

Objective:

**What led to the Gupta Golden Age? How did the Gupta Golden Age impact India, other regions, and later periods in history?**

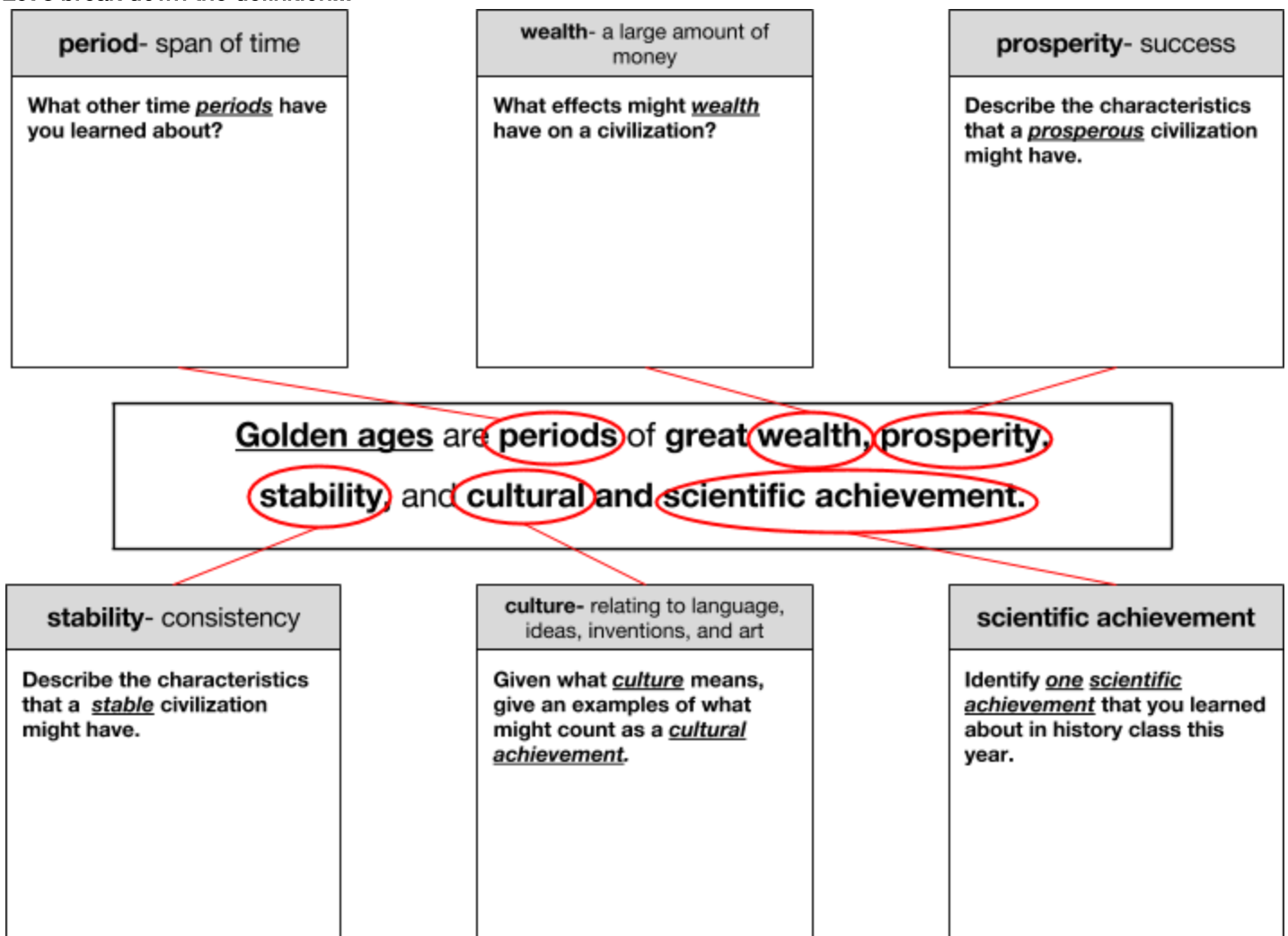
Contextualize the Gupta Golden Age.

