

Section 1 The Geography of  
China's River Valleys

Objectives

1. Examine the geography of ancient China.
2. Find out about early civilization in China.
3. Learn about the importance of family ties in early China.

 Target Reading Skill

**Identify Main Ideas** It is hard to remember every detail that you read. Good readers are able to find the main ideas of what they read. The main idea is the most important point. It includes all the other points, or details.

To find the main idea of a paragraph, read it through once. Then ask yourself what is the paragraph about. Do all the sentences center on the same point? If so, you've found your main idea. Sometimes it is stated in the first sentence or two.

The main idea of the paragraph below is underlined:

The family was the center of early Chinese society. It was more important than each person or the nation. The family came first.

As you read, look for the main ideas of paragraphs.

Vocabulary Strategy

**Recognizing Signal Words** Signal words are words or phrases that prepare you for what is coming next.

There are different kinds of signal words. Often signal words tell you when things happen. Some of these signal words are:

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <i>then</i>    | <i>later</i>                            |
| <i>when</i>    | <i>around</i> (followed by a date)      |
| <i>in time</i> | <i>in</i> (followed by a date)          |
| <i>earlier</i> | <i>as early as</i> (followed by a date) |

## Section 1 Summary

### The Geography of Ancient China

1 Ancient China covered a large area. The climate, soil, landforms, and waterways were different in each region.

The North China Plain is in East Asia. It is made of  
5 soil deposits from the Huang (hwahng) River. Northern China has only a brief summer monsoon. There is not much rain at other times. The climate is very dry. People here depend on rivers to survive.

The climate in southern China is warm and wet.  
10 Monsoons bring heavy rains from March to September. Light rain falls the rest of the year.

Mountains and seas separated China from other lands. The Chinese had little contact with other civilizations. The Chinese thought that they lived at the  
15 center of the world, so they called themselves the Middle Kingdom.

China's rivers flooded each spring. This brought fresh, fertile topsoil to the land. China's first farming villages developed along its rivers. Civilization began  
20 along the Huang. It later spread to the wetter south, along the Chang, China's longest river.

The Huang is China's second-longest river. It is also the muddiest river in the world. It is called the "Yellow River" because of the **loess** that it carries. When it  
25 floods, it deposits loess on the surrounding plain. Here, the Chinese grow a grain called millet.

The Chinese people also call the Huang "China's Sorrow." Its floods could be very destructive. Early Chinese people built **dikes** to help control flooding. ✓

### Early Civilization in China

30 China's first farming settlements were in the Huang Valley. They may have begun as early as 5000 B.C. Later on, they grew into civilizations.

### Vocabulary Strategy

As you read this section's summary, look for the following signal words that indicate when something happened. Circle the signal words when you find them.



when  
as early as  
later on  
around 1760 B.C.  
much later

### ✓ Reading Check

What did the Chinese do to control flooding?

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### Key Terms

**loess** (LOH es) *n.* yellow-brown soil

**dike** (dyk) *n.* a wall that controls or holds back water

The Shang dynasty was the first civilization in China. It arose around 1760 B.C. The Shang people built China's first cities. They created some fine bronze work. The Shang also created the first Chinese alphabet.

About 600 years after the founding of the Shang dynasty, a new group emerged. The Zhou dynasty ruled lands that bordered Shang lands. They conquered the Shang and ruled from about 1122 B.C. Much later, there was a time known as the Warring States. Small kingdoms fought for control of ancient China.

The Chinese thought that rulers came to power because of fate. This idea was called the Mandate of Heaven. A mandate is a law. The Mandate of Heaven was used to support a king's right to rule his people. It also gave a father power over his family. ✓

### Importance of the Family

The family was the center of early Chinese society. It was much more important than each person or the nation. The family came first.

A home in ancient China might contain up to five generations. A person's status in the **extended family** depended on age and sex. As a rule, the oldest man had the most rights and power. Women were expected to obey the men. When a woman married, she became part of her husband's family. ✓

The Chinese were the first people known to use two names. One was for the family and the other was for the person. In Chinese society, the family name comes first.

