China and continued for 7,000 kilometers to the Mediterranean. Merchants from Europe and the Middle East traveled to China to obtain silk and other precious goods. In early modern times, these voyages were to change the course of world history.

Ceramics: Pottery and Porcelain

Pottery was made and used in China as early as 7,000 or 8,000 years ago. Throwing pottery on a wheel gradually replaced the earlier method of building it up by hand. About 3,000 years ago, during the Shang Dynasty, it was discovered that coating the surface of the clay with a glaze prior to firing would give it a smooth and brilliant finish. During the Zhou, Chin, and Han Dynasties, glazes appeared in more colors. Pottery was no longer used only for making household utensils, but to create works of art.

Porcelain is generally finer and more translucent than other kinds of pottery. It was first made in China during the Tang Dynasty and reached a high degree of perfection during the Yuan Dynasty. The word porcelain is derived from “porcellana,” used by Marco Polo to describe the pottery he saw in China. Chinese porcelain was of such high quality that it was described as having “the brightness of a mirror, the thinness of paper, and the resonance of a chime-stone.” It was highly valued in other countries and was exported overland via the Old Silk Road or by sea to be sold in countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe. European potters tried to imitate this translucent porcelain for centuries, but it was only in 1575 that the first porcelain was made in Europe—in Florence, Italy.

Manchu China—The Qing (Ch’ing) Dynasty

In the 17th century, peasants began to rebel against the Mings. In 1644, the rebels entered Beijing and the Mings fled southward. The Ming commander of the Great Wall defenses united his forces with nomads from the Manchurian plains, the Manchus.

The Chinese have a saying, “Never call in a tiger to chase out a dog.” By allowing the Manchus into China, the Chinese commander had not followed these wise words. The Manchus, once allowed in, refused to leave. The Manchus took over the Empire and set up a new dynasty, the Qing (Ch’ing).

The Manchus, or Qings, were few in number, but ruled China for almost three centuries. They respected and encouraged the development of Chinese culture. They permitted the Chinese to take part in ruling the government and rarely interfered in village affairs. The villagers themselves handled most of the problems of government.

During the Manchu Dynasty, the population of China grew. The Manchus provided good government, kept law and order, and operated public works well (irrigation canals, roads, bridges). They introduced new crops, such as kaoliang (a cereal), potatoes, corn and peanuts, and more land was used for farming. These efforts increased the food supply. But, as usable farm land became scarce and population grew, the government began to neglect law and order and public works, peasant rebellions began to break out.

The Manchus had succeeded in extending the power of the Chinese Empire throughout East, Central, and Southeast Asia. The Manchus increased trade with the West. However, Europeans found it difficult to carry on trade with China, since the Chinese had many
restrictions. European merchants could only trade in the city of Guangzhou (Canton) in South China.

Chinese silks and porcelain found good markets in Europe. The Chinese also exported brocades (silk textiles), sugar, ginger, and tea. The Chinese, however, were not interested in European goods. Western textiles were too expensive and not as good in quality. To trade with China, Europeans had to ship large amounts of silver to buy Chinese goods.

China’s Relations With Foreigners: The Tribute System

Since ancient times China’s relations with foreigners were based on the tribute system. Tribute is money paid regularly by one ruler or nation to another as an acknowledgment of an inferior-superior relationship between the two. The tribute system developed from Confucian doctrine. According to these ideas, Chinese civilization was superior to all others and those people who lived outside of China were considered barbarians. Therefore, it was only natural that the foreign barbarians should acknowledge the superiority of Chinese civilization by presenting tribute to the Emperor and kowtowing (kneeling) before him. The kowtow was intended to show great respect and obedience. It was a series of three long kneelings, each one involving three long prostrations, nose and forehead upon the floor. Kowtowing was an important part of Chinese tradition. The Emperor kowtowed to Heaven and to his parents; the highest officials kowtowed to the Emperor. Foreigners were expected to do the same.

