of Southern and Eastern Asia is home to twenty-nine countries. The geography, cultures, and politics of each of these countries varies greatly: from communism in China to democracy in India; from Shinto shrines in Japan to Hindu temples in India. One of the key things to learn about a country is its location within a region, a continent, and the world. Before learning more about the countries in this unit, focus on finding their location and thinking about what this location means to the people of that country.

Look at the map of Southern and Eastern Asia at the beginning of this chapter. Find the country of India, located in Southern Asia, and put your finger on it. India is a **subcontinent**, which means it is a large land area that is mostly separate from the rest of Asia. India is on a different **tectonic plate** (a separate area of Earth's crust) than most of the rest of Asia. Its plate is crashing into the plate that China is on, creating the Himalayan Mountains. India is the world's largest democracy. It is also the birthplace of two of the world's largest religions, Buddhism and Hinduism. The mighty Ganges River flows through India, providing much-needed water to farmers along its banks. India is struggling with a population boom. Its population is over 1.4 billion and growing at a fast pace. As a result, air and water pollution are becoming very important environmental issues in India.

Move your finger directly north, crossing over the Himalayan Mountains, and you will find the country of China. China has the second largest population in the world and is the largest communist country in the world. It also has one of the largest economies in the world. It is not uncommon for Americans to buy products with the label "Made in China."

Move your finger to the east of China to locate the Korean Peninsula, which is home to both North and South Korea. North Korea is a dictatorship that is virtually cut off from the rest of the world. The citizens there do not even have access to the Internet. South Korea, on the other hand, is a stable democracy with a growing, high-tech economy.



Background: The Himalayan Mountains. **Above:** The Solani Aqueduct of the Ganges Canal was India's first aqueduct. **Below:** The O-Torii gate to the Itsukushima Shrine in Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan.





Just across the Sea of Japan from the Korean Peninsula is the country of Japan. Put your finger on Japan. This country is an **archipelago**, which means it is made of a chain of islands. The largest island, Honshu, is home to most of Japan's largest cities. Japan's thriving high-tech economy has overcome many obstacles, including having very few natural resources. Japan has had a constitutional monarchy since the end of World War II. It is one of the most politically stable countries in Asia.

Finally, take your finger and travel southwest from Japan through China to reach the country of Vietnam. Like China, Vietnam is a communist country. It has been communist since the end of French colonial rule. The United States was involved in a war there in the late 20th century in an attempt to stop the spread of communism. Today, the economy of Vietnam is beginning to grow and expand. In fact, the United States is one of its largest trading partners.

Physical Features of Asia

The physical geography of a region significantly affects the way people trade and travel, as well as where they live and what types of jobs they have. The geography of Southern and Eastern Asia is varied with mountains, rivers, deserts, and large bodies of water. Each feature can have an effect on how people trade and satisfy their basic needs and wants.

Southern and Eastern Asia are home to many of the longest rivers in the world. Look again at the map at the beginning of the chapter. Find India and look for the Ganges River. It is the most important river in India. Trace its path as it begins in the Himalayan Mountains and spreads sediment along its banks as it travels to the Bay of Bengal. The Bay of Bengal is a part of the larger Indian Ocean. The banks of the Ganges are densely populated even though the river occasionally floods. This dense population has caused the Ganges, a very sacred river for Hindus, to be very polluted.





Now find China and the Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River. This is one of China's two important rivers and the longest river in China. It begins in the western part of China near the Taklimakan Desert and flows east toward the East China Sea. It is one of China's main transportation routes, and the area around the river is very fertile for farming. The other major river in China is the Huang He (Yellow River). It also begins in western China and flows east to the Yellow Sea. Both the Yellow Sea and Yellow River get their names from the yellow sediment, called loess, that they carry, which gives them a yellowish tint. The Huang He River is also known as "China's Sorrow" because of its frequent and deadly floods. Unfortunately, as China has industrialized, both of these rivers have become heavily polluted.

Asia is home to the tallest mountain range in the world, the Himalayan Mountains. Put your finger on this mountain range that runs west to east between China and India for almost 200 miles. The highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, is located in this mountain range. Throughout history, the Himalayas have acted as a barrier both to trade and to invasion. As a result of this large barrier, the cultures of India and China developed very differently.

Now, look back at China on the map and find the two deserts located there: the Taklimakan Desert in western China and the Gobi Desert in northern China. Put your finger on each of these deserts to help you remember their locations. The Taklimakan is over 600 miles long, making it one of the longest deserts in the world. The Gobi is also very large and is covered with both sand and rocks. Due to their harsh climates, these deserts have very small populations. They have also helped to protect China throughout its history because they acted as a barrier to invaders from the west and north.

Did You Know?

The Himalayas contain more than 110 peaks that rise above 24,000 feet. Mount Everest reaches a height of 29,031.69 feet.



Opposite Page, Top: Tokyo Bay connects Japan's largest city to the Pacific Ocean. **Opposite Page, Bottom:** The Ganges River passes through Varanasi in northern India. **Top:** The Yangtze River as it flows through Yunnan Province, China. **Above:** Mount Everest is credited as the Earth's highest mountain above sea level.



Did You Know?

The Gobi Desert is expanding at an alarming rate, for familiar reasons: deforestation, overgrazing, and depletion of water resources. The Chinese are carrying out a plan of planting the “Green Great Wall,” a huge ring of newly planted forests as a buffer against further desertification.