### Review Questions

1. What was the first known civilization in China?

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2. Describe the importance of the family in early Chinese society.

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#### Key Term

**extended family** (ek STEN did FAM uh lee) *n.* several generations of closely related people

### Target Reading Skill

Which sentence states the main idea of the bracketed paragraph?

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### Reading Check

What was the Mandate of Heaven?

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### Reading Check

What factors did a person's status depend on in early Chinese families?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Section 2 Confucius and His Teachings

Objectives

1. Learn about the life of Confucius.
2. Find out about the teachings of Confucius.
3. Understand the impact of Confucianism on Chinese society.

Target Reading Skill

**Identify Supporting Details** The main idea of a paragraph or section is its most important point. The main idea is supported by details. Details give more information about the main idea. They may explain the main idea. They may give additional facts or examples. They tell you *what, where, why, how much, or how many.*

The main idea of the section titled “The Life of Confucius” is stated in this sentence: “Confucius was the most important early Chinese thinker.”

As you read, notice how the details tell you more about the life of Confucius and why he was important.

Vocabulary Strategy

**Recognizing Signal Words** Signal words are words or phrases that give you clues. They help you understand what you read. They prepare you for what is coming next.

There are different kinds of signal words. Signal words may be used to sequence relationships. Sequence is the order in which things occur. It relates events in terms of when they happen.

Some signal words that may show sequence are:

|              |                |                |                  |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| <i>first</i> | <i>then</i>    | <i>before</i>  | <i>afterward</i> |
| <i>next</i>  | <i>finally</i> | <i>earlier</i> | <i>later</i>     |

## Section 2 Summary

### The Life of Confucius

<sup>1</sup> **Confucius** was the most important early Chinese thinker. The Chinese considered him to be a great teacher.

Confucius was born in 551 B.C. He came from a  
<sup>5</sup> poor but noble family of the North China Plain. He loved learning and mostly taught himself. He hoped to get an important government office. He never succeeded. Instead, he decided to teach.

Confucius may have been China's first professional  
<sup>10</sup> teacher. He charged students a fee to take classes. He taught his students his views of life and government. He was willing to teach poor students. But his students had to be very eager to learn. ✓

Later in his life, Confucius looked for a ruler who would follow his teachings. He could not find one. He died in 479 B.C. at the age of 73. He thought his life had been a failure. But his teachings would be followed in China for many centuries.

### The Teachings of Confucius

Confucius was not an original thinker. Instead, he  
<sup>20</sup> passed on the wise teachings of thinkers who lived before him. Many of his teachings were meant to make rulers reform. He wanted to bring peace, stability, and wealth to China.

Confucius's teachings make up a **philosophy**  
<sup>25</sup> known as Confucianism. It was one of several philosophies in ancient China.

Confucius lived when there were many wars in China. Rulers wanted to get more power. They did not care about ruling wisely. Confucius hoped to persuade  
<sup>30</sup> them to change their ways. His goal was to bring order to society. He thought there would be order if people behaved properly to each other. Society would prosper.

#### Key Terms

**Confucius** (kun FYOO shus) *n.* (551–479 B.C.) Chinese philosopher and teacher whose beliefs had a great influence on Chinese life  
**philosophy** (fih LAHS uh fee) *n.* system of beliefs and values

#### ✓ Reading Check

What kind of students did Confucius like to teach?

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#### 🔄 Target Reading Skill

Underline the detail in the bracketed paragraph that supports the main idea that Confucius was an important Chinese thinker.



✓ **Reading Check**

Describe the religious traditions of ancient China.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Vocabulary Strategy**

Look at the first three sentences in the bracketed paragraph. The events they describe are out of order. However, signal words show how the events are related to each other. List the events in the proper sequence.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

✓ **Reading Check**

Why was it difficult for poor men to work in the civil service?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Confucius said that the people in power must set a good example. Confucianism is a philosophy, but also served as a religion for many people. It helped guide them. It told them how to behave. Some people practiced it alongside other religions.

