Trade and cultural exchange between all of these peoples took place in the land of the Kushans.
### Big Idea Card

#### Big Ideas of Lesson 3, Unit 5

- The history of the Kushan Empire demonstrates the global trend of Era 3 of growing interconnectedness between human societies. The Kushan Empire was located at a key crossroads for the Afroeurasian empires and became an important player in regional trade in this world zone.

- Kushan society provides a very clear example of increasing cultural diffusion, another global trend during this era. Being at this crossroads, the Kushans were influenced by many different cultures, and mixed together elements of Greek, Persian, and Indian belief systems and cultural practices.

- The Kushan ruler Kanishka played a key role in supporting the development of Buddhism by supporting Buddhists as they traveled and spread their religion.

- We know much about past societies because of the types of artifacts that they left behind. Artifacts that the Kushans produced such as coins and artwork reflect the multicultural influences on this empire.
Word Cards

Word Cards from previous lessons needed for this lesson:

- Bust – Word Card #13 from Lesson 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Card</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>19 middleman</strong></td>
<td>an intermediary or agent between a producer and a consumer of goods or services</td>
<td><em>Example</em>: The middleman in the exchange had contact with both producer and ultimate consumer. (SS070503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20 crossroads</strong></td>
<td>a place where two or more roads meet</td>
<td><em>Example</em>: They parted at the crossroads, each heading in a different direction. (SS070503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21 artifact</strong></td>
<td>any object made or used by mankind</td>
<td><em>Example</em>: The archaeologist found a falcon sculpture at the site. (SS070503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22 coin</strong></td>
<td>a usually flat piece of metal issued by governmental authority as money</td>
<td><em>Example</em>: They used coins to facilitate trade. (SS070503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23 cultural diffusion</strong></td>
<td>the spreading of ideas or products from one culture to another.</td>
<td><em>Example</em>: Improvements in technology has increased cultural diffusion across the planet. (SS070503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24 trade</strong></td>
<td>the act or process of exchanging goods or services one has for the goods or services one wants</td>
<td><em>Example</em>: We can obtain the resources we need through trade. (SS070503)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1) Where was the Kushan Empire in relationship to the Roman Empire and the Han Empire?

2) What about the Kushan Empire’s location made it likely to become “middleman” for trade?
### Student Handout 2 - An Overview of the Kushan Empire

**As you read, look for the most important ideas about the Kushan Empire.**

*What's the big picture for this empire? Why were they important? As you read, underline only the most important information.*

| The Kushan Empire was located in the area of what is now northwest India as well as parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Originally, the Kushans were part of the Yuezhi people who were forced out of northwestern China by the Xiongnu. They settled in the area of Bactria (modern Afghanistan and Pakistan) around 135 BCE and then continued to move south towards northwest India. They eventually formed the Kushan Empire and were ruled by a series of kings/emperors. The Kushans played an important role in the trade along the Silk Roads. Given their central location between the Mediterranean and China, the Kushans linked Europe and Asia and helped connect Parthia (Persia), Rome and Han China. Roman gold was traded for silk from China in the market places of Kushan cities. Kushans became middlemen for this trade, and Kushan coins were used all along the Silk Roads. The area controlled by the Kushans was home to people of many different ethnic backgrounds and religions. This area, a crossroads between East and West, had long been traveled by many different people and had been also been ruled by different societies including the Mauryans and Alexander the Great before the Kushans gained control. Beliefs, images, and ideas from Rome, Greece, Persia, the Middle East, and India mixed together in this area. The Kushans had been a nomadic people, and when they settled in this area, they were influenced by a mix of cultures, and they adopted a range of cultural practices. The Kushans used a form of the Greek alphabet, and they made | In your own words, summarize what you have underlined. |

