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## **Early China**

### **Level/Class:**

The lesson is intended for sixth grade students of mixed ability.

### **Objectives:**

The students will understand that features of the land affected China's history. The students will define the vocabulary words for each lesson. The students will also label important places and features on a map of Early China. The students will identify the three social classes and the development of Confucianism and Daoism. The students will create power point presentations to summarize the chapter.

### **Time:**

This lesson will take seven 50 minute class periods.

### **Materials:**

Textbook: Glencoe World History Journey Across Time, The Early Ages  
Computer access  
Handouts: map, summary chart  
Composition book and note-cards  
Pen/pencil  
Projector

### **Assessment:**

The students will be graded using a pre-made rubric on the power point presentation. They will also be grade by a chapter test and in class assignments.

### **Procedure:**

Create all materials for the chapter.

Day one: Preview the chapter. Introduce the main idea and reading focus of lesson one. Have the students define the following words on their note-cards: dynasty, aristocrat, mandate, pictograph, ideograph, Dao, and bureaucracy. Students will create a list of names and their accomplishments: Wu Wang. During the reading the students will answer the Using Geography Skills and Reading Check questions. After pages 225-231 of the text book have been read, the students will create a chart summarizing the characteristics of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Class work that is not finished in class is assigned as homework.

Day two: Review vocabulary and class work. Introduce main ideas of lesson two. The students will define the following words: filial piety, Confucianism, Daoism, and

Legalism. Students will add the following names to their list: Confucius, Laozi, and Hanfeizi. The students will answer the Reading Check, Connecting to the Past, and Understanding Chart questions during the reading of the lesson. The students will also create a chart of the Chinese Philosophers, the main ideas, and the influence on modern life. Review lesson one and two. Class work not finished in class is assigned as homework.

Day three: Review vocabulary and class work. Introduce the main ideas for lesson three. The students will define the word acupuncture. Students will add the following names to the list: Qin Shihuangdi, Liu Bang, and Han Wudi. Students will complete Using Geography Skills, Reading Check, and Understanding charts. The students will create a cause and effect chart showing the inventions of the Han Dynasty and the resulting impact on society. Class work not finished in class is assigned as homework.

Day four and five: Review vocabulary and class work. Students will work in pairs to create a power point presentation using page 250 of the text book. The students will have previous experience creating power point presentations. Presentations must be completed by the end of day 5.

Day six: View presentations.

Day seven: Chapter test.

**References:** I used the on-line student edition of the text book. As I was not able to cut, paste, or copy I tried to recreate the pages as handouts.

<http://www.glencoe.com/ose/>  
Access code: B0725CF99F

I used the following site to find maps of the empires.

<http://www.encarta.nl>

## Section One:

Page 225:

## China's Geography

**Main Idea:** Rivers, mountains, and deserts helped shape China's civilization.

**Reading Focus:** Why do you think so many cities and towns were built by rivers? Read to learn why rivers were important to the development of China.

The **Huang He** (HWANGH HUH), or Yellow River, flows across China for more than 2,900 miles (4,666 km). It gets its name from the rich yellow soil it carries from Mongolia to the Pacific Ocean.

Like rivers in early Mesopotamia and Egypt, China's Huang He flooded the land. The flooding was good and bad for the Chinese. When the river overflowed,

### Using Geography Skills:



While the country of China has one of the world's largest populations, little of its land can be farmed.

1. What is the name of the desert on China's northern border near Mongolia?
2. What effect did China's mountains and deserts have on its history?

many people drowned and many homes destroyed. As a result, the Chinese called the Huang He "China's sorrow."

The river, however, also brought a gift. When the river flooded, it left behind rich topsoil in the Huang He valley. As a result, farmers could grow large amount of food on very small farms.

China also has another great river, called the Chang Jiang (CHAHNG JYAHNG), or the Yangtze River. The Chang Jiang is even longer than the Huang He. It flows about 3,400 miles (5,471 km) east across central China where it empties into the Yellow Sea. Like the Huang He Valley, the valley of the Chang Jiang also has rich soil for farming.