Explain the impact of the Gupta Golden Age on India, other regions and later periods in history.

## Introduction

Historians refer to certain time periods of some civilizations as **golden ages**.

Let's break down the definition...



## Why Golden Ages are Important to Historians

During Golden Ages, a lot of new ideas and **innovations** are produced in **visual arts, architecture, literature, philosophy, and science and technology** in a relatively short period of time in one geographic area, but these new ideas and ways of doing things do not stay in one place for long. They are carried to other civilizations through **cultural diffusion** and passed down to new generations through the process of **collective learning**.

**Golden Ages move human intellectual and technological life ahead by leaps and bounds.** These spurts of growth in our collective ability to understand the world around us, express it through art, and invent new ways of doing things have been important in getting the human race to where it is today.

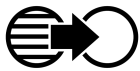
## The Gupta Golden Age Museum Walk



Categorize



Contextualize



Connect  
Cause and  
Effect

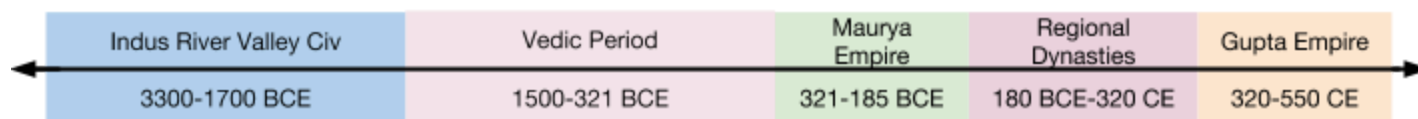


A lot of the artifacts that appear in museums come from the golden ages of civilizations.

In this activity, you will visit exhibits on the Gupta Golden Age. **As you learn about the Gupta Empire, fill out the appropriate row in the [Golden Ages of Classical Civilizations Graphic Organizer](#).**

## Exhibit A: The Gupta Empire (320-550 CE)

### Timeline of Indian History through the Classical Age



The Gupta Empire ruled parts of India from 320-550 CE. **Chandragupta II** was one of the most powerful emperors of the Gupta empire. His rule spanned from 375 to 415 C.E. when the Gupta empire was at its height, often referred to as the *Golden Age* of India. He attained success by pursuing both favorable **military alliances and an aggressive expansionist policy**. Chandragupta II controlled a vast empire, from the mouth of the Ganges to the mouth of the Indus River and from today's North Pakistan south to the mouth of the Narmada.

In addition to military prowess, Chandragupta II elevated culture, art, mathematics, philosophy, religion, and astronomy during his reign.

Source: Adapted from "Chandragupta II" New World Encyclopedia.

[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Chandragupta\\_II](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Chandragupta_II)



The Gupta Empire and conquests of its most powerful rulers.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gupta\\_empire\\_map.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gupta_empire_map.png)

## Exhibit B: Trade, Prosperity, and Wealth

### Standardized Money

Golden Ages require a lot of wealth. For artists and scientists to devote themselves to their work, they need someone to pay them for it so they can focus on their scholarly pursuits. Usually wealthy families or governments provide this support.

The government funded many of the innovations during the Gupta Dynasty. The government regulated and taxed trade and earned money from the mines and land it owned. As evidence of the Gupta government's control and support for trade in the economy, archaeologists have unearthed many coins created by the Gupta government. The coins show that the Gupta had the technology and power to mass-produce them, and the power needed to get merchants to use them. This also made it possible for the government to more easily tax business transactions.



Left: Golden coin from the Gupta Empire depicting an archer.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gupta\\_coin\\_Fighting\\_Lion.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gupta_coin_Fighting_Lion.jpg)

Below: Silver coin from the reign of Chandragupta II.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Silver\\_Coin\\_of\\_Chandragupta\\_II.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Silver_Coin_of_Chandragupta_II.jpg)



