

A Living High School Geography: Middle East, Central Asia, and India

A high school geography course by Jill Papsdorf

based on excerpts from

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V
The Old and the New World

originally published in 1884

by

Charlotte M. Mason

©2021 Jill Papsdorf and Mater Amabilis™. All rights reserved.

A Living High School Geography is designed by Jill Papsdorf. All primary rights to materials are to the designer. Any redistribution or reproduction of part or all of the contents in any form is prohibited other than the following:

- You may print or download to local hard disk extracts for your personal homeschool and non-commercial use only.
- You may not, except with our expressed written permission, distribute or commercially exploit the content, nor may you transmit it or store it in any other website or other forms of the electronic retrieval system.

Please note maps and images used in this document under the fair use principle for educational purposes. When possible, images in the public domain or licensed through Creative Commons were selected. Maps used with permission according to the Terms of Use at d-maps.com.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
ASIA	2
Asia - General Survey Part I	2
General Survey Part II	5
General Survey Parts III and IV	9
Siberia and Kamchatka	12
Turkey in Asia Part I	2
Turkey in Asia Part II	5
The Holy Land	10
Damascus	14
Arabia Part I	16
Arabia Part II	20
Persia	23
Central Asia	27
OUR INDIAN EMPIRE	32
History of British India	34
Himalaya Mountains	36
The Valley of the Ganges and the Valley of the Indus	38
The Deccan and the Coast Plains	42
MAPS	45

Introduction

Each day, before you read, you will use an atlas to find locations from the reading and label them on a blank map.

Charlotte Mason wrote her *Geographical Readers* in the 1880s. At that time, Britain ruled over a vast empire which (at its height) was the largest empire in history. The text you will read this year is excerpted from the *Reader* to exclude much of the Victorian-era commentary to allow us to focus on her geographical descriptions. As you read, however, keep in mind the world in which Miss Mason lived, a world of privileged English rulers (almost exclusively white) often living in colonies or territories surrounded by indigenous peoples.

Try to identify the Victorian attitudes of Miss Mason and her contemporaries towards non-Europeans. Consider both how those attitudes have changed and what future people might consider prejudices of our own.

How would the British leaders, political and military, feel about the native people in their territories? How would they justify their continued leadership? How would they ensure they continued in power?

Asia

Asia - General Survey Part I

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- Ural Mountains
- Arabian Peninsula
- India (notice it is a peninsula)
- Sri Lanka
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Kamchatka Peninsula
- Asia Minor
- Taurus Mountains
- Iran (Persia)
- Elburz Mountains
- Afghanistan
- Baluchistan (across Pakistan and Iran)
- Hindu Kush Mountains
- Plateau of Tibet
- Mongolian Plateau
- Himalaya Mountains
- Mount Everest
- Kunlun Mountains
- Tian Shan Mountains
- Altay Mountains
- China
- Deccan Plateau
- Kuril Islands
- Ryukyu Islands
- Taiwan
- Philippine Islands
- Borneo
- Sumatra
- Java

The **Pamir steppe** is found where the Himalayas, Hindu Kush, Kunlun, and Tian Shan Mountains converge. Mark this on your map.

Bolor-Kagh is an old name for the mountains that run north from the end of the Kunlun Mountain range to the Tian Shan Mountain range. Mark this on your map.

Definitions:

Peninsula - a piece of land almost surrounded by water or projecting out into a body of water

Plateau – an area of a highland, usually consisting of relatively flat terrain, that is raised significantly above the surrounding area; also called a high plain or tableland

Isthmus - a narrow strip of land with sea on either side, forming a link between two larger areas of land

As you read, consider how features of the Asian landmass seem to echo that of Europe. Why do you think a British author and teacher might have felt that this was important to point out? What effect might this idea have had on the imaginations of her British pupils?

Note how Miss Mason describes the relationship between mountains and tablelands (plateaus). What surrounds the plateaus of Tibet, Deccan, and Arabia? In an atlas, note these patterns of mountain ranges and plateaus as you work your way east.

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 1-4

Asia, the East, or Morning Land of the world, forms a third of all the land on the earth's surface, and is five times as large as Europe. The two land masses whose confines are marked by the Ural mountains are alike in many respects. Asia has, like Europe, three great peninsulas on the south; Arabia is an unbroken mass, like Spain; India, with Ceylon,¹ compares with Italy and Sicily, both peninsulas being flanked on the north by the loftiest mountains of their respective continents. Further India, like Greece, is the most broken of the three, and the East Indian Archipelago² is not unlike that of the Mediterranean. Putting the east coast of Asia for the west of Europe, the British Islands correspond to those of Japan, and the Scandinavian peninsula to that of Kamtchatka.³ In the interior, many parallels may be drawn in the position of the mountains and lowlands, and in the direction of the rivers.

But in Asia the great features of the land are all on a larger scale than in Europe. It has wider plains, larger rivers, higher mountains – the highest in the world; and, what is peculiar to Asia, is has a chain of high table-lands, which stretches almost across the continent from west to east. These enormous plateaus occupy nearly two-fifths of the continent, and rise above the average height of the European mountains, while the mountains themselves that gird and cross them surpass those of every other country in height. It is a mistake to look upon the mountains as independent ranges; they are, for the most part, simply the lofty and uneven edges, the broken faces, of the table-lands which they shut in.

Beginning at the west, there is first, the table-land of Asia Minor, with the Taurus mountains; then the vast table-land of Persia, crossed by the Elburz mountains, and continued in the highlands of Afghanistan and Beluchistan.

The Hindu Kush range forms the sort of mountain isthmus which joins the highlands of the west with those of the east. In this central region is the Pamir steppe, "the roof of the world"; and here are the giant Bolor Tagh mountains running northwards;⁴ while spreading away to the east are the great table-lands of Tibet and Mongolia.

¹ Sri Lanka

² Indonesia

³ Kamchatka

⁴ Bolor-Kagh is an old name for the mountains that run north from the end of the Kunlun Mountain range to the Tian Shan Mountain range

The great Himalaya chain, “the abode of snow,” forms the southern edge of the plateau of Tibet; the plateau itself reaches a height of 17,000 feet, greater than that of the highest Alps;⁵ while Mount Everest, the highest of the Himalaya chain, and the loftiest mountain in the world, is 29,000 feet in height.

The Kuen Lun mountains⁶ cross the table-land, and to the north of it are the Tian Shan mountains, the Altai⁷ range, and the long mountain ranges which, under various names, stretch into the extreme north-east of the continent.

Besides these, there are the Chinese mountains and those of Further India, and the table-land of the Deccan – walled in by mountain ranges – in the Indian peninsula, as well as the great plateau of Arabia.

Tibet is by far the loftiest of the table-lands which fill Central Asia, that of Persia being about 4000 feet, the height of our highest British mountains. The bare region of Tibet is, indeed, the highest plateau land of the world; and here the wandering herdsman tends his flocks of long-haired shawl-wool goats, his sheep, and his yak oxen; for grain can only be cultivated in the deeper valleys. This is the country of the wild horse and of the great wild sheep.

Lastly, we must notice the curious chain of volcanic mountains which skirt the eastern coast of Asia, beginning in Kamtchatka, passing through the Kurile Islands⁸ to Japan, thence through the Loo Choo Islands⁹ to Formosa,¹⁰ and from that through the Philippines to Borneo, Sumatra, and Java, which has a greater number of volcanic cones than is to be found on any land of the same size in the earth.

Why would we call Asia the “Morning Land of the world?”

⁵ The Tibetan Plateau has an average elevation average exceeding 4,500 metres (14,800 ft). (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibetan_Plateau)

⁶ Kunlun Mountains

⁷ Altay

⁸ Kuril Islands

⁹ Today known as the Ryukyu Islands

¹⁰ a short-lived republic on what is now Taiwan

General Survey Part II

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- Arctic Ocean
- Altay Mountains
- Siberian Plain
- Ural Mountains
- Caspian Sea
- Aral Sea
- Lake Balkash
- Samarqand, Uzbekistan
- Kazakh Uplands
- Mesopotamia
- Euphrates River
- Tigris River
- Great Indian Desert
- Ganges Plain
- Ganges River
- India
- China
- Sichuan Basin
- North China Plain
- Indian Ocean
- Pacific Ocean
- Ob River
- Yenisey River
- Lake Baikal
- Lena River
- Yakutsk, Russia
- Amur River
- Yellow River
- Yangtze (or Yangtse) River
- Tibet
- Mekong River
- Irrawaddy River
- Brahmaputra River
- Bay of Bengal
- Delta of the Ganges River
- Himalaya Mountains
- Indus River
- Syr Darya River
- Amu Darya River

Find the latitude 50 ° North, where the desert gives way to grassland. Add this line of latitude to your map.

Definitions:

Midge - any small fly

Tundra - a vast, flat, treeless Arctic region of Europe, Asia, and North America in which the subsoil is permanently frozen

Note the pattern of rivers across Asia from India to China. Note where there are and are not rivers, and what the effect of the presence or absence of a river might be on both the climate and the culture.

Stretching northwards from the mountains to the Arctic shores is the great Siberian plain, separated from the plains of Europe only by the narrow belt of the Ural. On the west, the plain is enormously wide, but towards the east the mountains encroach on the lowlands, until at last they are narrowed to mere coast plains.

Very different landscapes appear in different parts of the great plain of the north. On the south-west, from the Caspian, where the Sea of Aral and Lake Balkash are all that is left of a great Mediterranean which once covered these low lands, are deserts of drift sand; but where the rivers cross these, there are lovely patches of brilliant green, as in the gardens round the cities of Samarcand¹¹ and Khiva,¹² which seem, by contrast with the desert, to be very gardens of Eden.

About 50° N. lat., the deserts give place to the region of grassy steppes, where rain is less scanty, and where the nomadic peoples wander with their flocks and herds, and pitch their homes – tents of black horse-hair – wherever there is a show of green pasture. The southern part is known as the Kirghiz steppe,¹³ and is occupied by hordes of the nomadic Kirghiz,¹⁴ whose wealth is in their flocks of broad-tailed sheep and their camel droves. In the hot summer, clouds of midges hover over the grazing herds; while winter brings a covering of hard frozen snow, over which the sledge caravans pass on their way to the winter fairs.

Gradually, in about 55° N., the steppe begins to be covered with trees, and we enter the *forest zone*, with its woods of pine, and fir, and birch, sheltering innumerable squirrels, martens, and sables, bears, foxes, and reindeer. Here the Russian and Samoide¹⁵ hunters carry on their winter fur campaigns.

Approaching the Arctic Circle, the trees thin out, and give place at last to the bare swampy levels of the *tundra region*, over which winter holds sway during the greater part of the year. In the tundras, the nomadic Samoide hunt and fishes; and hither, in the short summer, the reindeer come to crop the mosses – the only vegetation of this rigorous climate. So level are the tundras, that along the coast in winter it would be

¹¹ Samarqand, Uzbekistan

¹² Another city in Uzbekistan, too small to be shown in the world atlas.

¹³ Kazakh Uplands

¹⁴ The Kyrgyz people (also spelled Kyrgyz and Kirghiz) are a Turkic ethnic group native to Central Asia, primarily Kyrgyzstan. (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyz_people)

¹⁵ From Wikipedia: “The **Samoyedic people** (also **Samodeic people**) are a group of closely related peoples who speak Samoyedic languages, which are part of the Uralic family. They are a linguistic, ethnic and cultural grouping. The name derives from the obsolete term *Samoyed* used in Russia for some indigenous people of Siberia. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samoyedic_peoples)

difficult to tell where land ceases and the ice-covering of the Arctic Sea begins, were it not for the line of drift timber marking the shore. Here the Polar bear and the Arctic fox are trapped by the hardy hunter.

The remaining lowlands of Asia occur along the borders of the continent. To the west is the great plain of Mesopotamia, watered by the Euphrates and the Tigris, once made fertile by innumerable channels led from these rivers, but now appearing as a great dry steppe, green only in the wet season. Next comes the plain of Hindustan,¹⁶ the west of it, the "Indian Desert," the east, the fertile basin of the Ganges, the richest and most populous part of India; and lastly, there is the wide river plain of China, tilled and watered in the most wonderful way [...]

The rivers of Asia flow outwards from the edges of the great highlands to the Indian, the Pacific, and the Arctic oceans; but within the borders of the great plateaus, and in the dry wastes of the steppes and deserts, there are immense regions from which no river finds its way to the ocean.

The largest rivers are those which flow northwards over the Siberian lowlands and into the Arctic seas. The Obi (2700 miles),¹⁷ rich in fish, is the great summer thoroughfare for all Western Siberia. Twice a year it is in flood, when the plain is a wide waste of waters, above which only the tree-tops rise. It is frozen at its mouth between October and May.

The Yenisei¹⁸ is a still larger river, ranked by Russian geographers after the Mississippi. It gathers its headwaters in Lake Baikal, the largest fresh-water lake in Asia.

The Lena is the great water-way for Eastern Siberia, and, like the other two great rivers, is traversed by steamboats in the summer. At Yakutsk, it is frozen over for more than two hundred days in the year.

