

MJ World History

Grade 6 / Week 4

Your Week at a Glance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> The Birth of Chinese Civilization<input type="checkbox"/> Society and Culture in Ancient China

Name

Teacher

LCS 6th Grade World History Distance Learning Assignment

Week 4: Parent Notes

Last week, students examined social, economic, and cultural developments of early civilizations in ancient India. This week, students will use materials from the workbook of their adopted textbook, McGraw-Hill's *Succeeding in Early World History* to take a closer look at life in ancient China. This will provide an opportunity for students to make comparisons among the two ancient civilizations in our next lesson. The following state standards are addressed in this week's lesson:

SS.6.G.1.7: Identify bodies of water on a map and explain ways they have impacted the development of civilizations.

SS.6.G.2.1: Explain how major physical characteristics, natural resources, climate, and absolute and relative locations have influenced settlement, interactions, and the economies of ancient civilizations.

SS.6.G.2.3: Analyze the role of physical geography to the development of ancient river valley civilizations.

SS.6.G.2.6 Explain cultural diffusion, and identify the influences of different ancient cultures on one another.

Learning Activities: Students should read pages 326-336 from the workbook and—to the best of their ability—answer the questions in the margin to guide their reading and understanding. (Page 332 is not included.) If students have difficulty with any of the concepts presented in the reading, they may find it helpful to discuss the reading with a classmate or reach out to their teacher. Students may also view this short video on ancient China: <https://youtu.be/kLStXI6CmS8>. The video was produced by *Studies Weekly*, a vetted educational site.

Extension Activities: If you have a child who benefits from more rigorous work, encourage him or her to read *Shang Dynasty: China's First Recorded History (9b)* at <https://www.ushistory.org/civ/9b.asp> for a more in-depth study of life in early China. Students may also write an essay comparing the Shang and Zhou dynasties, including political, social, and cultural characteristics.

Assessment: Once students have completed the reading and made notes in the margin, they should answer the questions below. This will serve as an assessment of their understanding. Students may write their answers on notebook paper or answer in a Word document. All answers should be in complete sentences.

- (1) In what way was the Huang He River both a curse and blessing to the people of ancient China?
- (2) Why did China have limited contact with other civilizations?
- (3) How did the king of Shang China conquer neighboring lands and people? Be specific in your answer.
- (4) What are oracle bones? How did the Shang communicate with their ancestors using oracle bones?
- (5) The Shang Dynasty¹ is famous for their writing system and bronze objects. Which of the two developments do you believe is most important in teaching us about ancient China? Explain.
- (6) According to the Mandate of Heaven, what was the responsibility of a king? How did the people know if the king was meeting his responsibility?
- (7) In a paragraph approximately 5 sentences in length and in your own words, describe the philosophy of Confucianism. Why would ancient Chinese leaders dislike Confucianism?
- (8) Discuss the most significant difference between Daoism and Legalism.
- (9) In 2-3 sentences and in your own words, explain the concept of *filial piety* in ancient China.
- (10) Create an illustrated graphic that shows the levels of power within ancient China's four social classes .

(1) ¹ a family of rulers who rule over a country or region for a long period of time

The Birth of Chinese Civilization

SS.6.G.1.6, SS.6.G.1.7, SS.6.G.2.1, SS.6.G.2.2, SS.6.G.2.3, SS.6.G.2.5, SS.6.G.5.3, SS.6.W.2.4, SS.6.W.4.6, SS.6.W.4.8

1. HYPOTHESIZING

What made the Huang He both an advantage and a disadvantage to Chinese civilization? Based on what you know about early civilizations, how might the Chinese people have learned to deal with this disadvantage?

The Land of China

Ancient civilizations developed along large rivers in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India. In China, civilization developed hundreds of years later, along the Huang He. In Chinese, Huang He means “yellow river.” China has undergone many changes in its long history, but it remains a powerful force in the modern world.

