

# Chapter Summary

## Early China

### Lesson 1 *The Birth of Chinese Civilization*

- People in China first settled along the Huang He, or Yellow River. The Huang He provided early China with rich soil, but it also often flooded and has cost millions of lives.
- The Chang Jiang, or Yangtze, is another river in China and the longest river in Asia. Early farmers grew rice along its shores.
- Mountains and deserts cover much of China. The mountains and deserts limited contact between China and other civilizations.
- China's first dynasty was the Shang. Shang kings ruled China from 1750 B.C. to 1045 B.C. The Shang king was the political, religious, and military leader.
- Warlords, who ruled territories, and other royal officials formed an upper class of aristocrats. Most Shang people, however, were farmers.
- The Shang worshiped many gods. They honored their ancestors and used oracle bones to seek guidance.
- Early Chinese writing used pictographs and ideographs. Chinese artists of the time made beautiful objects of bronze. They made vases and dishes from clay and carved statues from ivory and jade.
- The Zhou dynasty followed the Shang. The Zhou ruled for more than 800 years. Zhou kings had strong armies and soon ruled over a larger territory than the Shang.
- Zhou kings claimed that the Mandate of Heaven gave them the right to rule China. The Mandate of Heaven is the belief that the Chinese king's right to rule comes from the gods.
- The period from 400 B.C. to 200 B.C. is known as the "Period of the Warring States." During this time, aristocrats ignored the king's commands and fought with each other.

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### Lesson 2 *Society and Culture in Ancient China*

- Between 500 B.C. and 200 B.C., three major philosophies developed in China: Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism.
- Confucius urged people to follow the ways of their ancestors. He believed people should place the needs of others above their own needs.
- Laozi introduced Daoism. Daoism instructs people to free themselves from worldly desires and live simply. One aim of Daoism is for people to live in harmony with nature.
- Legalism stressed the importance of laws. Aristocrats supported Legalism because it emphasized force and did not require rulers to consider the needs or wishes of their people.
- Early Chinese society was made up of four social classes: aristocrats, farmers, artisans, and merchants.
- Chinese aristocrats were wealthy. They lived comfortably and owned large plots of land.
- Most Chinese people were farmers who rented fields from aristocrats. Farmers had to pay taxes and work one month a year on government projects. In wartime, they were forced to serve as soldiers.
- Chinese families practiced filial piety. This means that children obeyed and respected their parents and took care of them when they got old. The work done by Chinese men—farming, fighting wars, and running the government—was considered more important than the work done by women. Women’s major responsibility was raising children and seeing to their education. Women also managed household affairs and family finances.

# Chapter Summary *Cont.*

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### Lesson 3 *The Qin and Han Dynasties*

- The Qin dynasty came to power in 221 B.C. Qin Shihuangdi, the founder of the Qin dynasty, ruled China with absolute power and harsh punishments.
- Shihuangdi Qin sought to unify the country. To accomplish this, he established a currency that everyone had to use. He undertook huge building projects, including a canal that connected central and southern China.
- Qin planned to join and strengthen walls built by earlier rulers to create a barrier across all of northern China to keep out invaders.
- The Qin dynasty ended in 206 B.C.
- In 202 B.C. the Han dynasty came to power. The first strong Han ruler was Han Wudi. In an effort to improve the government, he instituted an examination system for civil service workers.
- China's population grew during the Han dynasty. New technology helped farmers grow more food. During this time, the arts flourished and the ideas of Confucius gained influence.
- During the Han dynasty, trade expanded. The Silk Road linked China with its western trading partners. Buddhism also made its way to China along the Silk Road.
- Many of the emperors who followed Han Wudi were weak and dishonest. People eventually rebelled against the Han rulers. By A.D. 220, civil war divided China.