

# Ancient China

## Map of Ancient China

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In this unit, you will learn about ancient China. Look carefully at the map. Trace the length of the Huang River in black. Put an orange star next to Anyang. Put a green star next to Luoyang. Put a red star next to Hao.



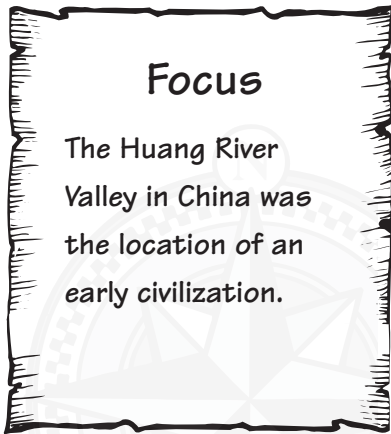
# Ancient China

## Vocabulary

1. **Analects**—the collected sayings and teachings of Confucius
2. **Bronze Age**—(3300–1200 B.C.) time when people made weapons and tools from bronze
3. **calligraphy**—artistic form of ancient Chinese writing
4. **Confucius**—influential ancient Chinese teacher and philosopher
5. **dynasty**—a ruling family
6. **Great Wall**—military fortification built to stop other people from invading China
7. **Huang River Valley**—area surrounding the Huang River in China
8. **jade**—hard, green-colored stone used in carving
9. **landscape**—a painting of a natural scene
10. **loess**—yellowish soil from the Gobi Desert
11. **oracle bones**—animal bones used for predicting the future
12. **pictograph**—a picture that stands for a word
13. **Shang Dynasty**—first dynasty in China
14. **Taoism**—ancient Chinese philosophy
15. **Terracotta Army**—collection of seven thousand life-sized sculptures made from pottery in the tomb of Shi Huangdi
16. **wattle and daub**—building technique using wood and soil utilized by the ancient Chinese
17. **Zhou Dynasty**—(1046–256 B.C.) China's longest dynasty

# Ancient Chinese Civilization

## Brief #1



### Huang River Valley

Just as the Ancient Egyptian civilization developed along the banks of a great river, so did another early civilization. **The Huang River Valley in China is home to one of the world's earliest civilizations.** Archeologists know that people settled there about 3000 B.C., which is about 5,000 years ago.

The Huang River is about 3,400 miles long. It runs through the North China Plain. Huang means *yellow* in Chinese. The soil on the North China Plain is very fertile. The soil contains loess. **Loess is yellowish soil that blows off the Gobi desert and onto the North China Plain.** Loess also blows into the Huang River and gives it a kind of yellowy color.

One of the earliest settlements was located in Anyang. Anyang is located along the banks of the Huang River. There are no written records from this period in Chinese history, but archeologists have found stone tools and other artifacts in this area. This is how they know people lived there.

Ancient Chinese civilization is slightly different from other ancient civilizations like the ones that existed in Greece or Egypt. That's because Chinese civilization and culture has an unbroken history. Many other ancient civilizations were conquered by other people and their civilizations changed. Some disappeared altogether. But Chinese culture has existed for thousands of years, and exists still.

### Vocabulary

1. Huang River Valley
2. loess
3. dynasty
4. Shang Dynasty
5. Bronze Age
6. wattle and daub



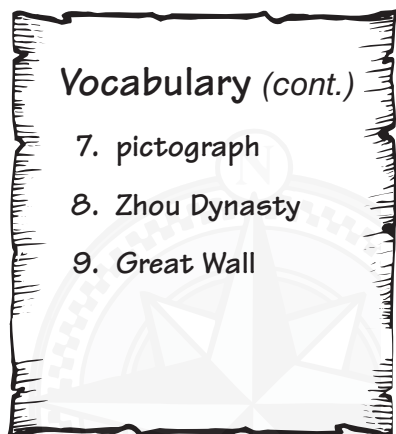
### Dynasties

**A dynasty means a series of political rulers belonging to the same family. The first dynasty in China was the Shang Dynasty.** The Shang Dynasty existed during a time called the Bronze Age. **The Bronze Age (3300–1200 B.C.) is the time when people made tools, weapons and other things, like jewelry, from bronze.**

The people who lived during the Shang Dynasty made homes of timber. The walls were made with wattle and daub. **Wattle is a kind of wooden frame made from interlacing strips of wood. Daub is a type of plaster that people made from soil, sand, and straw.**

# Ancient Chinese Civilization

## Brief #1 (cont.)



### Dynasties (cont.)

During the Shang Dynasty, people wrote with pictographs. **A pictograph is a picture that stands for a word.** They also used ideograms and phonograms. Archeologists have found ancient deer and turtle bones that have pictographs from the Shang period carved on them. The Shang people were also skilled at making jade carvings.

**The Zhou Dynasty is China's longest lasting dynasty.** It dates from about 1046–256 B.C. That's nearly 800 years! Scholars divide the dynasty into two periods: the Western Zhou (1046–771 B.C.) and the Eastern Zhou (770–221 B.C.).

Like the Shang, the Zhou were farmers. They grew rice, wheat, and fruit. Silk production was also very important to the Zhou. Silk is produced from the cocoons of worms. It is spun into fabric that is used to make clothing and rugs.

The period of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty is often called the “golden age” in China. That's because many important philosophers, like Confucius, lived during this time. The Eastern Zhou made advancements in irrigation. They also began to use iron to make tools and weapons.

Ancient China was divided up into many different states. Often these states would war with each other. In about 221 B.C., a strong leader from one of these states gained control of China. He became China's first emperor under the Qin Dynasty. He was called Shi Huangdi.

