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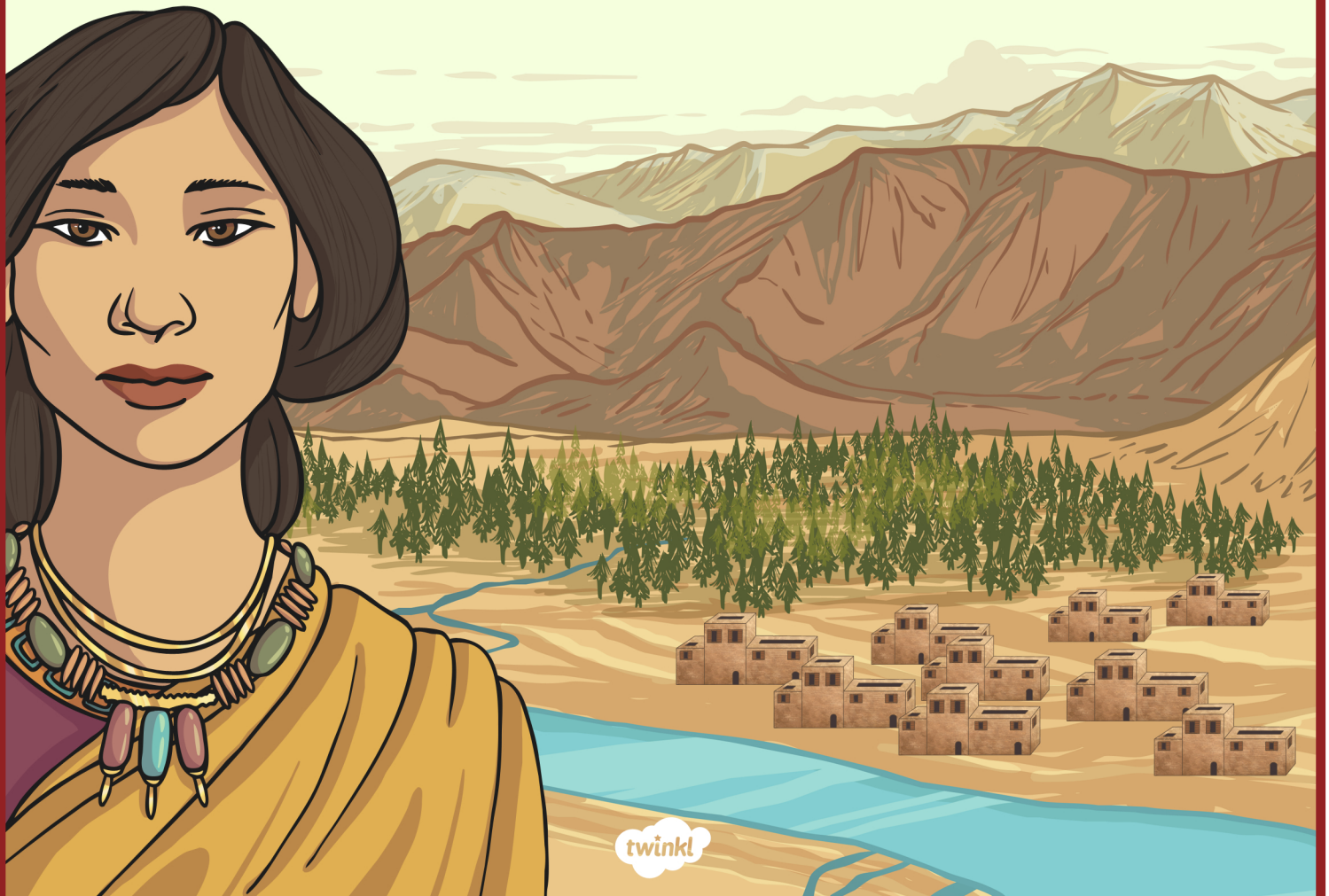
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Life in the Indus Valley

The Indus Valley civilisation covered a massive area, four times as large as the UK. It was built around the river Indus that runs through modern day northeast Afghanistan, Pakistan and Northwest India. At the time there was a second major river called the Ghaggar-Hakra but this dried up around 2000 BC.

The Indus Valley civilisation started around 3200 BC. Farmers moved into the area and established small farming settlements where they kept cows and sheep. In time these grew into major cities like Mohenjo-Daro and an advanced civilisation began to flourish. Evidence shows that the people from the Indus Valley civilisation made objects from clay; had their own Indus writing script and used tools like ploughs to farm the land. They were also skilled traders and they traded with other advanced civilisations like ancient Sumer. The civilisation thrived until around 1900 BC, after which it began to slowly decline. By 1300 BC all the major cities had been abandoned. It is thought that the drying up of the Ghaggar-Hakra could have brought the civilisation to an end.

The lost cities of The Indus Valley civilisation lay undiscovered until 1826 when a British soldier called Charles Masson saw mounds of bricks that he thought looked like castles. They were actually buildings from Mohenjo-Daro. Thirty years later, in 1856, workers building The Great Indian Railway found and used old bricks that turned out to be from buildings in Harappa.



Cities

The Indus Valley was the biggest of the ancient civilisations and its main cities were huge with many thousands of people living there. The cities were built near rivers that provided water for cooking, washing and drinking. The water that flooded the river banks each year sent nutrients into the earth that kept it rich and fertile for growing crops. The river also allowed traders to carry their goods to other cities. Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were the biggest cities of the Indus Valley civilisation and it is thought that up to 80,000 people could have lived there. Other Indus Valley cities included Kalibangan, Lothal and Banawali. However, not everyone lived in cities; lots of farmers, fishermen and traders lived outside the cities in small villages. Buildings in the cities were made from mud bricks that were dried in the sun. There were lots of buildings built for different purposes; these included granaries, dockyards, public baths, warehouses and of course houses for people to live in. Water was very important in the Indus Valley civilisation and the cities had drainage systems and wells to manage the water flow in and out of the city and to separate clean and dirty water.

Homes

There were big and small houses in the Indus Valley cities. Some had one floor and others (probably those belonging to richer people) had two or even three. The walls of the houses were very thick as this kept them nice and cool inside. There were no windows in the walls facing the main street so that people inside were not disturbed by the noise outside. Richer people's houses had many rooms which were sometimes arranged around a central courtyard, but some poorer people only had one or two rooms in which to live. Houses had flat roofs and this created an outdoor space where people could keep cool, meet with their friends and families and store some of their goods. The rooms inside the houses were used for different reasons, such as places to eat, sleep and wash. Keeping clean was very important and houses had bathrooms with toilets and showers. Toilet seats were made from bricks and waste from the toilets was channelled out into the street drains through clay pipes. Showers were really just a brick platform on which people would stand and pour water over themselves from jugs. Again, the dirty water would flow out of the house through the pipes and enter the city drain. Clean water was brought in from wells in the streets, although some richer households had their own private wells.

Life in the Indus Valley civilisation was very advanced for its time with living conditions as good as those in ancient Sumer and better than those in ancient Egypt. Historians and archaeologists are still working hard to discover more about this fascinating lost civilisation.

