

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Chapter 3, Section 3

For use with textbook pages 88–97

EARLY CHINESE CIVILIZATIONS

KEY TERMS

Mandate of Heaven a belief during the Zhou dynasty that kings received their authority to command, or mandate, from Heaven (page 91)

Dao the proper “Way” that a king was expected to rule in order to please the gods and protect the people (page 92)

filial piety the duty of members of a family to subordinate their needs and desires to those of the male head of the family (page 93)

Confucianism a system of ideas based on the teachings of Confucius (page 95)

Daoism a system of ideas based on the teachings of Laozi (page 96)

Legalism a philosophy that stressed harsh laws and punishments (page 97)

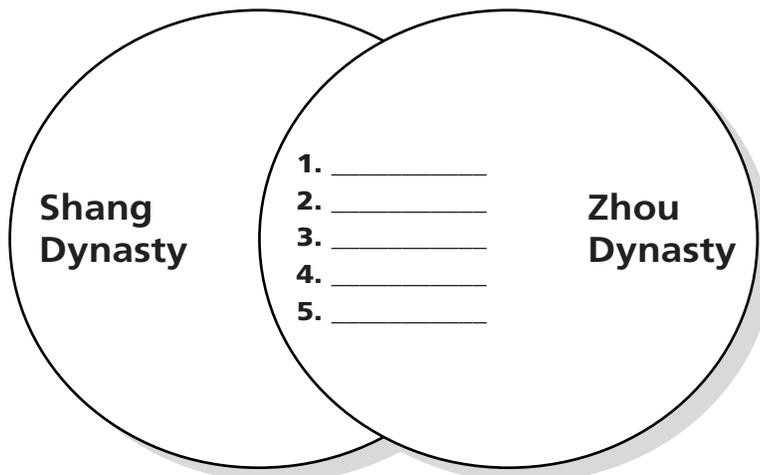
DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Do you think people are basically good or basically evil? Are strict laws necessary to keep order and make people obey?

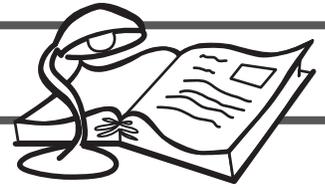
In the last two sections, you learned about the early civilizations and empires of India. In this section, you will learn about early civilizations in China and the philosophies they developed.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the diagram below to help you take notes. The Shang and Zhou dynasties had several similarities. List five similarities in the area where the two circles overlap.



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READ TO LEARN

- **The Geography of China** (page 88)

The Huang He, or Yellow River, is more than 2900 miles long. It extends from Mongolia to the Pacific Ocean. The Chang Jiang, or Yangtze River, is more than 3400 miles long. It flows across central China and empties into the Yellow Sea. The valleys of these two rivers became one of the great food-producing areas of the ancient world. Not all of China is fertile land, however. Only 10 percent of the total land is suitable for farming. Much of the rest of the land consists of mountains and deserts.

The mountains and deserts have played an important role in Chinese history. They served as barriers that separated the Chinese people from other Asian people. In the regions created by the mountains and deserts, there were peoples of Mongolian, Indo-European, and Turkish backgrounds. There were often conflicts between these groups and the Chinese.

6. What role have the mountains and deserts played in Chinese history?

- **The Shang Dynasty** (page 89)

Chinese civilization began with the Xia dynasty over four thousand years ago. Little is known about this dynasty. It was replaced by a second dynasty, the Shang, which lasted from about 1750 to 1122 B.C. The Shang dynasty was primarily a farming society. An aristocracy whose major concern was war ruled it. An **aristocracy** is an upper class whose wealth is based on land and whose power is passed from one generation to another.

There were large cities in Shang China. The cities had huge walls, royal palaces, and large royal tombs. The Shang king ruled from the capital city of Anyang. His kingdom was divided into territories with aristocratic warlords (military leaders) in charge of each territory. The king chose these leaders and could remove them. The king controlled large armies, which often fought on the fringes of the kingdom.

The Shang rulers believed that they could communicate with the gods to get help with their affairs. Priests scratched questions on bones to get answers from the gods. These bones were called oracle bones. The priests stuck heated metal rods into the bones, which caused the bones to crack. The priests then

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interpreted the cracks as answers from the gods. The Chinese had a strong belief in life after death. Humans were sacrificed to win the favor of the gods and to provide companions for the king and his family on their journey to the next world. From the belief in an afterlife came the idea of the veneration of ancestors (sometimes called “ancestor worship”). The Chinese believed that the spirits of ancestors could bring good or evil to the living members of a family. So it was important to treat the spirits well.

