

# Geography and the Early Settlement of China

## Overview and Objectives

### Overview

In a Problem Solving Groupwork activity, students create a relief map and a geographic poster of China's five regions and support hypotheses about the influence of geography on settlement and ways of life in ancient China. (Note: Pinyin spellings are used throughout this unit in accordance with the decision by the Library of Congress to join pinyin syllables.)

### Objectives

In the course of reading this chapter and participating in the classroom activity, students will

#### *Social Studies*

- describe the geography of China's regions and analyze how each region's physical features, climate, and vegetation affect daily life.
- create a relief map.
- record, analyze, and present geographic data.
- locate the Huang He Valley and explain why Chinese civilization originated there.
- explain how China's geographic features isolated it from the rest of the world.

#### *Language Arts*

- analyze text with a compare-and-contrast organizational pattern.
- offer persuasive evidence to support a hypothesis.

### Social Studies Vocabulary

**Key Content Terms** region, climate, oasis, North China Plain, tributary

**Academic Vocabulary** contrast, communicate, evaporate, enrich, isolate

## Lesson 19 - Geography and the Early Settlement of China

### Section 1 - Introduction

In this chapter, you will explore the geography of the vast land of China. You will read about the physical features, climate, and vegetation that greatly influenced the way of life of the early people of China.

China is a large country in eastern Asia. Words like *highest*, *largest*, and *longest* come to mind when talking about China's geography. The world's highest mountains, the Himalayas, are in China. So is one of the world's largest deserts, the Taklimakan (tah-kluh-muh-KAHN) Desert. China also has some of the longest rivers in the world.

China's climate is just as extreme as its physical features. The weather can vary from ice storms in the high mountains to the dreaded sandstorms of the Taklimakan Desert. The sandstorms darken the skies as if it were nighttime. Hot, howling winds fill the air with sand and gravel. For people caught in a sandstorm, survival may mean wrapping themselves in clothing or blankets and lying down until the storm passes. That could be hours, perhaps even days.

As you can see, China is a land of **contrasts**. In this chapter, you will compare five geographic regions in China. You will learn about the climate, physical features, and vegetation of each region. You will also discover how geography affected the history of the early Chinese people: where they settled, the way they lived, and how they **communicated** with other civilizations.

## Section 2 - An Overview of China's Geography

Present-day China is the third largest country in the world, after Russia and Canada. China includes about 3.7 million square miles (9.6 million square kilometers). With a population of about 1.2 billion, more people live in China than in any other country.

China's land area was much smaller in ancient times. To understand Chinese history, it's helpful to divide China into two main areas: Outer China and Inner China. Most of ancient Chinese history involves only Inner China. The two areas did not become one country until the 1600s C.E. But the geography of both areas affected the early settlement and history of China.

**The Geography of Outer China** Outer China includes the western and northern parts of present-day China. This is an area of great extremes in climate and physical features.

In the southwest, China is bounded by the Himalayas. The key geographical **region** in this area is the Tibet- Qinghai (tih-BET ching-HIE) Plateau. It is the world's largest plateau. This region is a bitterly cold place to live. There are only about fifty days a year without frost. Snowstorms are common, even in July.

In the northwest, the major region is the Northwestern Deserts. This area includes the Turfan Depression, the second-lowest place in China. It is 505 feet below sea level. It can grow so hot here that raindrops **evaporate** before reaching the ground.

In the northeast, the key region is the Northeastern Plain, a land of low hills and plains. It has short, hot summers. Winters are long and dry, with five months of freezing temperatures.

**The Geography of Inner China** Inner China includes the southeastern part of present-day China. This part of China is closer to sea level than the western areas. It is a land of rolling hills, river valleys, and plains. Rivers flow through this area from the west. They provide water for irrigation. Floods from these rivers also **enrich** the soil. To early settlers, these physical features made Inner China more attractive than Outer China.

Inner China has two main regions. The northern region is the North China Plain. To the south are the low river plains of the middle and lower Chang Jiang (chahng jyahng) Basins. These regions have very different **climates**. The Chang Jiang Basins are warm and wet. The North China Plain is drier and often cooler.

Each of China's five major regions has its own climate, physical features, and vegetation. Let's take a closer look at each area, starting with the three major regions in Outer China.

### Section 3 - The Tibet-Qinghai Plateau

The southwestern part of Outer China is dominated by the high Tibet-Qinghai Plateau. Also known as the Tibetan Plateau, this area is often called the "Roof of the World." Its average elevation of 13,500 feet is more than two miles above sea level. It is a very large area, covering almost a quarter of the land in China.

The Tibet-Qinghai Plateau is a rocky land surrounded by towering mountains. The Himalayas lie on the southern edge of the plateau. The tallest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, is part of this mountain range. Its peak is 29,000 feet in altitude, or more than five miles high.

Because the Tibet-Qinghai Plateau is so high, its climate is very cold. The air is thin and dry. Snow falls even in the summer.

Two of China's major rivers begin in this area: the Huang He (HWAHNG heh), also known as the Yellow River, and the Chang Jiang, also called the Yangtze River. Despite these rivers, the plateau is rather dry. The natural vegetation consists of sparse scrubs and grasses. Antelopes and yaks, a type of ox, roam the area. Sometimes they are prey for wolves and wildcats.

For the people of ancient times, the Tibet-Qinghai Plateau was a challenging place to live. It was too cold and dry to grow crops. But the grasses did provide food for yaks and other livestock. The cold, rocky plateau and the high mountains made travel to Inner China very difficult through this area.

#### Section 4 - The Northwestern Deserts

The northwestern part of Outer China is known for its vast deserts, including the Taklimakan and the Gobi (GOH-bee). These deserts are harsh places to live and difficult to cross. The climate varies from sizzling hot in the summer to below freezing in the winter. The oases are the only places to grow crops or raise animals such as sheep. Evidence shows that in ancient times, shelters made of mud were sometimes built near oases.

**The Taklimakan Desert** The Taklimakan Desert covers an area of about 105,000 square miles. It is considered one of the most dangerous deserts in the world. In fact, its name means “once you go in, you will not come out.” Desert winds cause huge sand dunes to shift and change. Sandstorms arise with stunning speed. Legend says that two armies and 300 cities are buried 600 feet beneath the sand dunes.

As you might expect, the desert is too dry to have much vegetation. Bushes, weeds, and trees grow only near oases and along rivers.

**The Gobi Desert** Stretching over 500,000 square miles, the Gobi Desert is one of the world’s largest deserts. It covers part of China and present-day Mongolia. Unlike the Taklimakan Desert, the Gobi has very few sand dunes. Most of the desert is stony. Its surface is made up of small pebbles and tiny bits of sand. Vegetation is sparse. Plants tend to be small and widely spaced apart.

## **Section 5 - The Northeastern Plain**

The Northeastern Plain is located east of present-day Mongolia. Today, this area is sometimes called either Inner Mongolia or the Manchurian Plain. It is a land of low hills and plains. The natural vegetation is mostly prairie grass. In ancient times, the grass provided food for horses, sheep, and other animals raised by herders.

The major rivers running through the Northeastern Plain are the Liao (lyow) and the Sungari (SOONG-guh-ree). The Liao is a shallow river, only navigable by small boats. The Sungari is deeper. It can carry larger boats. In the winter, when the waters freeze, people use these rivers as roads.

The Northeastern Plain is an area of great contrasts in its climate. It has short, warm summers. In winter, the northern and eastern parts of the plain are dry and cold. But the southern half, especially the valley of the Liao, has milder weather and more water because of the river. In general, though, the plain is too cold and dry to be suitable for growing crops. In the south, a narrow coastal plain links this area to the rest of China. This plain was used in ancient times by several groups of invaders as a route to Inner China.

## Section 6 - The North China Plain

One of the two major regions in Inner China is the North China Plain, a flat at region of grassland. Temperatures range from very warm in the summer to quite cold in the winter.

This region is sometimes called the “Land of the Yellow Earth” because the ground is covered by yellow limestone silt. The silt comes from the Gobi Desert. It is carried by the wind to the North China Plain. The river that runs through the plain is also full of yellow silt. The silt gives the river its name, Huang He (Yellow River).

The Huang He is one of the longest rivers in the world. It may also be the world’s muddiest. The mud makes the river water look like soup. The river begins in the high western mountains and winds its way down to the eastern plains. The silt it carries helps fertilize the surrounding lands, making the North China Plain a good place in which to settle and grow crops.

While the Huang He does help farmers, it has also been the source of many disasters for the Chinese people. In the past 3,000 years, the river is said to have flooded more than 1,500 times, causing much damage and loss of life



## Section 7 - The Chang Jiang Basins

The Chang Jiang Basins are areas of low, wet coastal plains. The basins are located along the river called the Chang Jiang.

This river is even longer than the Huang He. In fact, Chang Jiang means "Long River." It has hundreds of tributaries. People use the river to move goods between eastern and western areas of the region.

