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The Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal is on the list of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World. Historians, tourists, and students of **architecture** and design admire it for two reasons. One is for its beauty. The other is the love story that led to its creation.

The Taj Mahal stands on the banks of the Yamuna River in Agra, India. Its construction began in 1631 and was finished in 1653. It is an Islamic tomb built of white marble, which was imported from all over India and neighboring lands. Its creation required the use of more than 1,000 elephants to transport the marble. More than 22,000 builders labored for twenty-one years to erect it. They used twenty-eight different kinds of precious and semi-precious stones to decorate the temple.

This “Crown Palace” is a monument to love. Shah Jahan was the fifth Mughal emperor of India. When he was a fourteen-year-old prince, he fell in love with a fifteen-year-old Persian princess. Five years later, she became his third wife. This was in 1612. He called her “Mumtaz Mahal,” which means “Jewel of the Palace.” They had a happy marriage. However, she died giving birth to their fourteenth child. Heartbroken, her husband ordered the building of the Taj Mahal. This tomb is a tribute to her. It still stands as an enduring symbol of their love.

Check Your Understanding

- How old was the princess when they were married?
 - thirty-one years old
 - twenty years old
 - twenty-five years old
 - fourteen years old
- Which culture does the Taj Mahal represent?
 - American
 - Islamic
 - Jewish
 - Chinese
- Which of the following ideas can you infer from the passage?
 - Mahal means “palace.”
 - White marble was valued highly in Indian buildings.
 - The Taj Mahal is both a tomb and a temple.
 - all of the above
- What does **architecture** refer to?
 - the design of buildings
 - Indian religions
 - the damming of rivers
 - all of the above