Coming round to the Pacific slope, we meet with the Amoor,¹⁹ great as these, and called the "black river," on account of its dark brown waters. The two great rivers of China, the Hoang-ho,²⁰ or "yellow river," and the Yang-tse-kiang,²¹ the "son of the ocean," have their head streams near one another in the mountains of Tibet, and after flowing widely apart, draw together again at their mouths. The Hoang-ho, "the trouble of the sons of Hona," is a wayward and turbulent river, which has changed its course over the lower

¹⁶ In Miss Mason's day, Hindustan often referred to the areas encompassing both the Great Indian Desert and the Ganges Plain.

¹⁷ Ob River

¹⁸ Yenisey River

¹⁹ Amur River

²⁰ Yellow River

²¹ Yangtze River

plains of China no less than nine times. The Yang-tse-kiang, on the other hand, is the great commercial river of China.

Passing the Me-kong²² and the Menam,²³ the “mother of waters,” and the Irawadi,²⁴ we come to the twin rivers, Brahmaputra and Ganges, with their huge delta at the head of the Gulf of Bengal,²⁵ where, twice a day, the down-flowing waters of the two great rivers have a stout battle with the incoming tide amongst the islands of the Sunderbunds.²⁶ The Ganges, the sacred river of the Hindus, rises in a snow-field of the southern face of the Himalaya, some 14,000 feet above the sea.

The Indus, the great western river of India, rises high up in the dreary table-land of Tibet. Owing to its shifting channels and sandbanks, it is of less value for traffic than most rivers of its size. Of the great twin rivers of Mesopotamia we have already spoken.

Turning now to Central Asia, we find that the drainage is *continental*; that is, the rivers are lost in the deserts, or flow into the numerous salt lakes of the region, but never escape to the ocean. The wide steppes around the Caspian and the Sea of Aral, as well as the countries included in the highlands – Persia and Arabia, Turkistan,²⁷ Tibet, and Mongolia – are, for the most part, within this *continental drainage* area of Asia.

The Aral, the “sea of islands,” is wider and larger than the Irish Sea, though much shallower. Its two great feeders are the Syr Daria²⁸ and the Amu Daria (Oxus),²⁹ the largest of the rivers which do not reach the ocean.

²² Mekong River

²³ Chao Phraya River in Thailand (not labeled in the world atlas)

²⁴ Irrawaddy River

²⁵ Or Bay of Bengal

²⁶ The Sundarbans is a mangrove area in the delta formed by the confluence of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna Rivers in the Bay of Bengal.

²⁷ From Wikipedia: “Turkestan includes present-day Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, the Tarim Basin of China (also known as East Turkestan), and parts of northern Afghanistan (known as Afghan Turkestan).” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkestan>)

²⁸ Syr Darya River

²⁹ Amu Darya River; Oxus is the Latin name for the Amu Darya River.

General Survey Parts III and IV

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- Arctic Ocean
- Indian Ocean
- Pacific Ocean
- Great Indian Desert
- Ganges Plain
- India
- China
- Siberia
- Mongolia
- Tibet
- Iran (Persia)
- Asia Minor
- Yakutsk, Russia
- Malay Peninsula
- Malaysia
- Caspian Sea

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 8-14

The northern shores of Asia stretch into the Arctic regions, the southern peninsulas and islands reach into the tropics; all the rest of Asia is in the temperate zone. But the fact which most affects the climate of the continent is the position of the great belt of highlands which occupies Central Asia, stretching from the south-west to the north-east. The summer sun shines down fiercely on the plateaus, plains, and bordering peninsulas. So hot to the touch does the land become, that it heats the air above it, which grows light, and rises in the same way as does the hot air in a crowded lecture-room. Then the cool, moisture-laden winds from the oceans rush in to supply the place of this heated air. Rain-bearing winds (monsoons) from the Indian Ocean and the Pacific drop their delicious floods over Hindustan,³⁰ Further India, China, the islands, and even before the rains have ceased, the whole of the parched earth is rich and green with luxuriant plant life.

Nay, even the icy northern slopes receive their share: moist winds are drawn in from the thawing Arctic, from the far Atlantic, and bring the rains which support the vast forests of Siberia. To the very edges of the vast central table-lands do the rich rain-winds penetrate; but, alas for the highlands, lofty mountains tower like battlements all round the plateaus; the rain-winds touch their cold, snowy brows, and the moisture in the air condenses, becomes snow or rain, and at last pours in floods down the steep sides of the highlands, and feeds the mighty rivers which rise upon their borders; but all the time, never a rain-cloud climbs the summits of the flanking mountains to fall in delicious drops upon the parched plateaus; and these central highlands of Asia remain *rainless regions*.

³⁰ In Miss Mason's time, Hindustan often referred to the areas encompassing both the Great Indian Desert and the Ganges Plain.

“Therefore it is that all the inner plateaus of Asia, the vast regional of Mongolia, of Eastern Turkistan³¹ and Tibet, of Persia and Asia Minor, present landscapes of bare steppes and sandy deserts, with their accompanying dry atmosphere, cloudless blue skies, and failing and treacherous periodical streams (fed by the melting of the mountain snows), that end in salt lakes, or evaporate on the sands. Hence, also, their inhabitants, compelled to seek fresh pastures and watering places with almost every change of season, appear as restless nomads [...]”³²

Another notable thing about the climate of Asia is its *excessive* character: islands and maritime countries, with coasts much broken into by the sea, have always a *tempered* climate; that is to say, the cool, moist sea-breezes make the greatest summer heat endurable, while the “raw edge” is taken off the coldest day of winter by the moist and *warmer* winds from off the sea. The further a region is removed from the sea, therefore, the more excessive is its climate; that is, the more severe is the winter cold, and the more intense is the summer heat. A glance at the map shows that only round its coasts is Asia broken into by the sea: the centre is a vast solid mass of land where excessive cold is followed quite suddenly by such summer heat as our insular³³ climate gives us no experience of.

Probably at Yakutsk, in Eastern Siberia, the most excessive climate in the world is reached: the winter cold is many degrees below that of the frozen ocean to the north of it, and the soil is permanently frozen to the depth of 380 feet, and yet the summer heat, in the month of July, is as great as that of Paris in the same month! In India and the seaboard countries of the south-east, on the contrary, the temperature remains pretty much the same all the year round; and the seasons are not, hot and cold, but, dry and wet, according to the direction of the monsoon winds.

To Central Asia we owe most of the European grains and tree-fruits, -- oranges and lemons, peaches and apricots, the fig and olive, vines and nut-trees, besides hemp and flax, the garden rose, and many other cultivated flowering plants. From India come the banana, rice, and the sugar-cane, indigo, and several sorts of cotton. China is the native country of the tea-plant; the East India islands and the Malay peninsula, of spices, cinnamon, black pepper, and cloves, and of the large tree yielding the milky juice that hardens into “gutta-percha.”³⁴

³¹ From Wikipedia: “Turkestan includes present-day Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, the Tarim Basin of China (also known as East Turkestan), and parts of northern Afghanistan (known as Afghan Turkestan).” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkestan>)

³² The source of Miss Mason’s quote is unknown.

³³ Miss Mason is referring to the island climate of Britain.

³⁴ Gutta-percha is a hard tough substance which comes from certain Malaysian trees. It is now used chiefly in dentistry and for electrical insulation.

The mountain region of Central Asia is the native land of the horse and the ass, of the ox and buffalo, the sheep and goat, from which the domesticated varieties appear to be derived. Both varieties of camel, the single and the double-humped, are Asiatic. The yak ox, with its silky coat of long hair, is to the nomads of Tibet what the reindeer is to the tribes of the Siberian plains, almost their sole wealth and support. The elephant, of a different species from that of Africa, is a native of the tropical parts of Asia: the tiger is peculiar to the south-eastern parts of the continent, where is the lion also, but smaller than that of Africa: bears of various kinds are found in all parts [...] The domestic poultry of all parts of the world seems to have been derived from Asia. Tropical Asia abounds in monkeys, the largest being the “orangoutang,” the “wild man of the woods” of Malacca³⁵ and the south-eastern islands: some are tailed, others are tailless, but none have prehensile tails like the monkeys of America.

Siberia is the great mining region of Asia, yielding gold, silver, and platinum, copper and lead, coal, and graphite or black-lead: India has diamonds and other precious stones: China has its fine porcelain clay: the steppes round the Caspian are rich in salt, and also in springs of naphtha or petroleum, now made use of by the steamers of the Caspian instead of coal; these springs are the ancient “fire-fields” to which the fire-worshippers of Persia were wont to make pilgrimages. [...]

Note the northernmost and southernmost edges of Asia. But especially note the central highlands. Think about the extremes of weather, what these extremes make possible, and what hardships they might create.

Think again about how landscape and climate conditions shape developments of cultures and movements of peoples. Consider the difference in climate the farther you travel from the equator. About what latitude, north or south, do you think would be the ideal place to live?

How has the dominant economy changed for the people of Asia since the time of Miss Mason?

As you read about individual countries in further chapters, consider how cultures move across the climate zones despite a country’s political borders or not and why that might be.

³⁵ In Malaysia

Siberia and Kamchatka

Look at Siberia on the globe and compare its size to that of Great Britain. Compare it to the United States.

Draw or label on a map of Russia:

- Russia
- Moscow, Russia
- Siberia
- Altay Mountains
- Ural Mountains
- Yenisey River
- Kamchatka Peninsula
- Arctic Ocean
- Sea of Okhotsk
- Lake Baikal

Remember that Miss Mason is writing in the late 1800s. Consider what, traditionally, have been the chief exports or industries on which the Siberian economy has been based. Think about Miss Mason's assumptions about how a land is best "cultivated" or "managed" and how those assumptions compare to our modern ideas about land-use.

If you are interested, explore what penal colonies were like in Australia and Siberia. To which would you rather have been sent?

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 17-21

Siberia

Siberia is at least thirty times as large as Great Britain and Ireland, but its scanty population forms a miserable contrast to its enormous size. The inhabitants consist for the most part of Russians and Tartars, who have settled in the south or in the milder west, along the rivers, and along the roads which lead from one great river to another. In the northern and eastern districts, the settlements are almost entirely confined to the river bands, so that the enormous forest lands and the interminable swampy tundras of the coast are either uninhabited altogether, or are visited only by the huntsman, the gold-digger, and the [...nomad].

By way of peopling these vast solitudes, Russia sends an annual troop of unwilling emigrants across the Urals to the east. Sometimes celebrated personages are doomed to follow this melancholy path. [...]

In this century, many a political exile has been doomed to wander to Siberia, and to draw out his wretched life amid such sufferings as are described in the charming tale of

'The Exiles of Siberia.'³⁶ Most of the Siberian exiles are, however, common criminals, such as in our country would be hanged or transported [...] Thus, the vast plain of Siberia is used by the Russian government as a huge penitentiary [...]

The boundless woods of Siberia harbor a number of fur-bearing animals whose skins form one of the chief products of the country; of these, the rich brown fur of the sable is one of the most valuable [...]

In former times the ermine was one of the most valuable fur-bearing animals of the Siberian woods [...] The colour of this little animal, which is reddish brown in summer, becomes milk-white during the winter, with the exception of the tip of the tail which always remains black. [...]

Kamtchatka

The peninsula of Kamtchatka,³⁷ though numbering no more than 6000 or 7000 inhabitants, on a surface equaling Great Britain in extent, might easily maintain a far greater number. The climate is much more temperate than that of the interior of Siberia, being neither so excessively cold in winter, nor so intensely hot in summer; and though the frequent fogs and rains prevent the cultivation of corn, the humid air produces green pastures, so rich that the grass can be cut three times during the short summer.

The coast is bare of trees, as the cold winds check their growth; but inland, there are endless forests well stocked with sables and squirrels.

Then, as for the fisheries, no country in the world has fisheries to equal them. In spring the salmon ascend the rivers in such amazing numbers, that on plunging a dart into the stream, one is almost sure to strike a fish.

As the waters contain such an incredible multitude of fishes, we cannot wonder that the rocky coasts of the peninsula swarm with sea-fowl, whose breeding and roosting places are densely peopled.

Thus the population of Kamtchatka is quite out of proportion to the riches of its pastures and waters. Its scanty inhabitants are, moreover, settled on a few spots along the chief rivers and bays, so that almost the whole peninsula is nothing but an uninhabited wilderness.

³⁶ *Elizabeth, or The Exiles of Siberia* by Sophie Cottin, originally written in French, in which a Polish woman attempts to receive a pardon for her parents after they are exiled.

