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## **The First Emperor** **Shi Huangdi**

### **Level/Class:**

This lesson is created for departmentalized sixth grade social studies classes with mixed ability levels.

### **Objectives:**

The students will be able to discuss how Shi Huangdi unified China. The students will summarize the positive and negative aspects of the reign of Shi Huangdi.

### **Time:**

This lesson will take two 40-45 minute class period.

### **Materials needed:** Handouts

paper

pencil

Map of Asia

personal pictures taken of Terra Cotta Warriors and Great Wall

computer access to show video of Shi Huangdi from u-tube

Scott Foresman's **Social Studies: The World**

### **Procedures:**

Students will define specific vocabulary. Students will read pages 110 and 113 from textbook. We will discuss in length the life and contribution of Shi Huangdi to China's history. We will conclude on the second class period with a video of the life of Shi Huangdi.

**Assessment:**

Class participation will be an informal assessment. Students will have a written assessment on our completion of our study of Ancient China.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY/WORKS CITED:**

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Royalty. nu- The History of China-The First Emperor, Shi Huangdi (Shih huang-ti)

<http://www.royalty.nu/Asia?China?ShiHuangdi.html>, June 13, 2008.

Chang, Yin Cheng. "Chinese Legends Of Emperor Huangdi And How The World Was Formed", <http://www.beifan.com/026topic/26legends.html>, June 13, 2008

Scott Foresman's **Social Studies-The World**, copyright 2008, published by Pearson Education, Inc.

<Http://www.youtube.com/wtch?v=DinfyPqKU>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**The First Emperor  
Qin Shi-Huangdi  
259 B.C.-210 B.C.**

Define each vocabulary word. Then use it correctly in a sentence.

1. Shi Huangdi \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Qin dynasty \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. povinces \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

4. How did Shi Huangdi unify China? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Why was the Great Wall of China built? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Summarize the positive and negative aspects of the reign of Shi Huangdi. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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7. What building projects did Shi Huangdi oversee during his reign? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Based on the article that was written, the author said that Shi Huangdi was very harsh and strict. What evidence in the biography supports this opinion? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Why do you think that Shi Huangdi's tomb was so well protected? \_\_\_\_\_

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# The First Emperor

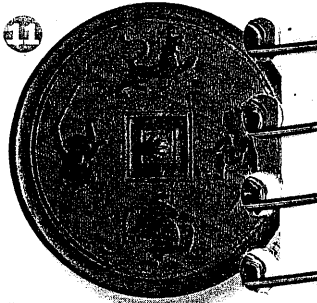
Toward the last years of the Zhou dynasty, many states were fighting for control of the government. In 221 B.C., the king of the strongest state, Qin (CHIN), became **Shi Huangdi** (SHEE hwang dee), or "first emperor" under the **Qin dynasty**. (Read more about Shi Huangdi in the biography on page 113.) No leader had been called an emperor since about 1700 B.C., the end of the days of the legends. The title signified a very powerful ruler. Qin was divided into 36 **provinces**, or political divisions. Shi Huangdi made the government more centralized by forming new states to bring all areas under his rule. Systems of money and weights and measures were standardized, which probably helped trade between regions.

Shi Huangdi started one of the biggest engineering projects in world history. Beginning under his rule, hundreds of thousands of laborers worked for hundreds of years to build the **Great Wall** of China. This was done by connecting existing defensive walls that had been built earlier. The Great Wall was

built to protect the empire from northern invaders. It was not finished for centuries. Rulers of later dynasties added to the Great Wall and rebuilt parts of it. Follow the route and time line of the Great Wall on the map below.

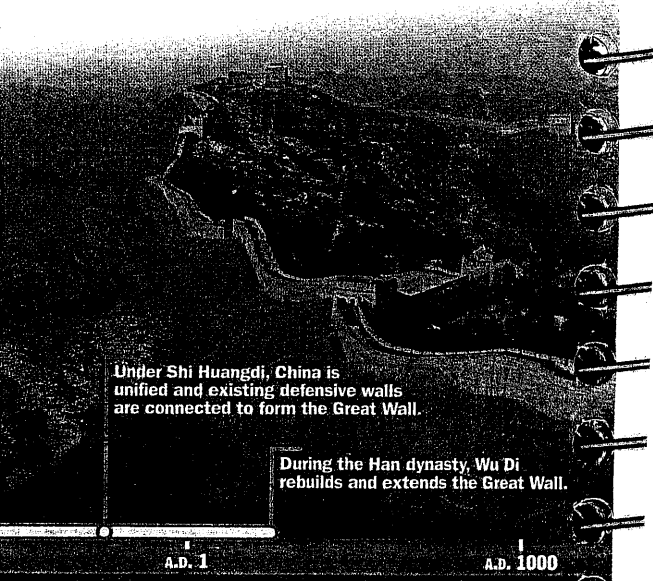
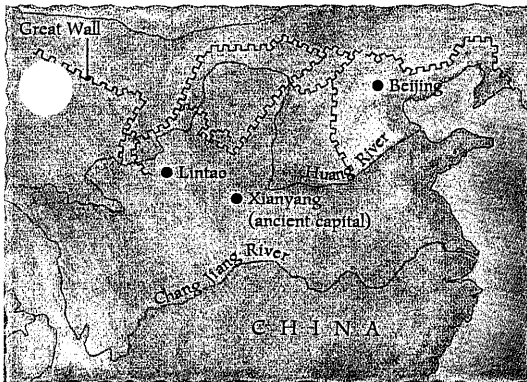
Shi Huangdi punished anyone who criticized him. He wanted the government to control what people talked about and studied. People felt oppressed, or persecuted, by this form of government. They wanted freedom, and revolts broke out. The Qin dynasty lasted only about 20 years, ending in about 206 B.C., shortly after the emperor died.