Powerful Rivers

The Huang He begins in the western mountains of China and flows to the Pacific Ocean. Stretching east across China, the river carries layers of rich, yellow soil called loess. The loess is spread downstream, making fertile soil for farming. The river’s water appears yellow because of the soil it carries, giving the river its name.

Early farmers grew large amounts of food on small plots of land because of the rich loess. This made the Huang He valley a major producer of wheat in the ancient world.

The Huang He was a great help to the people who settled on its banks. However, it has also caused problems, such as terrible floods. The Chinese have recorded more than 1,500 floods since 600 B.C. Millions of people have died as a result of these floods. As a result, the Chinese people have come to call the river “China’s Sorrow.”

Early people moved south from the Huang He to settle near the Chang Jiang, or Yangtze River. This river also flows from west to east across China. On its way to the East China Sea, it flows through canyons and broad plains. The Chang Jiang is a long river. The only rivers in the world that match its length are the Amazon in South America and the Nile in Africa.

Similar to the Huang He, the Chang Jiang deposits rich soil along its banks. Farmers grew rice there. The Chang Jiang also served as a major waterway for trade and transportation.

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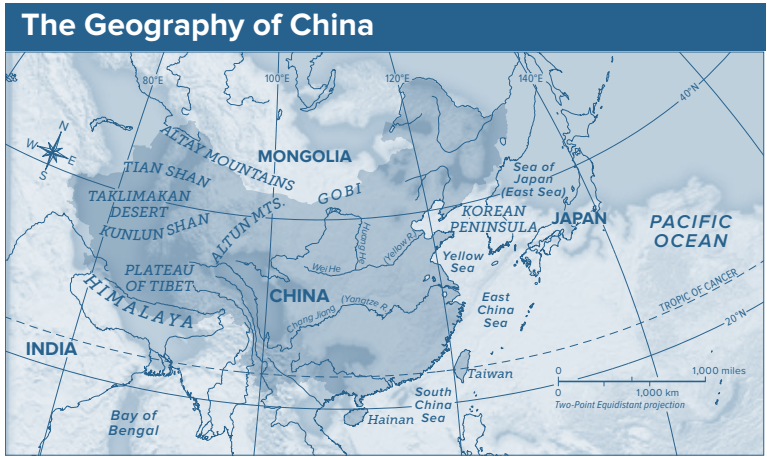
LESSON 1 SUMMARY, continued

Mountains and Desert

Despite these fertile river valleys, only about one-tenth of China’s land can be farmed. Much of the land consists of mountains and deserts. Mountain chains include the Himalaya to the southwest, and in the west are both the Kunlun Shan and the Tian Shan. A vast, rocky desert known as the Gobi lies east of the Tian Shan.

ANALYZING MAPS

2. Look at the map. Circle the location of both the Huang He and the Chang Jiang. How did the location of these rivers impact the development of China’s civilization?



These rugged geographic features isolated China from the rest of the world for centuries. The mountains and desert acted like walls around the country. Travel to and from China was difficult. As a result, China had limited contact with other civilizations. The culture they developed was unique and independent. They referred to their land as “the Middle Kingdom.” They believed it was the center of the world.

The First Chinese Dynasty

Archaeologists have found clay pots and cups dating back thousands of years in the Huang He valley. They show that the Huang He valley was the birthplace of Chinese civilization.

Myths and Legends

Early Chinese people created myths and legends to explain the creation of their world. Similar to other early cultures, these myths often tell about great heroes. One Chinese hero was Yü the Great. In the myth, Yü chases away the dragon responsible for the Huang He floods. He then digs the first channels to control the Huang He’s floodwaters. Legend also says that Yü founded China’s first dynasty—the Xia—around 2000 B.C. However, there is no historical evidence of the Xia.