³⁷ Kamchatka

Turkey in Asia Part I

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- Turkey (Türkiye)
- Ankara, Turkey
- Mount Ararat
- Aegean Sea
- Asia Minor
- Red Sea
- Lake Van
- Israel
- Mecca, Saudi Arabia
- Medina, Saudi Arabia
- Saudi Arabia
- Riyadh, Turkey
- Iraq
- Iran
- Tehran, Iran
- Armenia
- Yerevan, Armenia
- Georgia
- T'bilisi, Georgia
- Azerbaijan
- Baku, Azerbaijan
- Caucasus Mountains

Draw or label on a map of the Middle East:

- Iraq
- Baghdad, Iraq
- Euphrates River
- Tigris River
- Mesopotamia
- Israel
- Jerusalem, Israel
- Jordan
- Amman, Jordan
- Sinai Peninsula
- Mt. Sinai
- Cyprus

Using *Then and Now Bible Maps* or another source, find the following and note where they would be on your map:

- Nineveh
- Babylon
- Bethlehem
- Nazareth
- Sea of Galilee
- River Jordan
- Antioch
- Tarsus
- Ephesus
- Perga

Bear in mind that anyone writing geography or news articles, just like a person writing a history or a work of literature, is writing as much about his or her own identity as about the identities of other peoples. This is something to pay attention to in everything you read.

At the time Miss Mason was writing, the Ottoman Turks controlled a good bit more of the world than they would after World War. The identities of these nations today and their modern conflicts were shaped by that history.

You may one day read Scott Anderson's *Lawrence in Arabia*, which would fill in a lot of details about the Ottoman Empire in its final days, including the corruption to which Miss Mason alludes.

Also note that in 2021, Turkey officially changed the spelling of its name to Türkiye. At this time, most English sources continue to use "Turkey."

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 22-26

No region of the world is more full of interest than the group of Asiatic countries under Turkish rule, and included under the name of "Turkey in Asia." Here is the Euphrates, which is said to have watered Paradise: here, upon Mount Ararat, the ark of Noah rested while the world was adrowning: here are the Mesopotamian plains over which Abram wandered, the river which the Hebrew crossed, and the Promised Land which became the inheritance of his seed: here is the Sinaitic wilderness, up and down which, for forty years, rebellious Israel was condemned to wander; and Sinai, that awful mountain, whereon Moses was hidden for forty days whilst he received the law: here are the site of Nineveh, and the ruins of Babylon – the two mighty cities of the ancient world, the centres of the two vast empires which, in their turns, spread over the Mesopotamian plains: here, on the fair isle of Cyprus, and round the isles of the Aegean, which fringe the shores of Asia Minor, gather a hundred tales – mere fairy tales to us – of the doings of gods and nymphs. Here, included in this Turkish territory, on the long narrow strip of Arabia which skirts the Red Sea, are the two sacred cities of the [Muslims], Mecca and Medina, the birth-place and the burial-place of Mohammed, the mere sight of which secures, according to Mohammedan belief, a thousand years of paradise to even the unbeliever. Here are Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jerusalem, the Sea of Galilee and the river Jordan, sacred names, dear to the heart of Christendom. Here is Antioch, where the Christians first bore the name of their Chief; and here are Tarsus, Ephesus, Perga, and a dozen other names which occur in the journeyings of St. Paul, that Jew of Tarsus who became the great Apostle and Christian missionary to the Gentile world.

This land, the early home of the human race, and the scene of so many great events in history, has been, for a long period, slowly falling into decay under a corrupt government; though its situation, in the very centre of the Old World, and communicating by water with Europe, Asia, and Africa, its delicious climate, its numerous harbours, and extensive seaboard, should make it one of the most prosperous states of the world. But the Turks are the rulers of the country, and the Turks of the towns are debased and corrupt; those in office caring for their own ease and their own gains, to the utter neglect and, often, oppression of the people under their rule. [...]

The settled home of the Armenians is the plateau country round Lake Van; but, as the bankers and money-lenders of the empire, they are scattered freely in all the cities and towns, and, indeed, over the whole of Southern Asia. [...]

The Kurds, a pastoral people, wild and warlike, and famous horsemen, dwell in the mountain valleys and glens to the south of Lake Van [...]

The Arabs are as numerous as the Turks themselves, and still wander with their countless flocks of sheep and camels over the great Mesopotamian plain as they have done since the beginning of history. They trade in horses and wool, and are but nominally under the Turkish government, recognizing only the authority of their sheikhs.

The Greeks are settled in large numbers on the islands and shores of the Aegean; but, as merchants and handicraftsmen, they are to be found scattered all over Asia Minor. [...]

Turkey in Asia Part II

Draw or label on a map of Turkey:

- Turkey
- Asia Minor
- Armenia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Syria
- Mount Ararat
- Taurus Mountains
- Lake Van
- Lake Urmia
- Euphrates River
- Tigris River
- Izmir, Turkey
- Black Sea
- Trabzon, Turkey
- Adana, Turkey
- Konya, Turkey
- Ankara, Turkey
- Aegean Sea
- Cyprus

The **Anti-Taurus Mountains** curve northeast from the Taurus Mountains in southern and eastern Turkey. Notice the extensive mountain ranges surrounding the area of Lake Van and Lake Urmia.

Draw or label on a map of the Middle East:

- Mesopotamia
- Baghdad, Iraq
- Persian Gulf
- Syria
- West Bank
- Gaza Strip
- Lebanon
- Jordan River
- Iraq
- Al Basrah, Iraq
- Damascus, Syria
- Aleppo, Syria
- Jerusalem, Israel
- Beirut, Lebanon

Draw or label on a map of Saudi Arabia:

- Hejaz Tihamah (“Western Province”)
- Saudi Arabia
- Yemen

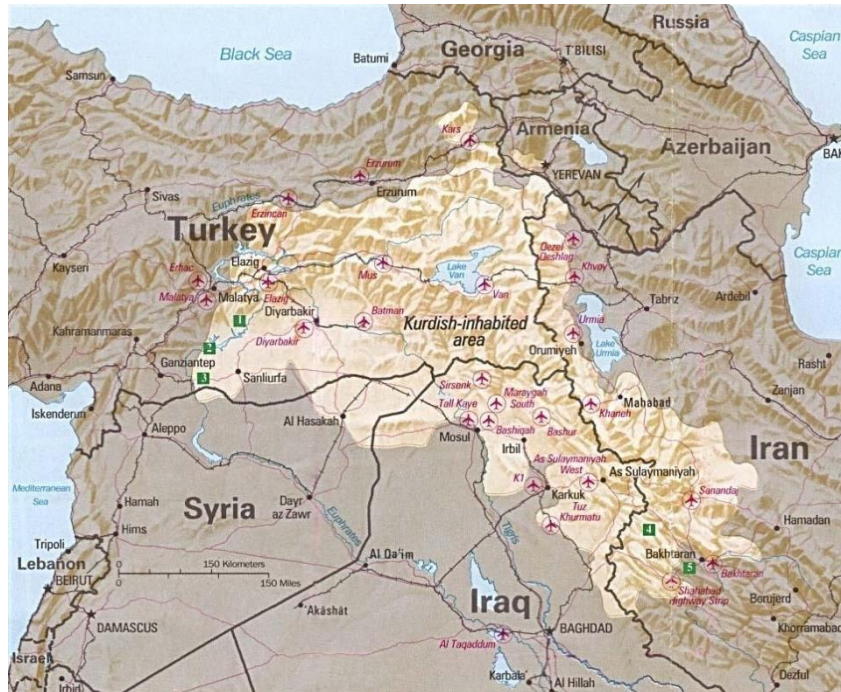
Draw or label on a map of Caucasus:

- Turkey
- Armenia
- Yerevan, Armenia
- Georgia
- T’bilisi, Georgia
- Azerbaijan
- Baku, Azerbaijan
- Caucasus Mountains
- Iran

Definitions:

Alluvial plain - a level or gently sloping surface formed of sediments laid down by streams, generally during flooding.

Miss Mason refers to the area of Kurdistan, which is not a country but a region, where Kurds have traditionally lived. You can see on the following map how Kurdistan includes significant areas of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.³⁸



The Middle East as we know it, with its current political boundaries, did not begin to exist until after World War I. For example, when Miss Mason was writing, there was no country called Lebanon. Recall from your previous reading that this entire region was subsumed into the Ottoman Empire.

Turn you page to read Charlotte Mason’s description of this area.

³⁸ By Source stated "The following maps were produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, unless otherwise indicated." - Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection at The University of Texas at Austin [1] http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kurdish_lands_92.jpg linked from Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection at The University of Texas at Austin, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50510580>

Turkey in Asia consists of a mountainous region, a hilly region, and a broad plain. The mountainous region includes the peninsula of Asia Minor and the other northern provinces which lie within the same parallels, that is, Armenia and Kurdistan.

The whole of this division is a great plateau, hemmed in and crossed by lofty mountain ranges, the highest summit of which is Mount Ararat, an extinct volcano, fully 17,000 feet in height.

Running south-westward from Ararat are the Taurus, with the Anti-Taurus range, and innumerable spurs and lateral ranges which overspread the whole country, making it not unlike the highlands of Scotland both in its climate and its pine woods.

But it is not for these "savage wilds" that the lovely verdure and fertility of Asia Minor have passed into a proverb: the mountain valleys and the lowlands which skirt the sea are very "gardens of the Lord," where are whole forests of olive and pomegranate, where apricot and peach, grape and fig, cherry and pear grow wild, and where the garden flowers of Europe deck the meadows and sweeten the air.

The whole of the plateau of Asia Minor bears evidence of volcanic action; the south-west portion is covered with volcanic cones, and it is here we find a cluster of salt-water lakes, with no outlet to the sea, surrounded by salt marshes.

Lake Van is the largest lake of the country; it lies in a hollow of the mountains more than 5000 feet above the sea-level. It has no outlet; its waters are salt, but clear and blue like the sea, and it abounds with fish and waterfowl.

All the rest of Turkey in Asia, with the exception of the maritime region of Syria, is a vast alluvial plain, drained by the Euphrates – "the great river," and the Tigris; the plain round the upper courses of the rivers being known as Mesopotamia, that round their lower courses, as Babylonia. The great plains are scorched and bare in summer, but the winters are mild, and over the greater part of the desert, which is broken up by oases, there are many pools of rain water, although there are no streams, and pasturage for camels and sheep is spread pretty widely. In ancient times the whole of these vast plains was made wonderfully fertile – able to support an immense population – by means of artificial channels led from the two great rivers; but the groves of dates and olives, the vineyards, cornfields and gardens, which in the old days covered the rich plain, are now to be found only along the river banks.

Both the Euphrates and the Tigris rise in the snow-capped mountains of Armenia,³⁹ and both overflow their banks at the melting of the snows.

At Bagdad,⁴⁰ the two great rivers of the plains approach to within twenty miles of each other; then, after making a wide sweep to the east, the Tigris joins the Euphrates at Kurnah,⁴¹ and the united rivers – under the name of Shat el Arab⁴² – flow for 120 miles in a broad full stream with flat marshy banks to the Persian Gulf. [...]

The third, westerly, division of Asiatic Turkey, including Syria, Palestine,⁴³ and the Arabian provinces of the Hedjaz and Yemen, is really a long range of sea-bordering hills and mountains and valleys. The principal range is Mount Lebanon, with the two parallel ranges of Libanus and Anti-Libanus.⁴⁴ The Lebanon gives rise to the famous Jordan of Scripture, which, alone of all the rivers in the world, flows, for the most part, at a level below that of the ocean, so strangely sunken is its valley. Oranges and grapes, tobacco, madder, the mulberry and cotton, are grown in most of the mountain valleys of the west.

Turkey in Asia has a great many considerable towns [...] Smyrna,⁴⁵ with a capital harbor and two railways, is the great trading place of the Levant,⁴⁶ and is, besides, beautiful for situation, and blest with a delightful climate [...]

Besides Smyrna, the chief towns of Asia Minor are, the ports of Trebizond⁴⁷ and Sinope⁴⁸ on the Black Sea, Tarsus and Adana on the south coast,⁴⁹ and Konieh⁵⁰ and Angora⁵¹ in the interior. Angora is famous for the long silky hair of its cats and goats. Ephesus and Sardis, once great cities and of Bible interest, are now scenes of ruin and decay. [...]

Bussorah⁵² on the estuary of the two rivers, and Bagdad⁵³ on the Tigris, are the two great cities of the plains; the latter is a well-known starting place for caravans.

³⁹ Miss Mason may be mistaken here, or she may be referring to a region formerly known as Armenia, but as you can see from your map, the Tigris and Euphrates both originate in the mountains of eastern Turkey.

⁴⁰ Baghdad, Iraq

⁴¹ Al-Qurnah (Qurna) in southern Iraq

⁴² also known as Arvand Rud

⁴³ Palestine, as Miss Mason uses the term, is a region that includes parts of Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and possibly parts of Jordan as well.

⁴⁴ Mount Lebanon is a mountain range that extends through the entire country of Lebanon, parallel to the Mediterranean coast.

⁴⁵ Izmir, Turkey

⁴⁶ “Levant” refers to an area which includes the historic areas of Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel and Syria.

⁴⁷ Trabzon, Turkey

⁴⁸ Sinop, Turkey (too small today for the world atlas)

⁴⁹ Tarsus is today part of the Adana metropolitan area.

⁵⁰ Konya, Turkey

⁵¹ Ankara, Turkey

⁵² Al Basrah, Iraq

⁵³ Baghdad, Iraq

Damascus, Aleppo, and Jerusalem are the three principal towns of Syria. Beyrout,⁵⁴ delightfully placed, is the port of Damascus [...]

