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Ancient China

Fun Projects for World History

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History, Language Arts, Art - Ancient China

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History, Language Arts, Art - Ancient China

GENERAL OVERVIEW

This collection of nine enrichment activities was designed to complement existing curricula and expand one's understanding of the ancient Chinese. Studies have confirmed that using our hands helps us retain information. So, if you are looking for creative and simple, yet stimulating and exciting projects to spark learning, take the next step toward a highly engaging encounter.

There is truly nothing more stimulating than combining a hands-on activity with a subject being studied. Regardless of a learner's age, learning by doing will help maintain their interest, improve retention of information, and foster a desire to learn now and in the future.

In this collection, there are a total of nine hands-on projects and writing activities. To enhance the complete learning experience using this collection, character and setting development statements as well as extensive vocabulary lists are provided. A general materials list, detailed instructions, and extensive activity suggestions are provided for the nine projects that focus on the collection theme.

As an educator with 18 plus years of teaching and product development experience, it is my personal goal to encourage young people to be creative. Each of the activities included in this collection are based on actual artifacts representative of ancient China. A conscious effort was made to develop activities that are constructed from readily available materials, yet result in stunning end products. Although having a wonderful end product is desirable, an essential part of learning is the process of creating something. A young person will gain a greater appreciation for the skills required by the ancient Chinese when they accomplish an activity.

It is my heartfelt desire that both teacher and student will find the nine activities in this book a wonderful journey of creativity. Jean Henrich



Chinese Emperors & Dynasties in Focus



History Chinese Emperors & Dynasties

EMPERORS IN FOCUS



Chinese emperors, or the “Sons of Heaven,” were considered to have complete and absolute authority over all the earth. Each emperor from the different dynasties that ruled ancient China were both high achievers and terrible leaders. Each emperor and the dynasty they ruled contributed different things to the Chinese empire. Chinese emperors were known for the dynasty they ruled. It was often the name of the family that assumed power from which a dynasty was named. For example, the Shang family assumed power at one point in Chinese history and a dynasty is named after them as a result.

Chinese emperors had absolute power. They were advised by many government officials and ministers. Wives were selected from the families of nobles. Emperors were constantly in danger from plots against them. As a result, many executed their entire family or members of their wife’s family. They lived a lavish lifestyle. The imperial kitchen staff had over 5000 servants and cooks. Exotic animals and rare plants were added to the palace gardens.

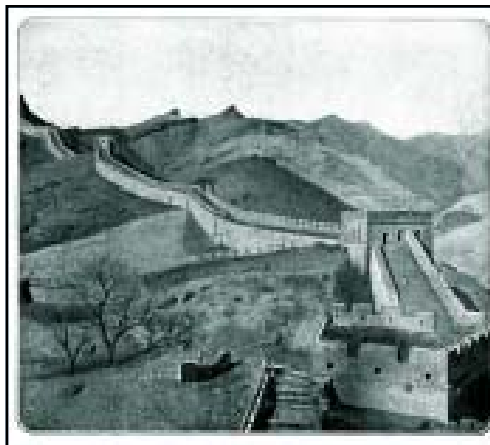
EMPERORS IN FOCUS

On the next several pages are a few of the primary dynasties (not chronological) and the accomplishments achieved by the rulers during that time.

THE FIRST CHINESE EMPEROR

The rule of the Chinese emperors began when the Qin soldiers defeated and united the warring factions under the leadership of the Yellow Emperor, Zheng, of the Qin clan. Zheng called himself “First Sovereign Qin Emperor,” or Qin Shi Huangdi. The name Qin eventually became the word China.

During his rule as emperor, he accomplished and contributed many things to the newly unified China. He built a massive tomb protected by thousands of life-sized terracotta warriors. He is credited with ordering the constructions of the Great Wall. He established many public works such as roads and canals. He made the dragon the emblem of the Chinese emperors.