Connected to China is the Korean Peninsula, home to North Korea and South Korea. Find the Korean Peninsula on the map and put your finger on it. Remember, a **peninsula** is a landform that is surrounded on three sides by water. This peninsula has been divided between the two countries since the Korean War in the 1950s. It is bordered by the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan, which are part of the western Pacific Ocean. The geography of the peninsula is varied, containing both mountains and areas of fertile farmland.

Finally, find two of the larger bodies of water in Southern and Eastern Asia: the Sea of Japan and the South China Sea. The Sea of Japan separates Japan from the Korean Peninsula. Russia also borders this important body of water. The sea acted as a barrier between Japan and the rest of Asia, so the culture of Japan developed differently from the culture of the rest of Asia. The South China Sea is located where its name indicates—south of China. This sea, a part of the western Pacific Ocean, separates the countries of Vietnam and Malaysia.

Top: The Gobi Desert in northern China is a desert and grassland region with harsh climates and very few inhabitants. **Right:** The South China Sea is a small part of the Western Pacific Ocean.





Impact of Geography on Where People Live and How They Trade

The geography of a region significantly affects where people live and how they trade. Asia's diverse geography and vast size have had a major impact on the people who live there. Additionally, there are many natural resources found throughout Asia that play an important role in determining where people live and how they trade.

India is separated from the rest of Asia by mountain ranges that include the Himalayas. These mountains have had a significant impact on the development of India by acting as a natural barrier to travel. While there are some natural passes that can be used to get through the mountains, trade was still difficult. South of the Himalayas are India's broad plains and river valleys. Most people in India live in these river valleys. The rivers provide water that can be used for irrigation, travel, trade routes, and drinking water. India is bordered by the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, which means that, for many in India, it was much easier to trade and travel by sea than by land.

Like India, where people live and how they trade in China has been influenced by physical geography. China is home to the Himalayan Mountains, as well as the Gobi and Taklimakan Deserts. All three of these physical features act as natural barriers to trade and transportation. Few people live in those areas because of the harsh environments. China is home to two major rivers: the Huang He and the Chang Jiang. The areas along the banks of the Huang He are very heavily populated. People live near the river because the water can be used for irrigation, trade, transportation, industry, and drinking water. China also has long coasts on the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea. These long coastlines became avenues for trade and travel within China and to other countries.

Top: People in this region of western India depend on fishing and transporting goods in the Arabian Sea.

Below: The Port of Ningbo-Zhoushan in China is the busiest in the world based on cargo tonnage, having handled over 35 million standard shipping containers in 2023. This port is situated along the coast of the East China Sea.





Above: A paddy field, like this one in South Korea, contains flooded land for growing rice.

On the Korean Peninsula, geography has influenced the lives of the people who live there almost as much as their governments have influenced them. In North Korea, there are many mountains, which make farming and trade difficult. The main problem with trade in North Korea, however, is that few countries in the world will even trade with it. Most people in North Korea live in the western part of the country where it is less mountainous so farming is easier. In comparison, South Korea has a lot of farmland. People mainly live near the major cities in South Korea, like Seoul, where there are high-paying jobs and other opportunities. South Korea's location between the Sea of Japan and Yellow Sea has provided trade and travel routes within the country and to other countries. Currently, South Korea has no overland trade route to other countries because North Korea is between South Korea and the rest of Asia.

Japan is an island nation that is almost completely made up of mountains and rock. As a result, Japan has few natural resources and must rely on trade in order to have resources and food to meet the needs and wants of its people. Because Japan is an island nation, trade and travel by sea was the only way to trade with other countries before modern air travel. People in Japan live mainly in urban areas, which are usually found near the coasts.

REVIEW AND SUMMARIZE

1. What are three of the most important rivers in Asia? Why are the banks of these rivers heavily populated?
2. How have the Himalayas influenced the history and culture of China and India?
3. How do deserts affect people in China?
4. Which two countries share the Korean Peninsula? How does the geography differ between the two countries?
5. How is Japan's geography different than the other parts of Asia?

SECTION 2

The People of Southern and Eastern Asia

AS YOU READ, LOOK FOR...

- » the differences between ethnic groups and religious groups;
- » how the caste system influences Indian society;
- » why Buddhism and Hinduism have some similar beliefs;
- » how Shintoism and Confucianism are different from Buddhism and Hinduism;
- » terms: **ethnic group**, **religious group**, **philosophy**, **Hinduism**, **Vedas**, **Brahman**, **reincarnation**, **karma**, **caste system**, **Buddhism**, **Four Noble Truths**, **Nirvana**, **Middle Way**, **Tripitaka**, **Mahayana Sutras**, **Shintoism**, **kami**, **Confucianism**, **Golden Rule of Behavior**, **Analects**.

Below: Indian Hindu bride and groom on their wedding day.

Bottom: The BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir is the largest Hindu temple in the United States, located in Lilburn, Georgia.