The countless islands of the Aegean are nearly all lovely, fertile, and full of interest. Patmos, a barren island, is famous as the place of St. John's banishment, and where he received the Revelation. Cyprus is a rich and fertile island, with a population of Greek-speaking Christians, for the most part. The women of the island are famous for their beauty. It contains many ruined towns and fever-breeding marshes, but drainage and tillage would restore it to its ancient fertility. It is, for the present, in the possession of Great Britain.

⁵⁴ Beirut, Lebanon

The Holy Land

Draw or label on a map of the Middle East:

- Mediterranean Sea
- Israel
- Lebanon
- Jordan
- Amman, Jordan
- Syria
- Gaza Bank
- West Bank
- Iraq
- Iran
- Kuwait
- Saudi Arabia

At the time Miss Mason was writing, these countries as you see them on the map today did not exist. Her descriptions, therefore, often flow over modern boundaries.

As you read today and in future weeks about the countries in the Middle East, think about how powerful countries from all over the world have been involved and continue to be concerned with affairs and events in this part of the world. Why would that be?

Using *Then and Now Bible Maps* or another source, add these to your map:

- Jordan River
- Sea of Galilee
- Mount Carmel
- Joppa/Jaffa
- Jerusalem
- Judea
- Hebron
- Bethel
- Mount of Olives
- Bethlehem
- Dead Sea
- Jericho
- Galilee
- Nazareth
- Mount Tabor

Recall that the **Lebanon** is a mountain range that extends through the entire country of Lebanon, parallel to the Mediterranean coast. Add this mountain range to your map.

In the reading below, Miss Mason draws comparisons between the Holy Land and her own nation of Great Britain, particularly the region of Yorkshire which was her home. Why would she do this? Is this just to help her pupils visualize the land where the Lord walked? Or might it also do something for the way they visualize Yorkshire?

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 29-35

The Holy Land is but a strip of country about the size of Wales, barely 40 miles in breadth, and about 140 in length. It is almost as completely isolated as if it were indeed

an island, having the great masses of the Lebanon on the north, desert on the south, the Great Sea⁵⁵ on the west, and on the east, the tremendous ravine of the Jordan valley.

It is a mountainous country; indeed the whole of central Palestine⁵⁶ consists of lofty uplands, sinking into the fertile plain of Sharon⁵⁷ on the west, and into the deep Jordan valley on the east. Small as the country really is, it seems even smaller to the traveller, who, from many a summit in the central highlands, may look down upon the green dip of the Jordan valley on the one hand, and upon the gleaming sea on the other, may see from a single point the Lake of Galilee, the long ridge of Carmel, and the sand-hills of Jaffa, the ancient Joppa, the sea-port of Jerusalem.

The features of western Yorkshire give one a very fair idea of the landscape of Palestine; for Palestine, like the Yorkshire moors, is a great limestone tract; there, as in Yorkshire, the mountain ridges are often long, grey, and bare, like huge ramparts, with deep glens between them, where are the beds of the brooks. But in Yorkshire the brooks flow all the year through, and the valleys are always green, while in the Holy Land the rivers and brooks are, for fully half the year, broad dry lanes of hot white or grey stones. Many parts of Palestine are completely honeycombed with the huge deep caverns, reaching far into the heart to the earth, so often mentioned in the Bible, and used by the Hebrews as burial places for the dead, shelters for the outcast, and hiding places for men pursued by their enemies. Such caverns are common enough in Yorkshire. Again, those who have seen the river Aire break out, a broad full stream, from the foot of a vast face of limestone rock, can form some idea of the glorious fountains of Palestine, “where a great body of the clearest water wells silently but swiftly out from deep blue recesses worn in the foot of a low cliff of limestone rock,”⁵⁸ – springs at which the patriarchs watered their flocks, round which the Hebrew women have gathered for centuries to draw water for their household uses.

Few countries in the world are more monotonous and bare than the highlands of Judea during the greater part of the year. Even these barren grey rocks show some green freshness in the spring, but in summer and autumn the look of the whole country from Hebron up to Bethel is very dreary and desolate. The valleys are, it is true, planted with figs, or olives, or corn;⁵⁹ but even the cultivated fields look neglected, and the grey villages, always on the top or near the top of the hills, are forlorn and dreary looking, with flat roofs and windowless walls. [...]

⁵⁵ Mediterranean Sea

⁵⁶ Palestine, as Miss Mason uses the term, is a region that includes parts of Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and possibly parts of Jordan as well.

⁵⁷ The Plain of Sharon is the central section of the coast of Israel. Today, it is one of the most densely populated regions of the country. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharon_plain)

⁵⁸ Miss Mason is quoting from *Dr. William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible: Comprising Its Antiquities, Biography, Geography and Natural History, Volume 3*

⁵⁹ Miss Mason probably uses the term “corn” to mean wheat or any grain.

Jerusalem, beautiful for situation, a city set amongst hills, stands in the midst of these dreary uplands; it is a good sized walled city, [...] The Mosque of Omar is the principal building in the city, once famous for the temple of Solomon; and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre [...]

“In the Holy City, your hotel is a monastery, your rooms are cells, the landlord is a stately abbot, and the waiters are hooded monks. If you walk out of the town, you find yourself on the Mount of Olives, or in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, or on the Hill of Evil Counsel. If you mount your horse, and extend your rambles, you will be guided to the wilderness of St. John, or the birth-place of our Saviour. The village of Bethlehem lies prettily couched on the slope of a hill. Its sanctuary is a subterranean grotto, where lies the low slab of stone whereon the infant Jesus is said to have been laid.”⁶⁰

The low coast plain, called the Plain of Sharon in its northern part, and Shephelah, or “Lowland,” in its southern, is wonderfully fertile; the “Lowland” is now, as when the Philistines possessed it, an enormous cornfield; an ocean of wheat stretches from the hill country to the sands of the sea-shore, without even a break, hardly even a single olive tree.

On the eastern side, the hill country drops into the valley of the Jordan, an extraordinary ravine, reaching through the whole length of Palestine, and with a width of from five to twelve miles. It is perhaps the lowest great valley in the world, dropping in the Dead Sea basin to more than 2500 feet below the level of the ocean. So low does this long valley lie that the vine and the olive of southern France here give place to the palms of the tropics: Jericho, “the city of palms,” lies in this hot and relaxing valley. The Jordan, the one real river of Palestine, is of no use at all for navigation, but, unlike the other brooks and rivers of the country, it carries water all the year through.

Dreary and arid as much of southern Palestine is, the north, the Galilee of the Gospels, is a beautiful and romantic region, not unlike our own “Lake Country.” [...] The mountains gather round the sea of Galilee, and woods clothes their slopes, and the flowers! – it is impossible for the English reader to imagine anything like the glowing beauty and abundance of the flowers that burst into sudden bloom with the spring, spreading a bright mantle over the bare earth, not only here in Galilee, but all over the land. Of these, none is more abundant or more beautiful than the oleander, which lines the banks of the streams profusely with its delicate sweet-scented pink blossoms.

In this delightful mountain region is Nazareth, a small town in a broad valley at the summit of a group of mountains. [...] The houses show nothing but square walls without windows, but they are in the midst of vines and fig trees. The gardens are fresh and

⁶⁰ This quote is from *The Living Age, Volume 2* published by E. Littell & Company in 1844.

green; the people amiable and cheerful, and the women are noted for their beauty. From the town itself little view is to be had; but ascend to the top of any of the hills which surround it, and you see Carmel, and Tabor, the hills [...] the Jordan valley and the sea, a view embracing a great part of the country.

“The saddest country in the world is, perhaps, the region round about Jerusalem. Galilee, on the contrary, is a very green, shady, smiling district. During the two months of March and April, the country forms a carpet of flowers of in incomparable variety of colours. The animals are small and extremely gentle: delicate and lively turtle doves, blue-birds so light that they rest on a blade of grass without bending it, crested larks which venture almost under the feet of the traveller, little river tortoises with mild and lively eyes, storks with grave and modest mien, which allow man to come quite near them. In no country in the world do the mountains spread themselves out more gracefully, or inspire higher thoughts. [...]”⁶¹ [...]

⁶¹ These paragraphs appear to be taken from *The Life of Jesus* by Ernest Renan, which was in its thirteenth edition by 1899.

Damascus

Draw or label on a map of the Middle East:

- Mediterranean Sea
- Israel
- Lebanon
- Beirut, Lebanon
- Jordan
- Syria
- Damascus, Syria
- Gaza Bank
- West Bank
- Iraq
- Iran
- Kuwait
- Saudi Arabia

The **Anti-Lebanon Mountains** form most of the border between present day Syria and Lebanon.

Definitions:

Copse – a grove of trees

Damascus, like all of Syria, is currently enveloped in war. We may read Miss Mason's beautiful descriptions of a serene and civil place and pray that that peace might be restored to this land.

This section is quoted entirely from *Eothen: Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East* by Alexander William Kinglake, originally published in 1844 and based on travels Kinglake made seven years earlier. It is available to read free online if you are interested.

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 35-37

“This ‘holy’ Damascus, this ‘earthly paradise’ of the Prophet (Mohammed), so fair to the eyes, that he dared not trust himself to tarry in her blissful shade – she is a city of hidden palaces, of copses, and gardens, and fountains, and bubbling streams. The juice of her life is the gushing and ice-cold torrent that tumbles from the snowy sides of Anti-Lebanon. Close along on this river’s edge, through seven sweet miles of rustling boughs and deepest shade, the city spreads out her whole length.

“The chief places of public amusement, or rather of public relaxation, are the baths and the great café. This last is frequented at night by most of the wealthy men of the city, and by many of the humbler sort; it consists of a number of sheds, built in a labyrinth of running streams – streams so broken and headlong in their course, that they foam and roar on every side. The place is lit up in the simplest manner by numbers of small, pale lamps, strung upon loose cords, and so suspended from branch to branch that the light leaps and flashes brightly as it falls upon the troubled waters. All around, and chiefly upon the very edge of the

torrent, groups of people are tranquilly seated. They drink coffee, and inhale the cold fumes of the narguilé (water-pipe);⁶² they talk rather gently the one to the other, or else are silent. [...]

“It has been generally understood, I believe, that the houses of Damascus are more sumptuous than those of any other city in the East. Every rich man’s house stands detached from its neighbor at the side of a garden. The lofty rooms are adorned with a rich inlaying of many colours, and illuminated writing on the walls. The floors are of marble. One side is generally laid open to a quadrangle, and in the centre of this is the dancing jet of a fountain. There is no furniture that can interfere with the cool, palace-like emptiness of the apartments. A divan, that is, a low and doubly broad sofa, runs round the walls; a few Persian carpets, or rather mats, are sometimes thrown about near the divan; and except these, there is nothing to obstruct the welcome air.

“But its gardens are the delight – the delight and the pride of Damascus; they are not the formal parterres⁶³ which you might expect from Oriental taste; rather they bring back to your mind the memory of some dark old shrubbery at home. High, high above your head, and on every side, all down to the ground, the thicket is hemmed in, and choked, by the interlacing boughs that droop with the weight of roses, and load the slow air with their damask breath. There are no other flowers.”

⁶² A tobacco pipe wherein the smoke is drawn through water.

⁶³ A level space in a garden or yard occupied by an ornamental arrangement of flower beds.

Arabia Part I

Draw or label on a map of Saudi Arabia:

- Arabian Peninsula
- Saudi Arabia
- Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Yemen
- Oman
- Qatar
- United Arab Emirates
- Bahrain
- Red Sea
- Gulf of Aden
- Persian Gulf
- Gulf of Oman
- Hejaz
- Tihamah
- Najd
- Ad Dahna
- Rub al Khali (Empty Quarter)

The nation we know as Saudi Arabia did not exist when Miss Mason was writing this geography; its boundaries were drawn after World War I.

Definitions:

Simoom - a hot, dry, dust-laden wind blowing in the desert, especially in Arabia

Wadi -- traditionally referring to a valley; may refer to a dry riverbed that contains water only when heavy rain occurs

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 38-42

All round the coast of Arabia there is a strip of sandy desert, terribly hot and dry, sometimes only a mile in width, sometimes as much as thirty miles: the Tahama,⁶⁴ as this desert tract is called, is everywhere a dry and burning plain, the sandy soil incrustated with salt. The centre of Arabia is a high plateau, or a succession of high plateaus, and the mountain chains which back the Tahama are simply the skirts of the interior table-lands. Upon the Red Sea side, these mountains reach a height of from 5000 to 6000 feet. Here, in this mountain tract, are watered plains and high valleys, verdant and delicious; here are groves and orchards, and the precious date-palm, and coffee thrives upon the slopes of the mountains.

Beyond the mountains, there is desert in the north, and desert in the south – two vast plateaus of sand divided from each other by the higher plateau of Nejd,⁶⁵ the central table-land.