History, Language Arts, Art- **Ancient China**

EMPERORS IN FOCUS

THE SHANG DYNASTY

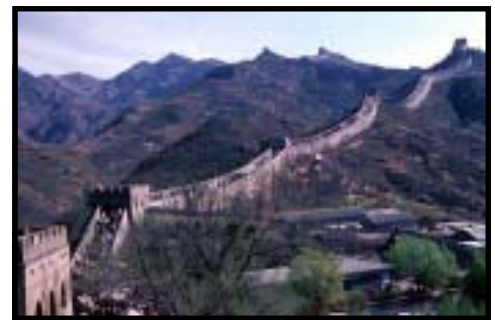
Another great dynasty was the Shang Dynasty. Around the Huang River Valley, or Yellow River, a group of people began to establish permanent farms and communities. The Yellow River provided a fertile area for the people to grow crops and live in small villages. These early villages were led by clan chiefs. It was from these clan chiefs that the Shang emperors were established.

There were numerous achievements under the Shang rule. This was the era when many bronze items including weapons, tools, and ornamental objects were made. People worshipped their ancestors and built China's first fortified walled cities. They placed wheels on their chariots which gave their military an enormous advantage during battles.

The economy was based on farming. Rice, wheat, millet, and barley were cultivated. Shang farmers raised silkworms, pigs, chicken, water buffalo, sheep, oxen, and dogs. They used carts and plows, dug ditches and canals to water farm fields, and had communal graves.

The Shang are credited with the creation of a decimal system, a 12-month calendar, and a writing system featuring more than 3000 characters. Shang craftsmen were skilled in textiles, and making jade ornaments, vessels, and pottery. Jade, ivory, and marble were carved into beautiful objects under their talented hands.

The Shang used soothsayers to help determine the course of government. Soothsayers would use "oracle bones," which were animal bones and tortoise shells that were arranged and deciphered.



EMPERORS IN FOCUS

THE ZHOU DYNASTY

The Zhou Dynasty was established when the warrior-kings came down from the western mountains and defeated the Shang. The Zhou established a feudal society in China. The emperor gave land to loyal nobles. Often, these nobles were appointed from family members. These nobles ruled their lands with absolute power. They established and maintained their own armies. It was the goal of each noble to please the emperor. Whenever the emperor required soldiers, the noble would provide him with peasants from the lands he ruled.



The Zhou Dynasty is recognized for numerous achievements as well. During their rule, advancements in astronomy were made, and the process for making ornate lacquer appeared in art. They made many technological advances and invented the crossbow. Skilled mechanics included potters, metalworkers, jewelers, and wheelwrights.

The Zhou Dynasty was primarily based on an agricultural economy. Farming land was divided into tracks of nine square plots. The first large canals were built for irrigation and transportation.

During the Zhou Dynasty, Confucius was born (circa 551-479 BC) and he became one of the greatest teachers and philosophers of China. He and other scholars traveled throughout the country teaching people how to be in harmony with their world. Confucianism and Taoism thought began.

The Zhou believed that heaven decided who would rule. Zhou emperors sacrificed to the Lord on High. Without the sacrifices, they believed great troubles would befall the empire. The Zhou empire collapsed after three centuries of warfare. Powerful feudal lords separated into seven warring states. This period in Chinese history would be known as the “Warring States” period.

EMPERORS IN FOCUS



THE QIN DYNASTY

The Qin Dynasty was established when they conquered all the other warring states and established the first Chinese empire in 221 BC. The new emperor called himself Qin Shi Huangdi. Under his rule, he unified China.

During the Qin Dynasty, a standardized coin system was adopted to encourage trade. A standardized and compulsory writing system was established. A standardized system of weights and measures was established. People could own land, and taxes and laws applied to all, regardless of position in society.

During the Qin Dynasty, citizens were expected to help with public labor. Over 30,000 peasants worked to complete remaining 1400 miles of the Great Wall.