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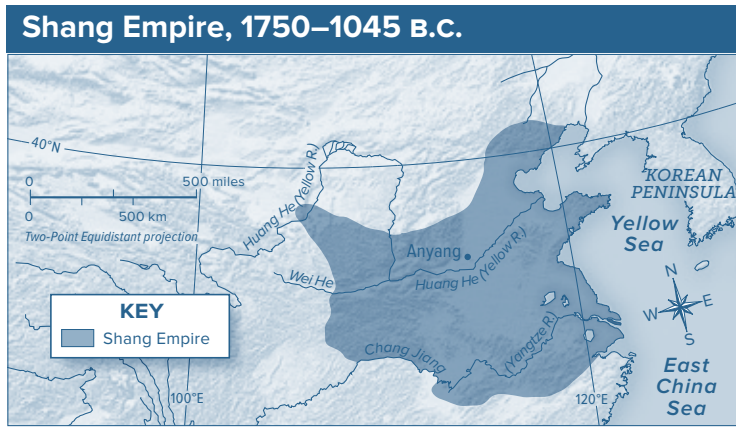
LESSON 1 SUMMARY, continued

ANALYZING MAPS

3. Look at the map. The Shang kings eventually ruled most of the people of the Huang He valley. How did Shang kings retain their power over such a large population and vast territory?

Who Were the Shang?

Written records establish the Shang as China’s first dynasty. Shang kings ruled from about 1750 B.C. to 1045 B.C. When archaeologists unearthed ruins of walls and buildings, they discovered that the Shang built the first cities in China. One of these cities was Anyang, the capital. At the center of the city was a palace and a temple. Surrounding these were public buildings and the homes of government officials. Other homes and workshops were outside the city’s center.



The king was the most powerful person in Shang China. He was the political, religious, and military leader. When the Shang kingdom began, it controlled a small area of northern China. The Shang eventually conquered neighboring areas and ruled most of the people of the Huang He valley.

Large armies defended the Shang borders. Kings appointed **warlords**—military leaders with their own armies—to govern territories. The warlords helped the Shang kings retain their power. Warlords and other officials made up the upper class. They were **aristocrats**, meaning they were people of noble birth, and their wealth came from the land they owned.

The majority of Shang China’s people were farmers, but there were also merchants, artisans, and slaves. Farmers lived in rural villages and worked the aristocrats’ land. They raised sheep, cattle, and chickens and grew millet, wheat, and rice.

The people of Shang China worshipped many gods. The gods were both admired and feared. The people believed the gods could bring good or bad fortune. Gifts were offered to the gods. Legend explained that the gods lived in the mountains, rivers, and seas.

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LESSON 1 SUMMARY, *continued*

The Chinese also honored their **ancestors**, or long-dead family members. They made offerings and asked their ancestors to help in hard times. Even today, many Chinese pay respect to their ancestors by burning small paper copies of food, clothing, and other items. These bits of paper represent things their ancestors might need in the afterlife.

Seeking Guidance From Ancestors

Religion and government were linked in Shang China. Shang kings believed they received their power from the gods and their wisdom from their ancestors. Therefore, they consulted both the gods and their ancestors before making important decisions. The kings used oracle bones to ask for help. A priest would scratch the king's questions onto bones. For example, the king might ask, "Will I win the battle?" The priest heated the oracle bones over a fire until they cracked. The priest would then interpret the pattern of cracks to find the answers from the gods or ancestors of the king.

The ancient Chinese communicated in writing through **pictographs** and **ideographs**. Pictographs are characters that represent objects, and ideographs link two or more pictographs to express an idea. This Chinese system of writing is not based on an alphabet, because alphabets use characters that represent sounds. In the Chinese writing system, most characters stand for entire words.

Shang Arts

The Shang dynasty produced many bronze objects. Beautiful works of art were cast in bronze. Artisans made clay molds in several parts. Then they carved designs into the clay. The parts of the mold were joined together and melted bronze was poured in. Once the bronze cooled, the clay mold was removed. Bronze objects included sculptures, daggers, vases, cup, and urns. Urns were used to serve food in ceremonies honoring Shang ancestors. Chinese artists also carved statues from ivory and jade. Artisans crafted vases and dishes from kaolin, which is a fine, white clay. Shang farmers raised silk worms, so weavers could use the silk to create colorful clothing for aristocrats.