Like the Huang He, the Chang Jiang begins in the high western mountains. It flows through three plains and then to a rich delta. Its deposits help make the surrounding lands very fertile. The river floods less often than the Huang He, making the Chang Jiang less dangerous.

The climate in the Chang Jiang Basins is warm and wet. In ancient times, the vegetation may have been thick rainforest. There was little space for farming, and the area was not suitable for grazing animals. But the basins were very good for growing rice, which needs abundant warmth and moisture

## Section 8 - Early Settlement in Ancient China

Archaeologists believe that the first inhabitants of China lived in caves more than 500,000 years ago. Remains of these people were found in the 1920s in the northeastern part of China. These cave dwellers are known today as either Peking (pay-king) man or Beijing (bay-jing) man. It is likely that they were nomads who lived by hunting, gathering, and fishing. They made tools and may have used fire.

As people in China turned to farming, they began to settle mostly on the North China Plain in Inner China. They grew crops and lived in villages near the Huang He. This marked the start of settled Chinese society.

It's not surprising that early farmers chose this area to live in. The North China Plain had plenty of water, fertile soil, and a moderate climate. In contrast, both the Tibetan Plateau and the Northeastern Plain in Outer China were too cold and dry to grow crops. The Northwestern Deserts were also too dry. The Chang Jiang Basins were wet and fertile, but heavy rains may have made farming difficult

## **Section 9 - Ancient China's Isolation**

China's geography kept the early settlements in Inner China **isolated**. Only a narrow coastal plain linked the Northeastern Plain to Inner China. In the southwest, the towering mountains, rocky plateau, and cold climate formed a natural barrier. In the northwest, the large deserts created another barrier.

Later in Chinese history, the same geographic features that kept ancient China isolated also made it difficult to govern a developing China as a unified state. The harsh geography and huge distances made communication and transportation difficult, and interfered with the movement of military forces

## Section 10 - Different Regions, Different Ways of Life

Although most early inhabitants settled on the North China Plain, some people did live in the other geographic regions. Ways of life for settlers in these regions developed quite differently.

**Life in Outer China** Mainly because Outer China did not have good farmland, fewer people settled there than in Inner China. The Tibetan Plateau was not suitable for growing crops, but herders could raise livestock, especially yaks.

The people who lived on the plateau were nomads who had to move frequently to find new grazing land. The animals they herded supplied many of the nomads' needs. They ate meat from the yak, and made butter and yogurt from yak milk. People used yak wool to make the heavy clothing that they needed to survive the cold climate. They also wove yak hair into material for tents.

In the Northwestern Deserts, the only permanent communities were on the oases. There, residents built homes out of mud. People grew cotton, wheat, and maize. Their main foods were wheat noodles, bread, and mutton.

The Northeastern Plain was too cold and dry for much farming, but its prairie grass supported livestock. Early inhabitants of this region were also nomads. They raised sheep, goats, cattle, and horses. Because they were constantly moving to find grass for their animals, they lived mostly in tents. Their main food was meat. They often invaded the North China Plain to get needed supplies. Eventually, the people of Inner China built the Great Wall to keep these invaders out.

**Life in Inner China** The fertile land of Inner China supported larger, more settled populations on the North China Plain. Farmers grew mainly wheat and millet. They raised cattle, sheep, oxen, pigs, and chickens. They herded cattle, water buffalo, and horses. Settlers built permanent homes out of rammed earth (soil tightly packed to make solid walls).

The Chang Jiang Basins had limited farmland and lacked grazing land for animals such as cattle. But rice thrived in this warm, wet area. As early as 10,000 B.C.E., settlers were able to grow rice in the river valley. They also raised pigs and poultry. Nearby seas provided plentiful seafood. People built permanent houses so they could stay in one place and tend their animals and crops.

## Summary

**In this chapter, you explored the climate, physical features, and vegetation in five geographic regions in China. You learned how geography affected settlement, ways of life, and communication in ancient China.**

**Outer China** This area includes three regions in the western and northern parts of modern China: the Tibet-Qinghai, or Tibetan, Plateau; the Northwestern Deserts (the Taklimakan and the Gobi); and the Northeastern Plain. This area's features—high mountains, a cold and rocky plateau, and large deserts—isolated Inner China.

**Inner China** This area includes two regions in the southeastern part of modern China: the North China Plain and the Chang Jiang Basins. The plain has the best conditions for farming.

**Early Settlement and Isolation** Archaeologists have found remains of what may be the first inhabitants of China. These hunter-gatherers lived in caves more than 500,000 years ago. Later, farmers established the first permanent settlements on the North China Plain, near the Huang He, or Yellow River. Harsh geography and vast distances isolated these early inhabitants.

**Different Regions and Ways of Life** Because of a lack of farmland, most settlers in Outer China were nomads and herders. In Inner China, people farmed and raised animals in permanent settlements. Farmers in the Chang Jiang Basins grew rice.

# The Shang Dynasty

## Overview and Objectives

### Overview

In a Social Studies Skill Builder, students “excavate” a tomb to learn about the government, social structure, religion, writing, art, and technology of the Shang dynasty. (Note: Pinyin spellings are used throughout this unit in accordance with the decision by the Library of Congress to join pinyin syllables.)

### Objectives

In the course of reading this chapter and participating in the classroom activity, students will

#### *Social Studies*

- describe the government, social structure, religion, writing, art, and technology of the Shang dynasty.
- analyze artifacts to draw conclusions about the Shang dynasty.

#### *Language Arts*

- justify an argument with relevant evidence.

### Social Studies Vocabulary

**Key Content Terms** Anyang, Shang dynasty, clan, bronze, ancestor worship, oracle bone

**Academic Vocabulary** chapter, expand, military, design

## Lesson 20 - The Shang Dynasty

### Section 1 - Introduction

In ancient times, most of China's early farmers settled on the North China Plain, near the Huang He (Yellow River). In this **chapter**, you will explore one of China's earliest dynasties, the Shang (shung) dynasty. This dynasty ruled the area centered in the Huang He valley, from 1700 to 1122 B.C.E.

Parts of ancient China were controlled by different clans, or extended families. Rival clans frequently fought each other. Sometimes, one clan became powerful enough to rule all of ancient China and begin a dynasty. The Shang was one example of such clans.

For hundreds of years, the Shang dynasty was considered a legend by Western scholars. Stories about some mysterious markings on animal bones hinted that the Shang might have been the first Chinese to use a system of writing. But still archaeologists had no solid evidence that the ancient culture had ever existed.

Then, in 1899, a Chinese scholar found some bones that had writing on them. He thought that they might be Shang oracle bones. Oracle bones are animal bones and turtle shells with inscriptions carved by engravers. In ancient times, many people believed that these objects could tell the future. Later, in the 1920s, the ruins of a Shang city were found at Anyang (ahn-yahng). Archaeologists unearthed many artifacts from these ruins. You will learn what these artifacts reveal about Shang civilization

## Section 2 - A Shang Capital City

When archaeologists began excavating the ruins at Anyang in 1928, a great deal was learned about the Shang culture. These ruins were the remains of one of the royal cities of the Shang dynasty. The city included a palace, a temple, and houses. There were also workshops for artisans who created objects made of metals, pottery, stone, and jade.

The king's palace sat on a platform. The palace was built of mud-plastered walls held up by wooden posts. Beneath its foundations, archaeologists found human bones. The bones suggest that the Shang performed human sacrifices when they constructed a new royal house.

Human sacrifices were also part of Shang burials. While excavating at Anyang, archaeologists found at least nine royal tombs. Each tomb had a large pit with ramps leading down to it from the north and south. When a king was buried, slaves, servants, and animals were led down the ramps into the pit. There, they were sacrificed as part of the Shang belief that the king must continue to be served in the afterlife.

This belief in life after death is likely the reason that metal vessels and containers of food were also buried with or near Shang kings. The treasures found in royal tombs include many weapons, carved jade ornaments, bone carvings, pieces of pottery, stone sculptures, and even chariots.

The artifacts unearthed at Anyang reveal some interesting facts about Shang beliefs and ways of life. Let's find out what conclusions scholars have drawn about this ancient civilization, beginning with the Shang government.



### Section 3 - Shang Government

The Shang government was led by a powerful king. To extend his power, a king set up smaller kingdoms led by his younger brothers and nephews. When a king died, his power was often preserved by passing it to a younger brother or to a son.

Shang kings depended on strong armies to maintain their rule and to defend and **expand** their kingdoms. The kings took part in almost constant warfare with their enemies and fought to keep other **clans** under control. Prisoners of war were used as laborers and in human sacrifices.

The king's armies were especially powerful because Shang nobles had weapons made of **bronze**. The Shang were among the first civilizations in the world to discover how to make bronze from a mixture of copper and tin.