**REVIEW** What do you think may happen in a society where a ruler wants to control what people do and think? **Draw Conclusions**



▶ **Bronze mirrors were made in China as early as 500 B.C. This bronze mirror is from the Qin dynasty.**

▶ **The Great Wall crosses mountains and rough terrain. It stretches for more than 4,300 miles. A new section of the Great Wall was discovered in northwest China in 2001.**



**Under Shi Huangdi, China is unified and existing defensive walls are connected to form the Great Wall.**

**State of Chu and other states under Zhou dynasty construct defensive walls.**

**During the Han dynasty, Wu Di rebuilds and extends the Great Wall.**

2000 B.C.      1000 B.C.      A.D. 1      A.D. 1000

# Qin Shi Huangdi

259 B.C.–210 B.C.

Qin Shi Huangdi (CHIN SHEE hwang dee) became the ruler of the kingdom of Qin in China in 238 B.C. He began expanding his power immediately. By 221 B.C. he had conquered all of China. As emperor, he proclaimed that his dynasty would rule for 10,000 generations.

Shi Huangdi was a great builder. He ordered the building of three highways to reach all parts of his empire. He used these roads to personally oversee the empire. In 214 B.C. work began on the Great Wall.

The emperor had many achievements, but he was a harsh and strict ruler. For example, his building projects needed the forced labor of hundreds of thousands of his people. Many of them died while working. He also was not open to criticism. He ordered that all books except those about medicine, farming, and his own rule be burned. When some scholars objected to this,

legend says that Shi Huangdi had many of them buried alive.

After his death, Shi Huangdi was buried in an elaborate tomb carved into the side of a mountain. Guarding his body was an “army” of more than 6,000 life-sized warrior statues. In the walls were arrows ready to be released if anyone tried to enter the tomb.

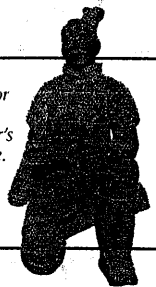


British Museum

**P**

**BIOFACT**

No two warrior statues found in the emperor's tomb are alike. This one kneels before the emperor.



**E**

## Learn from Biographies

Rebellions began soon after Shi Huangdi's death and his empire fell about four years later. What aspects of the emperor's style of rule may have been responsible for the fall of his empire?

For more information, go online to Meet the People at [www.sfsocialstudies.com](http://www.sfsocialstudies.com).

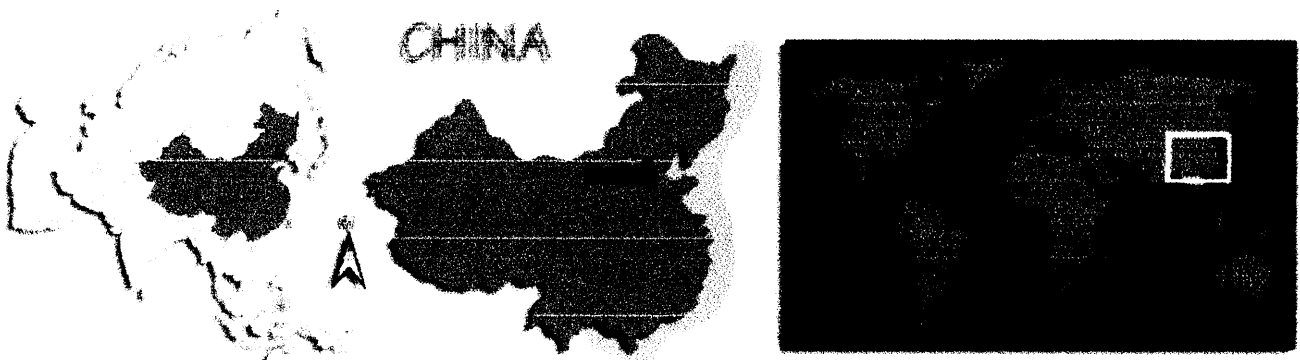


## Shi Huangdi, Ruler of the Qin Dynasty

By: Andrew Politte



Shi Huangdi, the founder of the Qin dynasty, was a violent and brutal man. Shi Huangdi provided a dynasty for generations to come, unfortunately, it was through the suffering of his people. Shi Huangdi had many names that were used, including Shi Huangdi, Ch'in, Prince Zheng, and Qin. Qin pronounced "chin" became the family name. Shi Huangdi named his land after one of his many names, the land became known as China (Clark 21).