Even though has rich soil along its rivers, only one-tenth of its land can be farmed. That is because mountains and deserts cover most of the land. The towering Himalaya close off China to the southwest. The Kunlan Shan and Tian Shan are mountain ranges on China's western border. The Gobi, a vast, cold, rocky desert spreads east from the mountains. These mountains and deserts shaped much of Chinese history. They were like a wall around Chinese, separating them from most other peoples.

Over time, the Chinese people united to form one kingdom. They called their homeland the "Middle Kingdom." To them, it was the world's center and its leading civilization. The Chinese developed a way of life that lasted into modern times.



**Reading Check Identify** Name two rivers important to early Chinese civilizations.

### Using Geography Skills:



The Shang probably built the first Chinese cities.

1. What rivers were found within the borders of the Shang dynasty?
2. In what part of the Shang kingdom was Anyang?

## The Shang Dynasty

**Main Idea:** Rulers known as the Shang became powerful because they controlled land and had strong armies.

**Reading Focus:** Who are the leaders in your community? What gives them their power? Read to learn why some in early China had more power than others.

Little is known about how early Chinese civilization began. Archeologists, however, have found pottery in the Huang He valley dating back thousands of years. These artifacts show that the Huang He was the first center of Chinese civilization. Archeologists think that people stayed in the valley and farmed the land because of the rich soil. As their numbers rose, they began building towns, and soon after, the first Chinese civilization began.

China's first rulers were probably part of the Xia (SYAH) dynasty. A **dynasty** (DY-nuh·stee) is a line of rulers who belong to the same family. Little is known about the Xia. We know more about the next dynasty, the Shang. The Shang Kings ruled from about 1750 B.C to 1045 B.C.

**Who Were the Shang?** Archeologists have found huge walls, royal palaces, and royal tombs from the time of the Shang. These remains show that the Shang may have built the

first Chinese cities. One of these cities was **Anyang** (AHN YAHNG) in northern China. From there, the Shang kings ruled the early Chinese people.

The people of the Shang dynasty were divided into groups. The most powerful group was the king and his family. The first Shang king ruled over a small area in northern China. His armies used chariots and bronze weapons to take over nearby areas. In time, the Shang kings ruled over most of the Huang He Valley.

Later, Shang Kings chose warlords to govern the kingdom's territories. Warlords are military leaders who command their own armies. However, the king controlled even larger armies who defended the kingdom's borders. The king's armies helped him stay in power.

Under the king, the warlords and other royal officials made up the upper class. They were the **aristocrats** (uh Rihs tuh krats), nobles whose wealth came from the land they owned. Aristocrats passed their land and their power from one generation to the next.

In Shang China, a few people were traders and artisans. Most Chinese, however, were farmers. They worked the land that belonged to the aristocrats. They grew grains, such as millet, wheat, and rice, and raised cattle, sheep, and chickens. A small number of enslaved people captured in war also lived in Shang China.

**Spirits and Ancestors** People in Shang China worshiped gods and spirits. Spirits were believed to live in mountains, rivers, and seas. The people believe that they had to keep the gods and spirits happy by making offerings of food and other goods. They believed that the gods and spirits would be angry if they were not treated well. Angry gods and spirits might cause farmers to have a poor harvest or armies to lose a battle

People also honored their ancestors, or departed family members. Offerings were made in the hope that ancestors would help in times of need and bring good luck. To this day, many Chinese still remember their ancestors by going to temples and burning small paper copies of food and clothing.

## The Way It Was

### Focus on Everyday Life

**The Role of Women** Zheng Zhenxiang was China's first female archeologist. In 1976, she found the tomb of Fu Hao, China's first female general. In the tomb were more than 2,000 artifacts from the Shang dynasty, including weapons, bronze vessels, jade objects, and bones with Chinese characters carved on them.

Fu Hao, the wife of Wu Ding, was given a royal burial. She was famous for her strength, martial arts skills, and military strategies. She often helped her husband defeat their enemies on the battlefield. Fu Hao was the first female in China's history to receive the highest military rank. Her tomb and its artifacts reveal the grand civilization of China's Shang dynasty. During this period, the Chinese developed writing, a calendar, and musical instruments.

1. What was Fu Hao famous for in her life?
2. Describe what artifacts found in Fu Hao's tomb might reveal about life during that time?

These copies represent things that their relatives may need in the afterlife.