Shang armies were made up of large numbers of foot soldiers, archers, men mounted on horses and elephants, and fighters in chariots. The chariots were two-wheeled carts drawn by horses. Three soldiers rode in each chariot. The driver stood in the middle, with a spear carrier to his left and an archer to his right. Shang armies must have been a terrifying sight to their enemies.

## Section 4 - Shang Social Classes

Shang society can be divided into six social classes. The king and his relatives were in the highest class. Below them were the nobles, artisans, traders, farmers, and slaves.

**Nobles** After the ruling family, the nobles made up the highest- ranking social class. Nobles fought in the king's armies. They also supplied the armies with weapons, foot soldiers, and chariots. In exchange for their military help, the king was unlikely to interfere with the nobles' control over the land.

Shang nobles enjoyed a life of luxury. They lived in great palaces and spent time hunting. We know that the Shang were great hunters, because large numbers of wild animal bones have been found at excavation sites. In addition, writings on oracle bones show that the king invited nobles to join him in hunting foxes, badgers, and other wild animals.

The king often gave nobles symbols of power, such as jade discs. The discs might be decorated with a "lucky" creature such as a dragon or tiger. Nobles often mounted the discs on posts in their homes.

**Artisans** This talented group formed a small social class that included potters, stonemasons, and workers crafting items of bronze and jade. These skilled workers had lower status than nobles but higher status than farmers. Artisans skilled in bronze were especially valued. They made the weapons used by Shang warriors. They also made and decorated containers for the king and his nobles to use in religious ceremonies, or simply as symbols of their wealth.

**Traders** Like artisans, those who were traders ranked below nobles but above farmers in Shang society. Scholars believe that the Shang traded extensively. One clue comes from the modern Chinese word for "merchant," *shang ren*, which could also mean "Shang man." During the Shang dynasty, people mostly exchanged goods.

The Shang also used cowrie shells, a type of seashell, as money. The shells were valuable because they came from far away. The Shang people had to trade with neighboring regions to get them.

**Farmers** Farmers made up the largest social class in Shang society. They worked small plots of land, growing millet, wheat, barley, rice, fruit, vegetables, and nuts. They did not own the land they

farmed. The land was under the control of either the king or the nobles. Farmers gave most of their harvest to the nobles, who sent a portion to the king. Farmers could keep only enough food to feed themselves and their families.

Even after the Chinese became highly skilled at making bronze and iron weapons, many farmers continued to use simple tools made of wood and stone. They dug with wooden sticks, weeded with stone-tipped hoes, and harvested grain with stone knives and scythes.

Besides growing crops, farmers learned to raise cattle. They may also have raised pigs and chickens.

**Slaves** At the very bottom of Shang society were slaves. Many of these slaves were prisoners of war. They spent their lives building tombs and palaces. When their masters died, the slaves were sometimes sacrificed, in keeping with the Shang belief that slaves should continue to serve their masters in the afterlife

## Section 5 - Shang Religion

Shang religion centered on **ancestor worship**. The treasures buried in kings' tombs show that the Shang believed in a life after death. They also believed that dead ancestors had the power to help or harm the living. For this reason, the Shang honored their ancestors. As signs of respect, worshippers gave offerings of food, and sometimes made human sacrifices.

The Shang believed that their king's relationship to ancestral spirits had special significance. The king inherited the right to rule from his ancestors. And among the king's responsibilities was a duty to follow the wishes of his ancestors.

Kings used **oracle bones** to seek their ancestors' advice on important matters such as when to hunt, where to build cities, and whether to go to war. The oracle bones were made from turtle shells or the shoulder blade of a cow. To ask a question, a holy man would make a statement such as this: "Tomorrow is a good day for the hunt." Then he would press a hot needle against the back of the bone. The heat would make the bone crack. The pattern of the crack was believed to be a message, which the holy man or king would translate. The holy man might then carve the message on the oracle bone. Today, these inscriptions reveal valuable information about life during the Shang dynasty

## Section 6 - Shang Writing

The inscriptions on oracle bones are among the earliest known examples of Chinese writing. In Shang writing, as in modern Chinese, characters stand for words rather than sounds. Early Chinese writing contained only pictographs, images that stand for objects. By the Shang dynasty period, people were also using logographs, characters that stand for words. For example, the character for “good” is a combination of the characters for “woman” and “child.”

Having a written language helped unify the Chinese people. Although spoken language varied from place to place, people of the upper classes used the same written language.

## Section 7 - Shang Art

Shang artists showed great skill in working with bronze. Shang artisans made beautiful vessels and other objects. Some bronze vessels had geometric designs and pictures of mythical creatures. The most common picture was an animal mask, later known as a taotie. It might have the horns of an ox, the ears of an elephant, the talons of a bird, the eye of a man, and the crest of a dragon. Some scholars say that these masks were symbols of all the beings in the world.

The Shang also produced remarkable jade pieces. Jade is a very hard stone. Workers made jade objects by sawing, filing, and sanding the stone.

The Chinese may have believed that the qualities of jade represented the qualities of a superior person. The hardness of jade stood for wisdom. Jade was also smooth and shiny. These qualities stood for kindness

## **Section 8 - Shang Technology**

Working with bronze was an important technology for the Shang. Artisans used bronze to make many tools of war. These included arrowheads, spearheads, ax heads, and helmets. The bronze making skill of the Shang is one of the reasons they were able to remain in power for more than five hundred years.

## **Section 9 - The End of the Shang Dynasty**

The Shang excelled in war, enabling the ruling classes to build up great wealth. But, in time, these very strengths helped to bring about the end of the dynasty. Constant warfare eventually weakened the military power of the Shang.

The Shang had a system of money, using valuable cowrie shells that they received as part of their extensive trade with neighbors. The Shang king and his nobles spent extravagant amounts of money on their palaces, furnishings, clothing, and even their tombs. Over time, this lavish spending may have weakened the economy. A later king would say that the final blow was the corruption of the last Shang king. Rather than look after his people, he spent all his time on recreational activities like hunting. But no one knows whether this report was true.

Around 1045 B.C.E., a frontier state called Zhou (joh) rose up against the dynasty. Zhou armies under King Wu caught the Shang unaware, defeating and overthrowing them. One story says that, as Zhou rebels stormed his capital city, the last Shang king ran from the battlefield, put on all his jewelry, and threw himself into the flames of a fire

## Summary

**In this chapter, you learned about one of China's earliest dynasties, the Shang dynasty, by examining artifacts from that time.**

**A Shang Capital City** The ruins and artifacts found at Anyang show that the Shang believed in an afterlife. Kings were buried with goods, people, and animals that would be useful to them in their life after death.

**Shang Government** Shang kings were powerful rulers who inherited their power and kept it through family ties and military might.

**Shang Social Classes** Shang society can be divided into six social classes: the king's clan, nobles, artisans, traders, farmers, and slaves.

**Shang Religion, Writing, Arts, and Technology** The Shang practiced ancestor worship and, sometimes, human sacrifice. Their writing used logographs as well as pictographs. Shang artisans excelled in working with bronze and jade. The bronze weapons they created enabled the Shang to stay in power.

**The End of the Shang Dynasty** The Shang ruled in the valley of the Huang He for some five hundred years. They traded widely and grew wealthy. But constant warfare, lavish spending, and corruption in the ruling class may have led to the dynasty's downfall. Around 1045 B.C.E., the Shang were defeated by the Zhou.

# Three Chinese Philosophies

## Overview and Objectives

### Overview

In an Experiential Exercise, students learn about Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism under classroom conditions that reflect the main beliefs of each philosophy.

(Note: Pinyin spellings are used throughout this unit in accordance with the decision by the Library of Congress to join pinyin syllables.)

### Objectives

In the course of reading this chapter and participating in the classroom activity, students will

#### *Social Studies*

- identify political and cultural issues at the end of the Zhou dynasty.
- describe the lives and fundamental teachings of Confucius, Laozi, and Hanfeizi.
- explain how various schools of thought affected political rule in China.
- apply Confucian, Daoist, and Legalist principles to contemporary situations.

#### *Language Arts*

- clarify main ideas and connect them to a related issue.

### Social Studies Vocabulary

**Key Content Terms** Zhou dynasty, Mandate of Heaven, feudalism, Confucianism, civil servant, Daoism, yin and yang, Legalism

**Academic Vocabulary** portion, emerge, sibling, laborer, pursue



## Lesson 21 - Three Chinese Philosophies

### Section 1 - Introduction

One of China's earliest dynasties was the Shang dynasty. China's next line of rulers belonged to the Zhou (joh) dynasty. In this chapter, you will learn about the Zhou and explore three Chinese philosophies that arose during this dynasty.

The Zhou dynasty lasted from about 1045 to 256 B.C.E. During its later years, different leaders fought for control in China. The country was thrown into disorder. These troubles led Chinese thinkers to ask serious questions about the best way to have peace and order in society. Three very different answers emerged and became the philosophies of Confucianism (kuhn-FYOO-shuh-niz-uhm), Daoism (DOW-iz-um), and Legalism.