Shi Huangdi began swallowing other warring nations in 246 BC (Hoobler 80). He then came to power in 221 BC. Shi Huangdi ruled north of the Yantze River to the Gobi Desert. Shi Huangdi destroyed the laws of the individual kingdoms and gave a standard set of laws in exchange (Clark 21). Shi Huangdi

opposed all the teachings of Confucius, which were benevolence, gentleness, and loyalty. Shi Huangdi practiced Legalism, which was the belief in strict laws and punishments (Clayre 9). During the process of this unification Shi Huangdi standardized the characters of writing, but allowed the spoken language to be diverse (Clark 21).

Because Shi Huangdi wanted to make his mark in history, Shi Huangdi believed in building large things. Shi Huangdi thought nothing of sending thousands to their death in the construction of grand things (Clayre 9). The majority of the labor force who went to build the "Great Wall" were convicts and other disliked groups whose death would not be noted. Shi Huangdi ordered several defensive portions of a stone wall to be connected to form the "Great Wall" (Hoobler 82). This northern boundary was fourteen feet high and forty feet thick. More than a million laborers died in its construction, it was said "each stone in the Great Wall cost a human life" (Clark 21). Pictures from space discovered an older wall built parallel to the Great Wall. Built fifteen thousand years ago this older wall had crumbled (Discover par.1). It is believed that the older wall was simply rebuilt by Shi Huangdi's peasants. From Shi Huangdi's biography comes this description of the "Great Wall", "He... built a Great Wall, constructing its defiles and passes in accordance with the configurations of the terrain. It started at Lin-t'ao and extended to Liao-tung, reaching a distance of more than ten thousand li. After crossing the [Yellow] River, it wound northward, touching the Yang mountains" (Koeller par.4).



Even in death Shi Huangdi was extravagant. In preparation for his death, Shi Huangdi ended the traditional emperors' burial with servants and slaves. Instead he buried himself with a life size, clay army. This army was dubbed the "Terra Cotta Soldiers". There were several different kinds of soldiers including archers, infantry, chariots, and even some horses. There was supreme quality in the detail of the soldiers, and the height indicated the position in the army. There were three different tombs; the soldiers were divided by rank with the generals in a separate, smaller tomb (Koeller, Terra Cotta par. 2). Some Chinese peasants digging a well found the tomb of Shi Huangdi. The tomb was very different from what was normally used by emperors. Normally the emperors were buried with women, and slaves. This tradition disappeared during the Qin Dynasty (Koeller, Terra Cotta par.1).

[Click to See A Movie About the Tomb](#)

Mao Zedong compared himself to Shi Huangdi as a leader who ruled with force, through Legalism (Clayre 9). It is a known fact that because of Shi Huangdi's brutality, Shi Huangdi was a hated individual. There were three assassination attempts targeted at Shi Huangdi (Koeller, Terra Cotta par.1). Shi Huangdi was extremely violent, Shi believed that all of his subjects should suffer in order for Shi to rule with relative peace. Shi Huangdi buried protestors alive and forced obedience. In order for

Shi Huangdi to build the "Great Wall", and the canals Shi Huangdi had to force the peasants to do manual labor. All these actions earned Shi Huangdi the hatred of almost everyone, including future generations (Hoobler 82). Shi Huangdi did not want any rebellions so to keep the subjects uneducated Shi suppressed freedom of thought. Shi Huangdi suppressed schools of philosophy, burned books, and buried scholars alive (Clayre 9). Books were the main threat and were burnt to stop any rebellion that could occur as a result of freedom of thought (Koeller, Burning par.2). In two hundred and thirteen BC Shi Huangdi burnt all Confucian books except one copy that was saved (Koeller, Burning par.3). When Shi Huangdi burnt the great books the scholars came to hate Shi (Clark 21). Shi Huangdi was cruel to the nobles who ruled the farther regions of China as well. Shi Huangdi moved all the nobles from their homes to Shensi. Shi Huangdi could watch the one hundred and twenty thousand nobles Shi had moved. Shi Huangdi also destroyed the kingdoms and with them, the nobles' power (Clark 21). Peasants hated the emperor the most. Shi Huangdi taxed the peasants heavily and forced them into labor. The peasants were forced to built such titanic projects as the "Great Wall", and the canals in the northeast, they also had to built the system of roads.

The assassination attempts were unsuccessful and Shi Huangdi looked healthy. Still the great emperor was nearing death. Soon, Shi Huangdi was dead before his tomb was completed. Shi Huangdi's loyal advisors were not ready to take over his empire so they disguised his death by piling dead fish on his body to hide the smell (Mirsky par.1).

While Shi Huangdi was still alive, practices of Legalism and brutal torture were Shi Huangdi's most useful tools. But ultimately, Shi Huangdi did help the kingdom by militaristically unifying the country and standardizing the written language so the subjects could work together toward a common goal.

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#### Additional Web Sites:

[http://www.taisei.co.jp/cg\\_e/ancient\\_world/xian/axian.html](http://www.taisei.co.jp/cg_e/ancient_world/xian/axian.html)