⁶⁴ Hejaz Tihamah

⁶⁵ Also called Najd, this geographical center of Saudi Arabia (the modern country) accounts for about a third of the population of the country. (Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Najd>)

The northern desert extends from the province of Hejaz to the shores of the Persian Gulf. In some parts, a small herbaceous plant, called *samh*, grows wild, and the reddish seed of this plant furnishes the chief food of the Bedouin. Over this desert the simoom blows during the summer heats: [...] the heavens become dark as the stifling blast, with the heat as of red-hot iron, passes over the waste. [...]

The Nejd is the central plateau; it is dry, rocky, and barren, shut in by hills, and crossed by hill ranges, having scarcely any water, and, altogether, one of the most desolate parts of Arabia. Yet the Nejd is a settled country [...]

How is it possible for a nation to find subsistence on this rocky and barren plateau? The fact is, that the Nejd is cut up by a perfect maze of valleys, at the bottom of which are roaring torrents during the rains, though the ravines are perfectly dry at other times: still, everywhere, and at all seasons, water is to be obtained at a depth of about twelve feet below the surface. In these valleys the people plant their towns and villages for the sake of shade and vegetation: they are careful husbandmen, and though water to irrigate their narrow patches of land must be raised from the deep wells at the cost of great labour and expense, they cultivate the date palm – the wealth of the Arab – corn, maize, millet, melons, pomegranates, peaches, grapes, figs, oranges, citrons, and a little cotton.

South and east of the settled land is the *Dahna*,⁶⁶ an awful wilderness. This is the main sand-waste of Arabia: between Nejd and the Persian Gulf it has been several times crossed by European travellers; but towards the south it appears to be untracked, an impenetrable waste of loose, reddish sand, without water or vegetation of any kind, extending south of the tropic line for a distance of 300 or 400 miles. The southern half of the Dahna is a blank upon the maps, marked by the name of Roba el-Khaly,⁶⁷ “the deserted abode.” Yet even here, says Lieutenant Burton, a well-known Arabian traveller, “I heard enough, from credible relators, to conclude that its horrid depths swarm with a large and half-starved population; that it abounds in wadys,⁶⁸ valleys, gullies, and ravines, partially fertilized by intermittent torrents.”⁶⁹

Many tribes dwell in the deserts belonging to the Bedouins, or wanderers, who occupy the open pastures of the central plain and the numerous small oases in the deserts. [...]

⁶⁶ Ad Dahna

⁶⁷ Rub al Khali

⁶⁸ Wadis (singular wadi)

⁶⁹ Miss Mason is quoting from *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Madinah and Meccah* by Sir Richard Francis Burton.

Others besides the born sons of the desert find pleasure in this strange wilderness life; travellers say it is so unlike anything they have known before, that the hardships of a desert journey are fully made up for by the excitements of novelty.

Mr. Warburton thus describes such an expedition:⁷⁰ --

“As long as you are journeying in the interior of the desert you have no particular point to make for as your resting-place. The endless sands yield nothing but small stunted shrubs; even these fail after the first two or three days, and from that time you pass through valleys dug out by the last week’s storm, and the hills and the valleys are sand, sand, still sand, and only sand, and sand again. The earth is so samely, that you turn your eyes towards heaven; you look to the sun; he comes when you strike your tent in the early morning, and then, for the first hour of the day, as you move forward on your camel, he stands at your near side and makes you feel that the whole day’s toil is before you. Then for a while, and a long while, you see him no more, for you are veiled and shrouded, and dare not look upon the greatness of his glory, but you know where he strides overhead by the touch of his flaming sword.

“No words are spoken, but [...] your camels sigh, your skin glows, your shoulders ache, and for sights you see the pattern and the web of the silk that veils your eyes, and the glare of the outer light. Time labours on, and by-and-by the descending sun softly touches your right arm, and throws your land shadow over the sand.

“Then begins your season of rest. The world about you is all your own, and there, where you will, you pitch your solitary tent; and there is no living thing to dispute your choice. When at last the spot had been fixed upon, and we came to a halt, one of the Arabs would touch the chest of my camel and utter at the same time a peculiar gurgling sound. The beast instantly understood and obeyed the sign, and slowly sank under me, till she brought her body to a level with the ground, then gladly enough I alighted. The rest of the camels were unloaded and turned loose to browse upon the shrubs of the desert, where shrubs there were: or where these failed, to wait for the small quantity of food that was allowed them out of our stores.

“One day we fell in with a sheikh, the head of a family that actually dwells at no great distance from this part of the desert during nine months of the year. We stopped, and sat down and rested awhile, for the sake of a little talk. I discovered that this man and his family lived habitually for nine months in the year without

⁷⁰ Miss Mason here again quotes extensively from *The Living Age*, Volume 2 published by E. Littell & Company in 1844.

touching or seeing either bread or water. The stunted herb growing at intervals through the sand in this part of the desert enables the camel mares to yield a little milk, and this furnishes the sole food and drink of their owner and his people. During the other three months (the hottest, I suppose) even this resource fails, and then the sheikh and his people are forced to pass into another district. [...] I made him sit down by my side, and gave him a piece of bread and a cup of water from out of my goat-skin. This was not very tempting drink, for it had become rather muddy and red, and it tasted strongly of leather. The sheikh sipped it, drop by drop, with great delight, and rolled his eyes solemnly round between every draught as though the drink were quite heavenly.”

Arabia Part II

Draw or label on a map of Saudi Arabia:

- Arabian Peninsula
- Saudi Arabia
- Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Yemen
- Sanaa, Yemen (also Sana, Sana'a)
- Oman
- Muscat, Oman
- Qatar
- Doha, Qatar
- United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.)
- Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.
- Bahrain
- Manama, Bahrain
- Red Sea
- Gulf of Aden
- Persian Gulf
- Gulf of Oman Najd
- Hadhramaut
- Arabian Sea
- Adan, Yemen
- Al Hudaydah, Yemen
- Medina, Saudi Arabia
- Mecca, Saudi Arabia
- Yanbu' al Bah, Saudi Arabia
- Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- Gulf of Aqaba
- Sinai Peninsula

Note where the Gulf of Suez and Suez Canal would be, just off your map.

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 43-47

Fully a third of Arabia consists of this desolate irreclaimable desert: the reason is obvious; Arabia has no rivers; torrents course through the mountain valleys in the rainy season, but not a single stream in this whole land carries water all the year through.

The habitable part of Arabia is divided into States; Nejd,⁷¹ of which we have spoken, Oman in the southeast, Hadramaut⁷² in the south, and Yemen in the southwest.

Oman, a mountain country, about the size of England and Wales, is the richest district of Arabia; pleasant streams water the fertile valleys, and cocoa-nuts, dates, corn, sugar-cane, coffee, cotton, apricots, and peaches are cultivated. [...] Here are two seasons, each lasting about six months: in the hot season, the towns become like ovens, but during the rainy season, the north-west monsoon blows with great force. [...]

Of Hadramaut, which stretches along the shores of the Arabian Sea between Oman on the east and Yemen on the west, very little is known: it appears to consist of a confused mass of hills, and to be occupied by Bedouin chiefs, who pasture their flocks of sheep, goats, and camels in the high valleys.

⁷¹ Najd

⁷² Hadhramaut

Aden,⁷³ in the Gulf of Aden, between Hadramaut and Yemen, is a British possession and free port. Though it has a population of 30,000, it is utterly naked and barren: great reservoirs for rain-water have been built by the English, and fortifications, which make the place another Gibraltar.

Yemen, on the south-west, consists of a mountain region with lovely valleys, and of a strip of the burning and barren Tehama. On the latter, stands Mocha,⁷⁴ long a famous port which gave name to the coffee of Arabia, which is exports (the best coffee, by-the-way is grown in Abyssinia,⁷⁵ and carried here for export): Mocha has now fallen into complete decay, and its trade has passed to Hodeida,⁷⁶ further north. The mountain slopes are richly wooded, the valleys fertile and most lovely, deserving its ancient title of "Araby the blest." It is upon the higher mountain plains and upon their sloping sides that the coffee plantations are to be met with, and, amongst the coffee shrubs, are figs, plantains, orange, and citron trees. Sana, the capital, lies in a beautiful valley, amongst fountains and gardens [...]

The Hejaz is by far the most important territory of Arabia. [...] The two chief cities are Mecca and Medina; the chief ports, Yembu⁷⁷ and Jedda. Yembu is the port of Medina, and possesses a considerable import trade for the supply of its chief town; and many pilgrims to both the great sanctuaries disembark there. Jedda is the port of Mecca, and has a large and safe harbor, where English steamers call regularly: numbers of European merchants and agents reside here, and natives of every country under the sun may be seen in the crowded bay.

Mecca and Medina are the chief cities of El Hejaz, and both are sacred in the eyes of every follower of Mohammed, for in Mecca the Prophet was born, and in Medina is his tomb. No infidel is allowed to profane with his tread these spots, hallowed by the steps of the Prophet; but certain adventurous Britons, disguised as pilgrims, have contrived to enter the walls – at the certain cost of their lives had they been discovered. Every year, the *haj*, or great yearly pilgrimage, draws many thousands of pilgrims hither from all parts of the [...] world [...]

Mr. Keane, one of the travellers who ventured within the holy cities, thus describes one of the numerous pilgrim caravans engaged in the *haj*: --

"There were seven hundred and thirty camels in our caravan, and these extended in a long line one behind the other for about three-quarters of a mile.

⁷³ Adan, Yemen, was under British administration from 1839-1967.

⁷⁴ Also known as al-Makha

⁷⁵ Abyssinia was a kingdom located in what is now the northern part of Ethiopia.

⁷⁶ Al Hudaydah, Yemen

⁷⁷ Yanbu' al Bah, Saudi Arabia

These camels carried about nine hundred pilgrims with all their baggage. On both sides of this line walked a wretched company of perhaps one thousand or so of men, women, and children.

“Medina, when first sighted, may fairly be ranked as one of the loveliest of the beautiful cities of the world. As it first presents itself to the pilgrim’s delighted gaze, its tall snow-white walls and numerous gilded minarets, with the morning sun gleaming over them, and the broad green belt of cultivated ground encircling it, -- as seen, I say, at such a time, by the wayworn pilgrim from Mecca, it is a fresh bright jewel, bounded by a vast grim barrenness of desert. [...]”⁷⁸

The Haram, which contains the tomb of the Prophet – a very plain oblong building – is, of course, the object of the pilgrims’ devotions; but we cannot attempt to describe the ablutions and prayers at this shrine, which are a part of the devotions of the world-famous *haj*.

Mecca is a fairly handsome but neglected looking town; the streets are unpaved, and frightfully dusty; no trees or gardens cheer the eye of the desert-worn pilgrim; there are no public buildings, excepting the famous Mosque; but the fact that, contrary to the practice in other Eastern towns, the windows here look out upon the streets, gives Mecca an air of some liveliness, at any rate during the *haj*. Within the Mosque is the Kaaba, and within the Kaaba is the sacred well which is said to cure all diseases, and the wonderful “black stone,” supposed to have been brought from heaven by the Archangel Gabriel. To kiss the “black stone,” to wash in the sacred well, these are the objects of the *haj* [...]

At its northern end, the Red Sea divides into two gulfs – the Gulfs of Suez and Akaba⁷⁹ – and between these is a small peninsula, and in this peninsula is the *wilderness of Sinai*, the desert in which the children of Israel wandered for forty years. It is a rugged mountain wilderness, a succession of barren hills and more barren valleys, the only streams being found in the higher central tract; and here, in this rugged mountain mass, is the “Horeb” of the sacred writings, on one of the peaks of which Moses received the Law while the assembled tribes of Israel waited below.

The small, but flourishing town of Suez, at the head of the gulf of that name, is a great place of embarkation for the [...] pilgrims from Egypt and the countries of Northern Africa on their way to the holy cities. It is the Red Sea terminus of the famous Suez Canal.

⁷⁸ Miss Mason is quoting from *My Journey to Medinah: Describing a Pilgrimage to Medinah* by John Fryer Keane.

⁷⁹ Gulf of Aqaba

Persia

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- Iran
- Tehran, Iran
- Persian Gulf
- Caspian Sea
- Zagros Mountains
- Elburz Mountains
- Kopet Mountains
- Lake Urmia
- Baluchistan
- Afghanistan
- Rasht, Iran
- Tabriz, Iran
- Esfahan, Iran
- Shiraz, Iran
- Bandar-e Bushehr, Iran
- Qazvin, Iran

Notice how the mountains encircle Persia and modern-day Iran. Notice also the dry salt lake in south of the Elburz Mountains. As we saw with earlier chapters, Miss Mason is writing before the modern countries were established. The area she calls Persia in this chapter encompasses Iran, but also parts or the whole of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 48-56

We are apt to think of Persia as a land of nightingales and roses, of orchards and delightful flower-gardens; a land where peaches, plums, cherries, almonds – our choicest garden fruits – grow wild. It is true there are bowers of roses and groves of fruit-trees in the mountain valleys, which are watered by hundreds of rills, and are sweet with the perfume of many flowers. And there are many of these valleys, for Persia is skirted by mountain ranges on every side but the east, and generally several of these ranges are parallel with one another, so that the mountain district often measures two hundred miles across. There is a low desert plain between the mountains and the Persian Gulf, and another low plain, very fertile but unhealthy, between the mountains and the Caspian; and this is nearly all which lies outside of the mountains.