The following scene illustrates the differences between these schools of thought. Imagine that it is 250 B.C.E. The ruler of a small kingdom has sent three advisers to learn about the three philosophies. Upon their return, he asks them, "What should I do to rule well?"

The first adviser has learned about Confucianism. He tells the king, "Lead by example." The second adviser has studied Daoism. He says, "If you must rule, rule as little as possible." The third adviser has learned about Legalism. He says, "Set clear laws and harshly punish those who disobey them."

In this chapter, you will learn why the three advisers gave such different answers. You will explore Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism and learn how each philosophy influenced political rule in ancient China.

## Section 2 - The Zhou Dynasty

Around 1045 B.C.E., the Zhou, a group of people in northwestern China, moved into the central plains. They overthrew the Shang dynasty and established a new dynasty. For several centuries, the **Zhou dynasty** ruled over a group of states in China. But in the later years of the dynasty, wars between these states plunged China into disorder.

**The Early Years: Stability and Feudalism** After overthrowing the Shang dynasty, the Zhou established their own dynasty to rule over China. To justify their conquest, they claimed that they had been given the **Mandate of Heaven**, a divine right to rule China.

According to this belief, Heaven was a power that controlled human destiny. The king was the son of Heaven. As long as the king governed his people well, Heaven gave him the right to rule. If the king did not govern well, Heaven would send signs of its displeasure, such as earthquakes and floods. When the king lost the support of Heaven, others had the right to overthrow him. The Zhou and later groups believed in the Mandate of Heaven.

Using a system of relationships called **feudalism**, the Zhou increased the stability of the government. Under feudalism, the king owned all the land. He gave large pieces of the land to loyal supporters, called lords. In exchange, these lords sent soldiers to fight against enemies who threatened their king. The lords were rulers of their own lands, or states. They had absolute power over the peasant farmers who worked those lands. Peasants had their lord's protection. In return, they gave a **portion** of their crops to the lord.

**The Later Years: Conflict and Creative Thought** For a time, feudalism maintained political stability in China. But by the 700s B.C.E., the system was starting to break down. The lords of individual states became more ambitious and more powerful. Eventually, the power of some lords rivaled that of the king.

Between about 770 and 453 B.C.E., a number of small states often quarreled with one another. They eventually grouped into six or seven larger states that fought for power. These wars brought some 250 years of disorder to China. This historical time is often called the Warring States period.

Such unrest led Chinese thinkers to ask important questions about human nature and about how best to govern. Some rulers hired scholars to advise them on how to create order and increase their royal power.

So many ideas were offered that the Chinese later called them the “Hundred Schools of Thought.” The three major schools of thought that **emerged** were Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism. Each of these philosophies had a major influence on Chinese culture. Let’s take a closer look at their origins, teachings, and influence, beginning with Confucianism

### Section 3 - Confucianism

**Confucianism** is based on the teachings of Kongfuzi, who is called Confucius (kuhn-FYOO-shuhs) by Western society. This philosophy deeply influenced Chinese government and culture.

**The Founder of Confucianism** Confucius lived from about 551 to 479 B.C.E. He was born in the small state of Lu, in eastern China. He experienced firsthand the disorder that erupted when lords fought for power. Between 722 and 481 B.C.E., his own state was invaded many times. Confucius deeply respected Chinese traditions such as reverence for ancestors and learning. But he also saw that society and government had to change, if peace and order were to exist. In particular, rulers needed to govern wisely. Confucius wanted to teach men of good character to serve society as honest and fair government officials.

**The Teachings of Confucianism** The goal of Confucianism was to achieve a just and peaceful society. Confucius taught that society worked well when all people used standards of good behavior in their roles and in their relationships with others.

According to Confucianism, there are five basic relationships between people: ruler and subject, husband and wife, father and son, older **sibling** and younger sibling, and friend and friend. All people must respect and obey those who are above them in status. In particular, they must respect their elders. In return, those with authority, such as rulers, fathers, husbands, and older siblings, must set a good example. They should be kind, honest, wise, and faithful. Confucius taught, "Do not do to others what you would not want done to you."

**The Influence of Confucianism** The philosophy of Confucius attracted a number of students who spread his ideas and teachings. After his death, some of these students collected his sayings in a book called *The Analects*. Later scholars further developed Confucianism.

Confucianism had a very practical effect on the government of a later dynasty, the Han dynasty. In China, **civil servants** were traditionally the sons of nobles. However, that did not ensure that they had the ability and wisdom to do their jobs well. The influence of Confucianism led Han leaders to hire civil servants on the basis of their ability. To be qualified, government workers were expected to know the Chinese classics in detail. For example, they had to know the proper behavior required of

people in the various roles in society, from laborers to government officials. To prove that candidates had this knowledge, they had to take exams that the emperor himself might grade.

The teachings of Confucius had a major influence on Chinese culture. Values such as respect for elders, proper behavior, and love of scholarship became deeply woven into Chinese society. Even today, the sayings of Confucius are wise and practical. Here are two examples from *The Analects*:

*Confucius said to his follower:*

*The gentleman first practices what he preaches  
and then preaches what he practices.*

*Confucius said to his student:*

*Shall I teach you what knowledge is?*

*When you know a thing, say that you know it;*

*when you do not know a thing,*

*admit that you do not know it.*

*That is knowledge.*

## Section 4 - Daoism

The second great philosophy to come out of China's time of trouble was **Daoism** (also spelled Taoism). Like Confucianism, it tried to provide answers to the problems that prevented right living and good government.

**The Founder of Daoism** According to tradition, the great sage, or wise man, of Daoism was Laozi (low-dzuh). His name is sometimes spelled "Lao-tzu." Laozi was said to be the author of a work called the Dao De Jing (dow duh jing). The English version of the title is *The Classic of the Way and Its Power*.

Some modern scholars think that Laozi was a real man who lived in the late 500s B.C.E. Other historians believe that he was merely a legend. Scholars do agree that the Dao De Jing was actually written over time by many writers.

Old stories of Laozi's life tell how he came to write the *Dao De Jing*. These stories say that Laozi worked as an adviser to the Zhou court for many years. When he was 90 years old, he tired of government work and decided to leave China. When he came to the Chinese border, a guard recognized him. The guard was upset that the great teacher's wisdom would be lost to China. He asked Laozi to record his thoughts before leaving. So Laozi sat down and wrote a small manuscript of only 5,000 characters, the *Dao De Jing*.

The *Dao De Jing* preached a return to a simple and natural way of living. Here is an example of one passage:

*If you do not want your house to be molested by robbers,  
Do not fill it with gold and jade.  
Wealth, rank, and arrogance add up to ruin,  
As surely as two and two are four.*

**The Teachings of Daoism** Daoism was based on the ancient Chinese idea of the Dao (dow), or "the Way." Dao was the force that gave order to the natural universe. Daoism taught that people gained happiness and peace by living in harmony, or agreement, with the way of nature.

To Daoists, nature is full of opposites, like life and death, or light and darkness. True harmony comes from balancing the opposite forces of nature, called **yin and yang**. *Yin* means “shaded,” and *yang* means “sunlit.” In the same way, human life is a whole made up of opposites. It is impossible to have good without bad, beauty without ugliness, or pleasure without pain.

The Daoists taught that people followed the way of nature by living simple lives of quiet meditation. Notice, the Daoists said, how nothing in nature strives for fame, power, or knowledge. Similarly, people should neither feel self-important nor work to gain possessions or honors. Instead, they should accept whatever comes, like a blade of grass that bends when the breeze blows.

The Daoists believed that everyone must discover the Dao for themselves. Too many laws and social rules conflict with the way of living naturally and following the Dao. According to these teachings, the best rulers were those who ruled the least. The *Dao De Jing* says, “Governing a large country is like frying a small fish. You spoil it with too much poking.” It also tells rulers to be weak and let things alone.

**The Influence of Daoism** Daoism encouraged rulers to govern less harshly. But Daoism’s more important influence was on Chinese thought, writing, and art. In time, Daoism developed into a popular religion.

## Section 5 - Legalism

The third major philosophy that came out of China's time of trouble was **Legalism**. It was very different from Confucianism or Daoism. It offered new answers about how to solve problems that interfere with order and good government.

**The Founder of Legalism** Legalism was based on the teachings of Hanfeizi (hahn-fay-dzoo). Hanfeizi (also spelled Han-fei-tzu) lived from 280 to 233 B.C.E. He was a prince of the royal family of the state of Han. Hanfeizi lived to see the end of the Warring States period and of the Zhou dynasty.

Like Confucius, Hanfeizi was very concerned with creating peace and order in society. But he did not think that the Confucian teachings about proper behavior were the answer. Many of his ideas survive today in a book named after him, *Hanfeizi*.

