

Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments are designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about India. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available (or planned) for each unit in a typical world history class.

★ *Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core*

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

★ *What Are These Assessments Like?*

- **A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of world history**

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards—Assessment 1 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 1, Assessment 2 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 2, and so on. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

- **Based on primary or secondary sources**

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source or on a primary and a secondary source. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone. Links to online versions of print media are available in the Bibliography. Please note that these links were valid at the time of production, but the websites may have since been discontinued.

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- **Brief tasks promoting historical literacy**

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the students' mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

- **Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments**

A *basic* and an *advanced* version of each assessment are provided. The *basic* assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The *advanced* assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the *basic* version.

- **Easy to use as both learning and assessment tools**

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess students' historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

- **Evaluating student responses**

Brief but specific suggestions are provided, defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly, they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

Assessment 1 *Basic Level*

The Bhagavad Gita

★ Key Ideas and Details

1. (6–8) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

★ Using This Assessment

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Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

★ Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should see that Arjuna does not want to fight because he might be fighting nobles whom he actually admires. Krishna answers by telling him that because the “soul acquires another body after death,” he should not mourn those he might kill in battle. Death is certain, he says, but also “birth is certain for the one who dies.” Krishna’s other reason for Arjuna to fight is that it is his duty as a warrior, and doing one’s duty is the most important of all values. Moreover, Krishna insists he should do his duty and fight without concern for the outcome or consequences. Given the idea of rebirth, no matter what happens, he will have fulfilled his destiny as a warrior. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should be able to see that this episode dramatically applies concepts central to Hinduism. One concept is *samsara*, the cycle of births and deaths. In this process, the soul must overcome the *karma*, or debt of sin, it builds up. The way to do this is to fulfill one’s duties as a member of a caste, in this case Arjuna’s warrior, or Kshatriya caste.

The Bhagavad Gita

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one primary source document and one secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Document 1: A Primary Source

Arjuna said: How shall I strike [these nobles], who are worthy of my worship, with arrows in battle, O Krishna? It would be better, indeed, to live on alms in this world than to slay these noble gurus, because, by killing them I would enjoy wealth and pleasures stained with [their] blood. (2.04–05)

The Supreme Lord [Krishna] said: You grieve for those who are not worthy of grief, and yet [you] speak words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead. There was never a time when I, you, or these kings did not exist; nor shall we ever cease to exist in the future. Just as the Atman [soul] acquires a childhood body, a youth body, and an old age body during this life, similarly [it] acquires another body after death. The wise are not deluded by this. (2.11–13)

If you think that this body takes birth and dies perpetually, even then, O Arjuna, you should not grieve like this. Because, death is certain for the one who is born, and birth is certain for the one who dies. Therefore, you should not lament over the inevitable. (2.26–27)

Considering also your duty as a warrior you should not waver. Because there is nothing [better] for a warrior than a righteous war. Only the fortunate warriors, O Arjuna, get such an opportunity for an unsought war that is like an open door to heaven. If you will not fight this righteous war, then you will fail in your duty, lose your reputation, and incur sin. (2.31–33)

You will go to heaven if killed, or you will enjoy the earth if victorious. Therefore, get up with a determination to fight, O Arjuna. Treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat alike, engage yourself in your duty. By doing your duty this way you will not incur sin. (2.37–38)

Source Information: These passages are adapted from Ramanand Prasad's translation of the Hindu scripture the Bhagavad Gita. The numbers in parentheses are the chapter numbers and verse numbers, respectively. This translation of the Bhagavad Gita is available online at the University of Evansville's Exploring Ancient World Cultures.

Document 2: A Secondary Source

Among Hindus in India, the Bhagavad Gita is one of the most beloved of all Hindu scriptures. It is a 700-verse narrative that is part of a much larger Hindu epic known as the Mahabharata. It is thought to have been composed between the fifth and second centuries BCE.

At the start of the Bhagavad Gita, a war is about to begin. Arjuna is a prince and a warrior who is in despair. He has doubts about fighting because he knows his opponents in battle include his friends and relatives. In his desperation, he asks his charioteer Krishna for advice. Krishna the charioteer is actually a version or incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu in disguise. He urges Arjuna to ignore his doubts and do his duty as a Kshatriya, a member of the warrior caste.

Within this dialogue key concepts are explored, concepts that are central to ancient Indian religious and philosophical thought. One such concept is the immortality of the soul and the idea of reincarnation. When the body dies, the soul is reincarnated—that is, it is reborn in another body. It repeats this cycle over and over, one lifetime after another. This cycle of birth and death is known as *samsara*. During the cycle, the soul builds up *karma*—a spiritual debt acquired for sinful actions accumulated over many lifetimes. The way to relieve oneself of this debt is through disciplined fulfillment of duty, regardless of the consequences. In other words, dutiful action without concern for the outcome—the success or failure of the action.