Between these lowlands is the great plateau of Persia, which rises to from 2000 to 3000 feet above the sea; it is walled in on the north by the lofty range of the Elburz mountains, whose highest point, Mount Demavend (18,460 feet), is a volcano; and its southern margin is marked by several parallel ranges of which little is known as yet; but as some of the summits never lose their snowy caps when seen from long distances, it is probably that they are at least as high as the Elburz mountains.

Within this mountain girdle, what shall we find? We climb a steep ascent until we reach a pass, one of the fair and fertile valleys we have spoken of, where the land spreads out, it may be, into a wide platform, and there are villages, and orchards, and pure streams. Then, up a mountain slope, and into another valley, with another and another mountain chain beyond – we must make a long journey through several passes, some of them at a

great height, several thousand feet, above the sea-level, before we reach that which lies within the mountains.

We shall be wise not to hasten our journey; let us linger in the fruitful valleys, or among the black tents of the wandering shepherd tribes which we shall find on the mountain slopes.

You think, perhaps, that Central Persia, so difficult of access, surrounded thus by a body-guard of mountains, should be indeed a garden of roses and all delights. On the contrary, these high plains are for the most part barren and sandy wastes, scored and streaked with patches of green oases, where cultivation is possible only by means of artificial irrigation. Examine the map: you may see one or two straggling lines to mark water-ways, which appear to end nowhere; but in all the vast space enclosed by the mountains there is not a single river which reaches the sea; while the rivers flowing down the outer slopes of the plateau are few and of no value at all for navigation. The plains of Central Persia are dependent for irrigation on the uncertain streams which flow down inward from the mountains on the melting of the snows; and when both rain and snow are wanting on the mountains, there is famine in the plains.

In the north-western corner of the country is the large lake of Urumia,⁸⁰ which is about the size of Lancashire, and is another Dead Sea for the excessive saltiness of its waters.

In the greater part of these barren plains no rain ever falls. It is not surprising to see "Great Salt Desert" filling up the north-eastern corner of the map; a land which is without water cannot fail to be desert. This dreary waste stretches over thousands of square miles, and is, in some parts, coated with a thin crust of salt; indeed, the whole of Persia, excepting on the borders of the Caspian Sea and among the mountains, is dry and barren, and is more or less a desert.

Nevertheless, where the dry soil of Persia is supplied with water it is exceedingly fertile; the wheat it yields is as fine as any in the world; cotton, rice, sugar-cane, and tobacco are other large crops. The wines of Shiraz are celebrated in Eastern poetry; and mulberries are largely grown in the north to feed the silk-worms.

The coasts of the Gulf are burning, sandy solitudes, where little or no rain falls; and here the mountains bring no relief. These are awful mountains, high, hot, and barren, and the valleys between them are burning and barren, and rise like steps, six or seven of them, from the shores of the Persian Gulf to the table-land. On the east, as we have said, there is no mountain barrier, but the plateau is continued into the highlands of Baluchistan and Afghanistan. [...]

⁸⁰ Lake Urmia

The climate of Persia is extreme, bitterly cold in the winter, and excessively hot in the summer [...]

The bazaars are, however, well worth seeing; here are beautiful embroidered silks and delicate muslins, rich velvets, porcelain, costly shawls manufactured from the long wool of a certain goat, jewelry, perfumes, sabres – all made by the Persians, who are a skillful and ingenious people. Their rich, thick silks, especially, are greatly prized. [...]

We will close our account with one or two Persian pictures from the pen of a traveller who recently crossed the country from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, by way of the [...] port of Resht,⁸¹ by Tabriz – a busy trading town, Tehran the capital, Ispahan⁸² and Shiraz – both former capitals, and Bushire,⁸³ the port of the south.⁸⁴

“The province of Ghilan, of which Resht is the chief town, must be one of the most fertile districts in the world; the country is a flat marsh, perennially manured with rank and rotting vegetation. Yet in places, the richly green lane through which we approached Resht might have been in Devonshire, save that at every turn we met some Persian, long-robed in blue, or yellow, or russet-brown, sometimes perched between the humps of a camel, sometimes upon the hinder extremity of a very good-looking donkey. [...]”

“We had a glass of tea in the Persian manner, that is, very weak, without milk and with an almost sickening quantity of sugar. Next morning, we passed through groves of olives quite unfenced, through a mud village, wealthy in splendid fruits. [...] “

“But now we had left behind the last pass of the Elburz chain; no more beautiful valleys, no more wooded slopes. We had risen above the level of the universal richness which belongs only to the provinces of Persia which border the Caspian Sea. Now our road lay through an arid country which was only green where artificial irrigation made an oasis. We had gained an elevation of about 7000 feet, and as the rising sun glowed upon the summits of the lower mountains of the Elburz chain the whole land seemed to be covered with hill-tops. [...]”

“We rode to Kasvin,⁸⁵ over the nearly flat plain which stretches far beyond Tehran, and which is about 4000 feet above the sea. The illusion of the mirage is

⁸¹ Rasht, Iran

⁸² Esfahan, Iran

⁸³ Bander-e Bushehr, Iran

⁸⁴ Miss Mason quotes extensively from *Through Persia by Caravan* by Arthur Arnold, published in 1877 and based on his travels in 1875.

⁸⁵ Qazvin, Iran

nowhere more often seen than in Persia. For hours we seemed to be riding towards water, which we knew did not exist. It is terribly wearisome to ride over a plain so flat that, in the morning, one can see the goal of the evening – a ride in which nine hours of travelling brings no change of landscape. [...]"

Central Asia

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- Baluchistan
- Pakistan
- Indus River
- Afghanistan
- Kabul, Afghanistan
- Kazakhstan
- Astana, Kazakhstan
- Uzbekistan
- Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Turkmenistan
- Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
- Tajikistan
- Dushanbe, Tajikistan
- Caspian Sea
- Aral Sea
- North Aral Sea
- Syr Darya
- Amu Darya
- Hindu Kush Mountains
- India
- Quetta, Pakistan
- Tian Shan Mountains
- Karakoram Range
- Kunlun Mountains
- Kandahar, Afghanistan
- The Steppes (in Kazakhstan)
- Orsk, Russia

Recall Miss Mason wrote her book when Britain administered India and therefore had a large presence near this area of Asia. She describes the tension between Britain and Russia and their influences in this region. Consider how her assessment of the situation may have been viewed from other viewpoints.

As you'll read later in the curated articles, this area remains troubled and continues to attract international attention.

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 56-61

In describing Persia, we mentioned that the centre of the country is occupied by a great table-land: this table-land stretches beyond the boundary of Persia, and its eastern half forms the two countries of Afghanistan and Baluchistan.⁸⁶ The Suliman and Hala mountains form the eastern boundaries of the table-land, while the lofty Hindu Kush range is its northern wall. It is a poor country, consisting, for the most part, of wide deserts crossed by barren mountains, and by narrows and deep gorges. [...]

⁸⁶ Baluchistan, in Miss Mason's time, was an area in south-western Asia that included parts of what is today Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. In the 1870s, Baluchistan came under control of the British Indian Empire in colonial India. (Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balochistan>)

Though the two barren countries of Afghanistan and Baluchistan are of little interest in themselves, they are of great importance in the political geography of Asia: at the present time, the two great Powers of the continent are Britain, in India, and Russia, in Northern and Central Asia: year by year, Russia is getting closer and to the Indian frontier; Britain, though not greatly extending her dominions, is defending them, keeping a jealous eye upon the movements of Russia, and strengthening her influence in the neutral ground which lies between her and her neighbour, that is, in the plateau lands of Afghanistan and Baluchistan.

Nature has made provision for the defense of British territory in a great mountain range which shuts in the valley of the Indus on the west, where the passes are few and difficult, and where, indeed, only through the two great passes would it be possible to carry an army; these are the Bolan Pass, leading to Quetta in Baluchistan, and the Kyber Pass,⁸⁷ leading to Kabul in Afghanistan.

Baluchistan consists of little but bare hill ridges and sandy deserts, frozen in the winter, and unbearably hot in the summer: a low strip of desert skirts the coast, which is one of the hottest regions of the world. Baluchistan has a single pleasant and fertile region – the well-watered mountain slopes of the north-east corner, descending to the valley of the Indus.

The Bolan Pass is a wild and narrow gorge, nearly sixty miles in length, and, in some places, shut in by wall-like cliffs, five and six hundred feet in height, and nearly meeting overhead, so that the road is darkened, and the passengers make their way upwards through a gorge infested by robbers, and so entirely shut in that there is no means of escape. This is one of the most formidable passes in the world; and, in 1839, it took a column of the British army six days to traverse it. It leads from the low plain of the Indus to the heights of the plateau. [...]

Afghanistan, reaching northward to the Oxus,⁸⁸ is a country larger than France. It is entirely mountainous, four-fifths of it being covered with mountain ranges and valleys, stretching from the great Pamir knot⁸⁹ to the Persian half of the table-land. Between the Hindu Kush and the Suliman mountains⁹⁰ many high masses run out to the south-west, enclosing between them many fertile, well-watered, and lovely valleys, as well as high, cold, treeless, pastoral table-lands. As a whole, this country of mountain and valley is well watered, the famous Oxus on the north, and the Kabul – upon which is the capital

⁸⁷ Khyber Pass

⁸⁸ Latin name for the Amu Darya

⁸⁹ The “knot” refers to the convergence of some of the world’s major mountain ranges, including the Tian Shan, Karakorum, Kunlun, Hindu Kush, and Pamir systems. (<https://geography.name/pamir-knot/#:~:text=GEOGRAPHY-,Pamir%20Knot,HINDU%20KUSH%2C%20and%20Pamir%20systems.>)

⁹⁰ Sulaiman Mountains – “the southern extension of the Hindu Kush mountain system and rise to form the eastern edge of the Iranian Plateau, and the northeastern edge of the Balochistan Plateau.” (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulaiman_Mountains)

city of Kabul, in the midst of gardens and orchards – are the two largest rivers: the Kabul is a tributary of the Indus. Kandahar is the great trading town between Persia and India. [...]

There are curious remains of antiquity scattered over Afghanistan, called *topes*:⁹¹ these are large mounds or barrows having an outer covering of stonework, and with small recesses or apartments in the centre of the building, containing caskets or vases of copper, brass, &c.: these topes appear to be monuments of the dead, like the British barrows, and the pyramids of Egypt.

“If a man could be transported at once from England to the Afghan country, he would be amazed at the wide and unfrequented deserts, and the mountains covered with perpetual snow. Even in the cultivated part of the country he would discover a wild assemblage of hills and wastes, unmarked by enclosures, not embellished by trees, and without canals or public roads. He would find the towns few, and far distant from each other, and would look in vain for inns. Yet he would sometimes be delighted with the fertility and populousness of particular plains and valleys, where he would see the productions of Europe mingled in profusion with those of the torrid zone, and the land cultivated with an industry and judgment nowhere surpassed. He would see the inhabitants following their flocks in tents, or assembled in villages with walls of mud and terraced roofs. [...] he would admire their martial and lofty spirit, their hospitality, and their bold and simple manners.”⁹²

The most difficult part of Central Asia to describe is the immense region called Turkestan.⁹³ Eastern Turkestan is under the dominion of China: part of Western Turkestan belongs to the neighbouring State of Afghanistan: the rest has been divided into a number of free States, each with a ruler of its own, called a khan. We have spoken before of the steady advance of Russia towards the Indian frontier: the Khanates of Turkestan are the steps by which, one after one, she makes her way southwards. [...]

The country is a desert, except along the banks of the rivers, and as far as channels from these have been led for irrigation. The chief river is the Amu⁹⁴, the ancient Oxus, which

⁹¹ Now called *stupas*

⁹² From *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and Its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India* by Mountstuart Elphinstone, published in 1815.

⁹³ “Turkistan, also spelled Turkestan, in Asian history, the regions of Central Asia lying between Siberia on the north; Tibet, India, Afghanistan, and Iran on the south; the Gobi (desert) on the east; and the Caspian Sea on the west. The term was intended to indicate the areas inhabited by Turkic peoples, but the regions also contained peoples who were not Turkic, such as the Tajiks, and excluded some who were...” (Encyclopaedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Turkistan>, accessed 7/10/20.)

⁹⁴ Amu Darya

is navigable for 600 miles from its mouth in the Sea of Aral; the Sir, or Sir-Daria⁹⁵ (daria means river), is nearly as valuable.

We add two or three sketches from the pen of Captain Burnaby – a traveller who recently visited these regions.⁹⁶

“We were rapidly nearing Kasala.⁹⁷ When we continued on our journey we passed by some small salt lakes, which were thickly covered with ice. Far away in the distance lay the Sea of Aral. A salt breeze was blowing straight in our faces. It parched and dried up the skin, and, in spite of the cold weather, produced a state of feverishness. The tea which we drank had a strong saline flavour. In fact, the whole district is impregnated with salt for miles around, and undoubtedly, at some not very remote date, has been covered by the sea.”