**The Teachings of Legalism** Those who followed Legalism believed that most people are naturally selfish. Left to themselves, Legalists said, people will always **pursue** their own self-interest. They cannot be counted upon to have a good influence on one another. Therefore, it was not enough for rulers to set a good example. Instead, they should establish strict laws and enforce them, either with rewards for good behavior or with harsh punishments for bad behavior. Civil servants should be watched carefully and punished for doing a poor job. People who were caught criticizing the government should be banished to China's far northern frontier.

In Hanfeizi's time, rulers were frequently overthrown. To solve this problem, Hanfeizi taught that rulers must have absolute power backed by military might. Rulers should trust no one, not even their own families. Hanfeizi wrote, "He who trusts others will be controlled by others."

**The Influence of Legalism** Legalist philosophy had an almost immediate influence on government in China. At the end of the Warring States period, the Qin (chin) dynasty seized control of China. Qin rulers read and admired the writings of Hanfeizi. These rulers wanted to build a strong central government and a well-organized society. To achieve these goals, they adopted strict Legalist ideas. People were forbidden to criticize the government. Anyone caught doing so was severely punished. Many people were put to death for disloyalty and other crimes during the rule of the Qin dynasty.



## Summary

**In this chapter, you read about three major Chinese philosophies—Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism—and their influence on political rule in ancient China.**

**The Zhou Dynasty** All three schools of thought developed in the later years of the Zhou dynasty. Zhou rulers believed they had the Mandate of Heaven, a divine right to rule China. For a time, the Zhou's practice of feudalism helped stabilize China. But during the dynasty's later years, China collapsed into disorder. Political unrest led many scholars to debate the proper way to rule.

**Confucianism** Confucius taught his followers that peace and order depended upon proper behavior. Those in authority must lead by example. Those lower in status must obey. Confucianism led Han leaders to hire civil servants based on ability and tested knowledge rather than on family relationships.

**Daoism** Daoists believed that people should live simply and in harmony with the ways of nature. Harmony could be reached by balancing yin and yang, the opposite forces of nature. Daoists said that the best rulers were those who ruled the least.

**Legalism** Legalists believed that people were driven by their own self-interest. Legalism taught that rulers could create order in society only through strict laws and harsh punishments.

# The First Emperor of China

## Overview and Objectives

### Overview

In a Visual Discovery activity, students analyze and bring to life images about Qin Shihuangdi's political and cultural unification of China, his efforts to protect China's northern boundaries, and his dispute with Confucian scholars.

(Note: Pinyin spellings are used throughout this unit in accordance with the decision by the Library of Congress to join pinyin syllables.)

### Objectives

In the course of reading this chapter and participating in the classroom activity, students will

#### *Social Studies*

- explain how the emperor Shihuangdi unified northern China under the Qin dynasty.
- analyze the policies and achievements of the Emperor of Qin.
- evaluate the extent to which Qin Shihuangdi was an effective leader.

#### *Language Arts*

- connect and clarify main ideas in text by relating them to images.
- select point of view; match purpose, message, and vocal modulation to an audience.

### Social Studies Vocabulary

**Key Content Terms** Qin Shihuangdi, standardize, Great Wall, censor, immortal  
**Academic Vocabulary** project, frontier, construct, conflict, revolt

## Lesson 22 - The First Emperor of China

### Section 1 - Introduction

In the later years of the Zhou dynasty, China entered a time of unrest that lasted until the Qin dynasty seized power. In this chapter, you will learn how Qin Shihuangdi (chin SHEE-hwahng-dee) unified China.

The Emperor of Qin (chin) ruled over a united China from 221 to 210 B.C.E. His reign was one of great contrasts. He executed hundreds of enemies, and his building projects killed thousands of his own people. But he also unified Chinese government and culture. His construction projects were among the most spectacular in the world.

The emperor's biggest project was the Great Wall along China's northern border. The wall was intended to protect China from invasion from the north. Much like a general would prepare for a war, the Emperor of Qin made plans to build his wall. Supply camps were set up to bring food and materials to the workers in the mountains and deserts of the northern frontier. Soldiers were posted to fight off bandits and to stop workers from running away. Thousands of Chinese were marched from their homes and forced to work on the wall. It is said that many of them never returned.

Clearly, the Emperor of Qin was both a strong leader and a cruel one. It is little wonder that later Chinese historians would have very differing opinions of this ruler. In this chapter, you will read about the Emperor of Qin and form your own opinion.

## Section 2 - Creating an Empire

China's first emperor began life as Prince Zheng (jung) of the royal family of the state of Qin. He was born in 259 B.C.E., near the end of the Warring States period. In 256 B.C.E., Qin rulers took over the state of Zhou, ending the Zhou dynasty. Ten years later, 13-year-old Prince Zheng became king.

Sometimes called the Tiger of Qin, Zheng was quite an ambitious man. He used military might, spies, bribery, and alliances to conquer the remaining rival states. His empire became far larger than the kingdoms of earlier dynasties. In 221 B.C.E., he gained control of all of China. He decided then to take a new title, **Qin Shihuangdi**, or First Emperor of Qin.

As a ruler, the Emperor of Qin was greatly influenced by Legalism. Legalists believed in strict laws, harsh punishments, and a strong central authority. The emperor adopted these ideas. To avoid threats from powerful lords, he replaced the old system of feudalism with a government he controlled personally. He divided his vast territory into 36 districts. Three officials were appointed to govern each district. One official was responsible for the army. Another took care of the laws and agriculture. The duty of the third official was to keep the emperor informed of district activities.

The Emperor of Qin used harsh measures to maintain his power. When he discovered plots against his life, he had the traitors and their families killed. He even exiled his own mother from court, fearful that she was plotting against him.

### Section 3 - Standardizing the Culture

The Emperor of Qin wanted to unify China. He began to standardize cultural practices that differed from place to place.

One key step was to create a uniform system of laws. A number of the emperor's new laws were aimed at government officials. Officials were punished if the grain in storehouses spoiled, or if a wall built under their supervision collapsed. Other laws governed everyday life. For example, widows were not allowed to remarry.

The emperor's laws were based on Legalist beliefs. The laws were detailed, and they spelled out exact punishments for people who broke them. Rich and poor were punished in the same way. Typical punishments included fines that were paid in shields, gold, or suits of armor. But there were also physical punishments that included forced labor, whippings, and beheadings.

To make trading easier, the emperor standardized money, weights, and measures. Throughout China, people had used various types of items as money, such as shells, pearls, silver, tin objects, and coins. The Emperor of Qin commanded that metal coins of gold or bronze would be the only acceptable form of money. A hole in the center of each coin enabled people to carry several coins together on a cord. The emperor also ordered that measuring cups be made to hold consistent amounts. To regulate weights, he had metalworkers create bell-shaped bronze or iron weights in a variety of standard sizes.

Shihuangdi also simplified the writing system. He removed many of the written characters that were in use across China. A later dictionary listed 9,000 approved characters.

## Section 4 - Protecting the Northern Border

To protect his empire from invaders, the Emperor of Qin forced workers to build a long wall along China's northern border. Earlier kingdoms had already built smaller walls of their own. The emperor ordered long sections built to connect these walls. He also extended the wall to the west. The structure was called the "10,000 Li Long Wall." (One li is about three-tenths of a mile.) It later became known as the **Great Wall**.

Few traces of the original Great Wall survive. The Great Wall as we know it today was built by later rulers. Most likely, the original wall was made of layers of earth pounded into wooden frames that held everything together.

The Emperor of Qin's wall took ten years to build. A workforce of 300,000 men was assembled to **construct** it. Some were soldiers. Many were peasants who were forced to give up farming to work on the project. Still others were musicians, teachers, writers, and artists that the emperor sent into exile in the north.

The men who built the wall worked under difficult conditions. The wall crossed high mountains, deserts, swampland, and quicksand. The weather was bitterly cold in the winter, and blazingly hot in the summer. According to later accounts, tens of thousands of men died while working on the project. Their bodies were buried in the wall.

Combined with strong Chinese armies, the Great Wall proved extremely effective at stopping invasions. Nomads living to the north of the wall were unable to move sheep or cattle over it. Horses could not jump it. Therefore, any invaders who managed to scale the wall would be left without supplies or horses.

## Section 5 - Ending Opposition

The changes that the Emperor of Qin introduced to unify and protect China drew a great deal of opposition. They were especially unpopular with Confucian scholars. The Confucians believed in behaving properly and setting a good example. They did not believe in enforcing harsh laws. The emperor was determined to end any opposition to his rule. It is said that he executed 460 Confucian scholars for plotting against him.

The **conflict** between the emperor and the scholars grew worse during a royal banquet in 213 B.C.E. During the meal, one Confucian scholar criticized the emperor. The scholar warned that the Qin dynasty would not endure unless the emperor followed the ways of the past.

The scholar's comments angered the emperor's trusted adviser, Li Si (lee sway). Li told the emperor that scholars' criticisms were causing trouble, and the government should **cancel** the scholars. No one, he said, should be allowed to learn about Confucianism. All Confucian books must be brought to the capital city and burned. Only books dealing with medicine, farming, and the history of the Qin kingdom should escape censorship.