Ethnic and Religious Groups in Asia

Most historians, geographers, and anthropologists divide people into two main groups when they study a population: ethnic groups and religious groups. An **ethnic group** is a group of people who share cultural ideas and beliefs that have been a part of their community for years. Some of the characteristics these groups usually share are language, religion, history, types of food, and a set of traditional stories, beliefs, or celebrations. These things are all part of a common culture that is unique to each ethnic group. People in a **religious group** share a belief system in a god or gods with a specific set of rituals and literature. People from different ethnic groups often practice the same religion; however, their customs and practices might vary between the different groups. The most important thing for members of a religious group to share is the belief in a god or gods. Southern and Eastern Asia is the birthplace of three religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shintoism. In addition, China is the birthplace of Confucianism—which is not a religion, but a **philosophy** (an ethical system based on good deeds and morality).



Bottom: Prambanan Hindu temple complex built in the 9th century in Java, Indonesia.

1500

1500 BC

Approximate beginning of Hinduism

550 BC

Birth of Confucius

500 BC

Creation of Buddhism

121 BC

Confucianism declared the official guiding practice for China

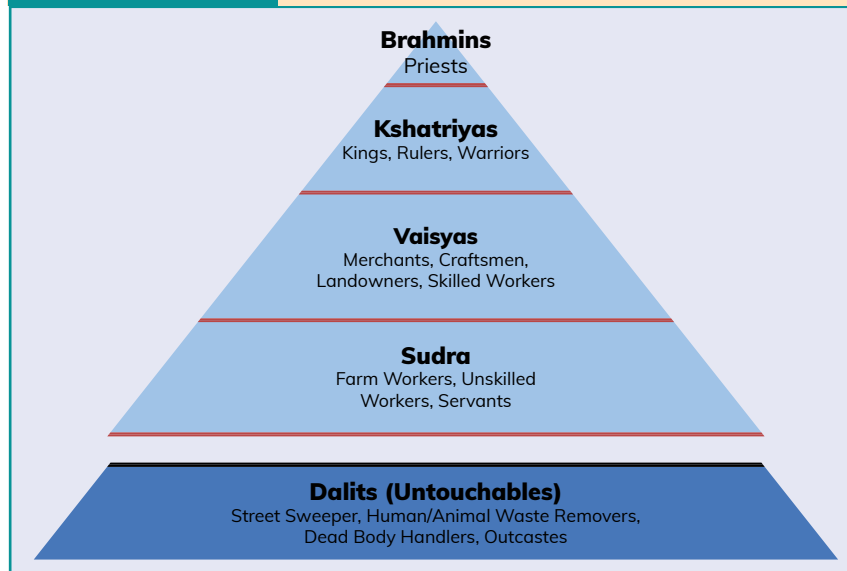
Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world, although there is not a specific start date of Hinduism. It developed in India as a result of the Aryan invasion around 1500 BC. Aryan priests followed complicated rituals and hymns known as the **Vedas**, or The Books of Knowledge. These prayers and rituals, along with other Aryan beliefs, led to the development of Hinduism. This means that there is no specific founder of Hinduism, unlike Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Followers of Hinduism are called Hindus.

Hindus believe in a supreme spirit named **Brahman**. There are many different gods and goddesses in Hinduism, but Hindus believe that all the gods and goddesses are a part of Brahman, which means “universal spirit.” Hindus also believe that all living beings have souls. This includes animals as well as people. Some animals, like the cow, are considered especially sacred. As a result of the belief that animals have souls, many Hindus are vegetarians, which means that they do not eat meat. Hindus also believe that the Ganges River is a holy river. Many Hindus are cremated when they die. It is a common practice to scatter the ashes of the deceased into the Ganges River.

Another important Hindu belief is the idea of reincarnation. **Reincarnation** is the belief that, when a person dies, his or her soul does not die. Instead, the soul is reborn into the body of another person or animal. How a person has lived his or her life determines what the next life will be. For example, a person who has lived a good life and been a good person will be reborn as someone who will live a better life. A person who did not live a good life and did bad things will be reincarnated as someone who will suffer. Hindus believe that a person’s soul is reincarnated again and again until that person has lived a good enough life to unite with Brahman. The belief that your actions determine your fate in your next life is called **karma**. Doing good things in your life builds good karma, while doing bad things makes bad karma.



Figure 12.2 Caste System in India**Did You Know?**

Today the caste system in India is called jati. There are over 3,000 jatis in India.

The caste system is another very important part of Hinduism and is closely tied with the idea of reincarnation. The **caste system** is a system of social classes that are inherited and cannot be changed. In other words, you are born into your caste and must stay in that caste for your whole life. You must do the jobs that are associated with your caste, and you must marry someone from your caste. The only way to move to a higher caste would be to build good karma during your life and be reincarnated into a higher caste in your next life.

Traditionally, there were four main castes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. The Brahmins, the highest caste, included the priests and wise men. The Kshatriyas included the warriors and rulers. Merchants, traders, and small farmers made up the Vaishyas. Finally, the Shudras were the peasants and field workers. There is one more group of people in the caste system: the untouchables or casteless people. Many people in this group had been removed from their caste by breaking a caste rule. As a result, the untouchables had to do the jobs viewed as “unclean” by the rest of society, such as cleaning toilets, streets, and gutters, and jobs that involved handling the bodies of the dead.