| The Kushan Empire was located in the area of what is now northwest India as well as parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Originally, the Kushans were part of the Yuezhi people who were forced out of northwestern China by the Xiongnu. They settled in the area of Bactria (modern Afghanistan and Pakistan) around 135 BCE and then continued to move south towards northwest India. They eventually formed the Kushan Empire and were ruled by a series of kings/emperors. The Kushans played an important role in the trade along the Silk Roads. Given their central location between the Mediterranean and China, the Kushans linked Europe and Asia and helped connect Parthia (Persia), Rome and Han China. Roman gold was traded for silk from China in the market places of Kushan cities. Kushans became middlemen for this trade, and Kushan coins were used all along the Silk Roads. The area controlled by the Kushans was home to people of many different ethnic backgrounds and religions. This area, a crossroads between East and West, had long been traveled by many different people and had been also been ruled by different societies including the Mauryans and Alexander the Great before the Kushans gained control. Beliefs, images, and ideas from Rome, Greece, Persia, the Middle East, and India mixed together in this area. The Kushans had been a nomadic people, and when they settled in this area, they were influenced by a mix of cultures, and they adopted a range of cultural practices. The Kushans used a form of the Greek alphabet, and they made | In your own words, summarize what you have underlined. |
coins in the style of the Greeks and Romans, with Greek mottos and symbols alongside images of Hindu and Persian gods. Kushan kings had works of art and coins made that displayed their faces right next to those of different religious figures like Buddha or Shiva (from Hinduism). In this environment, a new style of art emerged that blended Greco-Roman styles with Indian ideas. Much of what archaeologists and historians have learned about the Kushans actually comes from their art and coins, which have clear influences from Persia, Greece, Rome, and India.

One of the most well-known and powerful Kushan rulers was Kanishka. Under his rule, the Kushans controlled a large area and were actively involved in trade connecting many peoples in Afroeurasia. Kanishka had two captial cities, Purushapura, located where the modern city of Peshawar, Pakistan is today, and a summer capital at Begram, near the modern city of Kapisa. Kanishka built complex palaces in these cities that were as great as those of Rome and Han China.

Under Kanishka’s rule from 127 to 140 CE, the Kushans became very wealthy through their trade. Their cities grew and had become important centers for Buddhist study and art. Kanishka was known as a great supporter of Buddhism and built important Buddhist temples and monuments. Buddhist monks were supported by Kanishka, and many traveled through the Kushan lands to new places helping to spread Buddhist beliefs across Asia.

Eventually, the Kushan Empire divided into two halves, and one half was conquered by the Sassanid Empire of Persia while the other was taken over by the Guptas of India.
Use this graphic organizer to categorize key ideas from the reading. In each text box, summarize the main ideas related to each category of information.
Kushan coins often followed a Hellenistic, or Greek, style with a god or deity on one side and a ruler on the other side. Kings were generally shown with a profile, standing, or even on a horse. Persian influences are also evident in these coins. Information about what kings ruled at what time can be learned from these coins, as well as information about cultural influences and belief systems. Over thirty different gods have been identified on Kushan coins, from Greek, Persian, and Indian belief systems. There are clear influences from Buddhism, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism in these coins.

This coin shows Skanda and Visakha, figures from Buddhism.

This coins shows Kanishka I on the left side, and Buddha on the right, with Greek writing.
A gold coin produced during the rule of the early Kushan ruler Heraios, in the first few decades CE. The left picture shows a bust of Heraios, and on the right, the Greek god Nike crowns Heraios who is on horseback.

A few decades later, around 80 CE to 100 CE, the Kushan ruler Vima Takto issued a Greek-Kharoshthi coin depicting both a zebu and a dromedary. A zebu is a species of cattle from South Asia while a dromedary is another name for the type of camel that comes from the Middle East.
Vima Kadphises (ruled approximately 105 CE - 127 CE), the most famous of the earlier Kushan rulers, used images of Shiva on many of his coins, along with Greek and Kharoshthi (form of early Indian writing) inscriptions. On the left is a bust of Vima, and on the right is the figure of the Hindu god Shiva.

Another example of Vima's Shaivite coins, with a Sanskrit inscription in Kharhshthi script and Greek symbols, 112 to 127 CE
Working with a partner, do your best to answer these questions. Write down your answers on a separate sheet of paper and be ready to share your thinking!

**Basic Questions:**

1) What different cultures were represented on Kushan coins?

2) What types of people were represented on Kushan coins?

**Thinking Questions:**

3) What is the evidence that the Kushans were influenced by the Greeks as well as by cultures and religions of India?

4) In question #1 you listed out some of the cultures that had an influence on Kushan coins. Why these cultures? Why did these particular cultures end up being represented on Kushan coins?

5) Why would the Kushan kings have placed their own images on coins? Why would they also place gods and deities on the coins?

6) Why would the Kushans have made coins that included so many different cultures? How might that be helpful? What purpose would it serve?