**Telling the Future** Shang kings believed that they received power and wisdom from the gods, spirits, and their ancestors.

## History Makers

### Chinese Writers

The Chinese writing system was created nearly 3,500 years ago during the Shang dynasty. The earliest examples Chinese writing have been found on animal bones. The carvings on these bones show that Chinese writing has always used symbols to represent words. Some of the carvings are pictures. For example, the verb *to go* was represented by a picture of a foot. The characters were carved in vertical columns and read from top to bottom, like modern Chinese writing. The writing on the bones recorded the Shang kings' questions about a wide range of topics—from the weather to good fortune. Chinese writing has changed in many ways, but it still reflects its ancient roots in pictures and symbols.

Shang religion and government were closely linked, just as they were in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. An important duty of Shang kings was to contact the gods, spirits, and ancestors before making important decisions.

The kings asked for the gods' help by using oracle bones. They had priests scratch questions on the bones such as "Will I win the battle?" and "Will I recover from my illness?" Then the priests placed hot metal rods inside the bones, causing them to crack. They believed that the patterns of the cracks formed answers from the gods. The priest interpreted the answers and wrote them down for the kings. Scratches on oracle bones are the earliest known examples of Chinese writing.

**The Chinese Language** The scratches on oracle bones show how today's Chinese writing began. However, the modern Chinese language is more complex.

Like many other ancient languages, early Chinese writing used pictographs and ideographs. **Pictographs** are characters that stand for objects. For example, the Chinese characters for a mountain, the sun, and the moon are pictographs. **Ideographs** are another kind of character used in Chinese writing. They join two or more pictographs to represent an idea. For example, the ideograph for "east" relates to the idea of the sun rising in the east. It is a combination of pictographs that show the sun coming up behind trees.

Unlike Chinese, English and many other have writing systems based on alphabets. An alphabet uses characters that stand for sounds. The Chinese use some characters to stand for sounds, but most characters still represent whole words.

**Shang Artists** The people in Shang China developed many skills. Farmers produced silk, which weavers used to make colorful clothes. Artisans made vases and dishes from fine white clay. They also carved statues from ivory and a green stone called jade. The Shang are best known for their works of bronze. To make bronze objects, artisans made clay models in several sections. Next, they carved detailed designs into the clay. Then, they fit the pieces of the mold tightly together and poured in melted bronze. When the bronze cooled, the mold was removed. A beautiful decorated work of art remained.

Shang bronzes included sculptures, vases, drinking cups, and containers called urns. The Shang used bronze urns to prepare and serve food for rituals honoring ancestors.



**Reading Check** Explain What was the role Shang warlords?

## The Zhou Dynasty

**Main Idea:** Chinese rulers claimed that the Mandate of Heaven gave them the right to rule.

**Reading Focus:** Who gives you permission to do the things you do? Your mother? Your teacher? Read to find out how the rulers of the Zhou dynasty turned to the heavens to for permission to rule.

During the rule of the Shang, a great gap existed between the rich and the poor. Shang kings lived in luxury and began to treat their people cruelly. As a result, they lost the support of their people in the kingdom. In 1045 B.C. an aristocrat named **Wu Wang** led a rebellion against the Shang. After defeating the Shang, Wu began a new dynasty called the Zhou.

**The Zhou Government** The Zhou dynasty ruled for more than 800 years—longer than any other dynasty in Chinese history. Zhou kings ruled much like Shang rulers. The Zhou king was at the head of the government. Under him was a large **bureaucracy**. A bureaucracy is made up of appointed officials who are responsible for different areas of government. Like the Shang rulers, the Zhou king was in charge of defending the kingdom.



**Using Geography Skills** Zhou rules maintained the longest lasting dynasty in Chinese history.

1. What body of water made up the eastern border of the Zhou territory?
2. Why did the Zhou divide their kingdom into smaller territories?

The Zhou kings copied the Shang system of dividing the kingdom into smaller territories. The kings put aristocrats they trusted in charge of each territory. The positions the aristocrats held were hereditary. That meant that when the aristocrat died, his son or another relative would take over as ruler of that territory.