The king and his family were at the top of Shang society. Aristocratic families helped them. The aristocrats waged war, served as officials, and were also the chief landowners. The majority of the people were peasants who farmed the land of the aristocrats. Shang society also included a small number of merchants and artisans. The Shang are well known for their mastery of the art of bronze casting. Thousands of bronze objects from this period have survived. These are some of the most admired creations of Chinese art.

7. What were some of the religious beliefs during the Shang dynasty?

• The Zhou Dynasty (page 91)

Eventually the ruler of the state of Zhou revolted against the last of the Shang rulers and established a new dynasty. The Zhou dynasty lasted for almost eight hundred years (1045 to 256 B.C.). It was the longest dynasty in Chinese history. The Zhou dynasty continued the political system of the Shang rulers. At the head of the government was the Zhou king. Like the Shang rulers, he divided the kingdom into territories governed by officials that he appointed. These officials were aristocrats. The king was in charge of defense and controlled large armies.

The Zhou kings also made some changes. The Zhou dynasty claimed that it ruled China because it had the **Mandate of Heaven**. It was believed that Heaven kept order in the world through the Zhou king. Thus, the Zhou king had a *mandate*, or authority to command, from Heaven. The king was chosen by Heaven because of his talent and virtue. He was expected to rule according to the proper “Way,” called the **Dao**. It was his duty to keep the gods pleased to protect the people from bad harvests or disasters. If he failed, he could be overthrown. This gave people the “right of revolution.” The king was not a divine being himself and could be replaced. The Mandate of Heaven led to a pattern of *dynastic cycles*. From the beginning of Chinese history to A.D. 1912,

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China was ruled by a series of dynasties. Each dynasty said that it ruled with the Mandate of Heaven. It established its power, ruled successfully for many years, and then began to decline. Rebellions or invasions would cause it to collapse, and a new dynasty would take over. Then the cycle would be repeated.

The Zhou dynasty followed this cycle of rise, decline, and collapse. Some of the territories in the Zhou kingdom became powerful states and challenged the Zhou ruler. In 403 B.C., civil war broke out. This began a time in Chinese history called the “Period of the Warring States.” By this time, warfare in China had changed. Iron weapons were being used. Foot soldiers (the infantry) and soldiers on horseback (the cavalry) made their first appearance. The cavalry was armed with crossbows, a Chinese invention of the seventh century B.C. In 221 B.C., one of the warring states, the state of Qin, took control and created a new dynasty.

During the Zhou dynasty, peasants worked on land owned by lords (aristocrats), but they also had land of their own. A class of artisans and merchants lived in walled towns. Merchants did not operate freely but were considered the property of the lords. There was also a class of slaves. Trade consisted mainly of the exchange of local goods that were used on an everyday basis. Eventually, it increased to include goods from distant lands, such as salt, iron, cloth, and luxury items. One of the most important items that the Chinese traded was silk.

By the sixth century B.C., irrigation was in wide use. Large water projects controlled the flow of rivers and spread water evenly to the fields. The use of iron led to the development of iron plowshares. This made it possible to plow land that had not yet been used for farming. Because of these advances in farming, the population of China rose as high as fifty million people during the Zhou dynasty.

The family was the basic economic and social unit in China. The Chinese believed in the idea of **filial piety**. *Filial* refers to sons and daughters. Filial piety is the duty of members of the family to subordinate their needs and desires to those of the male head of the family. Every family member had his or her place. People needed to work together to farm the land. Children were important because they worked in the fields when they were young. Later, sons were expected to take over the physical labor on their family’s land and take care of their parents as the parents got older. Men were important because they worked in the fields and provided food for their families. They were also the warriors, scholars, and government officials. Women raised the children and worked in the home.

Perhaps the most important cultural contribution of ancient China was the development of a written language. By the time of the Shang dynasty, the Chinese had developed a simple script that is the ancestor of the complex written language that the Chinese use today. It was primarily pictographic

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and ideographic in form. Pictographs are picture symbols, usually called characters, that form a picture of the object they represent. Ideographs are characters that combine two or more pictographs to represent an idea.

