

Ancient China

Before You Read: Predicting

The Big Idea below is a general historical idea that will be applied to the region in this chapter. Write three questions about the idea that can be answered as you read. Here is an example:

What religions are practiced in China?

Watch for the answers to your questions as you read the chapter.

Big Ideas About Ancient China

Belief Systems Many religions and belief systems start with the ideas of a teacher or prophet.

Three major belief systems came out of China. They are Legalism, Confucianism, and Daoism. They developed during a time of unrest. Each one attempted to find a way of bringing peace and harmony to the land.



Integrated Technology

eEdition

- Interactive Maps
- Interactive Visuals
- Starting with a Story



Ancient China



INTERNET RESOURCES

Go to ClassZone.com for

- WebQuest
- Homework Helper
- Research Links
- Internet Activities
- Quizzes
- Maps
- Test Practice
- Current Events



Taklimakan
Desert

HIMALAYAS

CHINA

WORLD

1800 B.C.

1792 B.C.

Hammurabi begins his reign.

1766 B.C.

Shang Dynasty established.
(jade stag pendant) ►

1500 B.C.



1200 B.C.

1200 B.C.

Olmec culture in Mexico begins.
(Olmec man with jaguar cub) ►

1027 B.C.

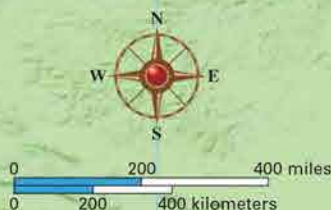
Zhou Dynasty founded.



Ancient China, 1523–221 B.C.

INTERACTIVE

- Shang Dynasty 1300 B.C.
- Zhou Dynasty 600 B.C.
- Present-day China



551 B.C.
Confucius born.
(portrait of Confucius)

403 B.C.
Period of Warring
States begins.

202 B.C.
Liu Bang becomes the first
emperor of the Han Dynasty.

600 B.C.

300 B.C.

B.C. A.D.

A.D. 300

751 B.C.
Piankhi of Kush
conquers Egypt.

509 B.C.
Roman Republic established.
(ruins of the
Roman Colosseum)



The Minister of Justice Comes to Town

Background: Around 500 B.C., the Duke of Lu appointed Confucius the minister of justice. Tradition has it that crime almost disappeared from the area in response to the teachings and actions of Confucius. In this story, Confucius is visiting a village in his district. The people wonder about the new minister of justice and the stories told about what he teaches and how he acts. You have joined others in the village gathering to meet Confucius.

Wooden sculpture of Confucius ►



We saw his oxcart coming in the distance. It was Confucius, the great teacher. We waited, excited at his presence. He was our minister of justice. We had heard stories about how crime and violence had disappeared from villages where he was the main official. We thought this sounded too good to be true.

"I am happy that you came," he said, to greet us all. Then he began to speak. "We need to change our ways of living so that we can all live in peace with each other. I have studied how to make this happen." Then he said that peace required us to learn how to treat each other kindly.

He said that we must behave properly with our family members, our neighbors, and the rulers. He went on, "In our families we must show respect for our parents and our ancestors. We must be righteous, or do what is right rather than what brings us profit. Each of us must know our place. Each has a duty to another."

I asked if that meant the government officials, too. They were always cheating the people and acting as if they were gods. Confucius quickly responded. "That includes the highest rulers," he said. "They must set examples of goodness for us. In turn, we must obey them as their subjects."

"Teacher," I asked, "is that all? Will that make crime and violence go away?" He replied, "It may seem too simple, but it will work. However," he cautioned, "all must agree to respect and honor each other."

He rose to leave. I, for one, was willing to try out his ideas. Did anyone else feel the way I did?

What impact do you think Confucius' ideas will have on the village?

Reading & Writing

- 1. READING: Character and Plot** What character trait does Confucius suggest is important in creating a peaceful society? How do you think Confucius' ideas will be accepted in the village?
- 2. WRITING: Persuasion** Write a letter to the village members explaining why Confucius' ideas will lead to a more peaceful village.

Lesson

1

MAIN IDEAS

- 1 **Geography** Natural barriers isolate China's fertile river valleys from other parts of Asia.
- 2 **Government** The Shang Dynasty ruled China's earliest civilization, which arose near the Huang He.
- 3 **Government** Claiming approval from the gods, the Zhou conquered the Shang and took over China.