The Chinese considered the king their link between heaven and earth. His chief duty was to carry out religious rituals. The Chinese believed these rituals strengthened the link between them and the gods. This belief paved the way for a new idea that the Zhou kings

introduced to government. They claimed that kings ruled China because they had the Mandate of Heaven.

**What Was the Mandate of Heaven?** According to Zhou rulers, a heavenly law gave the Zhou king power to rule. This **mandate**, or formal order, was called the Mandate of Heaven. Based on the mandate, the king was chosen by heavenly order because of his talent and virtue. Therefore, he could rule the people with goodness and wisdom.

The Mandate of Heaven worked in two ways. First, the people expected the king to rule according to the proper “Way” called the **Dao**. His duty was to keep the gods happy. A natural disaster or a bad harvest was a sign that he failed his duty. People then had the right to overthrow and replace the king. The Mandate of heaven also worked another way. It gave the people, as well as the king, important rights. For example, people had the right to overthrow a dishonest or evil ruler. It also made it clear that the king was not a god himself. Of course, each new dynasty claimed it had the Mandate of Heaven. The only way people could question the claim was by overthrowing the dynasty.

**New Tools and Trade** For thousands of years, Chinese farmers depended on rain to water their crops. During the Zhou dynasty, the Chinese developed irrigation and flood control systems. As a result, farmers could grow more crops than ever. Improvements in farming tools also helped farmers produce more crops. By 550 B.C., the Chinese were using iron plows. These sturdy plows broke up the land that had been too hard to farm with wooden plows. As a result, the Chinese could plow more and produce many more crops. Because more food could support more people, the population increased. During the late Zhou dynasty, China’s population had expanded to about 50 million people.

Trade and manufacturing grew along with farming. An important trade item during the Zhou dynasty was silk. Pieces of Chinese silk have been found throughout central Asia and as far away as Greece. This suggests that the Chinese traded far and wide.

**The Zhou Empire Falls** Over time, the local rulers of the Zhou territories became powerful. They stopped obeying the Zhou kings and set up their own states. In 403 B.C. fighting broke out. For almost 200 years, the states battled each other. Historians call this time the “Period of the Warring States.” Instead of nobles driving chariots, the warring states used large armies of foot soldiers. To get enough soldiers, they issued laws forcing peasants to serve in the army. The armies fought with swords, spears, and crossbows. A crossbow uses a crank to pull the string and shoots arrows with great force. As fighting went on, the Chinese invented the saddle and stirrup. These let soldiers ride horses and use spears and crossbows while riding. In 221 B.C. the ruler of Qin, one of the warring states, used a large cavalry force to defeat the other states and set up a new dynasty.



**Reading Check** Identify What was the chief duty of Chinese kings?

## Life in Ancient China

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**Main Idea:** Chinese society had three main social classes: landowning aristocrats, farmers and merchants.

**Reading Focus:** Have you heard the terms *high society* and *working class*? They describe social classes in America. Read on to find out about social classes in China.

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A **social class** includes people who share a similar position in society. Early Chinese society had three main social classes:

- landowning aristocrats
- peasant farmers
- merchants

**Classes in Chinese Society** China's aristocratic families owned large estates in early China. They lived in large houses with tile roofs, courtyards, and gardens. Fine furniture and silk hangings filled their rooms, and their houses were surrounded by walls to keep out bandits.

The aristocratic families did not own large estates for long. Each aristocrat divided his land among his sons. As a result, sons and grandsons owned much less property than their fathers and grandfathers had owned.

Aristocrats relied on farmers to grow the crops that made them rich. About nine out of ten Chinese were farmers. They lived in simple houses inside village walls. The aristocrats owned the fields outside the village walls. In these fields, farmers in northern China grew wheat and a grain called millet. In the south, where the climate was warmer and wetter, they were able to grow rice.

To pay for the use of the land, the farmers gave part of their crops to the landowners. Most farmers also owned a small piece of land where they grew food for their family. A typical family ate fish, turnips, beans, wheat or rice, and millet. The farmers had to pay taxes and work one month each year building roads and helping on other big government projects. In wartime, the farmers also served as soldiers.

In Chinese society, farmers ranked above merchants. The merchant social class included shopkeepers, traders, and bankers. The merchants lived in towns and provided goods and services to the landowners.