4. ANALYZING

Shang kings believed that they received their power from the gods and their wisdom from ancestors. Why do the gods provide power and the ancestors provide wisdom?

LESSON 1 SUMMARY, *continued*

ANALYZING MAPS

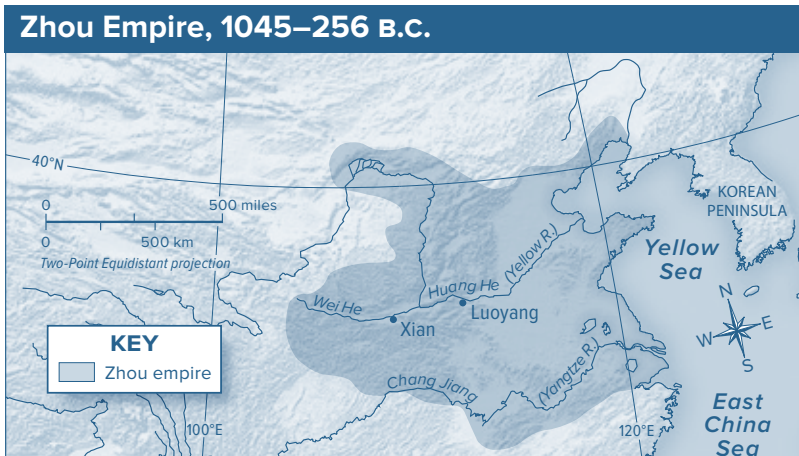
5. Look at the map of China. What bodies of water provided the eastern border for the Zhou dynasty?

6. PREDICTING CONSEQUENCES

The Zhou ruled China for 800 years with the help of a bureaucracy. How might giving authority to local bureaucrats weaken the Zhou kings?

The Zhou: China's Longest Dynasty

According to legend, the last Shang ruler was a terrible tyrant. The people turned against him. Wu Wang, an aristocrat, led rebels in a fight to overthrow the Shang government. In 1045 B.C., Wu achieved victory and declared a new dynasty, the Zhou. The Zhou ruled China longer than any other dynasty in Chinese history, for more than 800 years.



How Did the Zhou Rule China?

Zhou kings governed China in a similar manner to those of the Shang. The king ruled with the help of a **bureaucracy**. A bureaucracy is made up of officials who carry out government tasks. The king also organized an army to conquer weaker kingdoms nearby.

The Zhou kingdom grew larger than the Shang. The king divided his kingdom into territories, and loyal aristocrats managed their local governments. These positions were **hereditary**, which means that when a governing aristocrat died, a son or family member took over governing the territory.

In the Zhou dynasty, people still believed the king was their representative to the gods. As a result, Zhou kings performed religious ceremonies to please the gods. They also claimed that kings ruled China because they had the **Mandate of Heaven**.

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LESSON 1 SUMMARY, *continued*

The Right to Rule

The Mandate of Heaven is the belief that the gods approved of the king who ruled China. It stated that the gods chose a wise and good person to rule and that he would lead the people well.

The Mandate of Heaven taught the Zhou people to believe the king must rule by the proper “Way,” or Dao. His duty was to honor and please the gods. The people could judge whether or not the king was doing a good job. If there was a natural disaster or bad harvest, the people believed the king had failed to please the gods and could be replaced.

Technology and Trade

The Chinese developed new systems to irrigate the land under the Zhou kings. Chinese farmers had always relied on rain, but irrigation systems gave them a reliable water supply. More crops were grown than ever before. China’s trade increased during the Zhou dynasty. Pieces of Chinese silk have been discovered in central Asia and even in Greece.

War Between the States

The Zhou’s ruling aristocrats grew more powerful and took control of their territories away from the king. In the 400s B.C., they began to fight for power. The wars lasted almost 200 years. Each aristocrat formed his own state, so this conflict is called the “Period of the Warring States.”