TAKING NOTES

Reading Skill: Explaining Geographic Patterns

Facts about geography can help you understand settlement patterns in history. As you read, take notes on the natural barriers and the farming area of China. Record the information on a Web diagram placing the North China Plain in the center circle.



 Skillbuilder Handbook, page R16



▲ Shang Bronze Drinking Vessel The Shang were famous for their excellent bronzework.

Words to Know

Understanding the following words will help you read this lesson:

millet a plant that people grow for its grain (page 254)

Farmers in the northern part of China grow millet.

nomad a member of a group that has no fixed home and moves from place to place with the seasons (page 254)

The Chinese fought against invading nomads.

favor support or approval (page 256)

His recent failures led the leader to believe that he had lost the favor of the gods.

mandate an official order or command (page 256)

The approval of the Chinese gods was considered a mandate for a ruler.

Geography Shapes Life in Ancient China

TERMS & NAMES

oracle bone

pictograph

dynastic cycle

Mandate of Heaven

Build on What You Know What makes the area you live in a good place for people to live? Think about how the geographic features of your area have affected life there.

Geographic Features of China

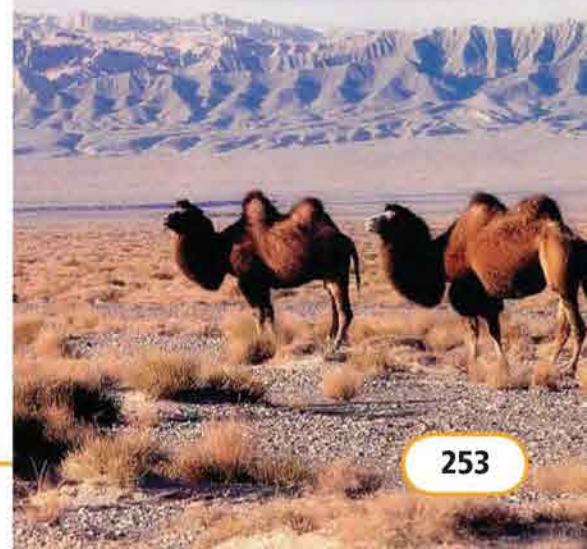
- 1 ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What effect did the physical features of China have on its early development?

The river valley pattern you studied in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley was repeated in China. Its civilization developed because two rivers brought water and silt that made farming possible. Cities grew along the banks of the river.

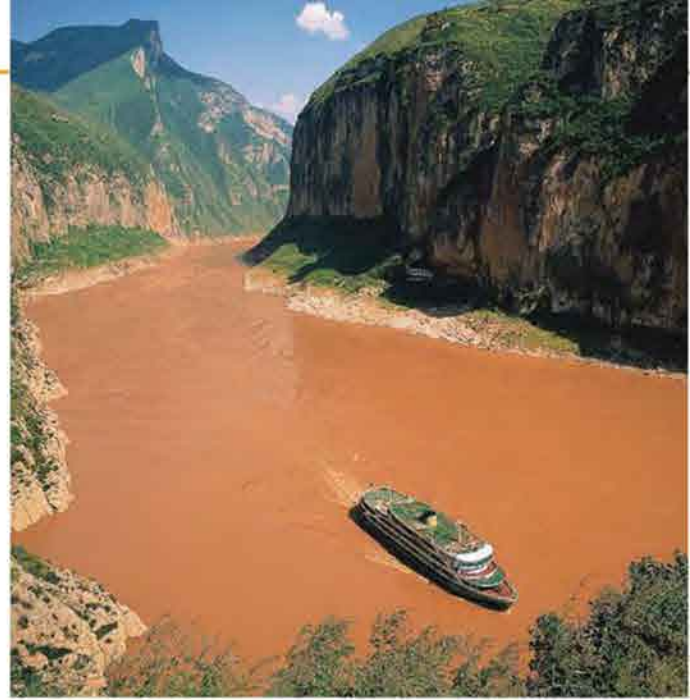
Isolated by Barriers Located on the eastern side of Asia, China lies about the same distance north of the equator as the United States. China's lands are bordered on the east by the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and the Pacific Ocean. Deserts edge the northern and western lands. To the north is the Gobi Desert and to the west lies the Taklimakan Desert. The Pamir, Tian Shan, and Himalaya mountain ranges form a tight curve on the western border.

