

	Social Studies	
Silver Burdett Ginn	World Cultures	
Chapter 6	Ancient China	

OVERVIEW

This chapter covers the geography and civilizations of **Ancient China**.

KEY TERMS

- **acupuncture**: the Chinese treatment of sticking needles into the body to ease pain
- **Confucianism**: the teachings of Chinese philosopher Confucius
- **dialect**: a variety of a language
- **dike**: an embankment that holds back water
- **herbs**: a plant used to season food or for medicine
- **jade**: a green stone used to make decorative objects
- **legend**: a popular story about the past that can't be confirmed to be true
- **mandate**: a command to do something specific
- **missionary**: a person who spreads their religion
- **navigable**: a body of water that is deep and wide enough for boats to pass through
- **petroleum**: an oily liquid that comes from the earth, which is used to make products such as gasoline
- **Pinyin**: a method for writing Chinese with the Roman alphabet
- **Plateau**: a plain of land which dramatically rises above the surrounding land
- **Silk Road**: a major trade route from China to the Mediterranean Sea
- **Taoism**: an important Chinese philosophy for "the way"

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Section 1: China's geography

China has a very distinctive and vast geography.

- I. More than one billion people live in China's vast land.
 - A. The Great Wall of China, which is almost 1500 miles long, is the only man-made structure visible in outer space.
 1. The Chinese began building The Great Wall around 300 B.C. to keep out barbarian invaders.
 2. The Great Wall was so difficult to build it is estimated that every block of stone in the wall cost a human life.
 - B. China has the world's greatest population, longest wall, and highest mountains.
 - C. Modern China is also one of the largest countries in the world; only Canada and Russian have more land.
 1. With over one billion people, almost one fifth of the world's people live in China.
- II. China has three great rivers, the Xi Jiang (or the West River), the Chang Jiang (or the Yangtze River) and the Huang He (or the Yellow River).
 - A. The Xi Jiang is the shortest, flowing for over twelve hundred miles throughout South China.
 - B. The Chang Jiang is the country's main river and flows over three thousand miles through South China.
 1. Only one thousand miles are navigable.
 - C. China's earliest civilization started along the Huang He, which is over twenty nine hundred miles long.
 1. The river got the name Yellow for the yellow soil it picked up in the north Chinese mountains.
 - D. Early civilizations began along the Yellow River because of fertile silt the river deposited after floods.
 1. The Chinese have tried to control the flooding with dams and dikes.



www.leapfrog.com

Code: SS47.06

	Social Studies	
Silver Burdett Ginn	World Cultures	
Chapter 6	Ancient China	

2. The huge floods destroyed villages, giving the river a second name of "China's Sorrow."
- III. China can be split into three distinct regions.
- A. The western interior has some of the highest mountains in the world and dry plateaus.
 1. The mountain range is called the Himalayas and contains Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain at over twenty nine hundred feet.
 2. The very high Tibetan plateau lies to the north of the Himalayas and is hard to travel through.
 3. North of the Tibetan plateau is a lower, bigger plateau, which contains the Tarim Basin.
 4. This area is very dry and has been a major trading route for China through the ages.
 - B. Southern and central China contains low mountains and large lowlands along the seacoast.
 1. The Chang and Yellow rivers flow between the mountains.
 2. Many of China's largest cities are located near these rivers.
 3. This region has warm weather and fertile soil that yield large crops throughout the year.
 - C. Northeastern China is a low lying plain bordered by mountains.
 1. This region produces many mineral resources, such as iron ore, coal, and petroleum.
 2. Farmers grow crops such as potatoes and soybeans in the cooler weather of this area.

Section 2: Early Chinese culture

The Chinese developed a very sophisticated culture with distinctive medicine, writing, and religion.

- I. The first Chinese civilizations arose along the Yellow River, because of the rich soil for farming.
 - A. Ancient legends told of early rulers who led China from barbarism to culture about 3000 B.C.
 1. The legends tell of China's distinctive painting, music, and writing.
 2. This civilization also traded, created a calendar, and controlled the floods with dams.
 - B. The Chinese also created a book of medicine around 2700 B.C.
 1. Most Chinese medicines used herbs or other exotic ingredients, such as powdered tiger bones.
 2. Some Chinese cures, such as acupuncture, are still employed today.
- II. The Chinese created a distinctive form of writing that used characters to stand for sounds.
 - A. While Chinese people speak in different dialects, they use the same alphabet that can be understood by everyone, no matter how the words are pronounced.

- B. The earliest writing was done by fortune-tellers who wrote peoples' questions on animal bones and shells.
 1. The fortune-tellers would then heat the shell or bone over a fire and determine the question's answer by the cracks that were created.
 2. The Chinese probably also wrote on bamboo and wood, but these materials would have rotted away a long time ago.
 - C. The modern day Chinese government has encouraged its people to use the Pinyin system to write Chinese using the Roman alphabet.
- III. The Chinese worshipped many gods and believed in an afterlife.
- A. Chinese gods represented forces of nature, such as the sun, moon, wind, and river.
 1. There was also a supreme god, Ti, who ruled everything.
 - B. The Chinese believed in an afterlife and buried animals and servants with their dead to help them in their next life.
 1. In 1974, archaeologists discovered thousands of soldiers made from clay who had been buried to protect their emperor's tomb.
 2. Eventually they uncovered almost eight thousand soldiers and horses.

Section 3: Chinese dynasties and philosophies

Like the Egyptians, the Chinese had dynasties of rulers. They also developed their own philosophies of life and adopted Buddhism, a religion from India.

- I. The earliest rulers were from the Shang and Zhou dynasties.
 - A. The first Chinese dynasty that was recorded in history versus in legend was the Shang dynasty.
 - B. The second was the Zhou dynasty, which ruled by the *Mandate of Heaven*.
 1. Many beautiful objects have been found from this dynasty, which was called the Golden Age of Chinese Culture.
 2. These objects were often made of bronze with jade and turquoise stones.
 3. Musical instruments were also found, including flutes, drums, and stringed instruments.
- II. The Chinese also created two major philosophies, Confucianism and Taoism.
 - A. Confucius was a very wise and influential teacher who taught that authority should come from virtuous behavior rather than power.
 1. He preached that people should be considerate to everyone.
 - B. Taoism was another important philosophy that taught a simple manner of living following natural laws.

www.leapfrog.com

Code: SS47.06



	Social Studies	
Silver Burdett Ginn	World Cultures	
Chapter 6	Ancient China	

1. While Confucianism advocated the best government, Taoism argued for little government.
- III. The next dynasties contributed many great structures and rules of government and commerce to the world.
- A. The Ch'in dynasty began in 265 B.C., and it's from this dynasty that we got the word China.
 1. The new emperor, Shih Huang-ti, created new forms of government, taxes, money, writing, and weights and measures.
 2. The army of clay soldiers was created to protect his tomb.
 3. He created a canal that connected China's great rivers and began construction of the Great Wall.
 - B. The Han dynasty followed the Ch'in and lasted for over four hundred years.
 1. This was the same time period that Rome was at its greatest.
 - C. The Buddhist religion came from India to China during the Han dynasty.
 1. Buddhist missionaries came to China by traveling the Silk Road, a major trade route.
 2. The Buddhist missionaries taught the Chinese people about the Buddhist religion.
 3. Buddhism helped Chinese people learn about other parts of the world and added to the Chinese culture through dramatic arts and architecture.



www.leapfrog.com

Code: SS47.06