There were many religions in ancient China. They included worship of ancestors and a belief in spirits. Most Chinese believed that they would be happy if they led a balanced life. These ideas were supported by Taoism (DOW iz um). Taoism followed the writings of Laozi (LOW dzuh). He was a Chinese thinker who lived in the 500s B.C. Taoists believe they should live simply. They should not be selfish. On the whole, Confucianism was more widely studied than Taoism. ✓

**The Influence of Confucius**

Members of the Chinese **civil service** had to learn the teachings of Confucianism. Before Confucius, government posts were often given to the sons of important people. Afterward, they were based on merit. The men had to pass official tests. These tests were based on the teachings of Confucius.

The exams brought more able young men into government work. But candidates had to know how to read. This made it hard for a poor man to advance. But it was not impossible. ✓

**Review Questions**

1. Why did Confucius think it was important to teach rulers how to behave?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How did the ideas of Confucius change the way civil servants were chosen in ancient China?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Key Term**  
**civil service** (SIV ul SUR vis) *n.* the group of people who carry out the work of the government

Objectives

1. Learn about the rise of the Qin dynasty.
2. Find out how Emperor Shi Huangdi tried to unify the economy and culture of China.
3. Look at the actions of the Han dynasty's leaders.



Target Reading Skill

**Identify Implied Main Ideas** The main idea of a paragraph or section is its most important point. Sometimes the main idea is not stated directly. Instead, all the details in a paragraph or section add up to a main idea. In this case, we say the main idea is implied. It is up to you to put the details together.

For example, let's say you are studying the details on the next page following the heading "The Qin Dynasty." You could then state the main idea this way: "China was unified and strengthened by its first emperor, Shi Huangdi."

Vocabulary Strategy

**Recognizing Signal Words** Signal words are words or phrases that give you clues. They help you understand what you read. They prepare you for what is coming next.

There are different kinds of signal words. Signal words may be used to show different kinds of relationships, such as contrast. Contrasts are the differences between things or ideas.

Some signal words that show contrast include:

*but*  
*not*

*however*  
*despite*

*on the other hand*  
*even though*

*yet*



## Section 3 Summary

### The Qin Dynasty

<sup>1</sup> China's first emperor was **Shi Huangdi**. At first, he ruled the Qin (chin) people. They lived on China's western edge. By 221 B.C., he controlled most of the land that makes up modern-day China. His dynasty is  
<sup>5</sup> called the Qin dynasty. The name China comes from *Chin*, another way to spell *Qin*.

Shi Huangdi's rule was strong and harsh. For a long time, nomads had attacked the northern border of China. To stop this, Shi Huangdi ordered the largest building project in Chinese history. Earlier rulers had built walls to protect the border. He decided to link them. The wall took about ten years to build. It is now called the Great Wall of China. Later emperors repaired and added to the wall, making it even longer. ✓

Shi Huangdi built roads to let his armies rush to the scene of any uprisings. He killed or imprisoned local rulers who opposed him. He divided all of China into districts run by his most trusted officials.

### Unifying Economy and Culture

Shi Huangdi wanted his dynasty to have one culture  
<sup>20</sup> and one economy. He ordered that one **currency** be used in China. This made it easier for one region of China to trade with another. He also said there should be a standard system of weights and measures. He ordered an improved system of writing and a law code.

<sup>25</sup> In 213 B.C., Shi Huangdi outlawed Confucianism and other beliefs. He replaced them with the Qin philosophy of legalism. Legalism states that people should be punished for bad behavior and rewarded for good behavior. Legalists thought people should serve the  
<sup>30</sup> emperor. Shi Huangdi burned almost all the books. Only books on medicine, technology, and farming were spared. When scholars protested, he killed them. ✓

Shi Huangdi's empire did not last long after his death in 210 B.C. His dynasty lasted only 15 years.

#### Key Terms

**Shi Huangdi** (shur hwahng DEE) *n.* China's first emperor

**currency** (KUR un see) *n.* money used by a group or a nation

### Target Reading Skill

State what all the details in the bracketed paragraph are about. Use only one sentence.

