Lesson 2: China’s Past

Ancient China
Vocabulary

ancestor - a relative who lived longer ago than a grandparent

civil service - the practice of using skills and talents to work in the government

middleman - a person who goes between buyers and sellers
Vocabulary

oracle bone - a bone commonly used during the Shang dynasty in China to predict the future

pictograph - a picture that represents a word

province - political divisions
What is unique about the culture of China?

The culture has been continuous, or unbroken, from its earliest recorded history to today.
What evidence do archaeologists have about China’s history?

- Writing
- Art and artifacts
- Remains such as stone tools and pottery
Centuries-old written records reveal a long-lasting civilization in China with a culture that is continuous from its earliest recorded history to the present.
Why do you think people tell tales such as the one about Pangu?

People feel the need to explain natural phenomena and their origins.
What was the Xia period and how do we know about it?

A legendary period that existed between 2000 BC and 1700 BC; from stories told about that time.
The Xia period, which existed between 2000 BC and 1700 BC, was characterized by legends of “superheroes.”
What do you think daily life was like during the Shang dynasty?

People spent their time farming and making crafts and tools.
What kinds of goods may have been an important part of the economy?

- Crops
- Cloth
- Bronze tools, cups and weapons
During the Shang Dynasty, farming was the way of life for people living in the Huang River Valley. This dynasty occurred during the Bronze Age.
Why did people believe that oracle bones could tell the future?

People may have believed in them because one of them worked once by chance, or a trusted authority may have proclaimed the accuracy of the oracle bones.
How do we know about the Shang dynasty?

The discovery of tortoise shells with writing on them as well as animal bones, bronze, and stone with writing on them tells us about the Shang dynasty.
The economy of Western Zhou was based on what?

Silk and crops such as wheat and fruit
Explain how silk was made.

1. Women cultivated mulberry trees to feed the silkworms.
2. Silkworms created cocoons, which were boiled to obtain the fibers.
3. The fibers were woven into cloth.
What was the role of women in Zhou society?

Women did most of the harvesting and were in charge of producing silk; they played an important role.
Summary: The Longest Dynasty

During the time period of Western Zhou, most people were **farmers**, and **silk** was an important part of the **economy**.
Why was Eastern Zhou known as the “golden age” in China?

- A new system of money encouraged trade
- Projects including flood control, irrigation, and canal building started
- Iron was just starting to be used for tools and weapons
- Traditions were challenged and new ideas emerged
- Some of the teachings from this time would affect Chinese life for centuries to come
What are some differences and similarities between life in the earlier and later periods of the Zhou dynasty?

**Differences**

- **Earlier dynasty** - some slaves worked on farms, farmers gave food and valuables to the king, and silk was an important product.
- **Later dynasty** - government started new projects, tools and weapons were made of iron, more people became scholars and teachers, new ideas emerged.
Similarity

Farming was important
Map - page 109: What capital cities are shown on the map?

- Anyang
- Hao
- Luoyang
Summary: Eastern Zhou Dynasty

During Eastern Zhou, the “golden age” of China, the economy thrived because a new monetary system encouraged trade. The government started new projects. New ways of thinking emerged.
Map - page 109: What part of China does this map show?

The eastern part
How did Shi Huangdi unify China?

He created new states to bring all areas under his control.

He also standardized systems of money and weights and measures, which probably helped trade between regions.
Why was the Great Wall of China built?

To protect the empire from northern invaders.
Summarize the positive and negative aspects of the reign of Shi Huangdi.

Positive
- economy was strengthened when trade between regions became easier
- a new engineering project was begun.

Negative
- Shi Huangdi wanted the government to control what people talked about and studied, which lead to revolts.
What do you think may happen in a society where a ruler controls what people do and think?

People may become restless and angry. Because they feel oppressed, they might revolt in order to gain freedom.
In 221 BC, Shi Huangdi became the emperor of China and formed new states, standardized systems of money and weights and measures, and started the building of the Great Wall of China.
What change did the first Han ruler, Gaozu, make that affected life in China?

He lifted the ban on books imposed by Shi Huangdi.
Compare and contrast Wu Di and Shi Huangdi.

- Both rulers took away power from people who challenged them.
- Wu Di also divided land owned by princes and lords.
- Rather than banning books as Shi Huangdi did, Wu Di encouraged scholars.
What is civil service? What civil service jobs do people currently hold?

Civil service is the practice of using skills and talents to work in the government.

- Police
- Firefighters
- City clerical workers
- Postal workers
What were Wu Di’s contributions to Han society?

- redistribution of land and power
- taxes on trade goods
- new roads
- appreciation for the contributions of scholars and teachers
- civil service exams
Summary: Han Dynasty

During the Han dynasty, China experienced many changes and advancements under the leadership of Wu Di.
What was the Silk Road?

The trade route through northern China and central Asia to the Roman Empire.
What are some important inventions that were made during the Han dynasty?

- Porcelain
- Paper
- Ink
Summary of the Lesson

- 2000-1700 BC: **Xia** legendary period
- 221 BC: **Shi Huangdi** became China’s first **emperor**
- 141-87 BC: **Wu Di** was emperor of the Han dynasty during which many great **advancements** were made.
Summary: Inventions

The Han dynasty brought new **inventions** to China. The **Silk Road** provided access to the rest of the world and allowed the Chinese to **trade** with other **countries**.