As time passed, the original castes were further divided into other castes. This has caused the Indian social structure to be very complicated. While the caste system is technically illegal in India, it still influences Indian society. For example, traditional families will not allow their children to marry someone from a different caste. This is one of the reasons why arranged marriages are common in India. In an arranged marriage, the parents of a bride and groom choose the person their child will marry. Many jobs in India are given based upon a person’s caste.

Below: Bhishma, a prominent character in Hindu literature known for his warrior skills.





Because Hinduism is a religious group, all Hindus share some of the same basic beliefs, like the belief in reincarnation. The sacred text of Hinduism is the Vedas, which began with the Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. Additional texts have been added throughout the years. Hindus worship at their homes and at temples. It is more common for people to worship alone at their homes and not in large groups. As a result, many Hindu homes contain a shrine for worship. Today, Hinduism is the third-largest religion in the world after Christianity and Islam. It is the largest religion in India.

Buddhism

Buddhism is another religion that began in South Asia. The creation of Buddhism began with a young prince named Siddhartha Gautama around 500 BC. Siddhartha was raised as a Hindu and grew up in a life of luxury with little contact with the outside world. Once he left his sheltered home, he was troubled and upset with the poverty and suffering he saw in the world around him. He asked some of the Hindu priests why there was so much suffering in the world, but he was not satisfied with their answers. As a result, he left his family and began searching for the answer to his question. Finally, he stopped wandering and simply sat and meditated about the suffering in the world. While meditating under the Tree of Wisdom, the answer came to Siddhartha. At this point, he became known as “Buddha,” which means “The Enlightened One.” According to Buddha, the cause of human suffering is greed and the desire for material things.

Buddha and his followers began to spread his message to different parts of India and South Asia. It is important to remember that Buddhists do not worship Buddha. They view him as a teacher, not a god. Buddha taught the same Hindu beliefs of reincarnation and karma, but he did not accept the caste system or the need for priests. The central teaching of Buddhism is called the **Four Noble Truths**. The first Noble Truth is that life always brings pain. The second is that suffering and sorrow are usually caused by greed and desire for material things. The third is that, in order to end suffering and reach Nirvana, a person has to give up greedy desires. **Nirvana** is a state of perfect peace. The fourth Noble Truth is that, in order to reach Nirvana, you have to follow the Middle Way. The **Middle Way**

Did You Know?

“His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet” was born into a farming family in Tibet. At age two, he was recognized as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama and soon began the training that would make him into a revered world figure. In 1989, he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent struggle to liberate Tibet from Chinese rule.



contains the Eightfold Path, a list of these eight rules for conduct: try to recognize the truth, try to avoid evil actions and bad people, do not say things that will hurt others, respect other people and their belongings, choose a job that does no harm to others, do not think evil thoughts, avoid excitement and anger, work at meditation, and think carefully about what matters in life. Buddha believed that unselfishness was the key to everything. He did not recognize gods or see a need for priests. He felt man alone could change evil into good. If one followed the Middle Way, one's soul would eventually reach a state of perfect peace.

Unlike some of the other main world religions, Buddhists do not worship a god. The focus of Buddhism is following the Eightfold Path to reach Nirvana. Like Hindus, Buddhists can worship at home or in a temple. There are several texts that are a part of Buddhism, including the **Tripitaka** and the **Mahayana Sutras**. There are also some divisions within Buddhism around the world. The Dalai Lama, for instance, is the leader of one of the major branches of Buddhism. Today, Buddhists make up about 7 percent of the world's population, which makes Buddhism the fourth-largest religion in the world. Buddhists can be found around the world, but Southern Asia and Eastern Asia have the largest numbers of Buddhists.



Opposite Page, Top: Buddhist home shrine. **Opposite Page, Bottom:** The 14th Dalai Lama has been in exile since 1959, when he fled Tibet for India to escape Chinese occupation.

Above: Buddhist monks collect donations for the poor in Laos. **Below:** Potala Palace in Tibet, in southwest China, was the winter home of the Dalai Lama.

Figure 12.3 The Eightfold Path





Top: An artistic depiction by Utagawa Kuniyoshi of the kami Inari appearing to a man.

Below: Assemblage of small torii at the Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine in Kyoto. Torii mark the entrance to Shinto shrines and are recognizable symbols of the religion. **Opposite Page:** Painting of the Chinese philosopher Confucius, about 1770.

Shintoism

Shintoism is a religion that is unique to Japan. It began in Japan so long ago that there is no known founder nor is there an official time frame for when it started. The name Shintoism means “the way of the gods.” The main belief of Shintoism is reverence for the **kami**, which are spirits that Shintoism followers believe live in nature. The word kami means “superior.” Shintoism followers believe that kami live in beautiful places, animals, and especially as a person’s ancestors. Additionally, many believers think that some of the mountains and rivers in Japan are homes to the kami and are considered to be sacred. Shintoism also stresses the importance of cleanliness.

The main religious practice of Shintoism is for followers to offer prayers and perform rituals to honor and please the kami. There is no belief in one central god and no sacred text. There is also not a large emphasis on what happens after a person dies. People often have small altars in their homes where the family will offer prayers for the spirits they hope will bless and protect them.

Shintoism has been a part of Japanese life for so long that it is often not even thought of as a religion but part of Japanese culture. Many Shintoism followers believe that one can follow the ideas of Shintoism as well as another religion. The worship of nature has also led the Japanese to perfect the art of creating small, beautiful gardens as areas of quiet and reflection in their crowded world. Until World War II, Shintoism was the official religion of Japan. Today it is no longer the official religion. Because Shintoism is unique and intertwined with Japanese culture, there are relatively few followers outside of Japan.