The Emperor of Qin agreed to order the book burning. He said that scholars who disobeyed the order would be marked with a tattoo on their faces and sent to do forced labor. Anyone who discussed ancient teachings would be guilty of criticizing the government and would be executed.

The emperor's brutal action shocked the people of China. Some scholars chose to die rather than give up their books. Even the emperor's son became a victim of his father's campaign to end opposition. When the son objected to the killing of scholars, he was sent to oversee work on the Great Wall

## Section 6 - The Emperor's Death and the End of the Qin Dynasty

Despite the Emperor of Qin's many achievements, some ancient Chinese writings say that he could not find happiness. Above all, the emperor was afraid to die. He summoned magicians to his court, asking them how he could become **immortal**, or live forever. Some magicians told him that he should seek a magic potion. The emperor searched far and wide for such a potion. He once sent an expedition all the way to islands in the sea that is east of China.

**The Death and Burial of the Emperor of Qin** In 210 B.C.E., the Emperor of Qin died after ruling for just over ten years. He had been off searching for the magic potion, 600 miles from the capital city. No one knows the cause of his death. He may have been poisoned.

The Emperor of Qin's body was taken back to the capital and buried in a huge tomb in a human-made mound. The tomb complex, or group of structures, covered many square miles. Ancient Chinese writings say that more than 700,000 workers helped build it. Some of them were buried with the emperor to prevent grave robbers from learning about the tomb's fabulous treasures.

The treasures in the Emperor of Qin's tomb were not uncovered until 1974 C.E. Among them were tools, precious jewels, and rare objects. The most amazing discovery of all was an entire army made of a kind of clay called terra-cotta. The army included more than six thousand life-size figures such as archers, foot soldiers, chariot drivers, and horses. So far, archaeologists have yet to find any two figures that are exactly alike.

**The End of the Qin Dynasty** Shihuangdi died in 210 B.C.E. The harshness of the emperor's rule had caused much unhappiness across China. After his death, rebellions broke out in the countryside. Members of royal families from conquered states joined in the **revolt**. As various leaders fought each other for power, civil war raged. Finally, in 206 B.C.E., Liu Bang (LEE-oo bahng), a peasant leader, gained power and established the Han dynasty.



## Summary

**In this chapter, you learned about Qin Shihuangdi, China's first emperor.**

**Creating an Empire** Qin Shihuangdi was influenced by Legalism. He replaced feudalism with a strong central government under his control. He divided his territory into 36 districts, each governed by three officials. He used harsh measures to enforce his power.

**Standardizing the Culture** The Emperor of Qin unified China and also greatly expanded its borders. He standardized Chinese laws, money, weights, measures, and writing.

**Protecting the Northern Border** Among the emperor's many construction projects was the Great Wall, which he built to protect China's northern border from invaders.

**Ending Opposition** Many of Emperor Qin's actions aroused opposition. He brutally censored and executed his critics, including Confucian scholars.

**The Emperor's Death and the End of the Qin Dynasty** Although the emperor searched for a way to become immortal, he died in 210 B.C.E. He was buried in a huge tomb, along with many treasures and an army of 6,000 life-size terra-cotta figures. His amazing tomb was discovered in 1974. Revolt broke out after his death and civil war raged until the Han dynasty was established.

# The Han Dynasty

## Overview and Objectives

### Overview

In a Social Studies Skill Builder, students visit seven stations to learn about Han achievements in the fields of warfare, government, agriculture, industry, art, medicine, and science. (Note: Pinyin spellings are used throughout this unit in accordance with the decision by the Library of Congress to join pinyin syllables.)

### Objectives

In the course of reading this chapter and participating in the classroom activity, students will

#### *Social Studies*

- explain how the Han dynasty expanded their empire.
- describe the political contributions of the Han dynasty to the development of the imperial bureaucratic state.
- evaluate the impact of inventions and discoveries in the fields of warfare, government, agriculture, industry, art, medicine, and science during the Han empire.

#### *Language Arts*

- organize paragraphs that state clear positions and support them.

### Social Studies Vocabulary

**Key Content Terms** Han dynasty, bureaucracy, industry

**Academic Vocabulary** estimate, release, series, suspend, benefit

## Lesson 23 - The Han Dynasty

### Section 1 - Introduction

Qin Shihuangdi, a Qin dynasty ruler, was China's first emperor. The Qin dynasty lasted only about fourteen years. In this chapter, you will learn about China's next dynasty, the Han (hahn) dynasty. It lasted over four hundred years, from about 206 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.

The Han dynasty arose during a period of unrest. The Chinese people were unhappy with the harsh, Legalist rule of the Qin. After the first emperor's death, they rebelled against the Qin. Liu Bang (LEEoo bahng), a rebel who had gained control of the Han kingdom, conquered the Qin army and established the Han dynasty.

Over time, Han emperors began to change the way China was ruled. Gradually, they incorporated Confucian ideals of moral behavior into Chinese government.

Under Han rule, China had a golden age, a long period of stability and wealth. Education, literature, and art flourished. New practices, inventions, and discoveries improved people's lives.

The Han dynasty was also known for its military achievements. Han emperors expanded the empire to include parts of present-day Korea and Vietnam. Once Central Asia was under its control, the Han established trade relationships with the West.

In this chapter, you will explore warfare, government, agriculture, industry, art, medicine, and science under the Han dynasty. You will see how the Han dynasty improved daily life in China.

## Section 2 - Warfare

The Han excelled in warfare. Their military methods and new weapons helped them expand their dynasty. At its height, the **Han dynasty** reached west into Central Asia, east to present-day Korea, and south to present-day Vietnam.

The Han dynasty had a large and well-organized army. All men from about the ages of twenty-five to sixty had to serve two years in the army. Historians **estimate** that Han armies had 130,000 to 300,000 men.

The army was helped by new technologies. Advances in iron making improved the strength and quality of armor. Han ironworkers produced a kind of fish-scale armor that flexed and moved with the body. The Han were among the first people to make iron swords. The strength of iron allowed skilled workers to fashion longer swords. With a long sword, a soldier could swing at an enemy from a safer distance.

Another favorite weapon of the Han was the crossbow. A crossbow is made of two pieces of wood in the shape of a cross. A string is attached to each end of the horizontal piece of wood. When that string is pulled back and **released**, an arrow is shot from the crossbow.

The Han invented the kite and used it in clever ways for military purposes. According to one legend, a Han general once used a kite to measure the width of a heavily guarded wall. Kites were used to send messages from one part of an army to another. They were also used to frighten the enemy. Kites with bamboo pipes were flown over enemy camps at night. Enemy soldiers would hear a ghostly noise coming from the darkness above them. It sounded like “*fu, fu*” (“beware, beware”). The alarmed soldiers often ran away.

### Section 3 - Government

The Han emperors made significant improvements in Chinese government. They adopted the centralized government established by Emperor Qin Shihuangdi. But they softened the harsh ruling style of the Qin emperor and brought Confucian ideas back into government.

Han emperors needed many government officials to help run the vast empire. The government of China during this time functioned as a **bureaucracy**. A bureaucracy is a large organization that operates using a fixed set of rules and conditions. At each level of the bureaucracy, people direct those who are at the level below them.

The highest-level Han officials lived in the capital and gave advice to the emperor. Lower-level officials lived throughout the empire. They had many responsibilities, including overseeing the maintenance of roads and canals. They also had to make sure that, in case of famine, enough grain was produced and stored.

One key improvement made by the Han concerned the way civil servants, or government workers, were hired. Before the Han dynasty, social status determined which government officials got jobs. The Han, however, based their choices on ability and knowledge. To become officials, young men had to pass a long, difficult civil service exam. It was based on the principles of classic Chinese writings. The candidates had to learn five books by heart. Legend says that the men then had to spend several days taking the exam in tiny rooms. All the while, they were watched by guards to prevent cheating.

Once hired, civil servants were not allowed to serve in their home districts. This rule was intended to prevent officials from giving special favors to friends and relatives. Every three years, civil servants could be promoted or demoted depending upon an evaluation of their work.

## Section 4 - Agriculture

Farmers in ancient China faced a number of difficulties. Several important advances made in agriculture during the Han dynasty improved their lives.

Han farmers were expected to grow enough food to feed their families and to help stock the shared granaries, or grain storehouses. In addition to growing crops, farmers had to make their own clothing, build their own homes, and give one month of unpaid labor to the government for building projects such as canals and roads. Hard as this life already was, floods and drought often destroyed crops, presenting farmers with yet another challenge.

One invention that helped farmers was the chain pump. The chain pump made it easier to move water from low irrigation ditches and canals up to the fields. Workers used pedals to turn a wheel, which pulled a series of wooden planks that moved water uphill to the fields.