## Exhibit C: Trade, Prosperity, and Wealth

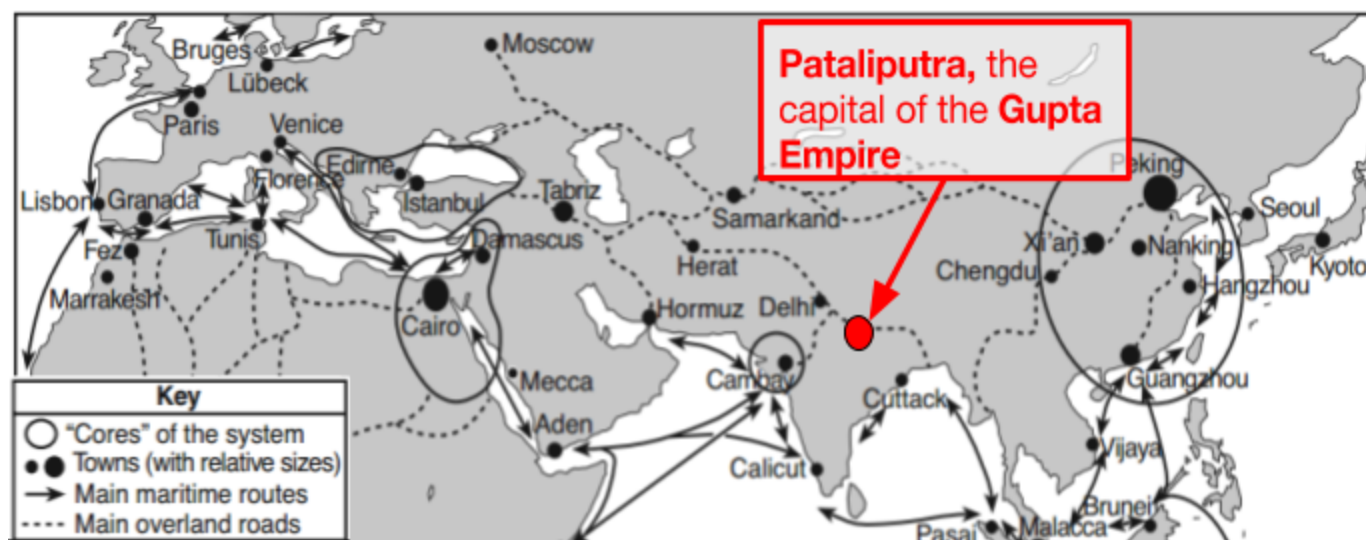
### On Trade Routes Between Rome and China

The Gupta ruled the largest and most **prosperous** empire in India, but in the first centuries CE it was not the most powerful in the world. To the west, **Rome** ruled the area around the Mediterranean Sea, and to the east, the **Han Dynasty** controlled China. The stability that the Roman, Han, and Gupta Empires brought to Asia spurred trade on the **Silk Roads**. This greatly benefited all three empires and the areas in between. Wealth and ideas passed along the trade network providing the money and ideas necessary for Golden Ages.

Classical Civilizations ca. 400 CE



Source: Adapted from <http://www.timemaps.com/history/world-200ad>



Source: Philippe Beaujard in "The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African World-Systems before the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of World History* (adapted) from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Examination, August 2012



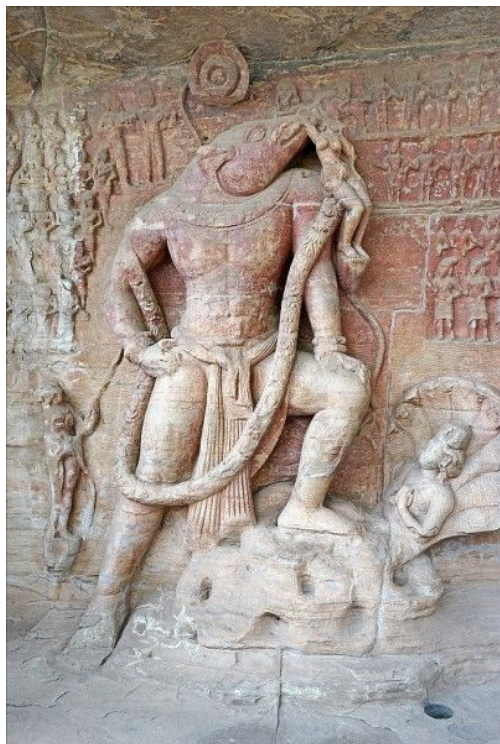
## Exhibit D: Trade, Prosperity, and Wealth

### Visual Arts and Architecture: Gupta Cave Shrines

Most of the examples we have of Gupta sculpture and architecture were inspired by Hinduism and Buddhism. The most well preserved and impressive of these examples are reliefs carved out of caves.