The government operated significantly different than previous dynasties. Hereditary aristocracies were abolished. Territories that were once ruled by nobles were divided into provinces and ruled by government officials. Legalism was adopted as the official government policy. The term “emperor” was used as a title. Provinces were unified through highways, walls, and dams. This was an era in China when different schools of thought flourished.

EMPERORS IN FOCUS

THE EARLY HAN DYNASTY

The Han Dynasty was established when Liu Bang overthrew the Qin rulers in 207 BC. They used a centralized form of government and extended their empire. Under Han rule, 400 years of peace called the *Pax Sinica* occurred. Civil service tests were developed to give any Chinese citizen the opportunity to hold a public office. Confucianism was adopted as the official ideology. People were appointed positions based on their capabilities rather than their heritage.

During the Han Dynasty, the Silk Road was established and opened up trade between the Parthian Empire and China. Inventions such as the sundial and waterclock were invented. Lacquerware became more detailed and soybeans were cultivated as a farm crop.

The Han Dynasty was the first to use an iron sword. This was also a time when wall paintings and sculpture appeared throughout the empire. Buddhism was introduced to China from India, and the first overview of Chinese history was written by Ssu-ma Ch'ien

THE HSIN DYNASTY

Wang Mang became emperor when he deposed an infant emperor. Although short-lived, Wang Mang tried to improve the conditions of the peasantry which were harsh at best. The richer classes were angered by Wang Mang's attention to the lower classes and this eventually resulted in a large-scale rebellion. Large landholding families and a group called the Red Eyebrows were so angered by the changes that they killed Wang Mang and reestablished the Han dynasty rulers.

Richer classes had been so angered by Wang Mang was because under his rule, all land was nationalized and redistributed among different farmers, and slavery was abolished. Government increased control of coinage, salt, and iron. Low-interest state loans were provided to those who needed start-up money for businesses.

EMPERORS IN FOCUS



THE LATER HAN DYNASTY

After their reestablishment as rulers, the later Han Dynasty began to place family members and infant emperors into positions of leadership. It was during this time that court eunuchs (disfigured attendants or servants) gained great power. During the years of 168 to 170 AD, war broke out between the government bureaucrats and the eunuchs. It wasn't until general Ts'ao Ts'ao took control that peace was reestablished.

THE SUI DYNASTY

The first Sui emperor was a military servant who overthrew the non-Chinese rule of the Northern Chou. The Sui Dynasty was marked by the reestablishment of a centralized administrative system, along with an examination system for selecting qualified candidates to hold government positions.

Under Sui rule, Confucianism was officially reinstated as the state doctrine, and Buddhism and Nestorian Christianity flourished.

Massive projects were implemented, such as repairing the Great Wall and constructing the Great Canal to allow farms to flourish in the Yangtze delta.

Campaigns against the southern Manchuria region and northern Korea ended in defeat. Rebels defeated the Sui rulers and a new dynasty was established.

EMPERORS IN FOCUS

THE T'ANG DYNASTY

The T'ang dynasty was a time of unprecedented achievement in Chinese history. During this era, local and imperial governments were restructured and evolved into a well-defined governing process.

Under T'ang rule, numerous achievements and events occurred. Great cultural and religious toleration was seen compared to previous dynasties. Trade with Central Asia and the West was established with extensive caravan routes. It was considered the golden age of Chinese poetry, art, music, and literature. Schools were constructed throughout the empire. Block printing was invented. The first female emperor, Wu Tang, ruled China.

THE SUNG (SONG) DYNASTY

The Sung Dynasty saw development and advances in many areas, including exploration, trade, and farming. The magnetic compass was invented, iron plows were developed, the use of paper money was established, the first known use of fractions in math were developed, and body armor was used by soldiers. This was also the dynasty when the Lunar phases of the moon were described.

During the Sung Dynasty, rulers incorporated the Korean method of moveable type in printing. It was also considered the golden age of painting. Other achievements included the use of porcelain, and a mechanical celestial clock using a chain drive mechanism was created by Su Song.