All foreign nations that had relations with China were required to send regular tribute missions (official representatives bringing tribute) to Peking (now Beijing). There were very specific rules covering every aspect of these missions. Also, when foreign merchants came to China seeking trade, their ruler had to send tribute to the Emperor. Without tribute there could be no trade. When the first European merchants arrived in China they were immediately put on the tribute lists. All the formalities of the tribute system were required of them, including the kowtow. The Europeans, with the Western ideas of equality, regarded the tribute system as highly offensive. As time passed, the European governments began to pressure the Chinese to do away with it.

The Opium Problem

Since ancient times, opium, a drug which is made from the seed pod of poppy plants, had been used by the Chinese in making medicine. However, in the 17th century the Chinese people began using opium as a narcotic. “Smoking” opium brought temporary relief from pain and misery, but it was also habit-forming. People became slaves to their habit and their lives were destroyed. Most of the opium used by the Chinese was grown in India and brought to China by British and Indian traders.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the smoking of opium in China increased and the opium trade grew. In the late 1700s, about 1,000 chests of opium were shipped from India to China each year. (A chest usually contained 133 pounds of opium.) From 1800 to 1821, an average of 4,500 chests were imported annually. In 1838, 40,000 chests of opium were imported. This great increase in the opium trade was due to several factors. In the 19th century, China was experiencing many economic and social problems. A large increase in population resulted in a decline in the standard of living for most people. Corruption, law-
lessness, and discontent were widespread. This atmosphere was conducive to drug smuggling and drug use. Another reason was that the opium trade brought enormous profits to everyone involved: the foreign merchants, the Chinese traders, and Chinese government officials. The British government in India had become dependent on the opium trade, receiving 5 to 10 percent of its revenue (income) from it.

The Chinese government tried to stop the opium trade but was not successful. The selling and smoking of opium were prohibited by imperial edict (by order of the Emperor) in 1729. Its importation and domestic production were prohibited in 1796. However, government officials accepted bribes from the opium smugglers and the trade continued. Opium addiction grew; smuggling and official corruption increased.

Finally in the 1830s, with millions of Chinese addicted and faced with an economic crisis, the Chinese government acted to wipe out the opium trade. China’s silver supply was being drained by the trade. This outflow of silver upset the currency system and brought hardship to many. The government concluded that most of the silver was going to British India to pay for the opium. During 1837 to 1838, the government tried to suppress the opium trade at Canton (now Guangzhou). But smuggling continued along the coast and opium imports increased. In 1839, the Emperor ordered that anyone involved with the opium evil—cultivators, distributors, consumers, and foreign importers—would be subject to the death penalty.

In 1839, the Emperor appointed Lin Zexu (Lin Tse-hsu) commissioner and sent him to Guangzhou to wipe out the opium evil. Lin demanded that the foreigners surrender their opium stocks. When they refused, he detained the foreign community in Guangzhou releasing them six weeks later after they had agreed to give up their opium stocks. He then publicly burned the opium.

The Opium War 1839–1842

War between Britain and China broke out in 1839. China’s attempts to suppress the opium trade and the detention of British subjects gave Britain an excuse to go to war. But other, more important, reasons had been building up over many years. At the same time that China was acting to end the opium trade, Great Britain was engaged in a struggle to gain trading privileges from the Chinese. Britain also demanded that relations between the two nations be carried out on the basis of equality and not according to the tribute system. The refusal of the Chinese to accept the Western ideas of unrestricted trade angered the British and other Western nations. The Westerners felt the tribute system was insulting and believed that relations between nations had to be based on equality.

The Opium War which began in November 1839 and lasted until August 1842 ended in a humiliating defeat for the Chinese. This was due to Britain’s military superiority on land and at sea. China’s armed forces were technologically backward and no match for the British.

The Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking)—1842

The Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking) between England and China was the first in a series of treaties which opened China to the Western world. They were called the “unequal treaties” by the Chinese because of the one-sided privileges they gave to the Europeans. China, in a helpless position, was forced against its will, to accept what it had so long resisted. The Treaty of Nanjing provided for the opening of five Chinese ports to British traders to
“reside and to carry on trade.” It ended the old Chinese system of controlled trade. The British were now free to trade with anyone they wished instead of only with licensed Chinese merchants. It also forced China to pay an indemnity to Britain (money to pay for the confiscated opium and to reimburse Britain for the cost of the war) and the island of Hong Kong was given to Britain. Britain took away from China its freedom to regulate its own tariff (a tax on imports). Britain was to be treated as an equal, not as a tributary state.

In a supplementary treaty signed in 1843, Britain introduced the “most favored nation” clause. This stated that any privileges which China might grant to other nations in the future would automatically apply to Britain. After this, all treaties between the Western nations and China contained this clause. The Treaty of Nanjing did not mention the opium trade, which continued until the end of the 1900s.

In 1844, the United States signed a treaty with China that gave Americans the same rights as those gained by the British. The treaty also provided that if American citizens committed a crime in China, they would be tried and punished only by officials of the U.S. government according to the laws of the United States. This practice was called extraterritoriality.

The privilege of extraterritoriality was immediately granted to the British and French. The Chinese did not realize that by giving the Western nations this privilege China was giving up its right to control the foreigners living and doing business in China.

War With Britain and France: 1857–1860

The British expected that the Treaty of Nanjing would greatly increase their trade with China, but this did not happen. British merchants complained that the reason trade had not developed the way they had hoped was that there were still too many obstacles to trade. They argued that there were not enough open ports and said that as long as they were not allowed to go into the interior of China, trade would remain low. British and other merchants put pressure on their own governments to gain more trading privileges from the Chinese.

At Guangzhou, Chinese officials ignored the treaties and put many obstacles in the way of the foreigners. The Chinese tried to continue the practices that had existed before the treaties.

The British, French, and U.S. governments wanted to revise the treaties in order to remove all the remaining obstacles to trade and diplomatic relations. The Chinese government naturally resisted. Two incidents occurred which gave Britain and France excuses to force the issue by going to war. In the first incident, Chinese officials boarded a ship flying the British flag whose registration had expired and removed some members of the crew. The dispute over their return caused British troops to occupy Guangzhou in 1857, but the incident was soon settled. However, Britain then decided to settle the issue of treaty revision by force and sent naval and military forces to Tianjin (Tientsin). In the second incident, a French missionary was executed by Chinese officials for traveling in the interior, which was forbidden by the treaties. To punish China, French forces joined the British in the fighting at Guangzhou and Tianjin.

The United States refused to cooperate with the British and French in going to war. The United States wanted to play the role of China’s defender. At the same time, the United States agreed with Britain and France in demanding that the treaties be revised to remove all obstacles to trade.

In 1858, the Treaties of Tianjin were concluded between China and Britain, France, the United States, and Russia. They provided for the opening of 11 new treaty ports. The
Chang River, China's most important river for trade, was opened to foreign commerce. Foreigners also gained the right to travel inside China. China's tariff was set by the Europeans at 5 percent and could not be changed without their permission. The importation of opium was legalized. Foreign missionaries were allowed to travel and carry on their activities all over China. The diplomatic representatives of the four nations were allowed to live in the capital Beijing. This last privilege would have ended the ancient tradition of China's superiority. Therefore, the Manchu government became determined not to grant it, even though it had accepted it earlier.

When British and French negotiators arrived at Tianjin in 1859 on the way to Beijing to ratify the treaties, the Chinese tried to prevent their passage. Fighting broke out and in 1860 the British and French defeated the much larger Chinese forces and then occupied Beijing. In 1860 at Beijing, the Chinese government was forced to ratify the Treaties of Tianjin. They had to sign additional agreements in the Treaties of Beijing (Peking) giving the Europeans more privileges.