#### Udayagiri Caves

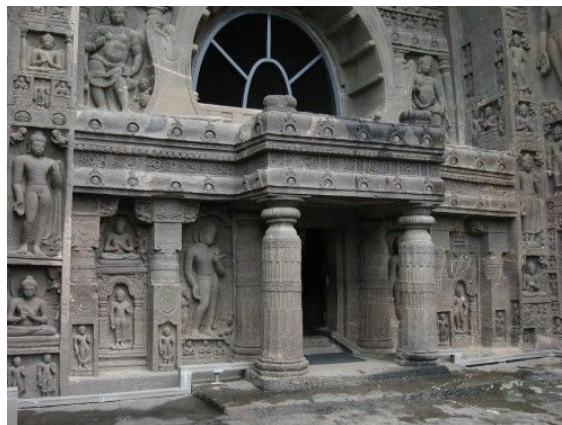
The image below is of a sculpture carved out of a cave wall of the Hindu god Vishnu in a boar-headed incarnation. It is roughly 23 feet tall and 13 feet wide.



Source: [http://www.ancient.eu/Gupta\\_Architecture/](http://www.ancient.eu/Gupta_Architecture/)

#### Ajanta Caves

The Ajanta Caves are covered in carvings and paintings that depict the lives of the Buddha.



Sources: [http://www.ancient.eu/Gupta\\_Architecture/](http://www.ancient.eu/Gupta_Architecture/),  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ajanta\\_Padmapani.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ajanta_Padmapani.jpg)

## Exhibit E: Literature

Some sources state that Chandragupta II supported literature and science in his empire directly by providing for a circle of scholars known as the **Nine Gems** in his court. A writer named **Kalidasa** stood as the greatest among them. He authored numerous pieces of literature, poems and plays, earning him the title of “the Shakespeare of India.”

Source: Adapted from [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Chandragupta\\_II](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Chandragupta_II)

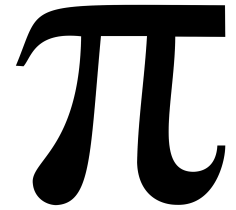
## Exhibit F: Mathematics



Watch an excerpt of [“Ancient India’s Contributions to the World”](#) (7:37- 10:33) and read the text below on other achievements in mathematics and made by Gupta scholars then answer the questions that follow.

Scholars during the Gupta period, made important **advances in mathematics** including:

- a close approximation of the value of  $\pi$  (pi)
- advances in **trigonometry**
- the use of **negative numbers**
- the use of **decimal points**



## Exhibit G: Science and Technology

### Stepwell Architecture



Watch an excerpt of [“Ancient India’s Contributions to the World”](#) (23:16- 26:38) about stepwells.



Stepwell in Abhaneri, India  
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChandBaori.jpg>

### Metallurgy and the Iron Pillar of Delhi

Indian metal workers were known for their expertise in ancient times. Their swords used by their soldiers were admired by other armies for their strength and the officers carried metal bows. In Delhi, there is an iron pillar from the Gupta era that stands 23 ft tall. It is over 1,500 years old but has very little rust or wear.



Iron Pillar of Delhi.  
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IronPillarDelhi.jpg>

# FA

## SQ 11: What led to the Gupta Golden Age? How did the Gupta Golden Age impact India, other regions, and later periods in history?

➡ Directions: Based on what you have learned about the Gupta Golden Age, complete the prompts below.



Contextualize

FA 1. Contextualize the Gupta Golden Age by completing the following tasks:

- Identify when and where the golden age took place
  - Describe the factors that led to the golden age
- 



Connect  
Cause and  
Effect

FA 2. Explain the impact of the Gupta Golden Age on India, other regions, and later periods in history by completing the following tasks:

- Identify two innovations developed during the golden age
  - Describe the effects of those innovations on India, other regions and/or later periods in history
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