Shi Huangdi began construction on the Great Wall. **The Great Wall was built to stop other people from invading China.** Many emperors and dynasties had a part in building the Great Wall. The Great Wall is over four thousand miles in length, and many parts of it are still standing today.

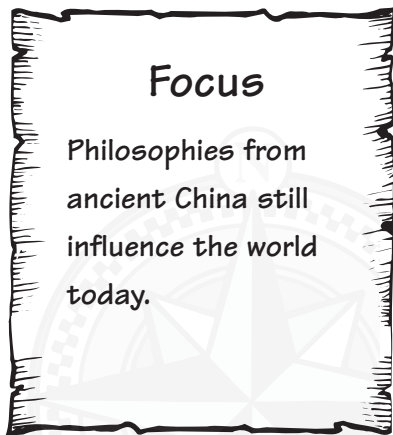
The Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) was a very influential period in Chinese history. During this period, paper, and ink were invented. Also, the Silk Road, the great trade route which connected China to many other civilizations, saw its beginnings. The Han people kept detailed records so modern scholars know a lot about this period. A Han writer named Sima Qian wrote a history of China that covered the first three thousand years!

### Fast Fact

*A single cocoon can produce over 2,000 feet of silk.*

# Ancient Chinese Thinkers

## Brief #2



### Focus

Philosophies from ancient China still influence the world today.

The ancient Chinese made important contributions to philosophy. Philosophy is a system of thought and belief that helps explain the world to people.



### Confucius

**Confucius is probably the most famous Chinese philosopher.** He was born in 551 B.C. He was a strong believer in the value of education and self-improvement. Confucius believed in honesty and in living a life of virtue. He believed that people should respect their leaders, but that leaders must be fair and just to the people. He also believed that people should lead by example.

**Confucius is famous for his sayings which reveal his philosophy. These sayings are collected in a book called the *Analects*.** They were written down by his many students. The advice that Confucius gave thousands of years ago can still be applied today. Here are some examples:

- Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it.
- Forget injuries, never forget kindness.
- Respect yourself and others will respect you.

### Vocabulary

1. Confucius
2. Analects
3. Taoism



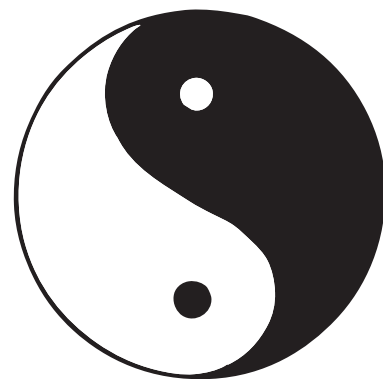
### Taoism

Taoism is another influential ancient Chinese philosophy. **Taoism teaches that the world is made up of opposite forces: sun and moon, good and evil, hot and cold.** The opposing forces in the world are called *yin* and *yang*. Taoism teaches that all people should try to live in harmony with nature.



### Legacy

Confucius and Taoism have had a major influence on the development of ancient China. Even today, Confucius is revered in China and other parts of Asia. In many places his birthday or the anniversary of his death are celebrated as *Teacher's Day*, as many Chinese consider him to be the world's greatest teacher.



# Ancient Chinese Art

## Brief #3



**Focus**  
Calligraphy and landscape painting flourished in ancient China.



### Calligraphy

**Chinese calligraphy is the art of drawing Chinese characters or pictograms.** It is a very ancient practice that goes back thousands of years. The earliest forms of calligraphy were found carved on oracle bones. **Oracle bones are the bones of turtles and other animals that the ancient Chinese used to predict the future.** As Chinese civilization advanced, writings were etched onto stone and metal. The ancient art of Chinese calligraphy is still practiced today.

A person who was very skilled at the art of calligraphy was called a master. The merit of calligraphy was judged by the brushwork, meaning how the brush was used to make the characters. One of the great masters of Chinese calligraphy was called Wang Xizhi. He lived in about 220 A.D.



### Painting

The ancient Chinese were also very skilled at landscape painting. **A landscape is a painting of a natural scene.** Landscape paintings do not have people in them. Two famous ancient Chinese landscape painters were Li Sixum and Li Zhaotao. They were father and son. Their paintings were highly detailed. They used a lot of blue, green, white, and gold in their work.



### Bronze Work and Jade

During the Bronze Age, the ancient Chinese made many beautiful objects from the metal. They made masks, animal figures, mirrors, and a variety of different types of containers. Often these items were inlaid with gold and silver. A lot of the bronze work that the ancient Chinese made was used in religious ceremonies.

The ancient Chinese also made many things out of jade. **Jade is a hard, green-colored stone.** It is not easy to carve things from jade. At first the things that were made were very simple because the tools that the ancient Chinese had were not that sharp or precise. But as their tools improved, the carvings that they made from the stone became more intricate.

### Vocabulary

1. calligraphy
2. oracle bones
3. landscape
4. jade
5. Terracotta Army

# Ancient Chinese Art

## Brief #3 (cont.)



### Terracotta Army

One of the most famous and intriguing pieces of ancient Chinese art is the Terracotta Army. **The Terracotta Army is a collection of about seven thousand life-sized sculptures made from pottery.** The stone army was made for the first emperor of China, Shi Huangdi. They were buried with the emperor in order to protect him in the afterlife. The Terracotta Army dates from 200 B.C.

The Terracotta Army was found in 1974. Some men were digging a well when they uncovered some of the figures. This is considered one of the greatest archeological finds of all time. The soldiers in the Terracotta Army are arranged in rows, in a kind of military formation. The average size of a Terracotta soldier is five feet eleven inches. Even though there are thousands and thousands of sculptures, no two are alike! Buried with the army are also life-sized horses, chariots and weapons.