Confucianism

Confucianism is not a religion. It is a philosophy created by a Chinese scholar named Confucius. Confucius was born around 550 BC—when the Chinese government was having a hard time keeping order and warlords controlled much of the countryside. He believed that the key to peace and social order was for people to behave with good character and virtue. Virtue means behavior that is fair to others. Confucius’s teachings were written down in the **Analects**. Confucius’s **Golden Rule of Behavior** might be familiar to you. He said that “What you do not like when done unto you, do not do to others.” In other words, if you would not want something to happen to you, do not do it to another person. One example would be this: If you do not want people to gossip about you, do not gossip about others. Similarly, Confucius believed that to be a good ruler a person should treat people fairly and be kind to them.

Confucius saw himself as a teacher, not a leader. He believed that following his philosophy would bring order to China. According to Confucian philosophy, there are five basic relationships among men: ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. He taught that, if each relationship was based on kindness, there would be peace and harmony in China. In 121 BC, the emperor of China, Wudi, declared that Confucianism would be the official guiding practice for the Chinese government during his reign.

Even after Wudi’s reign ended, Confucianism continued to have a large influence on the Chinese government for almost 2,000 years. In 1949, China became a communist country, but even that revolution did not end the influence of Confucianism. Many people in China still support the teaching of Confucius and his emphasis on treating others fairly. Many people throughout Southern and Eastern Asia also admire and follow the teachings of Confucianism. Additionally, many historians see Confucianism as one of the foundations of Chinese society.

REVIEW AND SUMMARIZE

1. What are the differences between ethnic groups and religious groups?
2. What is reincarnation in the Hindu religion?
3. How does the caste system affect Indian society?
4. Why do Buddhism and Hinduism have some similar beliefs?
5. Copy the chart below and complete it with information from the reading.

Religion	Founder	Followers	Sacred Text	Place of Worship	Major Beliefs
Hinduism					
Buddhism					
Shintoism					

6. In which country is Shintoism the main religion?
7. Why is Confucianism not considered a religion?



SECTION 3

A Brief History of Southern and Eastern Asia

Did You Know?

India won its independence from the United Kingdom on August 15, 1947. It chose to remain in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

AS YOU READ, LOOK FOR...

- » events that ended World War II in Asia;
- » two movements that began to spread in Asia after World War II;
- » the U.S. policy of containment;
- » the domino theory;
- » terms: **nationalism, communism, Cold War, containment, domino theory, armistice, demilitarized zone.**

Colonialism and Struggles for Independence

The people of Southern and Eastern Asia were not all able to escape European colonialism. India was a colony of the British. France colonized most of Southeast Asia, creating a colony known as French Indochina. Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were all part of French Indochina. Many of these countries gained their independence following World War II. While the Koreas, China, and Japan escaped the harsh effects of European colonialism, they were all affected by the independence movements and the growth of communism.

Bottom: The Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, India is a monument to Queen Victoria who ruled as the British monarch over India from 1858 until her death in 1901.





World War II and Its Aftermath

Many Asian countries were major participants in World War II. The reason the United States entered World War II was the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941. In the Pacific, the United States and its allies fought alongside the Chinese. Before the outbreak of the war, Japan had been slowly taking over parts of China for resources. During the war, China, the United States, and other Allies slowly pushed the Japanese back from areas they had occupied. The war finally ended when the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki three days apart in August of 1945. The massive devastation to the Japanese homeland that came from these bombs forced the Japanese to surrender.

After World War II, two major movements swept through Asia: nationalism and communism. **Nationalism**, or pride in your country, fueled independence movements in India and French Indochina, where the native people tired of foreign rule. India's independence movement was led by Mohandas Gandhi, who emphasized the need for a peaceful, nonviolent independence movement. On the other hand, Vietnam's independence movement was led by Ho Chi Minh, who fought for all of Vietnam to become a communist country. **Communism** is a type of government in which a single party controls the country and the government owns all property and controls the economy. In 1949, China had a revolution and became communist. After World War II ended, the **Cold War** (a war of words with no direct fighting) began. The United States wanted to contain, or stop, the spread of communism to other countries in Asia. This policy of **containment** brought about U.S. involvement in conflicts in Korea and Vietnam.



Did You Know?

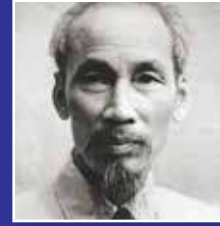
Mohandas Gandhi spent more than twenty years working as a lawyer in South Africa, where he was exposed to the racial discrimination of apartheid. Through that experience, he developed a philosophy of peaceful nonviolence that he later used in his struggle for Indian independence.



Top, Left: Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, just as the USS Shaw exploded. **Above:** Statue of Gandhi in Madrid, Spain. **Left:** A Chinese soldier guarding American shark-faced fighter planes during World War II.

Special Feature

Ho Chi Minh



Ho Chi Minh is one of the most famous opponents of colonial rule in the 20th century. He fought the longest battle, which means that it was the costliest struggle in terms of people killed.