8. What was the Mandate of Heaven and how did it lead to dynastic cycles?

• The Chinese Philosophies (page 94)

Toward the end of the Zhou dynasty, three major schools of thought, or philosophies, developed in China. Chinese philosophers were concerned about the world in which people lived and how to create a stable order in the world. **Confucianism** is a system of ideas developed by Confucius, known to the Chinese as the First Teacher. Confucius was born in 551 B.C. He lived during a time of chaos in China. He provided a set of ideas about how to restore order to society. His interest in philosophy was ethical and political, not spiritual. His concern was with human behavior. According to Confucius, the key to proper behavior was to behave in accordance with the Dao (Way). Duty and humanity were important elements of the Dao. The concept of duty meant that all people had to subordinate their own interests to the broader needs of the family and the community. This concept of duty is often expressed as a “work ethic.” If each person worked hard to fulfill his or her duties, society would prosper. The concept of humanity consisted of a sense of compassion and empathy for others. Confucius taught, “Do not do unto others what you would not wish done to yourself.” Confucius believed that government should not be limited to people of noble birth, but should be open to all men. His ideas did not have much effect in his lifetime. But after his death in 479 B.C., his message spread widely throughout China. Until the twentieth century, almost every Chinese pupil studied his sayings.

Daoism was a system of ideas based on the teachings of Laozi. According to tradition, Laozi, or the Old Master, lived during the time of Confucius. Scholars do not know if Laozi actually existed. But the ideas that people associate with him became popular in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. The main ideas of Daoism are contained in the *Tao Te Ching* (The Way of the Dao). Like Confucianism, Daoism does not concern itself with the meaning of the universe. It is concerned about proper forms of behavior. Its ideas about human behavior are very different from those of Confucius, however. Daoists believe that the true way to follow the will of Heaven is not action but inaction. The

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best way to act in harmony with the universe is to act spontaneously and let nature take its course by not interfering with it.

A third philosophy that became popular in China was **Legalism**. Legalists believed that human beings were evil by nature. They could only be brought to follow the correct path by harsh laws and punishments. Legalists believed that a strong ruler was needed to create an orderly society. The ruler did not need to have compassion for the needs of the people. Fear of harsh punishment would cause the people to serve the interests of the ruler. This would maintain order and stability in society.

9. What three philosophies developed in China near the end of the Zhou dynasty?

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Chapter 3, Section 4

For use with textbook pages 98–103

RISE AND FALL OF CHINESE EMPIRES

KEY TERMS

regime the government in power (*page 99*)

censorate a division of the bureaucracy in the Qin dynasty that had inspectors who checked on government officials to make sure they were doing their jobs (*page 99*)

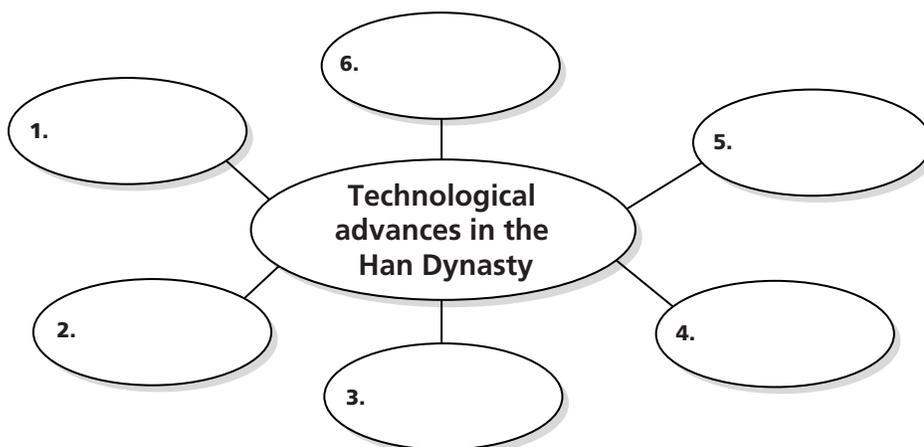
DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Have you ever applied for a job? What questions did you have to answer? What criteria do you think employers should use when choosing people for jobs?

In the last section, you learned about the early civilizations in China. In this section, you will learn about two Chinese empires, the Qin and Han dynasties. Both dynasties chose their government officials on the basis of merit rather than birth.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the web organizer below to help you take notes. New technology added to the economic prosperity of the Han Era. List six inventions or areas of technological progress during the Han dynasty.



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READ TO LEARN

- **The Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.)** (page 98)

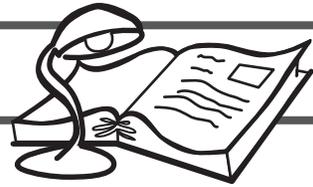
From about 400 to 200 B.C., there were civil wars in China. Powerful states fought each other and ignored the Zhou kings. The Qin state gradually defeated the other states. In 221 B.C., the Qin ruler started a new dynasty. This ruler’s name was Qin Shihuangdi, which means “the First Qin Emperor.” The Qin dynasty made many changes in Chinese politics. Legalism was adopted as the regime’s philosophy. (A **regime** is a government in power.) Anyone who opposed the new regime was punished or executed. The Qin dynasty was a centralized state. The central bureaucracy was divided in three parts: the civil division, the military division, and the **ensorate**. The censorate had inspectors (censors) who checked on government officials to make sure they were doing their jobs. Below the central government were two levels of administration—provinces and counties. Officials at these levels did not inherit their positions but were appointed by the emperor. The censors kept a close watch over these officials and reported to the emperor. If the officials were found guilty of wrongdoing, they were executed.