Effects of the Unequal Treaties

The treaties of Nanjing, Tianjin, and Beijing took away from the Chinese government control over its own economy and its own affairs. Foreign merchants were now free to travel and do business all over China. Missionaries were able to travel into the interior and teach the Christian religion. The privilege of extraterritoriality meant that the foreigners would not be subject to Chinese laws. Foreign communities sprang up in newly built sections in all the treaty ports. They were governed by their own officials according to the laws of their own country. Foreign troops and gunboats were stationed at the treaty ports to back up the demands of their own citizens. Foreign goods could now be distributed all over China. The 5 percent tariff was so low that foreign goods were cheaper than Chinese goods. The treaties were a great blow to the Manchu Dynasty and undermined the traditional order.

By the middle of the 19th century, China was carved up into spheres of influence. These were areas where foreign nations exercised control and had special economic and political privileges. Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Japan each had a sphere of influence in China.

Because of the unequal treaties in the years after 1860, China was not really an independent nation. It was not until the end of World War II that China regained its full sovereignty (control over its country's affairs). The treaties imposed on China by the Western nations became a symbol of national humiliation. Twentieth century Chinese leaders regarded the Opium War and treaties as examples of Western imperialism.

The Fall of the Manchus

As China entered the 19th century, powerful forces were being set in motion which were to shatter the old order and destroy the glory of the Manchu Empire. As you read, China's population had grown without an equal increase in agricultural production. The official estimates showed a population increase from 142 million in 1741 to 432 million in 1851. However, land used for farming was about eight million ching (about fifteen acres) in 1701, but was not more than ten million ching in 1850. This had never happened before in Chinese history.
At the same time, the Manchus were faced with the same type of opposition that dynasties had faced many times before in Chinese history. The peasants who were unhappy and did not trust the Manchus as rulers felt that the Manchus had lost the Mandate of Heaven. A series of peasant revolts broke out in northern and western China. From 1850 to 1865, the worst of these revolts, the Taiping Rebellion, almost succeeded in toppling the Qing Dynasty. Many peasants joined the rebellion because its leaders promised land, equality, and brotherhood. The Manchus were not able to defeat the rebels and they asked the Europeans for soldiers and money. With this help, and after much fighting, the Manchus crushed the Taipings.

Another powerful force that tore apart the Manchu Empire was Western imperialism. Imperialism takes place when a strong country uses a weaker, less developed country to its own advantage. China’s troubles in the 19th century made it easier for European imperialism to succeed.

The Japanese also decided to take advantage of China’s weakness. Japan’s victory in the first Sino (China)-Japanese War was a disaster for China and the Manchus. The great weaknesses of China were obvious, and encouraged the Western powers and Japan to press for even more rights and privileges in China.

In the late 19th century, the Chinese Empire was ruled by a boy whose aunt, the Dowager Empress Cixi, controlled the government. She allowed some reforms to be made. However, her main interest was to keep the Manchu Dynasty and her own power intact.
used the Chinese resentment of the West to try to get rid of the Westerners and the Japanese. In 1900, a group called the Boxers attacked the foreigners, but were defeated.

By the opening of the 20th century, it seemed that China was to be divided by the Western powers and Japan. The United States wished to protect its own trading interests in China. Therefore, the United States asked other nations to stop looking for special privileges in China and to respect China’s independence. The American government proposed equality and an “open door” for China’s trade and privileges. However, no one paid attention to this plea.

Weak from rebellions and wars, the Manchus were doomed. They could not fight the West, they could not keep order, and they could not reform China. Therefore, they had to be overthrown, for they had obviously lost the Mandate of Heaven.

The Chinese Republic
(1911–1949)

A revolution happens when important changes are brought about in the form of the government, the economy, or the society of a country. Revolutions can be peaceful or violent. The causes of a revolution may develop over many decades, but the revolution itself usually occurs in a short period of time. This was true in the American and Russian Revolutions.

The years of preparation for revolution in China took many decades. The revolution itself has lasted for over 80 years, and still seems to be going on. It is interesting to note that in the past, when the Chinese revolted against their rulers, the revolutions also lasted for long periods of time and went through many stages.