Farmers were forced to become soldiers. They used swords, spears, and crossbows. Over time, the warriors began riding horses. To make riding easier, the Chinese developed the saddle and stirrup. Soldiers could ride into battle while using weapons. These long wars eventually led to a new dynasty in China.

7. MAKING INFERENCES

What is the Mandate of Heaven? Based on this belief, how might the flooding of the Huang He have affected the rule of a Zhou king?

8. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Based on the events that led to war between the states, would you consider the Zhou government a strong central government or a weak central government? Why?

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Society and Culture in Ancient China

SS.6.G.2.4, SS.6.G.2.5, SS.6.G.4.1, SS.6.E.1.3, SS.6.W.4.7, SS.6.W.4.8

Chinese Philosophies

The Period of the Warring States was a time of conflict, distrust, and death. Many Chinese longed for order. The desire for an orderly society brought about the creation of three Chinese philosophies between 500 B.C. and 200 B.C. Confucianism, Daoism, and legalism each taught a different approach to achieving order. These three Chinese philosophies were lasting contributions to the development of Chinese life and government.

What Ideas Did Confucius Teach?

Born in about 550 B.C., the philosopher Confucius lived during a time of rivalry between kings. His farming family and many others suffered during this fight for power. Confucius spoke out against the rule of the warring kings. He said that peace could return to China if people followed the beliefs of their ancestors. These ideas became the basis for a philosophy called **Confucianism**.

The central idea of Confucianism is duty. Confucianism teaches that people have a duty to think of the needs of the family and the community first. Individuals also have specific duties.

Parents have the duty to love their children. Children must respect their parents. Husbands have the duty to take care of their wives. Wives are expected to obey their husbands. Rulers have the duty to rule fairly and to set an example for those they rule. In return, those ruled must follow laws and remain loyal to their leader. Confucius explained that society would succeed if all people carried out their expected duties. He also said that everyone should be kind in relationships with others. Acts of kindness included good behavior, respecting elders, and honoring tradition.

The Influence of Confucius

People loved Confucius's ideas. Leaders, however, were not as pleased with him. Government jobs had long been held by individuals of noble birth. Confucius believed that government jobs should be given out based on ability rather than class or family connection. Afraid of losing their power, the aristocrats challenged this idea. Eventually, however, Chinese rulers began choosing government officials based on civil service tests.

1. ANALYZING

Confucianism developed during a time when people longed for order. How do the teachings of Confucius reflect the desire for an orderly society? Use examples to support your answer.

LESSON 2 SUMMARY, *continued*

ANALYZING VISUALS

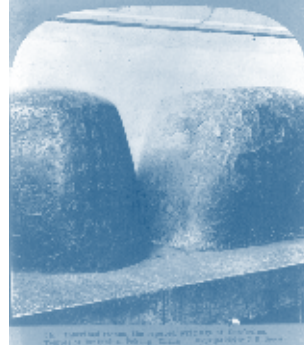
2. SPECULATING

Look at the photo and read the caption. The Temple of Confucius was built in the 1300s A.D. Why do you think a temple was built honoring Confucius hundreds of years after the philosopher's death?

3. DEFINING

Why is *Dao* a useful term to describe Daoism's philosophy?

Confucius died in 479 B.C., and his followers compiled a written collection of his sayings in a work called the *Analects*. These writings helped spread the teaching of Confucius across China. Until the early A.D. 1900s, Confucianism influenced the growth of Chinese government and society.



In the Temple of Confucius in Beijing, China, stones are inscribed with the philosopher's teachings.

The Philosophy of Daoism

The philosopher Laozi probably lived at the same time as Confucius. Also seeking a more peaceful society, he created the philosophy of **Daoism**. The word **Dao** means “path,” or “the Way.” Daoism teaches people how to live a good life. According to Daoism, people should give up their worldly desires to live a simple life. By depending on nature and the Dao, or the spiritual force that guides all things, people can enjoy a happy life.