Ho Chi Minh was born in Vietnam on May 19, 1890. His birth name was Nguyen That Thanh. At this point in history, Vietnam was part of the French colonial empire. Ho Chi Minh's family did not support French colonial rule; in fact, his father actually lost his job because he criticized French rule.

As a young adult, Ho Chi Minh traveled to Europe. During his travels, he learned about communism and began to believe that it was the future for Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh created the Vietnamese Communist Party. Then he traveled to the Soviet Union and China to learn more about communism and gain more support. In 1941, he returned to Vietnam and changed his name to Ho Chi Minh, which means "Bringer of Light." He then created the Viet Minh to fight the Japanese in the Indochina War.

When World War II ended, many colonies gained their independence. Vietnam declared itself independent, but the French refused to recognize its independence. War broke out between the French and the Vietnamese, which would last for eight years. At the end of eight years, a peace treaty was signed that separated Vietnam into communist North Vietnam and noncommunist South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh became president of North Vietnam in 1954. He wanted to reunite Vietnam as one communist country. His goal for reunification eventually led to the Vietnam War.

In the 1960s, while the Vietnam War was raging, Ho Chi Minh began to get sick. He died on September 2, 1969, unable to see his wish of a unified Vietnam fulfilled. When the North Vietnamese captured the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon, they renamed it Ho Chi Minh City in his honor. The Vietnam War finally ended in 1975, and Vietnam was reunited under a communist government. Ho Chi Minh's body was embalmed and preserved as the founding father of the country. You can visit it if you ever travel to Hanoi, Vietnam. What legacy of American involvement in the Vietnam War do you think might still be present today? Explain your thinking.



Background: Hồ Chí Minh statue outside Hồ Chí Minh City Hall, Hồ Chí Minh City. **Top:** Hồ Chí Minh with members of the East German Young Pioneers near Berlin. **Inset:** A young Hồ Chí Minh.

Korean War

At the end of World War II, the alliance between the United States and Soviet Union ended. The two countries engaged in a Cold War, or war of words and threats of violence. While the two countries never fought directly, they were involved in several wars supporting opposing sides. The Soviet Union provided support for communist forces in other countries, while the United States provided support for democratic or non-communist forces. During the Cold War, the Americans and Soviets competed for allies with their preferred form of government. The United States was worried that, if one country became a communist country, other neighboring countries would also fall to communism. This idea is called the **domino theory**. Due to this theory and the U.S. policy of containment of communism, the United States became involved in Korea.

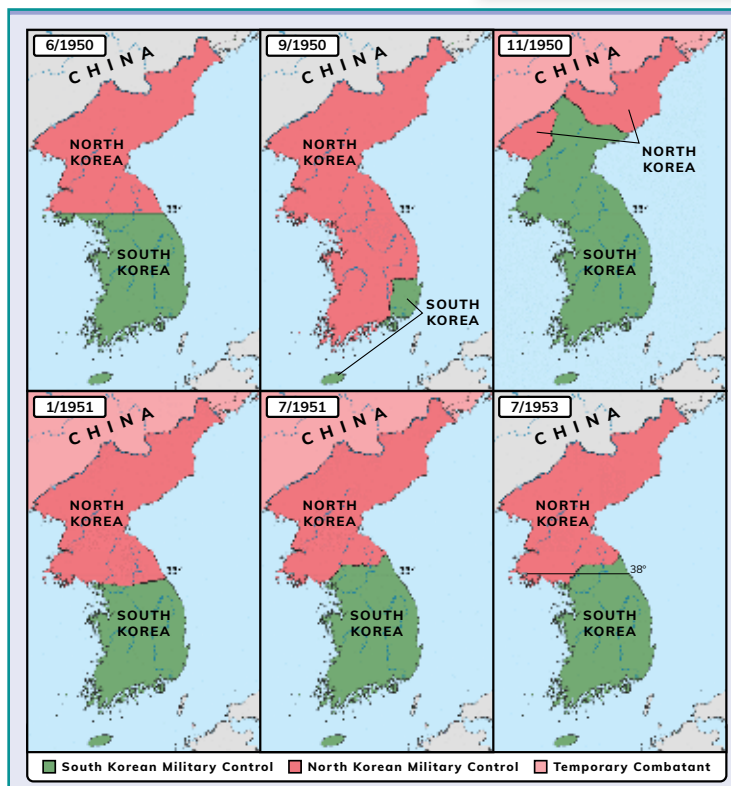
During World War II, the Korean Peninsula was under the control of the Japanese. At the end of the war, the peninsula was divided with the north being controlled by the Soviet Union and the south by the other Allies. In 1950, North Korean forces invaded the south to reunify the peninsula under communist control. The United States, along with United Nation forces, fought alongside the South Korean forces. After three years of fighting, an **armistice** was signed in 1953. An armistice is a temporary pause in fighting. A formal peace treaty was never signed to officially end the conflict. The boundary between the two countries had not changed during the three years of fighting. When the fighting ended, each country maintained control over half of the peninsula. Initially, the United States and the Soviet Union had agreed that the Korean people would get to vote and decide what type of government they would like. In the end, however, the peninsula was simply divided into two countries. The northern part that was controlled by the Soviets became communist, while the southern part became an ally of the United States as a democracy.

Did You Know?

