

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.

8 Many people believe that the Taj Mahal is
16 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
50 Jahan had the Taj Mahal built as a tomb for his
57 wife, Arjumand Banu Begum. He built this
63 beautiful **mausoleum** to honor his dead
72 **empress** and to **eternally** show his love for her.

80 Work on the Taj Mahal started shortly after
88 the death of the empress in 1631. Twenty
95 thousand people worked to build it, finally
103 completing the work in 1648. The white marble
111 tomb stands on a red sandstone platform. The
119 emperor wanted it to be **elegant** and beautiful
like his wife.

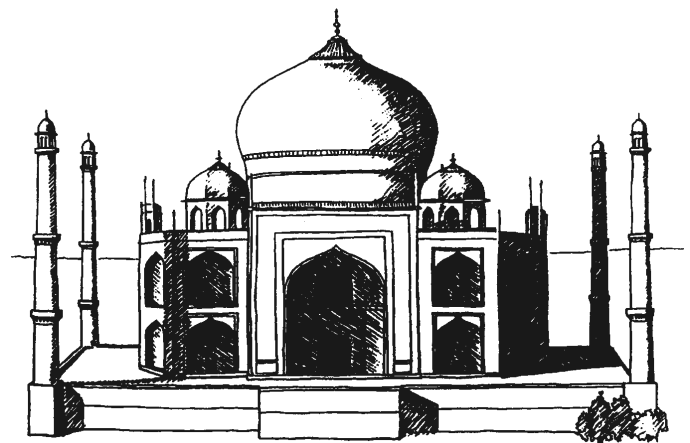
122 The **architect** who designed the Taj Mahal
129 took great care to meet the emperor's **standards**
137 of beauty. The Taj Mahal has a large **dome** and
147 several smaller domes. The largest dome,
153 covering the center of the building, rises 240
161 feet. All of the domes are in perfect **symmetry**.
170 At each corner stands a slender, 133-foot-tall
179 prayer tower. **Passages** from the **Koran**, the
186 **Muslim** holy book, decorate the outside.
192 Beautiful **inlaid** images of flowers **adorn** the
199 exterior as well.

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

249 Equally **impressive** are the **classical**
254 gardens that surround the building and the long,
262 **ornamental** pools that reflect the lovely tomb.
269 It's no wonder that the Taj Mahal has been
278 called the most elaborate tomb in the world.

286 According to **traditional** stories, the
291 emperor originally intended to have his tomb, a
299 **replica** of the Taj Mahal, built on the other side
309 of the river. He **envisioned** the replica in black
318 marble and connected to the Taj Mahal by a
327 bridge over the river. The emperor felt that the
336 two magnificent buildings would always **echo**
342 his love for his wife.

347 Sadly, the emperor was overthrown and put
354 into prison by his own son. After eight years in
364 prison, the emperor died. Today, his body rests
372 beside his beloved wife in the **vault** of the Taj
382 Mahal, one of the most beautiful buildings in
390 the world.
392



words read _____

- errors _____ = _____
cold score

words read _____

- errors _____ = _____
hot score

goal _____

expression _____
date passed _____

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.

Recalling a fact

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

Using context clues

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.

Connecting author's ideas with reader's ideas

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

Attending to details

7. Fill in each blank with a bold-faced word 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 Unknowns in Arlington Cemetery. Why was it built, and what happens there daily?