Many merchants became quite rich, but landowners and farmers still looked down on them. Chinese leaders believed that government officials should not be concerned with money. As a result, merchants were not allowed to have government jobs.

## The Way It Was

### Focus On Everyday Life

**Chinese Farming** Farmers in ancient China had to find ways to grow enough food to feed their large population. It was often difficult because of the dry, mountainous land.

Over centuries, farmers learned to cut terraces—flat areas, like a series of deep steps—into the mountain slopes. Terraces made more land available for farming and kept the soil from eroding, or wearing away. Early farmers also used the terraces as a way of irrigating their crops. As rain fell, it flowed down from one terrace to the

**What Was Life Like in a Chinese Family** The family was the basic building block of Chinese society. Because farming in ancient China required many workers, people had big families to help them produce more and become wealthier. Even the young children

of a family worked in the fields. Older sons raised their own crops and provided food for their parents. Chinese people also took care of people in need—the aged, the young, and the sick.

Chinese families practiced **filial piety**. This meant that children had to respect their parents and older relatives. Family members placed the needs and desires of the head of the family before their own. The head of the family was the oldest male, usually the father. However, a son could take on this role, and then even his mother had to obey him.

Men and women had very different roles in early China. Men were respected because they grew the crops. They went to school, ran the government, and fought wars. The Chinese considered these jobs more important than the work that women did. Most women raised children and managed the household.

Chinese women could not hold government posts. However, women in the royal court could influence government decisions. Wives of rulers or women in the royal family often convinced men in power to see things their way.



**Reading Check** Explain Why did the amount of land owned by each aristocrat decrease over time?

next, watering the crops. This method of farming, called terrace farming, is still used in China today.

Farmers in ancient China were the first to use insects to protect their crops from damage by other insects. As early as A.D. 304, Chinese farmers used ants to prevent other insects from damaging their citrus fruit trees. They also used frogs and birds for pest control.

### Connecting to the Past

1. How did farmers in ancient China increase the amount of productive farmland?
2. What three farming methods helped farmers in ancient China grow more food?

## Chinese Thinkers

**Main Idea:** Three Chinese Philosophies, Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism grew out of a need for order.

**Reading Focus:** If people around you were arguing and fighting, what would you do? Read to learn about early Chinese ideas for restoring order.

As the Zhou kingdom weakened in the 500sB.C., violence became common. During the Period of the Warring States, rulers sent armies to destroy enemy states. Whole villages of men, women, and children were beheaded. Many Chinese began looking for ways to restore order to society.

Between 500B.C. and 200B.C., Chinese thinkers developed three major theories about how to create a peaceful society. These theories are called Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism.

## Chinese Numbering System

### Chinese Numbers

数码	小写	大写
0	〇	零
1	一	壹
2	二	贰
3	三	叁
4	四	肆
5	五	伍
6	六	陆
7	七	柒
8	八	捌
9	九	玖
10	十	拾
100	百	佰
1000	千	仟

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### Understanding Charts

The Chinese system of numbering is based on units of 10. It uses characters to represent 0 through 9 and the powers of 10 (10, 100, 1,000, and so fourth)

1. How would you write the number 328 using the Chinese numbering system?

**Who Was Confucius?** Confucius was ancient China's first great thinker and teacher. He wanted to end the problems in China and bring peace to society.

Confucius believed that people needed to have a sense of duty. Duty meant that a person must put the needs of family and community before his or her own needs. Each person owed a duty to another person. Parents owed their love to their children, children owed their parents honor. Husbands owed their wives support, and wives owed their husbands obedience. Above all, rulers had to set good examples. If a king ruled for the common good, his subjects would respect him and society would prosper.

Confucius believed that if each person did his or her duty, society as a whole would do well. He also urged people to be good and to seek knowledge:

“There are those who act without knowing; I will have none of this. To hear a lot, chose the good, and follow it, to see a lot and learn to recognize it: this is next to knowledge.”



--Confucius, *Analects*

To Confucius, the best way to behave was similar to an idea known as the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” Confucius urged people to “measure the feeling of others by one's own,” for “within the four seas all are brothers.”

