Mahinda

c. 282-222 BC

WHY HE MADE HISTORY Mahinda was a monk who spread Buddhism through Sri Lanka and India.

As you read the biography below, think about the faith and determination it took for Mahinda to accomplish all that he did.

Mahinda was born around 282 BC. His father was Emperor Asoka of the Mauryan Empire in India. At the age of 20, Mahinda was ordained. It is said that Mahinda also became an arhat, or a person who has achieved enlightenment, on this same day.

After 12 years of study, Emperor Asoka sent Mahinda and four other monks to Sri Lanka. The monks were charged with teaching and spreading Buddhism to the people of Sri Lanka, an island located off the southeastern tip of India.

Mahinda and the four monks met King Devanampiyatissa of Sri Lanka while the king was hunting. Mahinda first tested the king on his intelligence, which was customary before teaching someone about Buddhism. Then Mahinda and the monks told Devanampiyatissa about the life and teachings of Buddha.

King Devanampiyatissa soon became a Buddhist, becoming the first monarch of Sri Lanka to convert to Buddhism. The king asked Mahinda’s father, Emperor Asoka, to send relics of Buddha to Sri Lanka. King Devanampiyatissa also requested a branch from the Bodhi Tree. The Bodhi Tree is believed to be the place where the Buddha first found enlightenment.
Sri Lanka’s conversion to Buddhism brought about a religious revolution for the people who lived there. It is said that 40,000 men became Buddhists after Mahinda’s visit. Mahinda continued to teach about Buddhism. He also remained in contact with King Devanampiyatissa, encouraging him to build monasteries throughout Sri Lanka.

Mahinda continued to live in Sri Lanka until his death at the age of 60. His body was taken to Anuradhapura, the capital of Sri Lanka, where it was cremated. A cetiya, a Buddhist sanctuary, was built where he was cremated, and the location was named Isibhumangana, or “courtyard of the sages.” Half of his ashes remain in this spot, while the other half of the ashes were scattered over India.

The Mahinda Festival occurs every year in June and celebrates the life of Mahinda, the great monk who brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

1. What was Mahinda’s greatest contribution to history?

   _______________________________________________________

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2. **Sequence** List the events of Mahinda in the order in which they occurred.

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**ACTIVITY**

Use an encyclopedia, your textbook, or online reference to research India. Write a brochure that describes India to someone who is thinking about visiting the country on vacation.
Biography Candragupta Maurya

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
1. Maurya was said to have ruled India much like Alexander the Great.
2. Indica described what life was like in India during this time. It may have included details about civilian lives, legal and state doctrines, and even Mauryan’s practices.

ACTIVITY
Answers will vary.

Biography Kautilya

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
1. The Arthashastra was a guidebook that discussed politics, and how to lead. It also dealt with philosophy.
2. Kautilya’s thoughts and opinions were probably applicable to life in the time in which he lived, however today things are very different. I do not think politicians would be able to follow the Arthashastra, as modern government is very different from what I have learned about history.

ACTIVITY
Answers will vary.

Biography Mahinda

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
1. Mahinda spread Buddhism through India.
2. Mahinda was a monk who became enlightened, then traveled to Sri Lanka to convert the King to Buddhism. He then spread the teachings of Buddha. He died, and a memorial was erected where he was cremated.

ACTIVITY
Answers will vary.

Literature

CALL-OUT BOX
Similes (p. 12): misery will follow, as the wheel of a cart follows the foot of an ox; happiness will follow, like a shadow that never leaves.

ANALYZING LITERATURE
1. the consequences of good and evil
2. Both passages talk about the consequences of good and evil. The Buddhist passage uses comparisons and refers to happiness when one is good and sorrow when one is evil. The Hindu passage lists the traits of good and evil men. It refers to goodness leading to freedom and evil leading to suffering and bondage.

Primary Source The Story of Savitri from India’s Mahabharata

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
1. Possible answers: intelligence, loyalty, devotion, lack of concern for riches, determination, concern for family members, more concerned for others than for herself
2. Answers will vary. Possible answers: She cares more about making other people happy than about her own happiness. She wants to trick Yama into continuing to grant her favors. She wants Yama to admire her and feel sympathy for her.
3. Accept any reasonable response.