On the Kirghis steppes:⁹⁸ --

“The aspect of the country now underwent an entire change. We had left all traces of civilization behind us, and were regularly upon the steppes. Not the steppes as they are described to us in the summer months. Then hundreds of nomad tribes, like their forefathers of old, migrate from place to place, with their families, flocks, and herds. The dreary aspect of this vast flat expanse is relieved by picturesque kibitkas, or tents; and hundreds of horses, grazing on the rich grass, are a source of wealth to their Kirghiz owners.

“A large dining-table covered with nought but its white cloth is not a cheering sight. To describe the country for the next one hundred miles from Orsk, I need only extend the table-cover: for here, there, and everywhere was a dazzling, glaring sheet of white – a picture of desolation which wearied by its utter loneliness, and at the same time appalled by its immensity.”

“The mighty Oxus – the Oxus of Alexander – lay at my feet, its banks bound together by transparent ice; here it is, at least, half a mile broad, and is the boundary line separating the subjects of the Khan of Khiva from those who pay tribute to the Tzar.”

“We were now fast nearing Khiva,⁹⁹ which could just be seen in the distance, but was partly hid by a belt of tall, graceful trees. However, some richly painted

⁹⁵ Syr Darya

⁹⁶ Miss Mason quotes extensive from the book by Fred Burnaby, *A Ride to Khiva: Travels and Adventures in Central Asia*, based on his travels in 1875.

⁹⁷ Kasala was probably a Russian settlement on along the Syr Darya, in modern day Kazakhstan.

⁹⁸ The Steppes in Kazakhstan

minarets and high domes of coloured tiles could be seen towering above the leafy groves. Orchards, and avenues of mulberry trees, studded the landscape. [...] The streets are broad and clean, whilst the houses of the richer inhabitants are built of polished bricks, and coloured tiles relieved the dullness of the mud-built dwellings of the poor. There are nine schools, the largest containing 130 pupils, and they are all built with high, coloured domes. Presently we rode through a bazaar, shaded to keep the stall-keepers and their customers from the rays of the summer sun. [...]"

⁹⁹ The Khanate of Khiva was an Uzbek state that existed in the historical region of Khwarezm in Central Asia from 1511 to 1920. (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khanate_of_Khiva) This would be near the Amu Darya river.

Our Indian Empire

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- India
- New Delhi, India
- Pakistan
- Islamabad, Pakistan
- Bangladesh
- Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Indian Ocean
- Arabian Sea
- Bay of Bengal
- Ganges Plain
- Vindhya Mountain Range
- Indus River
- Deccan Plateau
- Himalaya Mountains
- Western Ghats
- Eastern Ghats

From 1757 to 1858, the Indian subcontinent (including modern-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) was ruled by the East India Company. From 1858 until 1947, India was ruled by the British Crown.

Miss Mason published her book in 1884, during this time period of British rule. Consider her point of view as a British citizen as she describes India.

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 63-66

We see by the map that much of India is within the tropics; and, throughout the country, the year is divided, as in all tropical lands, into a *wet* and a *dry* season. The hot season begins about March; then the scorching rays of the sun destroy every green thing; never a cloud deadens the glare, unless it be a cloud of dust, which the hot, dry wind has raised from the parched earth; everything you touch is hot, -- wood, iron, stone. The heated air expands, rises, and, "there is not a breath of air!" is the general moan. But no sooner has heated air risen to higher regions from any spot on the earth's surface, than cool winds rush forward to take its place, and about the beginning of June vapour-laden winds from the south-west are drawn in – the winds of the south-west *monsoon*. Heavy clouds roll up from the Indian Ocean, becoming denser as they near the land, over which they pass with strong gusts of wind, followed by incessant thunder-claps, such thunder-storms as are never known in temperate regions. When the thunder ceases, nothing is heard but the pouring of the rain, which comes down for days in a steady stream. The river channels soon overflow, and rushing streams add to the sound of water everywhere.

After several days the sky clears, and meantime, the parched brown earth has been covering itself with a magical mantle of green. The change is as great as if the bare brown fields of February in England were suddenly to burst into the green freshness of May. The rains continue to fall from time to time till September, when they depart

amidst thunder and lightning, as they came. This rainy season is called the wet *monsoon*, a word which simply means “season.”

And now the south-west monsoon is driven out by a cold dry wind from the northern mountains, which is known as the *north-east monsoon*, because it blows from the north-east, and this wind brings the coolest, pleasantest season to the northern plains of India; the hot season follows, beginning usually in the month of March. To supply the fields with needful water during this season of drought, there are multitudes of irrigation canals and reservoirs scattered over the whole country.

Great numbers of English people live in India, because they have employment there. Perhaps you know the reason; this mighty country, as large as half of Europe, belongs to England! It is not quite correct, however, to speak of India as a single country; it is almost a continent in itself, containing many nations, the people of which speak as many as thirty different languages. [...]

Quite recently, our Queen has been declared *Empress* of India, as it was thought suitable that the sovereign of so many States should take rank as empress. And a very splendid empire India is. “From the line of the Himalaya southward to the extreme cape on the Indian Ocean, India occupies a space more than *fifteen* times as large as our island of Britain; a journey across it from north to south, or from east to west (about 1800 miles), would require half a year if one travelled ten miles every day.”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ This quotation is from *A Physical, Historical, Political, & Descriptive Geography* by Keith Johnston, 1881.

History of British India

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- Indian Ocean
- India
- Pakistan
- Bangladesh
- Surat, India
- Chennai, India
- Kolkata, India
- Mumbai, India
- Kanpur, India
- Nepal
- Bhutan

In this chapter, Miss Mason describes events leading to Britain's government in India. You will read more about these events and those that led to independence in your current articles.

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 66-69

How this great empire came to belong to England is too long a history to be told here. India had long been known as a land where the merchants might load their ships with precious cargoes – gold and gems, silk embroidery, and ivory. In A.D. 1600, a company of London merchants got a charter from Queen Elizabeth which gave them the sole right of trading in all seas east of the Cape of Good Hope. No trade was so profitable as that with India, and by-and-by these merchants gained permission from the native princes to build, here and there, warehouses for their goods, and fortresses for protection. They formed these trading places at Surat, Madras,¹⁰¹ Calcutta,¹⁰² and Bombay.¹⁰³

For a hundred years or more, this company of merchants carried on their trade, but did not greatly increase their possessions in India. Meanwhile the French had, also, established settlements on the coast, and French and English became jealous of each other's influence with the native princes. The emperors of Northern India at this time were the famous Great Moguls, mighty monarchs who claimed submission from a multitude of native princes. But a time came when the authority of the ruling Great Mogul was on the wane; rebellions amongst the native princes became more and more frequent, and the European settlers, French and English, took part with one side or the other as best suited their own purposes. It was now that the great soldier-statesman Robert Clive broke the power of France in Northern India by his great victory of Arcot, 1751. This was followed by the siege and capture of the English town of Calcutta by the viceroy of the Great Mogul in Bengal. The horrible crime of the "Black Hole of Calcutta" followed. One hundred and forty-six persons were confined in a room twenty feet square. The air-holes were small. It was in the hot season, when the fierce heat of

¹⁰¹ Chennai, India

¹⁰² Kolkata, India

¹⁰³ Mumbai, India

Bengal can hardly be endured by natives of England, even when they dwell in lofty halls, and are cooled by the constant waving of fans. A night of agonies, too frightful to describe, followed. In the morning, only twenty-three wretched beings were drawn out from the dead bodies of their comrades.

This event, in the end, greatly increased the power of the English in India.

In the following year, 1757, Clive defeated the infamous Surajah Dowlah in the battle of Plassey, when 3000 British troops were victorious over 60,000 of the enemy. This great victory was the mean of adding the fertile country of Bengal, which now includes nearly the whole of Northern India, to the English. Ten years later, two powerful sovereigns of Southern India, assisted by the French, rose against the English, but they were defeated by Warren Hastings – another English name famous in the history of India.

We cannot follow the history of the wars which added one Indian State after another to the possessions of the British – wars carried on for the most part by means of the native soldiers who served the English for pay. But in 1857, the native army, discontented for many reasons, broke out in the Sepoy rebellion. Far more revolting than the tale of the Black Hole of Calcutta is that of the massacre of Cawnpore,¹⁰⁴ when tender English ladies and children fell into the hands of the native soldier, the [...] Sepoy.

This frightful mutiny brought about a change in the government of India. The East India Company was required to make its powers over to the Crown. Now, a Secretary of State for India manages Indian affairs at home, with the assistance of a council; while in India itself, a Viceroy, or Governor-General, assisted also by a council, carries on the government.

The Great Mogul has ceased to be; but there are still some 400 or 500 native States, each ruled by its own native prince or rajah, but under the control of the British Government. There are two really free States among the northern mountains – Nepal and Bhutan; and France and Portugal have still a few, small, scattered possessions. With these exceptions, India is under the rule of Great Britain; and, as we have said, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1876.

¹⁰⁴ Kanpur, India

Himalaya Mountains

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- India
- Bhutan
- Thimphu, Bhutan
- Nepal
- Kathmandu, Nepal
- Himalaya Mountains
- Plateau of Tibet
- Mount Everest
- Indus River
- Ganges River
- Brahmaputra River
- Ganges Plain
- Sutlej River
- Myanmar

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 69-71

Hindustan¹⁰⁵ has on the north the lofty range of the Himalaya, or “abode of snow” – really the southern border of the vast table-land of Tibet – stretching out in a continuous chain for nearly 1800 miles. Six of the summits are fully five miles in height, and one of them, Mount Everest (29,002 feet),¹⁰⁶ is the highest mountain the world.

Are you trying to imagine how awful it must be to look up a mountain-wall five miles in height, high enough, you might think, to touch the sky? The Himalayas do not tower above the plain in this awful way, and nowhere do they look astonishingly high, because the snowy summits can only be seen from a great distance: from the base of the mountains, only their slopes are visible, which are covered with various forest trees, and higher up, with rhododendrons. A traveller who crosses this mighty mountain mass – 350 miles in width at its widest – finds himself perpetually shut in between lofty crags, and only now and then gets a glimpse of countless snowy peaks and wide glaciers. In these high snow-fields rise the tree great rivers of India – the Indus, the Ganges, and the Brahmapootra,¹⁰⁷ which water the low plains at the foot of the mountains.

In front of the ascent there are lower, or sub-Himalayan ranges, and between the last of these and the plains of India there extends a broad strip of marshy land called the *Terai*, covered with forest and jungle, crowded with wild animals, and so unhealthy that it cannot be inhabited by man.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Hindustan is the Persian name for India.

¹⁰⁶ 29,029 feet at the summit

¹⁰⁷ Brahmaputra

¹⁰⁸ The *Terai* (or Tarai) is a region in southern Nepal and nearby lands in India. When Miss Mason wrote her book, the area was extremely marshy and therefore a likely region for malaria.

A traveller, who crossed one or two of the lower chains that he might get a view of the main range from the highest of the sub-Himalayas, thus describes what he saw:¹⁰⁹ --

“We were on the crowning point of the sub-Himalayas. To the north I looked into the wild heart of the Himalayas – a wilderness of barren peaks, a vast jumble of red mountains, divided by tremendous clefts and ravines of that dark indigo hue which you sometimes see on ‘the edge of a thunder-cloud,’ but in the background, towering far, far above them, rose some of the mightiest pinnacles of the chain. There they stood, immeasurably above me, and so cold and clear, and white, that I should have thought they were not more than twenty miles off, had I not known that they were fully seventy miles away.

“Though not the highest of the Himalayas, these mountains form the great central group of the chain, and contain the cisterns whence spring the rivers of India, Tibet, and Burmah.¹¹⁰ The snows of their southern slopes feed the Jumna¹¹¹ and Ganges; on their northern, the Sutlej,¹¹² Indus, and Brahmapootra. [...]”

To the north-west of the Himalayas, the Suliman mountains¹¹³ present a steep and forest-covered face.

¹⁰⁹ Miss Mason’s source is unknown.

¹¹⁰ Myanmar, formerly Burma

¹¹¹ The Yamana River (also known as the Jumna) is the second largest tributary of the Ganges River.

¹¹² The Sutlej is the easternmost tributary of the Indus River.

¹¹³ Sulaiman Mountains – “the southern extension of the Hindu Kush mountain system and rise to form the eastern edge of the Iranian Plateau, and the northeastern edge of the Balochistan Plateau.” (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulaiman_Mountains)

The Valley of the Ganges and the Valley of the Indus

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- Himalaya Mountains
- Arabian Sea
- Bay of Bengal
- Ganges River
- Brahmaputra River
- mouth of the Ganges River (where the Sundarbans lie)
- India
- Bangladesh
- Pakistan
- Kolkata, India
- Varanasi, India
- Allahabad, India
- Lucknow, India
- Agra, India
- Indus River
- Great Indian Desert
- Gulf of Kutch
- Lahore, Pakistan
- Amritsar, India
- Kashmir
- Tibet

A large portion of the Indus River Valley is in the modern-day country of Pakistan. Recall what you know about the independence of India and its subsequent splitting into two countries, India and Pakistan, along lines of faith.