Confucius traveled through China trying to persuade government leaders to follow his ideas. **Confucianism** taught that all men with a talent for governing should take part in government. Of course, this idea was not popular with aristocrats, and few leaders listened.

Over time, Confucius won many followers who honored him as a great teacher. They wrote down his sayings and carried his message. After Confucius died in 479 B.C., his sayings spread throughout China.

## Chinese Philosophers

	Confucianism	Daoism
Founder	Confucius	Laozi
Main Ideas	 <p>People should put the needs of their family and community first.</p>	 <p>People should give up worldly desires in favor of nature and the Dao.</p>
Influence on Modern Life	<p>Many Chinese accept his idea duty to family. His ideas helped open government jobs to people with talent.</p>	<p>Daoism teaches the importance of nature and encourages people to treat nature with respect and reverence.</p>

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## Legalism

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Hanfeizi

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Society needs a system of harsh laws and strict punishment.

Legalists developed laws that became an important part of Chinese history.

### Understanding Charts

Three philosophies developed in early China.

1. Which philosophy encourages followers to concentrate on duty and humanity?
2. Which of these philosophies do you think would be most popular in the world today?

**What Is Daoism?** **Daoism** is another Chinese philosophy that promotes a peaceful society. Daoism is based on the teachings of **Laozi**. Laozi, or the Old Master, lived around the same time as Confucius. Scholars do not know if Laozi was a real person. However, the ideas credited to him became popular between 500 B.C. and 300 B.C. The ideas of Daoism are written in *Dao De Jing* (The Way of the Dao). Like Confucianism, Daoism tells people how to behave. Daoists believed that people should give up worldly desires.

They should turn to nature and the Dao—the force that guides all things. To show how to follow the Dao, Daoists used examples from nature:

“Higher good is like water:

The good in water benefits all, and does so without contention. It rests where people dislike to be, so it is close to the way. Where it dwells becomes good ground; profound is the good in its heart, Benevolent the good it bestows.”

--Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*

In some ways, Daoism is the opposite of Confucianism. Followers of Confucius taught that people should work hard to improve the world. Daoism called on people to give up their concerns about the world. It said they should seek inner peace and live in harmony with nature. Many Chinese followed both Confucianism and Daoism.

**What Is Legalism?** A third group of thinkers disagreed with the idea that honorable men in government could bring peace to society. Instead, they argued for a system of laws. People called their thinking **Legalism**, or the “School of Law.”

A scholar named **Hanfeizi** developed the teachings of Legalism during the 200sB.C. Unlike Confucius or Laozi, Hanfeizi taught that humans were naturally evil. He believed that they needed harsh laws and stiff punishments to force them to do their duty. His followers believed that a strong ruler was needed to keep order in society.

Many aristocrats liked Legalism because it favored force and power, and it did not require rulers to show kindness or understanding. Its ideas led to the cruel laws and punishments often used to control Chinese farmers.



**Reading Check** Explain Why did Hanfeizi believe that people needed laws and punishment?

## Emperor Qin Shihuangdi

**Main Idea:** Qin Shihuangdi used harsh methods to unify and defend China.

**Reading Focus:** Imagine your city or state without any roads. How would people get from one place to another? Read to find out how a Chinese ruler used roads and canals to unite China.

You have read about the problems in China from 400B.C. to 200 B.C. The rulers of powerful local states fought one another and ignored the Zhou kings. One of these states was called Qin. Its ruler took over neighboring states one by one. In 221 B.C. the Qin ruler named himself **Qin Shihuangdi**,

### Qin and Han Empires 221- B.C. –



### Using Geography Skills

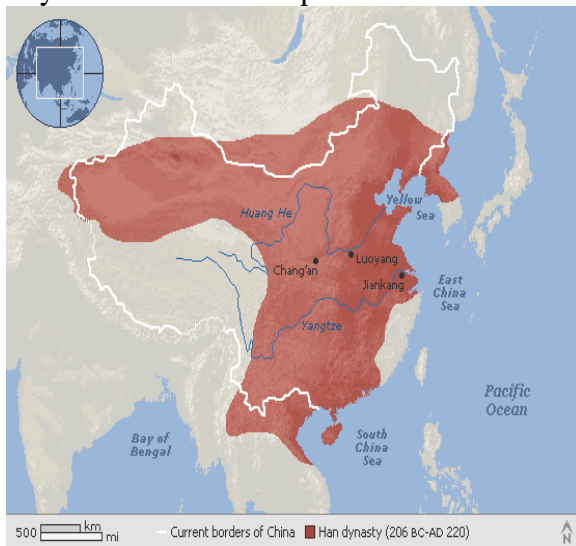
During both the Qin and Han dynasties, China’s empire expanded.

