

WEEK 9: HISTORY



Read the article about China that follows this homework assignment.

Answer these questions on notebook paper.

1. Where did the first known civilization in China develop?
2. What was the most important development during the Shang dynasty?
3. What are the five fundamental virtues of Confucianism?
4. Who was Lao-tse?
5. Which dynasty united the Chinese empire into one kingdom?
6. Why did they build the Great Wall of China?
7. When did the Chinese invent paper?
8. Who developed the first movable type printing in China?

Read Chapter 11: “The Great Teacher of a Great People”

Answer these questions on notebook paper.

1. How did Chinese script unite their country?
2. What mattered the most to Confucius?
3. What did Confucius teach about outward appearances?
4. What does “Tao” mean?

WRITING

Chinese mythology has many creative stories about what life was like long ago. One story tells about how people used to be able to fly, but they lost the ability.

This week, you will write your own Chinese myth. Invent something incredible about the way things used to be and then explain why it changed. You can include imaginary animals, like dragons and winged creatures, in your story, if you’d like. Use lots of details. Describe where, when, and how things happened. Describe what things looked like. Create a picture with your words.



China

Geographical features. With a written history extending over 35 centuries, China is the world's oldest living civilization. Mainland China is today the *world's largest country in population* and the *third largest in area*. Ancient China was bounded by the Gobi Desert to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the east, and the Tibetan mountain systems to the south and west. One of these mountain systems, the Himalayas, separates China from India. Two great river systems—the **Hwang Ho** [hwäng' hō'] and the **Yangtze** [yäng' [t]sē]—begin in the Tibetan highlands and drain into the fertile, heavily populated plains of eastern China before emptying into the Pacific Ocean. The Hwang Ho is called the “Yellow River” because of its yellowish-brown color; it is also called “China's sorrow” because of frequent flooding.

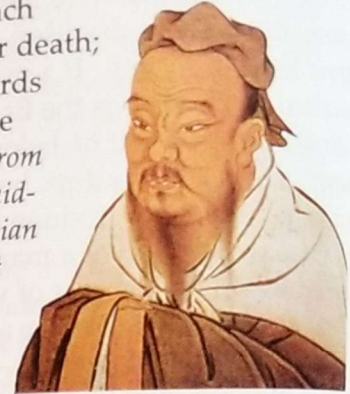
Early dynasties. The first known Chinese civilization arose in the **Hwang Ho Valley** shortly after the dispersion from the Tower of Babel. The ancient Chinese called their land **Chung-kuo** (“Middle Country”) because they believed that China stood at the geographic and cultural center of the earth. Because China is surrounded by towering mountains, vast deserts, and great seas, the ancient Chinese developed a culture distinctly different from that of Mesopotamia, Egypt, or even India. For centuries, the Chinese lived in virtual isolation from the rest of the world.

China's history revolves around ten dynasties. Around 1500 B.C., the **Shang dynasty** (1766–1122 B.C.) came to power. During the Shang dynasty, the Chinese began casting bronze, building horse-drawn chariots, and cultivating silkworms. Most important, they developed a system of writing. The priests of this dynasty used pictographs to record events and keep records, laying the foundation of the intricate written Chinese language.

After about 500 years, the Shang dynasty was replaced by the **Ch'ou dynasty** (1122–255 B.C.). During this time, the arts and scholarship flourished, Chinese laws were written down for the first time, and the basis of ori-

ental thought was formulated by Confucius and Lao-tse.

Confucianism. Confucianism had its beginnings in China about the time that Buddhism arose in India. **Confucius** (c. 551–479 B.C.) did not teach worship or life after death; he saw high standards of morality to be the savior of society. *From the 100s B.C. to the mid-20th century, Confucian thought was the most influential force in Chinese education, government, and attitudes.* As the



Confucius

official state “philosophy,” Confucianism, which held the past as sacred, also held back Chinese progress.

Confucius was born in a time of great degeneracy and disorder. The country then had a feudal system. A succession of weak monarchs had so strengthened the nobles that they were almost independent of imperial authority. Confucius endeavored to improve the state of society by reviving interest in the ideas and customs of the past. He tried to do this in a practical way as an official in his own province. He at first met with some success, but was soon obliged to give up his office and depart from the capital. With persistent devotion to the interests of his country, he wandered from court to court, offering his services and instructing disciples. Most rulers were unwilling to adopt his measures, and in his old age he returned disappointed to his native province to die.

Confucius's books set forth a comprehensive natural system of morals recognizing five human relations: **sovereign and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, brother and brother, friend and friend.** These relationships require the exercise of five fundamental virtues: **benevolence, justice, wisdom, politeness, and good faith.**

The books abound in excellent precepts. The following are a few of the best:

Pity the widow and the fatherless, and give succor to brute animals.

When you see the right, do it; when you know your fault, correct it.

Kindness must be repaid, but not injury.