The Ideas of Dr. Sun Yat-sen

The Chinese Revolution started when a bomb exploded in the city of Wuchang, in Central China, on October 10, 1911. A republic was set up in Nanjing with Sun Yat-sen as its first President. Dr. Sun is known as “the Father of the Chinese Revolution.” He was a thinker and a planner. He was trusted by the people, and he had trust in the people’s ability to run the government. For years he spread the idea that the Chinese people should have a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” He spoke all over China, and wrote about his ideas, which he called Three Principles of the People, in Chinese, San Min Chu-I (Sahn min jooee).

The three principles were nationalism, democracy, and livelihood. Nationalism meant love and sacrifice for China; democracy meant government of the people; and livelihood meant economic equality, for all the Chinese people would share in the wealth of China equally.

These ideas were difficult to put into practice. Dr. Sun gave the Presidency to Yuan Shih-kai, the general who helped the revolutionaries overthrow the Manchus. However, he betrayed the ideas of San Min Chu-I, became a military dictator, and drove Sun out of the country. Yuan was not powerful enough to rule the whole country. Consequently, generals and leaders of bands of soldiers became independent rulers in their own provinces. They were given unlimited power and were known as warlords. The warlords cared little for

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China, and fought each other for power. China became badly divided, civil war broke out, and the central government broke down.

Dr. Sun returned to China in 1916 after Yuan's death and formed his Kuomintang (KMT), the Nationalist Party, to work for the unity of the country under the Three Principles. The KMT received important help from Soviet Russia. The Russians sent an advisor to aid Sun. He helped to organize the KMT and form it into a powerful revolutionary party. The Russians also helped the Nationalists set up a military academy where officers devoted to the ideals of the Chinese Revolution were trained for a new revolutionary army. In 1923, Dr. Sun brought the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which had been set up in 1921, into the KMT.

Dr. Sun died before his ideas were fulfilled. His spirit and dream lived on. He soon became the symbol of the Chinese Nationalist Revolution and of the Communist National Revolution.

**Chiang Kai-shek Rules China**

After Dr. Sun's death, there was a power struggle. Chiang Kai-shek, the president of the military academy and an important leader of the KMT, took over the leadership of the Nationalist Party.

In 1926, Chiang led the new KMT army in a military expedition against the warlords in the north and united much of China. He interrupted this expedition in 1927 and turned on the Communists because he did not trust them. Fearing they would seize power, he expelled them from the KMT. The main communist centers in Hankow (now Hangzhou) and Shanghai were attacked and many communist leaders were killed or forced into hiding. Mao Zedong, a young communist leader, escaped. He and his followers went into hiding in the hills of southeastern China where they set up their own government and built an army. Chiang then returned to his conquest of the warlords. When Beijing was conquered by Chiang, the second revolution had occurred, and the Second Republic was set up. Chiang renamed Peking, Peiping, which means “northern peace.” He also moved the capital to Nanking (now Nanjing) in the Chang Valley because of its central location. Chiang made himself leader with unlimited powers. (When the Communists came to power in 1949 they returned the traditional name of Peking, meaning “northern capital,” and made the city their capital.)

Chiang faced a number of problems. The warlords still controlled a large part of China. The Communists, although greatly weakened, still blocked national unity. Finally, the Japanese continued to cause problems for the Chinese.

**Japan Invades China**

In 1931, the Japanese invaded Manchuria. This was a deadly blow to Chiang's government. Japan took Manchuria and made it an industrial and military base. Chiang's difficulties with Japan gave the Chinese Communists a chance to recover their strength.

After repeated attacks by Nationalist forces in 1934, the Communists, led by Mao, fled to Yenan, in Shaanxi (Shensi) Province near the Yellow River. This retreat known as the Long March covered over 5,000 miles. Of 180,000 people who started out, fewer than 25,000 survived. In the caves of this northwest province, the Communists were safe from Chiang's army and closer to the Russian border. The Russians sent some aid to the Chinese Commu-