Source Information: This passage is a secondary source document about the classic Hindu religious text the Bhagavad Gita. A secondary source is an account of past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. This particular historical account was written in 2014 specifically for use as part of this activity.

Assessment Questions

1. Using Document 1 alone, explain why Arjuna does not want to fight, and summarize the two reasons Krishna offers for why he should fight.

2. How does Document 2 help you to understand why this episode was so important and meant so much to people in India over the centuries? Cite details from the document to support your answer.

Assessment 7 *Advanced Level*

Aryan Influences in Ancient India

★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 7. (9–10)** Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
- 7. (11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

★ *Using This Assessment*

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Assessment 7 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in a wide variety of primary sources presented in many visual and textual formats. It also asks them to judge the relative strengths and weaknesses of visual as compared with written sources. [It may be useful to combine work on this assessment with *Assessment 6*, which covers a similar theme.]

★ *Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment*

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question should see that all of these documents offer evidence of some sort of Aryan influence on ancient Indian history and culture. Document 1 sums up the evidence on which the theories of Aryan influence rest. It describes the language similarities between Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages, and it indicates how the *Rig-Veda* describes the sort of nomadic warrior society most likely to have carried this language into India. Document 2 is evidence of the striking similarities of words and word forms in various languages that derived from the original Indo-European prototype, including Sanskrit. Document 3 suggests how migrations might have transported the Indo-European languages themselves into various parts of Europe, the Middle East, and India. Acceptable answers to the second assessment question should see that Document 1 cautions us about the lack of physical evidence in India of a society like the ones described in the *Rig-Veda*. All three documents only suggest some sort of external cultural influence on India. They do not tell us who the Aryans were or even if they were one distinct ethnic group. Languages and other cultural patterns can be transferred from one group to another over time. Much remains unresolved about the Aryan influence on ancient Indian history.

Aryan Influences in Ancient India

Directions: This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer two questions on what these sources have in common. In order to better understand the documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information located just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 7: (9–10) Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. **(11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Document 1: A Secondary Source

Did Aryans in horse-driven chariots invade India from the northwest in the second millennium BCE? Did these Aryans bring with them their Vedic rituals and an early form of India's Sanskrit language? The Aryans and the rituals are described in the hymns of the *Rig-Veda*. . . .

So, did the Aryans found Hinduism and all Indian civilization to follow? Historians in the 19th century were sure this Aryan invasion theory was correct. Today historians are no longer so sure. They are not sure the Aryans invaded and conquered India. They are not even sure who the Aryans were. Some say these Aryans may have migrated in slowly, sometimes fighting groups they met, sometimes simply trading, cooperating, and intermarrying with them. It is hard to tell, as there are just too few clues.

The first clues that led to the Aryan invasion theory had to do with language. In the late 18th century, some European scholars in India began to study Sanskrit. They noticed many words and word forms that were similar to those in Latin, Greek, English, Celtic, Persian, and a whole group of other languages. Soon they began to call all these the "Indo-European languages." But who were the speakers of the first Indo-European language, the one from which all these others developed? Many historians think they were from somewhere in Central Asia or the steppes of what is now the Ukraine and southern Russia. In this view, these original Indo-European speakers were horse-riding herders of cattle and sheep who invaded and conquered India. Others moved into Persia, northern Syria. Still others spread westward throughout Europe.

As for India, the *Rig-Veda* does seem to describe people with horses, chariots, and fire rituals at which animal sacrifices were carried out. . . . Yet it is hard to find actual physical clues that link these references to actual places and material objects. Exactly where were the ruins, chariot wheels, horse bones, weapons, and villages and cities of the Aryan invaders? They have been very hard to find, at least inside India.

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The Indus Valley civilization declined and disappeared sometime after 1900 BCE. Did the Aryans conquer it? This seems unlikely. No physical evidence of such a conquest has been found. Nor does the *Rig-Veda* describe any such complex, urban civilization. Historians now think a change in climate and other economic factors may have led to the decline of the Indus Valley civilization.

In any case, who the Aryans were and how they fit into this ancient history remains a mystery in many ways

