

Exploring India

Rivers - The Ganges

Video summary	Before watching the film	During the film
<p>Three 13-year-old UK students explore the River Ganges in India.</p> <p>They are in Patna, which is located on the middle course of the river where the Ganges is over 4km wide. The Ganges is one of the world's biggest rivers, and seven times the size of the River Severn, the UK's longest river. They discover that the source of the Ganges is in the Himalayas and the deltas of the Ganges, as it reaches the Indian Ocean, are in Bangladesh.</p> <p>They meet a local scientist as they travel along the river, and discuss how the river is deemed sacred to Hindus and a lifeline to local people who use the river to irrigate their crops, to wash and to travel, yet it is heavily polluted. The pollution affects the river dolphin population. The pupils discover that the course of the river changes as it slows and it deposits sediment, which affects the navigation of boats. This sediment helps provide the farmers with rich, fertile soil when the river floods during the monsoon.</p> <p>Download / print a transcript of the video.</p>	<p>Using a world map, locate India and The Ganges. Ask students to write a locational description of where the Ganges is in India. This should include other countries that India flows through.</p> <p>Look at some photographs of how people use the Ganges. Ask students to describe what they can see.</p> <p>Discuss with students why rivers are important. What inference can students make from the photographs about the importance of the Ganges to local people and to the wider Hindu faith?</p> <p>Introduce key terms such as:</p> <p>Tributaries: smaller branch rivers which join a larger river.</p> <p>Sewage: waste water which contains material flushed down the toilet.</p> <p>Silt: a type of sediment which is smaller than sand, but larger than clay.</p> <p>Barrage: a type of small dam which has gates to control the water flow.</p>	<p>You may wish to stop at relevant points during this short film to pose questions and check understanding or wait until the end. Useful questions might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where does the Ganges end? • What is the Ganges known as locally? • Why is the Ganges important? • Why is the river polluted? • How is the river different to the Thames? • Why do so many people live near the Ganges? • Why does the river need dredging? • What impacts are dams and barrages having on the river? • What has happened to the blind river dolphin?

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After watching the film

The exploration of the river Ganges is an opportunity to see how humans depend on rivers but also pollute them. Using a variety of photographs and the clip, discuss the ways in which the river has been used. Students can use these sources to create a table of impacts, categorised into social, economic and environmental impacts.

Using GIS, explore the Ganges. Measuring tools can be used to measure the width of the river at different points. Students can compare this to areas local to them to begin to understand the scale of the river in comparison to their local surroundings. Discuss with students what happens to the width of the river as they move downstream and how this compares to an area that they know.

Investigate the importance of the Ganges. Ask students about why the river was important in the video. This could lead to further discussions around the importance of the river to people who follow Hinduism.

Where next?

Compare the Ganges to another river in India, such as the Brahmaputra. This could be completed through using GIS. The length, width and land use around the river could be compared.

Links to Bitesize

Brief introduction to India:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zc72frd/revision/1>

Practices in Hinduism:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zvrsv9q/revision/8>

Rivers:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zs92tfr>