Qin Shihuangdi unified the Chinese world. He created a single monetary system and built a system of roads throughout the entire empire. His armies advanced to the south and extended the border of China to the edge of the Yuan River, or Red River, in modern-day Vietnam. His major concern was in the north. In the area south of the Gobi, there were people known to the Chinese as the Xiongnu. They were nomadic people and fought on horseback. The Xiongnu became a threat to the Chinese communities near the northern frontier. The Chinese began to build walls to keep them out. Qin Shihuangdi added to these walls. He linked the existing walls together to create “The Wall of Ten Thousand *Li*” (a *li* is about a third of a mile). Today this is known as the Great Wall of China. The great wall that we see today was actually built 1500 years later, however. Most of Qin Shihuangdi’s walls were constructed of loose stone and sand and disappeared long ago.

Qin Shihuangdi died in 210 B.C., and his dynasty was overthrown four years later. The fall of the Qin dynasty was followed by a period of civil war. This period did not last long, and was followed by a new dynasty.

7. What changes did the Qin dynasty make in Chinese politics?

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• The Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-A.D. 220) (page 100)

Liu Bang founded the Han dynasty in 202 B.C. Liu Bang was a peasant who became known by his title, Han Gaozu (“Exalted Emperor of Han”). The Han dynasty was one of the greatest and longest dynasties in Chinese history. Han Gaozu discarded the harsh policies of the Qin dynasty. Confucian principles, rather than Legalism, became the philosophy for the new government. The Han dynasty did not change all of the systems of government, however. It kept the three divisions of the central government. It also kept the system of provinces and counties. Most important, it kept the system of choosing officials on the basis of merit rather than birth. The Han dynasty introduced the civil service examination and started a school to train officials. Students were expected to learn Chinese history, law, and the teachings of Confucius. During the Han dynasty, the population increased rapidly to over sixty million people.

The Han emperors, especially Han Wudi, expanded the Chinese empire. They added the southern regions below the Chang Jiang to the empire. Part of what is now northern Vietnam became part of the empire. The Han armies went westward into central Asia and extended the Chinese boundary there. They also drove the Xiongnu back to the north. After Han Wudi’s death in 87 B.C., China experienced almost 150 years of peace.

The Han period was a time of prosperity. Peasants began to suffer, however. They were forced into military service or labor of up to one month per year. The growing population eventually reduced the size of the average farm plot to about one acre per person, which was barely enough to survive. Many poor peasants were forced to sell their land and become tenant farmers. The aristocrats once again controlled the land.

Technological advances were made during the Han Era. Progress was made in textile manufacturing, water mills for grinding grain, and iron casting. Iron casting led to the invention of steel. Paper was also developed during the Han dynasty. The rudder and fore-and-aft rigging for ships were invented. Ships could sail into the wind for the first time. This led to a major expansion of trade. Trade was established with countries as far away as India and the Mediterranean.

Over time, the Han Empire began to decay. Rulers became weak, and the aristocrats forced more and more farmers to become tenants. By A.D. 170, peasant uprisings and wars caused the Han dynasty to collapse. In 190, rebel armies sacked the Han capital, Luoyang. In 220, a general seized control but was unable to stay in power. China plunged again into civil war, and there were new invasions by northern peoples. The next great dynasty would not arise for four hundred years.

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8. In what way was the government of the Han rulers different from the government of the Qin Emperor? In what ways was it similar?

• **Culture in Qin and Han China** (page 103)

The Qin and Han dynasties were also known for their cultural achievements. The main Confucian writings were made into a set of classics during this time. These writings became required reading for generations of Chinese schoolchildren.

Perhaps the most remarkable achievement of the Qin period was discovered in 1974. Underground pits were found about a mile east of the burial mound of the First Qin Emperor. They contained a vast army made of terra-cotta (hardened clay). Archaeologists believe it was a re-creation of Qin Shihuangdi's imperial guard and was meant to be with the emperor on his journey to the next world. There are more than six thousand figures in the first pit alone, along with horses, chariots, and seven thousand bronze weapons. The terra-cotta figures are slightly larger than life-size. The detail on the uniforms is realistic, and the heads were modeled individually to reflect the different ethnic types in the army.

9. What do archaeologists think was the purpose of the terra-cotta figures found near the burial mound of the First Qin Emperor?