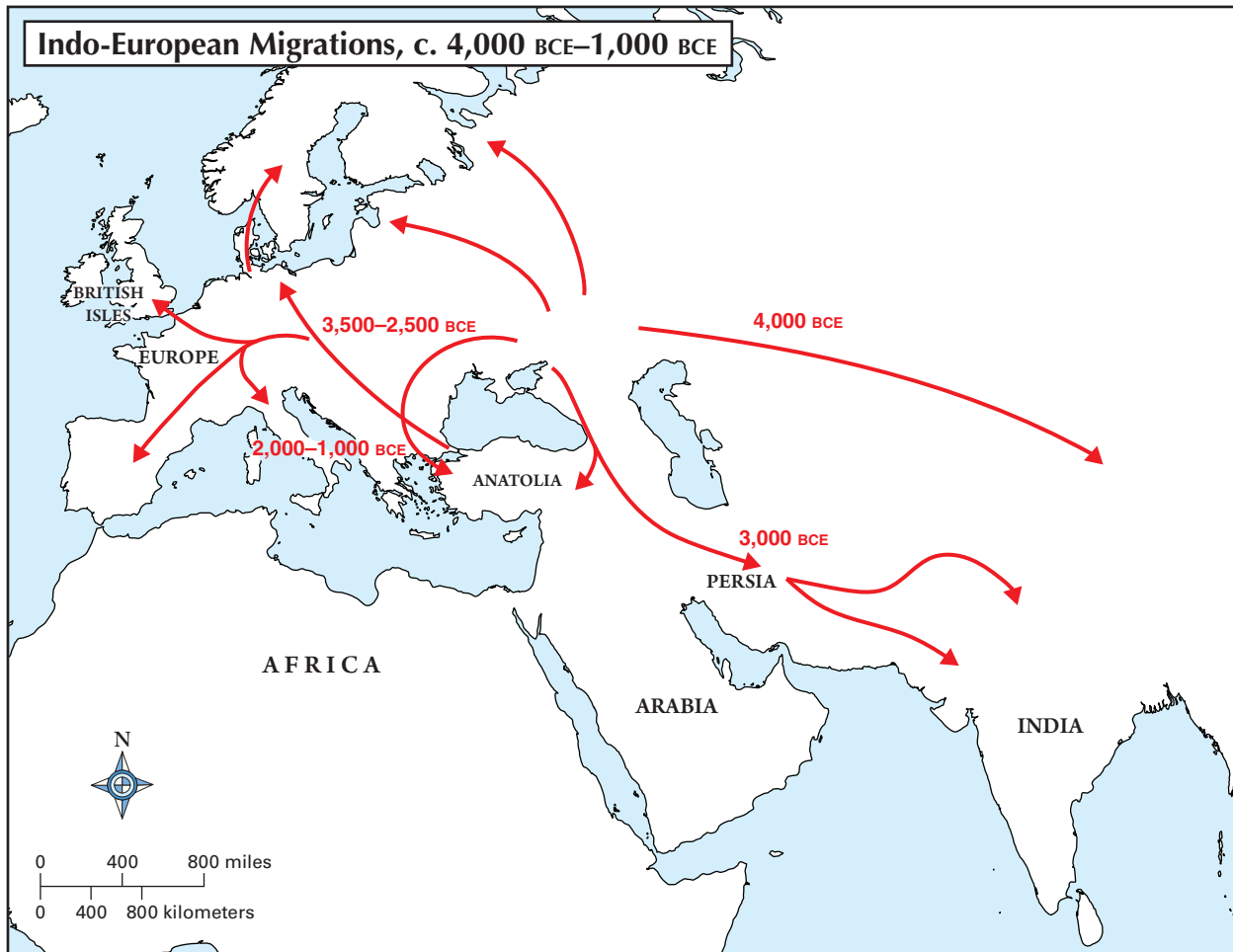
Source Information: This is a secondary source document about the issue of Aryan influence in ancient India's history. The passage is adapted and expanded from introductory material for Jonathan Burack's *Ancient India: Was There an Aryan Invasion?* (Culver City, CA: MindSparks, 2010).

Document 2: A Secondary Source

Latin	<i>regere</i> (to lead or rule), <i>rex</i> (a king)
Old Irish	<i>ri</i> (a king),
Gaulish	<i>rix</i> (a king)
Old English	<i>ric</i> (a king), <i>rice</i> (rich, powerful)
Old English	<i>riht</i> (right, just, correct)
Old High German	<i>riche</i> (kingdom)
Modern German	<i>recht</i> (right)
Iranian Avestan	<i>razeyeiti</i> (directs)
Iranian Persian	<i>rahst</i> (right, correct)
Sanskrit	<i>raja</i> (king); <i>maharajah</i> (great king)

Source Information: Linguists have learned to re-create many words of an original Indo-European language from which many other languages evolved—including Sanskrit in India. For example, they can trace back many words to the Indo-European root word **reg**. This root word means either “tribal king” or “to direct in a straight line, to rule or lead.” This table shows just a few of the words that evolved over centuries from this Indo-European root “reg.” This list is adapted from a longer one available at the Online Etymology Dictionary.

Document 3: A Secondary Source



Source Information: This map shows Indo-European migrations from 4000 to 1000 BCE. It is not clear whether this shows the spread of languages and cultures only, or of a single ethnic group carrying those languages and cultures.

Assessment Questions

1. Construct a thesis statement or claim about Aryan influence in India that *all three* of these sources could be used to support.
2. Explain why Document 1 might lead a historian to treat Documents 2 and 3 cautiously as evidence of Aryan influence in India.