How is Daoism different from Confucianism? Confucius believed that people needed to work hard to improve the world. In contrast, Laozi suggested giving up all worldly affairs and being one with nature. Despite their differences, many Chinese incorporated the ideas of both philosophies into their lives.

Legalism

A thinker named Han Fei Zi had very different ideas from Confucius and Laozi. To him, all humans were naturally evil. The only way to force people to do their duties would be to set up a system of strict laws and harsh punishments. His ideas led to the philosophy of **legalism**, or the “School of Law.” Many aristocrats embraced legalism because it did not require much change on their part. They did not have to be considerate of the people they ruled. In fact, legalism seemed to give them the right to issue cruel punishment if they chose.

LESSON 2 SUMMARY, *continued*

CHINESE PHILOSOPHERS			
	Confucianism	Daoism	Legalism
Founder of the Philosophy	Confucius	Laozi	Han Fei Zi
Main Ideas of the Philosophy	The needs of family and community are most important.	Nature and the Dao are more important than worldly affairs.	Harsh laws and strict punishment are required to keep order.
How It Influenced Modern Life	The idea of family duty still plays a role in the lives of many Chinese people today. Confucius's ideas have helped allow qualified people to be hired for government jobs.	Daoism teaches the importance of nature and encourages people to treat nature with respect and reverence.	Legalism introduced laws that affected Chinese history for many centuries.

ANALYZING VISUALS

4. EVALUATING

Look at the chart of Chinese philosophers and philosophy. Choose one idea from the chart, and explain how it is still relevant in today's world. Support your response with evidence from the text.

Chinese Life

Ancient China had four main social classes—aristocrats, farmers, artisans, and merchants. These groups had different levels of power and wealth.

Life of Aristocrats

Aristocratic families held most of the wealth and authority in Chinese society. Their large tile-roofed houses were filled with fine furniture and other evidence of their high status. The aristocrats' homes were located on large plots of land called estates. The death of a father meant that his land and possessions would be divided equally among all his male heirs. As a result, the estates became smaller and smaller over many generations, and sons had access to fewer productive resources than their fathers and grandfathers.

Life of Farmers

The second class in ancient China was the largest, consisting of all the people who farmed China's land. About nine out of ten of all early Chinese people were farmers. Farmers lived in small homes located in rural villages. Beyond the mud walls of the villages, aristocrats owned the vast fields.

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LESSON 2 SUMMARY, *continued*

6. SPECULATING

How might social classes and family structures have provided order to Chinese society? What was the relationship between social class and filial piety?

The aristocrats let the farmers use small portions of their land to grow crops. In return, the farms used barter to pay rent to the aristocrats in the form of a share of the crops grown. Wheat and millet were main crops in northern China. A warmer and wetter climate in the south allowed farmers to grow rice.

Farmers led difficult lives. Floods and famine were among the many threats they faced. They also had to pay taxes to the government. For one month out of every year, they were used as labor on public works projects such as roads. If there was a war, farmers were forced to become soldiers.

Lives of the Artisans and Merchants

Skilled workers, or artisans, crafted the objects that the Chinese people depended upon. They made iron tools and weapons as well as silk clothing and bronze and jade containers. Family relationships often decided the craft in which an artisan specialized. Fathers often passed on their skills to sons.

Merchants sometimes became very wealthy, but they always occupied the lowest position in the Chinese class system. This was because they did not produce anything on their own. They gained the reputation for not caring about what was good for society.

What Were Chinese Families Like?

Early Chinese society revolved around the family. Workers were an important resource in China, which had a traditional economy based on farming. Parents gained additional workers by having more and more children. Families were very tightly knit. These strong bonds ensured that elderly, young, and sick family members would be cared for.

Filial piety had an important role in early society. *Filial* refers to a son or daughter while *piety* relates to duty or devotion. Filial piety was the responsibility people had to respect and obey their parents. The idea of filial piety encouraged people to care for older relatives. People placed the needs of the head of the family, usually the oldest male, ahead of their own. Filial piety was central to Confucianism and remains an important component of Chinese culture today.