1. Which geographical areas did both empires include?
2. Which empire expanded farthest west?

which means “the First Qin Emperor.” The Qin ruler made changes in China’s government that would last for 2,000 years.

**A Powerful Ruler** Qin based his rule on the ideas of Legalism. He had everyone who opposed him punished or killed. Books opposing his view were publically burned. Qin made the central government stronger than ever before. He appointed government officials, called censors, to make sure government officials did their jobs.

Second in power to the central government were provinces and counties. Under Zhou kings, officials who ran these areas passed on their posts to sons or relatives. Under Qin, only he could fill these posts.



Qin Shihuangdi unified China. He created one currency, or type of money, to be used throughout the empire. He also ordered the building of roads and a huge canal. The canal connected the Chang Jiang in central China to what is today the city of **Guangzhou** in southern China. He used the canal to ship supplies to his troops in far-off territories.

**The Great Wall** Northern China was bordered by the vast Gobi. Nomads, people who move from place to place with herds of animals, lived in the Gobi. The Chinese knew them as the Xiongnu. The Xiongnu were master at fighting on horseback. They often attacked Chinese farms and villages. Several Chinese rulers in the north built walls to keep out the Xiongnu.

Qin Shihuangdi forced farmers to leave their fields and work on connecting and strengthening the walls. The result was the Great Wall of China, built with stone, sand, and piled rubble. However, Qin did not build the wall that we know today. It was built about 1,500 years later.

**Why Did People Rebel?** Many Chinese viewed Qin Shihuangdi as a cruel leader. Aristocrats were angry because he reduced their power. Scholars hated him for burning

their writings. Farmers hated him for forcing them to build roads and the Great Wall. Four years after the emperor died in 210 B.C., the people overthrew his dynasty. Civil War followed, and a new dynasty arose.



**Reading Check** Explain Why Qin face little opposition during most of his reign?

## The Han Dynasty

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**Main Idea:** Developments during the Han dynasty improved life for all Chinese.

**Reading Focus:** How much time do you spend studying for tests? Find out why some Chinese spent years studying for one test?

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In 202 B.C. **Liu Bang** founded the Han Dynasty. Liu Bang, who was once a peasant, became a military leader and defeated his rivals. He declared himself Han Gaozu—“Exalted Emperor of Han.” Although Han Gaozu threw out the harsh policies of the Qin dynasty, he continued to use censors and also divided the empire into provinces and counties.

**What Was the Civil Service?** The Han reached its peak under the leadership of **Han Wudi**, which means “Martial Emperor of Han.” He ruled from 141 B.C. to 87 B.C. because Wudi wanted talented people to fill government posts, job seekers had to take long, difficult tests to qualify for openings in the bureaucracy. Those with the highest scores got the jobs.

In time, Wudi’s test became the civil service examinations. This system for choosing officials remained part of Chinese civilization for 2,000 years. The system was supposed to help anyone with the right skills to get a job with the government. However, it actually favored the rich. Only wealthy families could afford to educate their sons for the difficult exam.

Students preparing for these tests learned law, history, and the teachings of Confucius. They began to memorize the works of Confucius at age seven. After many years of schooling, the students took their civil service examinations. Only one in five passed. Those who failed taught school, took jobs as assistants to officials, or were supported by their families.

**The Chinese Empire Grows** A large bureaucracy was needed to rule the rapidly growing empire. The population had grown from about 20 million under Han Gaozu to more than 60 million under Han Wudi.

Because farmers had to divide their lands among more and more sons, by the middle of the Han dynasty the average farmer owned only about one acre of land. With so little land, farm families could not raise enough to live. As a result, many sold their land to aristocrats and became tenant farmers. Tenant farmers work on land that is owned by someone else and pay rent in crops. The aristocrats now owned thousands of acres, but peasants remained trapped in poverty.