The Han skill in ironwork also came to the farmers' aid. The Chinese were the first to learn how to pour melted iron into molds. This process enabled them to make strong iron plows. Han plows were designed to push the dirt away from the row being plowed so that the soil would not pile up in front of the plow.

The Han also invented the wheelbarrow. The Chinese wheelbarrow had one large wheel in the center. Goods were carried on either side of the wheel. It was much easier for farmers to push a heavy load in a wheelbarrow than to carry it on their backs or in buckets suspended from a pole across their shoulders.

## Section 5 - Industry

Like agriculture, Chinese **industry benefited** from advances made during the Han dynasty. The Han government controlled the two most important industries in China, silk and salt. New inventions helped both industries.

Silk is a material produced from the fibers of a silkworm cocoon. For the ancient Chinese, making silk was difficult and time-consuming labor. During the Han dynasty, the Chinese developed a foot-powered machine that could wind the silk fibers onto a large reel, ready for use. Making silk production more efficient was important because there was a high demand for silk outside of China. The valuable silk trade began during the Han dynasty.

Salt was an equally important trade item. Salt was valued in ancient times because people used it to help preserve meat and vegetables. At first, people only knew how to get salt from the sea. During the Han dynasty, the Chinese learned how to mine salt from under the ground.

Salt water, or brine, exists deep beneath Earth's surface. The Chinese used iron-tipped bamboo drills to dig deep wells. When the drills reached salt water (sometimes 1,000 feet below the surface), a hollow bamboo pole was dropped into the well. The pole had a valve that allowed the salt water to enter the pole. The valve was then closed, and the pole filled with the salt water was brought back to the surface. Workers placed the water in large iron pots. The pots were heated until the water evaporated and only the salt remained. In this way, the Chinese people could find salt, even in regions far from the sea.

## Section 6 - Art

During the Han dynasty, a key advance was made in art—the invention of paper. Paper was the ideal material for calligraphy, which is the art of fine handwriting. Calligraphy was important in Chinese culture. It was a style of writing especially valued for its natural flow, as if inspired by nature.

Chinese scribes used some of the same tools and techniques as painters did. They wrote their characters by painting them with a brush and ink. Characters were created by one or more strokes, drawn quickly in a particular order. The ideal stroke created both delicate and bold lines. Paper was perfect for this art because of the way it absorbed the ink.

Before the invention of paper, the Chinese wrote on silk. Silk could easily be rolled into scrolls, but it was very costly. People also wrote symbols vertically on bamboo strips. To make books, they tied a series of strips together in a bundle. Bamboo was less expensive than silk, but it was bulky and awkward to use.

The invention of paper, in about the first century C.E., not only benefited calligraphers but also changed the way people communicated. It was cheaper to produce paper than bamboo or silk, so more people could now afford writing materials. Paper was also easier to bind together into books.

A variety of materials were used to make paper. They included silk fibers, hemp, bamboo, straw, and seaweed. These were boiled into a soupy pulp. A screen was dipped into the pulp and then pulled out. When the pulp dried on the screen, the result was paper.



## Section 7 - Medicine

The practice of medicine during the Han dynasty involved some ideas and treatments that are still used in traditional Chinese healing today. The ancient Chinese believed that illnesses occurred when the forces of yin and yang in the body were out of balance. Healers tried to restore the natural balance of these opposite forces.

One technique developed by Chinese healers for this purpose was acupuncture. In acupuncture, thin needles are inserted into specific parts of the body. This procedure is thought to rebalance the forces of yin and yang. Acupuncture is believed to be useful for curing illnesses that strike quickly, like headaches.

A second healing technique was moxibustion. In this method, a moxa—a small cone of powdered leaves or sticks—is placed on or near the skin and burned. The heat is believed to reduce pain and promote healing. This technique is used to treat long-term diseases, such as arthritis.

Chinese doctors also made several discoveries about how the human body works. For example, they learned to judge health by listening to a person's heartbeat or by feeling his or her pulse. The pulse is the little throb in your blood vessels, caused by the contraction of your heart as it pumps blood through the body. The Chinese also discovered that blood circulates from the heart, through the body, and back to the heart. Western science did not make this discovery until the 1600s C.E.

## Section 8 - Science

The Chinese achieved a number of scientific advances during the Han dynasty. Chinese astronomers closely observed the heavens. They recorded the appearance of comets, which they called “broom stars.” They discovered that the moon shines because it reflects the light of the sun. They also learned that solar eclipses occur when the moon blocks our view of the sun.

The Chinese of this period also invented two very useful instruments, the seismograph and the magnetic compass. A seismograph is an instrument for detecting earthquakes. The first Chinese seismograph was a circular machine made of bronze. The machine had a pendulum in the center, surrounded by eight sculpted animal heads. During an earthquake, the pendulum vibrated. The vibration triggered the release of one of eight balls. The ball would then fall in the direction of the earthquake. Using this ingenious machine, the Han were able to detect earthquakes up to several hundred miles away.

The magnetic compass is an instrument for determining direction, such as north or south. The Chinese believed that using direction to correctly position their temples, graves, and homes would bring good fortune. By the 200s C.E., Chinese scientists understood that a lodestone, a type of iron ore, tends to align itself in a north-south direction because of Earth’s magnetism. With this knowledge, they used lodestones to make compasses. The lodestone was carved into the shape of a spoon with a handle that would always point south.

## Summary

**In this chapter, you read about the golden age in China during the Han dynasty. In this period, the Chinese made many advances that improved their government and daily life. The Chinese word *Han* is still used to describe China's culture.**

**Warfare and Government** New weapons helped Han emperors succeed in war and expand their empire. They organized the government into a bureaucracy. Civil servants who were chosen for their ability worked in the bureaucracy.

**Agriculture and Industry** Several inventions improved production in agriculture and in the silk and salt industries. Farmers used the chain pump for irrigation and iron plows. Workers used foot-powered reeling machines to make silk thread, and iron tipped drills to mine salt.

**Art, Medicine, and Science** The invention of paper advanced the art of calligraphy and changed the way people communicated. Healers learned about the human body and developed techniques that are still used today. Chinese scientists made careful observations of the heavens, and invented the seismograph and the compass

# The Silk Road

## Overview and Objectives

### Overview

In an Experiential Exercise, students travel along a simulated Silk Road to learn about facing obstacles, trading products, and absorbing cultural exchanges that occurred along the Silk Road during the Han dynasty. (Note: Pinyin spellings are used throughout this unit in accordance with the decision by the Library of Congress to join pinyin syllables.)

### Objectives

In the course of reading this chapter and participating in the classroom activity, students will

#### *Social Studies*

- locate trans-Eurasian trade routes in the period of the Han dynasty and the Roman Empire.
- identify travel difficulties along the Silk Road.
- explain how the Silk Road led to an exchange of goods, ideas, and beliefs.
- describe the diffusion of Buddhism northward from India to China.

#### *Language Arts*

- clarify main ideas in text and connect them to a classroom simulation.

### Social Studies Vocabulary

**Key Content Terms** Silk Road, trade route, caravan, cultural diffusion

**Academic Vocabulary** dominate, link, acquire, oxygen, occur

## Lesson 24 - The Silk Road

### Section 1 - Introduction

Under Han rule, new trade routes allowed the Chinese to trade with other ancient cultures. In this chapter, you will explore the great trade route known as the Silk Road.

The Silk Road was actually a network of smaller trade routes. It stretched for more than four thousand miles across Asia— from Luoyang (l-waw-yahng) and the Han capital of Chang'an (chahn-ahn) in China to Mediterranean ports such as Antioch (AN-tee-ahk) in Syria. By the first century C.E., the Roman Empire, and its capital, Rome, **dominated** the Mediterranean region. The Silk Road connected the Han and Roman empires.

Both goods and ideas traveled along the Silk Road. The Chinese traded silk and jade for spices from India and glassware from Rome. Ideas, like Buddhism, entered China with this trade.

The Silk Road **linked** the peoples of the East and the West for more than a thousand years. In this chapter, you will learn more about the exchanges between Asian and western cultures.

## Section 2 - The Opening of the Silk Road

The expansion of the Han empire made the **Silk Road** possible. The military campaigns of the Han drove back nomadic peoples in northwestern China, opening up **trade routes** to the west.

**The Father of the Silk Road** A Chinese explorer named Zhang Qian (jahng chee-ehn) is often called the Father of the Silk Road. His travels opened the way for trade between China and its western neighbors.

In 138 B.C.E., a Han emperor sent Zhang Qian west with 100 men. His mission was to persuade western peoples to form an alliance against China's northern enemy, the Huns. Zhang Qian traveled across Central Asia to what is now the country of Iran. Twice, he was taken prisoner by the Huns. Both times, he was able to escape.

Zhang Qian never achieved an alliance. But his trip was a success in other ways, as it helped the Chinese learn about a number of cultures to the west. Zhang Qian brought back word of such places as Persia, Syria, India, and Rome.