Unlike the regions of the Nile and Fertile Crescent, where civilizations interacted with each other, China was geographically isolated. The huge mountain chains, vast deserts, and large expanses of water made the spread of ideas and goods to China difficult. As a result, Chinese civilization developed along very distinct lines.

Gobi Desert One of the largest deserts in the world, the Gobi covers more land than Texas and California combined. ▼



Two River Systems Two major rivers flow toward the Pacific Ocean. The Chang Jiang (chahng jyahng), or the Yangtze, is found in central China. The Huang He (hwahng huh) to the north is also known as the Yellow River. Their floodwaters deposit yellowish silt that makes fertile soil. In ancient times, most Chinese farming was done in the very rich land between these rivers. This land, called the North China Plain, has always been the center of Chinese civilization.



A Varied Climate China has a varied climate like the United States. Western China is dry like the western United States. The north has seasons like New England. The southeast is like the U.S. south. These different climates allow a variety of crops to be produced. Rice is grown in the moist south, while wheat and millet are grown in the drier north lands. (See map on page 283.)

▲ **Chang Jiang (Yangtze River)** This river is the longest river in Asia. It has been and still is a major trade route throughout China. Like the Huang He, it, too, carries yellow silt.

REVIEW Why was the North China Plain the center of Chinese civilization?

The Shang Dynasty

2 ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did the Chinese language develop?

Around 2000 B.C., farming settlements along the Huang He began to grow into cities. An early civilization began there, and Chinese culture today evolved from that ancient beginning. Therefore, we can say that China is the oldest continuous civilization in the world.

Shang Kings About 1766 B.C., Shang family kings began to control some cities. They set up a dynasty, or rule by generations of one family. The kings were responsible for religious activities. They claimed to rule with the gods' permission. Shang kings controlled the central portion of the North China Plain; their relatives ruled distant areas. The Shang used chariots to defend themselves against the nomads who lived to the north and west. They made war with nomadic people like the Zhou (joh).

Shang Families In Shang culture, respect for one's parents and ancestors was very important. Family was closely tied to religion. The Chinese believed that the spirits of their ancestors could bring good fortune to the family. Families paid respect to the father's ancestors by making animal sacrifices in their honor. Men ruled within the family.

Developing Language The Shang kings claimed to be able to influence the gods to help people. Shang kings received messages from the gods through **oracle bones**. These were animal bones or turtle shells on which Shang royal priests scratched questions to the gods. Next, they touched the bones with heated rods to make them crack. The royal priests interpreted the cracks and scratched the answers on the bones. These scratch marks were an early form of a writing system.

Like other ancient peoples, the Shang developed their system of writing with **pictographs**. This system of writing used simple drawings, or characters, for words or ideas. As you can see in the chart to the right, the pictographs are very similar to the modern Chinese characters. Compared to the English alphabet of 26 letters, the Chinese system of writing used a huge number of symbols. To be barely able to read and write, a person had to know at least 1,500 characters. An educated person had to know at least 10,000 characters.

One unique thing about the Chinese system of writing is that you can read Chinese without being able to speak it. (A person who speaks a language other than English can still understand $2 + 2 = 4$.) The writing system helped unify a large and varied land.

REVIEW How did the Shang develop writing?

The Zhou Dynasty

- 3 ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How were the Zhou able to conquer Shang lands?

The Zhou people moved down from the northwest. They clashed with the Shang on many occasions. Around 1027 B.C., the Zhou ruler Wu Wang led a force that defeated the Shang.

