

The Journey to the Ancient City of Shahdad

AGES 3–12 · 44 PAGES · SHAHDAD, ON THE EDGE OF THE LUT DESERT

On the edge of one of the hottest, driest deserts on Earth, people built a city and filled it with furnaces. Homa carries Aryan and Ariana back five thousand years to Shahdad, where metalworkers melt copper out of rock and hammer it into tools, mirrors and treasures.

THE BIG QUESTION — FOR EVERY STUDENT

Why would anyone build a city next to the hottest desert on Earth — and how did they make it work?

Ask it of the whole class. The supports below are for students who need a way in — not an easier question.

Words to know

furnace

copper

bronze

channel

craft

Before you read

- Name three things you would need to survive in a desert, then put them in order of importance.

Talk about it

- Shahdad sat beside a desert. How do you think its people found enough water to grow food?
IF STUCK They could get water by ...
- Melting rock until metal runs out of it needs a very hot fire. How would someone learn to do that without books?
IF STUCK They would learn it from ...
- Shahdad had separate neighbourhoods for different kinds of workers. Why would a city arrange itself that way?
IF STUCK Keeping the metalworkers together would help because ...
- Bronze is two metals mixed to make something harder than either alone. What else works better mixed than pure?
IF STUCK Something else that is better mixed is ...

Make it

Hammered in Metal

25–30 MINUTES

Kitchen foil squares, a blunt pencil or empty ballpoint pen, and newspaper to work on.

Step-by-step instructions are on the student sheet overleaf — photocopy one per child.

Check they got it

Hold up two finished pieces — one bold, one faint — and ask **why does this one read and this one doesn't?** Listen for pressure or line thickness. If a student says “that one's just better”, ask them to point at the exact part that disappeared and say what would fix it.

What students often get wrong

- ✗ That deserts were empty. Shahdad was a working city with workshops, trade and neighbourhoods.
- ✗ That bronze is a metal you dig up. It is a recipe — two metals deliberately mixed, which is why the age is named after it.
- ✗ That ancient metalwork was crude. Shahdad's metalworkers were among the finest anywhere in the world at the time.

The real archaeology

- Shahdad sat at the edge of the Lut Desert, one of the hottest and driest places on the planet; its people dug channels to bring water to their fields.
- Its metalworkers heated rock in furnaces until copper ran out of it, then hammered and cast tools, mirrors and cups.
- The best-known object found there is a standard made of metal, sometimes called the Shahdad flag.

Design a standard for your city

Five thousand years ago, in a city beside a burning desert, someone made a flag out of metal. It is still here. You are going to design your own — first on paper, then pressed into foil.

- 1 Sketch your design in the box. Big, bold shapes work best. Thin scribbles disappear in metal.
- 2 Lay your foil on newspaper, shiny side down.
- 3 Draw firmly over your design with a blunt pencil. Push the metal — do not tear it.
- 4 Turn the foil over. Your design now stands up.

My city is called:

Sketch your design here FIRST



Now think: Which lines came out clearly, and which vanished? What does that teach you about designing for metal instead of paper?

One thing I would ask a metalworker from Shahdad:

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Finished early? Design a second one using only straight lines. Is it easier or harder to read?