Some years later, Zhang Qian went on a second journey to the west. This time, he learned about a type of horse that was more powerful than the smaller Chinese horse and better suited for war. He also discovered grapes, which were unknown in China. Most important, he was able to establish trade relationships with some of the Central Asian peoples he met along the way.

Over time, Chinese traders traveled farther west. Smaller trade routes connected to form larger networks. The most famous of these routes became known as the Silk Road, named after the product that traders valued most of all: Chinese silk.

**Silk as a Trade Good** Silk is a fiber used to make cloth. Silk cloth is strong, but also warm, light, and soft.

Silk was a valuable good for trade because, at first, only the Chinese people knew how to make it. During the Han dynasty, the Chinese had discovered how to make silk out of the fibers taken from the cocoon of the silkworm. To protect the trade value of silk, the Chinese tried to keep their production process a secret. Under Han rule, revealing the silk-making process was a crime punishable by death.

**Rome Trades Glassware for Silk** When people of other cultures learned about silk, it became a highly prized material. The Romans, in particular, eagerly traded valuable goods for silk.

The first time the Romans saw silk may have been during a battle near the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia. At a key point in the fighting, the enemy unfurled many colorful silk banners. The Romans lost the battle, but this experience led them to want to **acquire** this remarkable new material. Chinese silk was a luxury item. It was rare and expensive. Even the richest Romans could afford to wear only a strip or a patch of silk stitched to their white togas, or robes. Silk was so highly valued that traders willingly made the dangerous journey eastward to obtain it.

Besides having gold to trade, the Romans had something else the Chinese prized: glassware. The Romans knew how to blow glass into wonderful, delicate shapes. Just as the Romans had never seen silk, the Chinese did not know the method for glass production. The Romans were happy to trade glassware for silk.

### Section 3 - The Eastern Silk Road

The Silk Road was not one continuous route. It was a network of shorter trade routes between various stops. Most traders moved between these stops, rather than journeying thousands of miles along the entire length of the route. Goods changed hands many times before reaching their final destination.

The two major parts of the route were the Eastern Silk Road and the Western Silk Road. The Eastern Silk Road connected Luoyang to Kashgar (KASH-gahr), in the western part of the Taklimakan Desert. The Western Silk Road ran from Kashgar to Antioch and other Mediterranean ports.

**Traveling the Eastern Silk Road** From Luoyang, the Silk Road led west along the Gobi Desert to Dunhuang (dun-hwang), in northwestern China. This part of the route was protected by the Great Wall to the north.

From Dunhuang, travelers could choose either a northern or a southern route across the Taklimakan Desert to Kashgar. Many chose the northern route, where the distances between oases like Loulan and Kucha were shorter.

Several dangers faced traders crossing the Taklimakan Desert. Bandits often attacked travelers on the northern route between Dunhuang and Kucha. Throughout the desert, sudden sandstorms sometimes buried travelers in sand. Mirages may have lured travelers off the main path to their deaths.

To protect themselves before entering the desert, travelers often formed long caravans of camels. One type of camel was especially suited for desert travel. Bactrian camels have double eyelids and nostrils that can close to keep out blowing sand. These camels could also carry enough food and water to ensure a traveler's survival from one oasis to the next.

**Goods Exchanged Along the Eastern Silk Road** It was costly to carry goods over the Silk Road. For traders to make a profit, goods had to be valuable. They also had to be easy to carry so that merchants could transport more goods on fewer animals.

Silk was the perfect trading good because it was both light and valuable. Huge quantities of silk traveled along the Eastern Silk Road from China. Traded for other goods, the silk eventually reached



the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Then it was taken by boat to Rome and other Mediterranean cities.

Besides silk, the Chinese also traded fine dishware (which became known as china), ornaments, jewelry, cast-iron products, and decorative boxes. In return, the Chinese received a variety of goods from other traders. The Chinese particularly valued horses from Central Asia. Other items from Central Asia included jade, furs, and gold. Traders from India brought various goods north to Kashgar. These included cotton, spices, pearls (from oysters), and ivory (from elephant tusks). From Kashgar, the goods made their way east to China.

## Section 4 - The Western Silk Road

Kashgar was the central trading point at which the Eastern Silk Road and the Western Silk Road met. Goods from various areas were exchanged there and sent in both directions along the trade route. Traders traveling westward carried goods by yak rather than camel. The Western Silk Road ended in Mediterranean ports like Antioch.

**Traveling the Western Silk Road** The journey west from Kashgar began with a difficult trek across the Pamir (pah-meer) Mountains. Some of these mountain peaks rose over twenty thousand feet. Travelers often experienced headaches, dizziness, and ringing in the ears caused by a lack of oxygen in the thin air of the high mountains.

Many of the mountain passes were narrow and dangerous. Along this part of the route, sometimes called the "trail of bones," animals and people often died. Pack animals such as donkeys slipped off the narrow trails and tumbled over cliffs. Sometimes, traders unloaded their animals and hand-carried the goods through the passes.

After the Pamir Mountains, the route took travelers through a fertile valley in what is now the country of Afghanistan. Then the route went across the Iranian Plateau, passed south of the Caspian Sea, and crossed Mesopotamia. An important stop along this part of the route was Ctesiphon (TES-uh-fahn), in what is now Iraq. Ctesiphon was located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, north of ancient Babylon.

From Ctesiphon, the Silk Road turned north and passed through the Syrian Desert. Travelers faced many hardships there. They were threatened by tigers, lions, and scorpions, and also tormented by flies.

The varied goods finally reached Antioch and other Mediterranean ports. From there, ships carried them throughout the Mediterranean world.

**Goods Exchanged Along the Western Silk Road** Many goods traveled along the Western Silk Road and eventually ended up in China. Traders from Egypt, Arabia, and Persia brought perfumes, cosmetics, and carpets. Central Asian traders brought metal items and dyes, and sometimes traded slaves.

Rome sent a number of products to be exchanged for Chinese silk. The Chinese highly valued Roman glass products. These included trays, vases, necklaces, and small bottles. They also prized asbestos, which the Chinese used for making fireproof cloth as well as coral. Chinese doctors used coral to help them treat illness. It was said that coral lost its color when placed on the skin of someone who was sick.

The Romans also sent massive amounts of gold to trade for silk. In fact, so much gold was shipped out of Rome that, in the first century C.E., the Roman emperor Tiberius passed a law forbidding men to wear silk. Legend says that the emperor was afraid that wearing so much finery would make the Romans appear soft and weak. It is more likely that he wanted to reduce the amount of gold that was flowing out of his empire.

## Section 5 - Cultural Exchanges and the Silk Road

The trade between East and West along the Silk Road created **cultural diffusion**, in which ideas and knowledge—as well as goods—spread from one culture to another. For example, China and Rome did not merely trade new products with each other. In time, they learned how to make these products for themselves. By 500 C.E., the Chinese had learned how to make glass. About the same time, the West had learned how to produce silk. Such cultural diffusion **occurs** in many cultures, past and present, and in many different ways.

Diets, gardening, and agriculture also changed as trade introduced new plants into different areas. For example, China imported many new foods and spices. Among them were grapes, cucumbers, figs, pomegranates, walnuts, chives, sesame, and coriander. The West imported oranges, peaches, pears, and different kinds of flowers, including roses, chrysanthemums, azaleas, peonies, and camellias.

The Silk Road also helped spread Buddhist beliefs. Buddhism had its origins in India. Because the Silk Road passed through many different nations, religious travelers using the route shared their teachings.

The spread of Buddhism is a good example of how cultural diffusion takes place. Buddhism was introduced to China around the middle of the first century C.E. Some Chinese Buddhists journeyed on foot across Central Asia to India to learn more about their new religion. They returned to China with copies of sacred Buddhist texts. Buddhism would eventually become a major religion in China

## Summary

**In this chapter, you learned how the Silk Road, an ancient network of trade routes, promoted an exchange of goods and ideas between China and the West.**

**The Opening of the Silk Road** The Silk Road was opened during the Han dynasty and remained a major route of trade for more than one thousand years. The eastern and western parts of the Silk Road presented many dangers and hardships for those who traveled along it. To make a profit from trade, goods had to be valuable and easy to carry. Silk and ornaments traveled from China to Rome, India, and central Asia. Gold, horses, cotton, and spices traveled back to China.

**The Eastern Silk Road** The Eastern Silk Road connected the capital of China to Kashgar. Travelers formed camel caravans for protection from bandits and the harsh conditions of desert travel.

**The Western Silk Road** From Kashgar, the Western Silk Road crossed mountains and a desert on its way to Mediterranean ports like Antioch. Travelers faced high, slippery mountain trails and dangerous desert wildlife, such as tigers and lions.

**Cultural Exchanges Along the Silk Road** Many goods were exchanged along the Silk Road, including both silk from China and glassware from Rome. In addition to new products, ideas and knowledge were exchanged. In this way, trade brought cultural changes to both East and West. One of the most important examples of cultural diffusion was the introduction of Buddhism to China.