China's empire grew in size as well as in population. Han armies added lands to the south and pushed China's borders westward. The Han dynasty also made the country more secure.

After Wudi's armies drove back the Xiongnu—the nomads to the north—the Chinese lived in peace for almost 150 years.

During this period of peace, new forms of Chinese literature appeared. Scholars and historians wrote new histories of current events and made copies of old literature. The focus of art also changed during the Han dynasty. Wealthy families commissioned products made of the best quality silk and wall carvings featuring scenes of everyday life.

**An Era of Inventions** New inventions during the Han dynasty helped Chinese workers produce more than ever. Millers used newly invented waterwheels to grind more grain, and miners used new iron drill bits to mine more salt.

Ironworkers invented steel. Paper, another Han invention, was used by government officials to record a growing amount of information.

Chinese medicine also improved under the Han. Doctors discovered that certain foods prevented disease. They used herbs to cure illnesses and eased pain by sticking thin needles into patients' skin. This treatment is known as **acupuncture**.

The Chinese also invented the rudder and a new way to move the sails of ships. These changes allowed ships to sail into the wind for the first time. Chinese merchant ships could now travel to the islands of Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean. As a result, China established trade as far away as India and the Mediterranean Sea.



**Reading Check** Explain How did China's empire increase in size during the Han dynasty?

## The Silk Road

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**Main Idea:** The Silk Road carried Chinese goods as far as Greece and Rome.

**Reading Focus:** Many of the things we buy today are made in China. Read to learn how goods made in China long ago made it all the way to Europe.

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Emperor Han Wudi ordered a general named Zhang Qian to explore areas west of China. Zhang was sent on this mission to find allies for China against its enemies, especially the Xiongnu to the north. After a journey of about 13 years, Zhang returned to China. He failed to find allies, but he told of a mighty empire to the west with large cities full of people "who cut their hair short, wear embroidered clothes, and ride in very small chariots." Zhang was describing the Roman empire. He had also discovered another kingdom, perhaps in Kazakhstan, where there were horses of exceptional strength and size.

Emperor Wudi was delighted to hear this because the cavalry of the Xiongnu gave them a great advantage over his army, which was mostly infantry. The emperor encouraged trade to get these horses. The result was the **Silk Road**, a large network of trade routes stretching 4,000 miles (6,436 km) from western China to southwest Asia.

Merchants used camels to carry their goods across deserts and mountains to central Asia. From there Arabs carried the goods to the Mediterranean Sea. The trip over the Silk Road was expensive because it was difficult and dangerous. Merchants had to pay taxes to many kingdoms as they moved the goods east and west. For this reason, they carried only high-priced goods such as silk, spices, tea, and porcelain.



**Reading Check** Conclude Why were only expensive goods carried on the Silk Road?

## More Changes in China

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**Main Idea:** Unrest in China helped Buddhism to spread.

**Reading Focus:** What do you do when you feel frightened or unsafe? Read to find out how those feelings triggered the spread of Buddhism from India to China.

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As you read in Chapter 6, Buddhism began in India but it soon spread to other countries as well. Merchants and teachers from India brought Buddhism to China during the A.D. 100s. At first, only a few merchants and scholars were interested in the new religion. In time however, Buddhism became very popular. One of the most important reasons that the Chinese people began to believe in Buddhism was the fall of the Han dynasty.

The Han emperors after Wudi were weak and foolish. As a result, the central government lost respect and power. At the same time, as you read earlier, the aristocrats began grabbing more land and wealth. Dishonest officials and greedy aristocrats caused unrest among the farmers.

Wars, rebellions, and plots against the emperor put an end to the Han dynasty. In A.D. 190 a rebel attacked the Han capital, **Luoyang**. By A.D. 220, China had plunged into civil war. To make the situation worse, the northern nomads invaded the country.

The collapse of the government and the beginning of the civil war frightened many Chinese. They felt unsafe. Buddhist ideas helped people cope with the stress and their fear. Even the followers of other religions found Buddhism attractive. Followers of Confucius and Daoists admired Buddhist ideas. By the 400s, Buddhism became popular in China.



**Reading Check** Identify What groups in China were the first to adopt Buddhism?