Visual Vocabulary

Oracle Bone

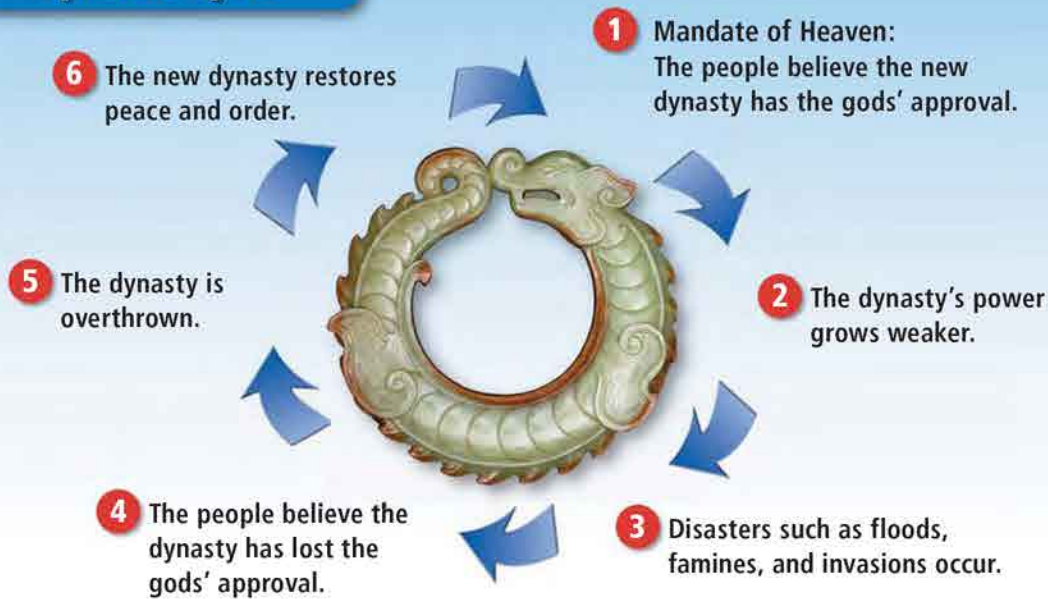


This oracle bone made of a shoulder blade has inscriptions scratched on it.

Chinese Writing

Ancient	Modern
field	
water	
ox	

Dynastic Cycle



The Zhou and the Dynastic Cycle The Zhou kings established a new dynasty in China. Chinese dynasties rose and fell in a pattern. Historians call the pattern of the rise and fall of dynasties in China the **dynastic cycle**. Look at the diagram above to see the pattern.

Like the ancient Egyptians, the Zhou kings thought that trouble would come if rulers lost heaven's favor. Eventually, the idea that a good ruler had approval from the gods became a part of Chinese culture. When a ruler was bad or foolish, the people believed the approval of the gods would be taken away. This idea was called the **Mandate of Heaven**. The Chinese people believed that troubles such as peasant uprisings, invasions, floods, or earthquakes meant that the Mandate of Heaven had been taken away. Then it was time for new leaders.

The Zhou adopted many Shang ways. This started a pattern of Chinese culture that developed until the present day.

Zhou Government Like the Shang, the Zhou did not have a strong central government. Kings put people with family ties or other trusted people in charge of regions. Those local rulers, or lords, owed loyalty and military service to the king. In return, the king promised to help protect their lands. As their towns became cities, the lords grew stronger. More groups came under their rule. The lords became less dependent on the king. They began to fight among themselves and with other peoples. The lands they added to their control expanded Chinese territory.

The Time of the Warring States Invasion of Chinese lands was a constant theme in Chinese history. After 800 B.C., nomads from the north and west invaded China. In 771 B.C., invaders destroyed the capital city of Hao and killed the king. The king's family escaped to Luoyang and set up a new capital. Because the kings were weak, the lords fought constantly. This led to a period called the Time of the Warring States, which began around 403 B.C.

REVIEW How did the idea of the Mandate of Heaven help the Zhou take over the Shang?

Lesson Summary

- River valleys supported the rise of Chinese civilization, while some geographic features helped to isolate China from outside contact.
- The Shang developed a dynasty and a culture that included a system of writing.
- The Zhou claimed to rule using the idea of the Mandate of Heaven.

Why It Matters Now . . .

The culture developed by the Shang and the Zhou still influences Chinese ways of life today.



▲ Jade Dragon Pendant The dragon is a symbol of power and excellence.

1 Lesson Review

Terms & Names

1. Explain the importance of
oracle bone dynastic cycle
pictograph Mandate of Heaven

Using Your Notes

Explaining Geographic Patterns Use your completed graphic to answer the following question:

2. How did geographic barriers affect Shang and Zhou relations with outside peoples?



Main Ideas

3. Why did Shang settlements begin along the Huang He?
4. How did the Shang develop a Chinese language?
5. How would the Chinese people know that a ruler had lost the Mandate of Heaven?

Critical Thinking

6. **Understanding Cause and Effect** How did the belief in the Mandate of Heaven help the change in government from the Shang to the Zhou?
7. **Comparing** In what ways was the settling of the Huang He Valley similar to settlements in other world regions?

Activity

Creating Elements of Language Develop pictographs and use them in a sentence about your classroom. Have classmates try to determine what you wrote.

