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Ashoka
Becoming the Dharma King

by J. Noel Hubler

DESCRIPTION

Travel back to 258 BCE and step into the Royal Council of King Ashoka, the powerful ruler of Magadha whose empire spanned most of India. Ashoka's bold vision is to rule not by force but through dharma—a growing concept of universal order and ethical governance. As councillors, students join a diverse group of voices—Brahmin traditionalists, Jains, Ājīvikas, and Buddhists—each with unique beliefs about truth and leadership. Together they will debate crucial issues: whether to abolish animal sacrifice, how to build public welfare, whether to commission dharma officials, and whether some traditions should be prohibited as dangers to the kingdoms.

Balancing Ashoka's Buddhist faith with political unity, councillors must navigate competing moral and spiritual values, form alliances, and advocate for their communities without alienating others. Students explore the rise of Buddhism, religious pluralism, and the challenges of ethical leadership in ancient India through the game. Engaging with these complex debates gives students insight into how spiritual ideals and political realities shaped Ashoka's lasting legacy.

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