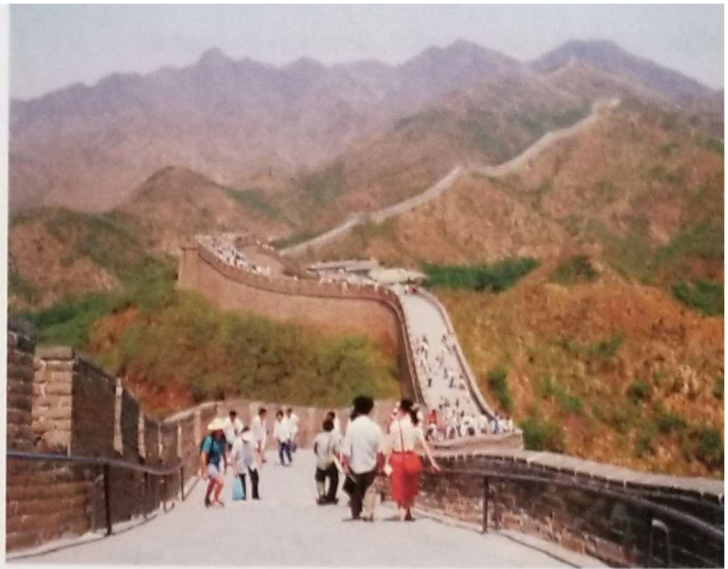
Do not to others what you would not have done to you.

One important relationship omitted by Confucius was the relation of man to his Maker. Confucianism fails to recognize the living God, who is the source of all goodness, justice, and judgment.

Taoism. Lao-tse (c. 604–531 B.C.) emphasized harmony with nature. His teachings became known as Taoism. Its polytheistic beliefs, based on Chinese folk religion, rejected Confucianism's emphasis on society, teaching instead that people should avoid worldly affairs and live close to nature. In Taoism, a priest acts as a mediator between the people and the gods. In group meetings, Taoists seek elimination of sins by means of incantations, penance, fasting, and extremely loud music. Desperate for assurance of future life, some Taoist groups have in vain sought immortality by means of special diets, meditation, and magic.

Ch'in dynasty. Weakened by feudal strife and warfare, the Ch'ou dynasty crumbled, and in its stead arose the remarkable **Ch'in dynasty** (255–206 B.C.). The name *China* comes from the Ch'in dynasty. Led by Ch'in **Shih Huang Ti** [shīr' hwāng' tē': *Shih* meaning "first" and *Huang Ti* meaning "sovereign emperor" or "imperial ruler"], this new dynasty abolished the trouble-ridden ancient feudal system and established a centralized monarchy. Emperor Ch'in joined the feudal states and built the first united Chinese empire.

The Ch'in dynasty made great strides of progress. A new method of irrigation was



The Great Wall of China

introduced, and a vast inland communication system spread across the empire. Rivers were joined by a series of canals, and a network of roads further aided travel and communication. The **Great Wall of China**—built during the Ch'in dynasty primarily for protection against the nomadic, barbarous **Huns**—remains the world's longest fortification. Constructed partly of masonry and partly of packed earth, the Great Wall connected already existing feudal walls and finally stretched 1,500 miles. The wall itself is 30 feet high and is garrisoned by 40-foot-high watchtowers. So many lives were lost in its construction that the Great Wall of China has been called "the longest cemetery in the world."

The Ch'in dynasty became a relentless military government. Ch'in felt the retrospective, conservative ideas of Confucius were a threat to the advancement of his power and would not stand for any opposition from Confucian scholars. He ordered that 460 of them be buried alive and that most Confucian books be burned.

Han dynasty. The **Han dynasty** (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) marked the height of ancient China's power and glory. The **Great Silk Road** linked China with the Roman world, and it is possible that the first Christian missionaries came to China over this road during the Han Empire. **Buddhism** also entered China from

India under the Han rulers, joining Confucianism and Taoism as a cultural force in Chinese life. During this dynasty, Chinese astrologers devised a calendar of 365¼ days, like our own, and Chinese artisans wove silk cloth and made glazed pottery plates (chinaware). About A.D. 105, **T'sai Lun** [tsī' lōon'] invented paper.

Printing in China. Printing began in China over 1000 years ago (when Europeans were still laboriously producing handwritten books). In 1045, **Pi Sheng**, a Chinese printer and alchemist (practitioner of the medieval form of trial-and-error chemistry), developed the first movable type. However, because of the thousands of characters (symbols) in the Chinese language, printing from wood blocks was more practical for their language. In 1313, **Wang Chen**, a magistrate interested in publishing a treatise on the history of technology, had over 60,000 Chinese characters carved and also developed a system for the easier handling of type. The complicated written Chinese language greatly hindered scientific development, and the spoken language had no distinct, individual sounds to be represented by individual letters or symbols. Therefore, a great number of characters had to be employed singly and in combinations to represent things and ideas.