U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower never used the term “domino theory,” but he described the “falling domino” principle in 1954 when referring to communism in Indochina: “You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly.”

MAP 12.2 KOREAN WAR FRONTLINES 1950-1953

Map Skill: In which month and year might South Korea's defeat seem likely?





Above: This floral display was a gift from the president of South Korea in May 2021 at the groundbreaking of the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance in Washington, D.C. **Below:** The Three Servicemen Statue in Washington, D.C. honors the Americans who fought and returned from the Vietnam War. The figures keep watch over The Wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



Today, the Korean Peninsula remains divided with tensions running high along the border. In fact, the border between the two countries is a **demilitarized zone**, which means no military equipment or people are allowed within the border. North Korea remains a communist country with a dictator. Because the country is focused on its military, other problems in the country—such as poor farm production and frequent famine—are ignored. While the Soviet Union no longer exists, North Korea is an ally of the other remaining communist countries, such as China. However, even China has moved away from the strict autocratic style of North Korea. South Korea, on the other hand, is a stable democracy with a fast-growing, high-tech economy. It remains one of the United States' main allies in Southern and Eastern Asia.

Vietnam War

The domino theory and the spread of communism also led to a conflict in Vietnam. At the end of World War II, many Vietnamese wanted to reorganize their country under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, who had spent years fighting French colonialism in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh was a communist, however, and the United States did not want any new communist countries in Southeast Asia. Once again, it was feared that, if Vietnam became communist, the other nearby countries—for example Laos and Cambodia—would also become communist. As a result, the United States supported French efforts to regain colonial control over Vietnam.

In 1954, the French decided to give up their fight to regain control, so the United States stepped in. At the 1954 Geneva Conference attended by several countries, decisions were made about the future of Vietnam. One decision was to divide Vietnam into North Vietnam and South Vietnam. Elections were to be held within one year after the division, and the Vietnamese people would be allowed to decide what type of government they wanted. The United States, however, was worried that the Vietnamese would choose Ho Chi Minh and the communists, so the election was never held.

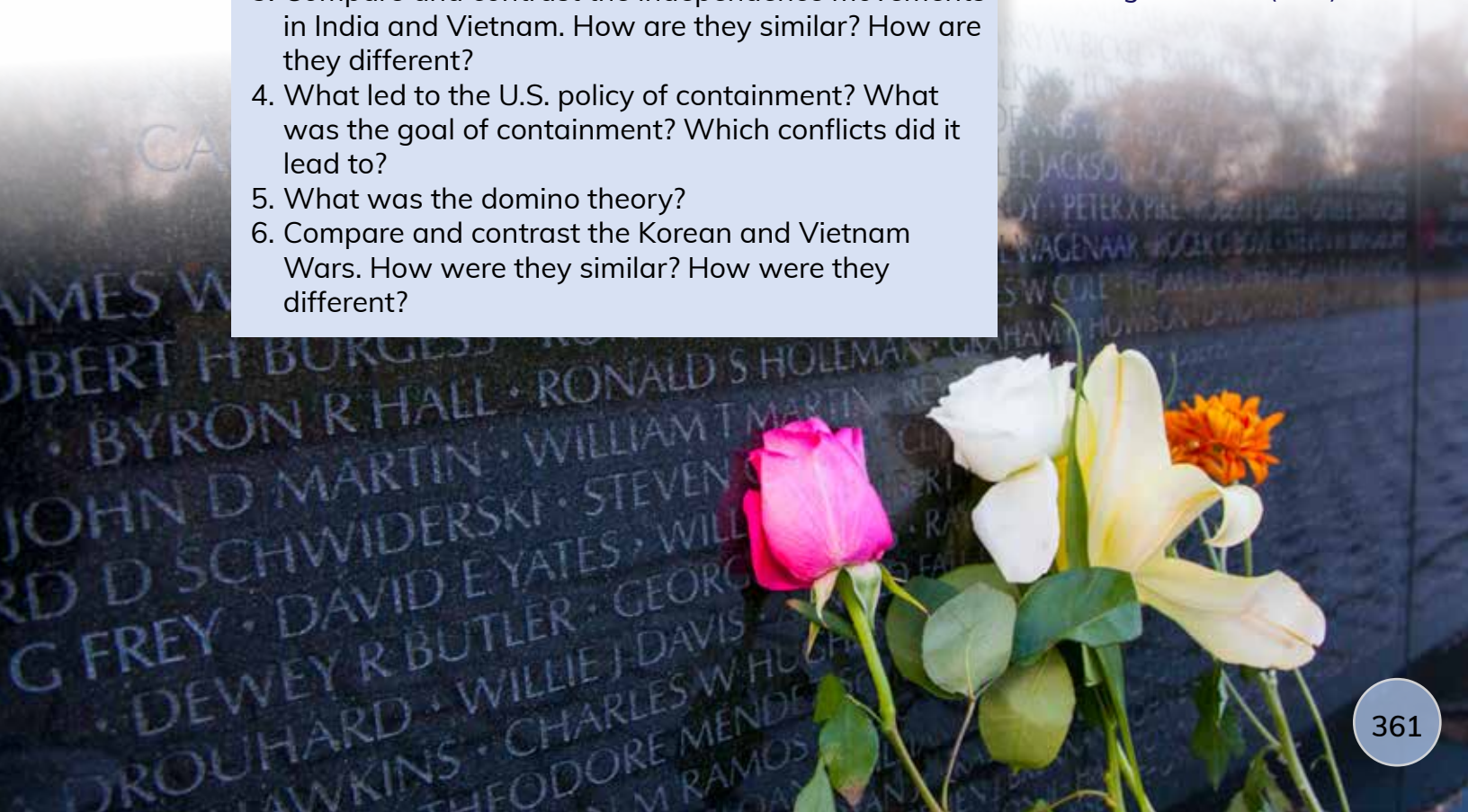
War broke out between the North Vietnamese (led by Ho Chi Minh and supported by the Soviet Union) and the South Vietnamese (supported by the United States). At first, the United States just sent military advisors to help the South Vietnamese, but as the war continued, the United States sent in more and more troops. American troops began fighting in Vietnam in 1965. By 1969, more than 500,000 US soldiers were in Vietnam. North Vietnam had allies as well. Both the Soviet Union and China sent troops, supplies, and weapons.

