

Student Handout #2

Historical Overview of the Gupta Empire and Summarization Exercise:

Read the entire article first. Then go back and summarize each paragraph in the spaces provided. Each paragraph should be summarized in 20 words or less. Finally, combine your four section summaries into one paragraph of no more than 30 words.

1) The Gupta Empire was one of the largest, most prosperous societies in the history of India. From 320 CE to around 550 CE, they ruled over much of what is India today, and some areas that border modern India. Before the Gupta Empire, India was controlled by several smaller kingdoms that divided this large territory up. Many of these kingdoms were becoming wealthy as a result of trade with Han China and the Roman Empire. Cotton and spices that were grown in India were valued in Rome and China, so trade was very profitable.

Paragraph 1 Summary:

2) The Gupta family came into power in one region of India, Magadha, and from there they expanded their reach through both military conquests and also by family alliances and marriages with the children of rulers from other areas. Over time, they gained control of more and more of what is now India. Chandragupta I, who was the third Gupta to hold power, is known for finally gaining control over the whole area in 320 CE and established the complete Gupta Empire.

Paragraph 2 Summary:

3) Chandragupta and other Gupta rulers were different from the rulers of China and Rome. They allowed some of the kingdoms they brought into the empire to remain somewhat independent, allowing their leaders to still control much of what happened in their land. This meant that they spent less time on military conquest and could put their energy into supporting religious, artistic, and scientific advances. Villages were protected from bandits by small military squads, but there was no large scale focus on war once peace was established. During the rule of the Guptas, great works of literature were produced along with important art and architecture and many advances in science and math. Hinduism also gained strength and influence in India with the support of the Gupta. As Hinduism grew, Buddhism lost some support there even as it expanded eastward. The caste system of social hierarchy was further developed under the Gupta as well and Indian law was shaped in this time. This was a time of peace and prosperity in India.

Paragraph 3 Summary:

4) In approximately 450 CE, the Hephthalites – a nomadic group from central Asia – began to clash frequently with the Gupta and moved into the northwest part of the empire. Having been at peace for so long, the Gupta were not prepared to defend their empire, and the Hephthalites began an invasion around 480. Within 40 years, the Hephthalites had pushed back the Gupta and taken over most of their territory. By the middle of the next century, the Gupta Empire was completely gone, and no Gupta leader was in place anywhere in India by 720 CE.

Paragraph 4 Summary:

Article Summary: