

The Taj Mahal

elegant

Elegant means beautiful, graceful, and refined.

mausoleum

A mausoleum is a large building for dead bodies.

grief-stricken

Grief-stricken means full of sadness.

symmetry

Symmetry is balance or evenness of parts in shape, size, and position.

7 Many people believe that the Taj Mahal
16 is the most beautiful building in the world. It
25 stands on the **outskirts** of the city of Agra,
33 India, on the bank of the Yamuna River.

39 A **grief-stricken emperor** named Shah
49 Jahan had the Taj Mahal built as a tomb for
56 his wife, Arjumand Banu Begum. He built
63 this beautiful **mausoleum** to honor his dead
72 **empress** and to **eternally** show his love for her.

79 Work on the Taj Mahal started shortly
87 after the death of the empress in 1631.
94 Twenty thousand people worked to build it,
101 finally completing the work in 1648. The
109 white marble tomb stands on a red sandstone
117 platform. The emperor wanted it to be **elegant**
122 and beautiful like his wife.

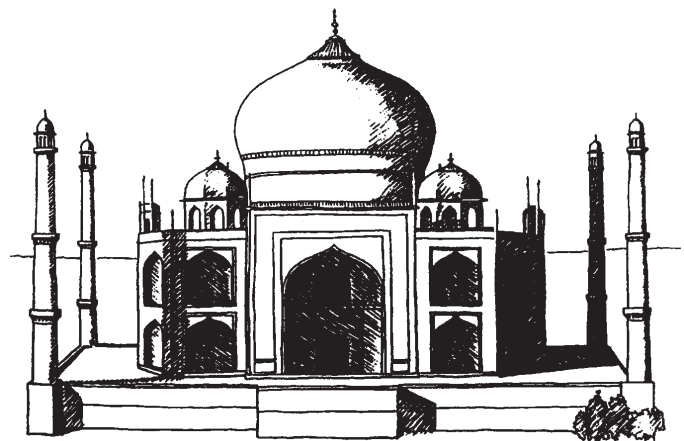
129 The **architect** who designed the Taj Mahal
137 took great care to meet the emperor's **standards**
146 of beauty. The Taj Mahal has a large **dome**
152 and several smaller domes. The largest
159 dome, covering the center of the building,
169 rises 240 feet. All of the domes are in perfect
176 **symmetry**. At each corner stands a slender,
184 133-foot-tall prayer tower. **Passages** from the
191 **Koran**, the **Muslim** holy book, decorate the
197 outside. Beautiful **inlaid** images of flowers
202 **adorn** the exterior as well.

210 The architect also took great pride in the
218 interior of the building. Inside the tomb are
224 **chambers** adorned with **semi-precious** stones.
231 Light comes in through carved marble screens.
238 The central room, under the main dome,
244 contains two **monuments**, which visitors can
see through another carved marble screen.

250 Equally **impressive** are the **classical**
255 gardens that surround the building and the long,
263 **ornamental** pools that reflect the lovely tomb.
270 It's no wonder that the Taj Mahal has been
279 called the most elaborate tomb in the world.

287 According to **traditional** stories, the
292 emperor originally intended to have his tomb, a
300 **replica** of the Taj Mahal, built on the other side
310 of the river. He **envisioned** the replica in black
319 marble and connected to the Taj Mahal by a
328 bridge over the river. The emperor felt that the
337 two magnificent buildings would always **echo**
343 his love for his wife.

348 Sadly, the emperor was overthrown and put
355 into prison by his own son. After eight years
364 in prison, the emperor died. Today, his body
372 rests beside his beloved wife in the **vault** of the
382 Taj Mahal, one of the most beautiful buildings
390 in the world.
393



words read _____

– errors _____ = _____
cold score

words read _____

– errors _____ = _____
hot score expression date passed

goal _____

The Taj Mahal

Identifying the main idea

1. What is the main idea of this story?
 - a. The Taj Mahal, which is reflected in pools, has domes that are in perfect symmetry.
 - b. The Taj Mahal sits on a bank of a river on the outskirts of a city in India.
 - c. The Taj Mahal is a beautiful mausoleum that reflects the love of an emperor for his empress.

Focusing on a detail

2. How long did it take to build the Taj Mahal?
 - a. about 17 years
 - b. about 8 years
 - c. about 20 years

Getting meaning from the context

3. What does **vault** mean in this story?
 - a. a big jump or leap
 - b. a room in which to keep money
 - c. a burial chamber

Making connections within the text

4. Why didn't the emperor build a replica of the Taj Mahal, as stories say he had intended?
 - a. He was too old to complete the project.
 - b. He wanted his body to rest beside his wife's.
 - c. He was overthrown and put in prison.

Writing a response

5. Write at least two facts from the story that show the emperor's great love for his wife.

Summarizing information

9. The Taj Mahal is one of the most elaborate tombs in the world. Write three facts from the story that support this statement.

Developing vocabulary

6. A synonym is a word that has the same meaning as another word. Match each word with its synonym.

1. envisioned	a. ___ copy
2. eternally	b. ___ pictured
3. chambers	c. ___ decorate
4. replica	d. ___ rooms
5. adorn	e. ___ forever

Understanding the information

7. Fill in each blank with a bold-faced word or phrase from the story.

The Taj Mahal stands on the _____ of Agra, India. Emperor Shah Jahan had the Taj Mahal built as a tomb for his wife, the _____. The architect was careful to meet the emperor's high _____. It is a beautiful building; each of its domes is in perfect _____. It is decorated with writings from the _____.

Processing information

8. Why did the Taj Mahal take so long to build?

Enrichment Activity

People often build mausoleums or monuments to honor people who have died. Read about the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery. Why was it built, and what happens there daily?