The Kashmir region is one of conflict since 1947 because it is claimed by both India and Pakistan (and partly by China after a war in 1962).

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp. 71-76

The Valley of the Ganges

Southward, from the base of the Himalayas, the Great Plain of Northern India spreads out, reaching across the whole breadth of Hindustan,¹¹⁴ from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal. The eastern part of this plain, watered by the Ganges and Brahmapootra¹¹⁵ and their tributaries, is most fertile, and densely peopled. The melting of the mountain snows causes the rivers to overflow and flood the plain; and the rich mud left after the floods prepares the fields for the rice crops [...]

The soil, however, is most fertile, and yields great crops of sugar-cane, cotton and indigo, rice and wheat, opium and tobacco. The fields and gardens are full of scented flowers, and the villages stand among groups of the shady mango tree, which yields a refreshing fruit, or of the wonderful banyan. The banyan and the tamarind are the characteristic trees of India.

¹¹⁴ Hindustan is a Persian name for India.

¹¹⁵ Brahmaputra River

At the head of the Bay of Bengal the plain ends in the great group of marshy islands of the *Sundarbans*, which form the vast delta of the Ganges. These are separated by countless narrow water channels, and all are overgrown by low wood and jungle, sheltering tigers, wild buffaloes, wild swine, deer, and monkeys.

The Ganges is the great river of Northern India, and the sacred river of the Hindus; and from the sacred [...] where it issues from the sub-Himalayas, to Calcutta¹¹⁶ at its mouth, many of the most famous cities of India are scattered in its valley.

Very few of the mouths of the Ganges afford passage for ships; but upon the Hooghly, which is the most navigable, stands the great town of Calcutta, the capital of British India. It is the London, or rather, the Paris of India; the “City of Palaces,” its admirers call it. [...]

On the northern bank of the Ganges is Benares,¹¹⁷ the holy city of the Hindus, and one of the most ancient in India. In the English part of the town there are some handsome mansions, a fine church, and a Sanscrit College – a noble building; while the Indian town is full of interest. The streets are narrow and crooked, but well paved; the houses are lofty, substantial structures of wood, with projecting stories, and at every turn the eye rests upon the gilded domes of a Hindu temple, or the tall minaret of a [...] mosque. The Golden Pagoda is the great sight of the city; and all round it, the streets are obstructed with numbers of sacred bulls. Benares swarms with these animals, knowing bulls, quite aware of their sacred character, the terror of the dealers in fruit and vegetables.

Allahabad, also, is a holy city of the Hindus. A traveller says: --

“When the sun rose, I saw the Ganges in the distance, and the richness and beauty of the scenery betokened my approach to Allahabad. The plain was covered with a deluge of the richest grain, and dotted with magnificent groves of mango trees. The road was thronged with pilgrims, returning from the festival, and most of them, women as well as men, carried large jars of Ganges water, which they would pour upon the shrines of the gods at Benares. For though the river is holy everywhere, here it is holiest; because, according to the Hindus, *three* rivers meet here – the Ganges and the Jumna,¹¹⁸ and a third which has its source in paradise, and thence flows underground to join the Ganges at this spot.”¹¹⁹ [...]

There is far more life, gaiety, and appearance of wealth in Lucknow than in any other [...] city in India.

¹¹⁶ Kolkata

¹¹⁷ Varanasi

¹¹⁸ The Yamana River (also known as the Jumna) is the second largest tributary of the Ganges River.

¹¹⁹ Miss Mason is quoting from *A Visit to India, China and Japan* by Bayard Taylor, from a visit in 1853.

“In the afternoon we went out to see Lucknow, mounted on three of the largest elephants. With our gilded howdahs,¹²⁰ long, crimson housings, and the resplendent dresses of the drivers and umbrella-holders who sat behind us on the elephants, we made as stately a show as any of the native princes. It was the fashionable hour for appearing in public, and as we entered the broad street, it was filled with a long string of horses and elephants, surging slowly through the dense crowd of pedestrians. Turning back, we plunge into the heart of the city – into the dark, narrow, crooked streets of old Lucknow.”¹²¹

Agra, on the Jumna, was, for a century, the residence of the great Mogul emperors, and contains wonderful monuments of their taste and power. Amongst these, the *Taj Mahal* is considered the finest work of art in Hindustan.[...]

More famous even than Agra is Delhi – also on the Jumna – the imperial city of India, which all the Moguls, excepting Akbar, had for their capital. The modern city of Delhi is the last of its name, there having been several Delhis, because whenever the city was taken and desolated in the early wars, instead of rebuilding it, the inhabitants founded a new one in the neighbourhood: thus, for more than ten miles in every direction, the country is strewn with the ruins of palaces, mosques, and tombs – as beautiful as those of Agra, and far more numerous. Modern Delhi is a large and picturesque [...] city. In addition to the manufacture of shawls and scarfs, only less beautiful than those of Cashmere, Delhi is celebrated for its jewelry. [...]

The Valley of the Indus

The Indus drains the western part of the Great Plain. The northern part of its valley is a fertile district watered by five rivers, all of which unite in the Indus: this district is called the Punjab, a name which means “five rivers.” Here are broad, grassy steppes between the fertile borders of the rivers, affording boundless grazing ground for camels, cattle, buffaloes, sheep, and goats.

Further south is a dreary tract, the Great Indian Desert, which is twice as large as Britain; it is covered with wave-like ridges of sand, and can, for the most part, be crossed only by camels.

Beyond this, about the Lower Indus, come the dusty plains of Sindh; and, on the coast, a curious stretch of level land called the Runn of Kutch¹²² – 150 miles in length – where vegetation is entirely absent. It is a salt desert, so hard and dry that the offspring of the

¹²⁰ Miss Mason explains, “The howdah is a sort of carriage, borne on the back of the elephant.

¹²¹ Miss Mason is quoting from *A Visit to India, China and Japan* by Bayard Taylor, from a visit in 1853.

¹²² Rann of Kutch

camels and horses which cross it do not make the slightest impression. During the south-west monsoon, however, the tides flow over it, and covert the Runn into a shallow bay.

Lahore is the chief town of the Punjab, and here is the junction of the great railways of the north-west. Amritsar is the holy town of the Sikhs. [...]

Cashmere,¹²³ a country larger than Great Britain, is a tributary State to the Punjab province: it reaches from the plain northward through the Himalaya mountains to the borders of Tibet. It is a wild mountain country, with deep ravines and lovely valleys and steep forest-clad mountains; the high valleys yield pasturage to the goats and wild sheep, from whose wool the well-known Cashmere shawls are made. The far-famed "Vale of Cashmere" is a lovely mountain valley, about fifty miles in length, fragrant with roses, grown for the manufacture of the attar.¹²⁴

¹²³ Kashmir, from Wikipedia: "Until the mid-19th century, the term "Kashmir" denoted only the Kashmir Valley between the Great Himalayas and the Pir Panjal Range. Today, the term encompasses a larger area that includes the Indian-administered territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, the Pakistani-administered territories of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, and Chinese-administered territories of Aksai Chin and the Trans-Karakoram Tract." (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmir>)

¹²⁴ a fragrant essential oil, typically made from rose petals

The Deccan and the Coast Plains

Draw or label on a map of Asia:

- India
- Sri Lanka
- Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Sir Jayawardenepura Kotte, Sri Lanka
- Maldives
- Maale, Maldives
- Deccan Plateau
- Western Ghats
- Eastern Ghats
- Malabar Coast
- Coromandel Coast
- Mumbai, India
- Palk Strait (that between Sri Lanka and India)

Geographical Readers for Elementary Schools Book V pp 76-80

The Deccan

Southern India is occupied, for the most part, by a wide table-land called the Deccan, which is marked by undulating treeless plains, flat-topped hills, and wide stretches of jungle. This table-land is shut in on either hand by mountain ranges known as the Eastern and Western Ghats,¹²⁵ which run parallel with the two coasts of the peninsula. The Western Ghats, clothed with magnificent teak forests, form an almost unbroken range about thirty miles or so from the sea. The Eastern Ghats are much lower, at a greater distance from the sea, and with wide openings for the passage of the rivers, for the Western and not the Eastern Ghats form the watershed of Southern India. Let us hear the description of a traveller journeying toward the Deccan from Bombay:¹²⁶ --

“Morning showed me an open, rolling country, studded here and there with clumps of trees, and showing occasional signs of cultivation. The sea was out of sight, and the broken ranges of the Ghats before me seemed near at hand. The road was broad and good, but so beaten by continual travel that we swept along in a cloud of dust. At last we reached the base of the Ghats, and our road now plunged into a wide, hilly region, covered with jungle. Our progress over this rough and frightfully steep road was hindered by the endless throngs of bullocks which we met. They were laden with bags of rice and of grain and bales of cotton, on their way downward to the coast; we must have passed twenty thousand of them.

“We were nearly four hours in making the twelve miles over the pass which brought us to the foot of the South Ghaut. The highest ridge of the range was now above us, and the final ascent of the table-land commenced. The formation

¹²⁵ Ghats

¹²⁶ Miss Mason again quotes from *A Visit to India, China and Japan* by Bayard Taylor, from a visit in 1853.

of this part of India very much resembles that of the west of Mexico. The summit is generally level, but sharp peaks rise here and there, formed of abrupt terraces, crowned by domes or towers of naked rock which look in the distance exactly like works of art – indeed, like the ancient temples or pagodas of the Hindus. [...]

“The winding road round the sides of the gorge gave me grand views of the lower terraces of the Ghauts. At the top, we entered on the great table-land of Central India. It was an open, undulating region, much better cultivated than any I had yet seen, and crossed at intervals of twenty to thirty miles by high ranges of hills. The air was drier and purer than below, and the setting sun shone broad and warm over tracts of wheat and sugar-cane. [...]”

The Coast Plains

Before climbing the Western Ghauts, we should see Bombay,¹²⁷ the capital of the Presidency [...] It has an excellent harbor, but the climate is very trying to Europeans. [...] It is divided into two parts, the fort, and the city within [...]

The great sight of Bombay is the cave-temples of the lovely island of Elphanta: here you see the Hindu Trinity – Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver; and Shiva, the Destroyer; with an immense number of the thirty millions of inferior deities which have sprung from these, beautifully carved in the rock of the cave, the roof of which is supported by rows of many rock-hewn pillars. [...]

Between the Eastern Ghauts and the sea lies the wide maritime plain known as the Carnatic, reaching back from the Coromandel coast for about fifty miles. The soil of this plain is fertile enough when it is well watered, but there are few streams, and a supply of water for irrigation must be stored in reservoirs against the dry season. On the south of this plain is the Gap of Coimbatour,¹²⁸ a low passage between the east and west coasts with mountains on either side, those on the north being the Nilgiri mountains which rise like a vast precipice. [...]

Off the south point of India, and divided from it by Palk Strait, is the mountainous and delightful island of Ceylon,¹²⁹ the “jewel of the eastern seas.” So lovely is Ceylon, that the [some] believe, here was the paradise of our first parents. Upon Adam’s Peak,¹³⁰ the highest mountain in the island, is a mark like the print of a huge human foot – a footprint left by Adam, says the legend, which he climbed the Peak to take a last look at his beloved paradise: and, connecting the island with the mainland, is a chain of sandbanks known as Adam’s Bridge, because upon these he stepped to reach the

¹²⁷ Mumbai

¹²⁸ Palakkad Gap or Palghat Gap

¹²⁹ Sri Lanka

¹³⁰ Pidurutalagala, Mount Pedro in English

further shore. Coffee plantations cover the lower slopes of the hills, and higher up are forests hung with beautiful creepers. The date-palm, cinnamon, spices, sugar, cotton, tobacco, and indigo, are among the rich products of this island, where “every prospect pleases”; and there is a famous pearl-fishery off the coast. Ceylon, more than any other part of the world, abounds with precious stones. We must not leave India without a word about its gems. Diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds are found in various parts. Colombo is the well-fortified capital of Ceylon, and by far the largest town.

Maps

You will need:

11 copies of the map of Asia, plus 3 additional copies for exams

1 copy of the map of Russia

4 copies of the map of the Middle East

1 copy of the map of Turkey

3 copies of the map of Saudi Arabia

1 copy of the map of Caucasus

Asia



Asia, hydrography, states, color

<https://d-maps.com/m/asia/asie/asie37.gif>

This page intentionally left blank.

Russia



Russia, boundaries, hydrography

<https://d-maps.com/m/europa/russia/russie/russie21.gif>

This page intentionally left blank.

Middle East



Middle East, hydrography, states, color
<https://d-maps.com/m/asia/prochorient/prochorient31.gif>

This page intentionally left blank.

Turkey



Turkey, boundaries, hydrography
<https://d-maps.com/m/asia/turquie/turquie13.gif>

This page intentionally left blank.

Saudi Arabia



Saudi Arabia, boundaries

<https://d-maps.com/m/asia/arabia/arabie/arabie05.gif>

This page intentionally left blank.

Caucasus



Caucasus, hydrography, states, color

<https://d-maps.com/m/asia/caucase/caucase31.gif>