As the war continued into the 1970s, it became increasingly unpopular in the United States. By 1973, the United States began to withdraw its troops from the fighting in Vietnam. By 1975, all American military personnel had left Vietnam, and South Vietnam soon fell to the North. Vietnam was reunited as one country under a communist government. In the end, over 1 million people were killed—civilians and soldiers. Over 58,000 of these were Americans. Today, Vietnam is still a communist country; however, its economy is one of the fastest growing in Asia. The United States is Vietnam's top trading partner, and Vietnam is becoming a popular tourist destination.

REVIEW AND SUMMARIZE

1. What event ended World War II in Asia?
2. Which two movements began to spread in Asia after World War II was over?
3. Compare and contrast the independence movements in India and Vietnam. How are they similar? How are they different?
4. What led to the U.S. policy of containment? What was the goal of containment? Which conflicts did it lead to?
5. What was the domino theory?
6. Compare and contrast the Korean and Vietnam Wars. How were they similar? How were they different?

Bottom: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. lists the names of 58,318 men and women who died in combat or are listed as missing in action (MIA).



Chapter Review

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Section 1: The Geography of Southern and Eastern Asia

- Asia includes the subcontinent of India, which is separated from the rest of Asia by the Himalayan Mountains.
- There are many long rivers across Asia that provide transportation and fertile soil, making them densely populated.

Section 2: The People of Southern and Eastern Asia

- People in the same ethnic group share cultural traditions and beliefs while people in the same religious group share a belief in a god or gods.
- Hinduism and Buddhism have similar ideas of reincarnation and the need to lead a good life on earth.
- Shintoism is a religion from Japan that is often considered part of the culture, and Confucianism is a philosophy from China.

Section 3: A Brief History of Southern and Eastern Asia

- The French colonized a large section of Asia, and the British colonized India. Korea, China, and Japan escaped European colonization.
- Inspired by nationalism, the people of India achieved independence through nonviolence, while the people of Vietnam led by Ho Chi Minh, fought a war for independence.
- After World War II, Korea and Vietnam became battlegrounds in the Cold War because of the United States' policy of containment and the domino theory.

Below: Rice farmers in Bangladesh harvested over 36 million metric tons of rice in 2024-2025, representing seven percent of the world's rice crop.



ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNING

Reviewing People, Places, and Things

Create a crossword puzzle with the following words. Create clues for each of the words.

archipelago
Ganges River
Vedas
caste system
Nirvana
kami
armistice
containment

Understanding the Facts

1. Why are Buddhism and Hinduism similar?
2. Why are areas around rivers densely populated?
3. How did mountains influence the development of China and India?
4. What is the domino theory?
5. Why is Mohandas Gandhi an important historical figure?
6. Why is Ho Chi Minh an important historical figure?
7. How has Confucianism influenced Chinese history?
8. How have tectonic plates influenced the geography of Asia?
9. What is reincarnation?
10. How is Shintoism different from many other religions?

Developing Critical Thinking

1. Japan is distinctive compared to its Asian neighbors. Identify two unique facts about Japan (concerning geography, history, or culture) and explain why you think these features developed differently in Japan.

2. The Cold War is important to understanding Asia today. Identify four historical events and ideas that you think are most important to understanding this conflict in Asia. Explain your reasoning for each answer.

Writing across the Curriculum

1. Write a short report on the effects of the Himalayas on the history of Asia. Include at least two specific examples that you find most interesting.
2. What do you think are the three most important things to know about Confucianism? Write a short report detailing these facts and why they are the most important.

Applying Your Skills

1. Why do you think understanding Hinduism is important for an American traveling to India to do business? Provide a specific example of a situation that could occur, and how the American could avoid this problem with knowledge.
2. Create a Venn diagram comparing Buddhism and Hinduism. Be sure to compare at least four aspects of Buddhism and Hinduism.

Exploring Technology

1. Use Google Maps to view the political map and satellite images of Asia. What physical features do you notice? Locate (a) Ganges River, (b) Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River, (c) Bay of Bengal, (d) Gobi Desert, (e) Taklimakan Desert, (f) Himalayan Mountains, and (g) Korean Peninsula.
2. Visit the BBC's Asia page at www.bbc.com/news/world/asia. Find one article that interests you and write a short summary. Be sure to cite your article.