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### Reading Check

How was China's Great Wall built?

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### Reading Check

How did Shi Huangdi try to control his people's freedoms?

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## The Han Dynasty

<sup>35</sup> **Liu Bang** helped defeat the Qin dynasty. By 202 B.C., he started the Han (hahn) dynasty. His government was stable. His rule was less harsh than Shi Huangdi's.

Stable governments were a mark of the Han dynasty. Han rulers wanted educated workers. They <sup>40</sup> based the civil service system on Confucianism.

In 140 B.C. **Wudi** came to power. He was Liu Bang's great-grandson. He was about 15 years old. Wudi ruled for more than 50 years. He was mainly interested in war and the military. The Great Wall was improved.

<sup>45</sup> He made the army stronger and expanded China's land.

Wudi died in 87 B.C. China was still well-off under later Han emperors. Many new ideas and technologies were developed. But the empire was weaker. Several emperors were very young. Others fought for power. The empire began to fall apart.

As a result, **warlords** gained power. The last Han emperor was kept in power by a warlord. In A.D. 220, he replaced the Han dynasty with his own. This was <sup>55</sup> the Wei dynasty. The Wei dynasty only controlled parts of northern China. It ended about 50 years later. China broke up into several smaller kingdoms. ✓

### Review Questions

1. What did Shi Huangdi do to unite the economy and culture of China?

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2. What was government like in China under the Han dynasty?

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#### Key Terms

**Liu Bang** (LYOH bahng) *n.* founder of the Han dynasty

**Wudi** (woo dee) *n.* Chinese emperor who brought the Han dynasty to its peak

**warlord** (WAWR lawrd) *n.* a local leader of an armed group

### Vocabulary Strategy

In the bracketed paragraph, a signal word is used to show contrast. Find the signal word and circle it. What is being contrasted here?



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### ✓ Reading Check

What happened in A.D. 220?

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Section 4 Achievements of Ancient China

Objectives

1. Learn about the Silk Road.
2. Find out about the Han dynasty’s respect for tradition and learning.
3. Discover what important advances in technology were made in China during the Han dynasty.



Target Reading Skill

**Identify Supporting Details** Each section of text has a main idea. The main idea is supported by details. The details give more information about the main idea.

On the next page, the main idea for the text under the heading “The Silk Road” is implied. It is not stated directly. But it can be determined by adding up the details and seeing what they are about. The main idea can be stated this way: “Both ideas and goods were exchanged along the Silk Road. It connected China to the Mediterranean.”

As you read, note the supporting details under each heading.

Vocabulary Strategy

**Recognizing Signal Words** Signal words are words or phrases that give you clues. They prepare you for what is coming next.

There are different kinds of signal words. Signal words may show how things are related, such as cause and effect. As you will recall, a cause is what makes something happens. An effect is the result of the cause. Some signal words that may show cause and effect include:

| <u>Cause</u>         | <u>Effect</u>       |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| <i>because</i>       | <i>as a result</i>  |
| <i>if</i>            | <i>consequently</i> |
| <i>on account of</i> | <i>so</i>           |
| <i>since</i>         | <i>then</i>         |
|                      | <i>therefore</i>    |

## Section 4 Summary

### The Silk Road

- <sup>1</sup> Wudi's conquests brought the Chinese into contact with the people of Central Asia. The Chinese exchanged goods with these people. A major trade route developed. It was called the **Silk Road**.
- <sup>5</sup> The Silk Road was a series of routes that covered more than 4,000 miles (6,400 kilometers). It crossed mountains and deserts. It ended in what is now Turkey. From there, traders shipped goods across the Mediterranean.
- <sup>10</sup> Few travelers went the entire length of the Silk Road. Instead, goods were passed from trader to trader as they crossed Asia. With each trade, the price went up. At the end, the goods were very expensive.

The Silk Road got its name from **silk**. Han farmers had developed new ways for raising silkworms, the caterpillars that made the silk. Wealthy Romans would pay high prices for Chinese silk. Wealthy Chinese would pay well for items from Rome. ✓

New ideas also traveled along the Silk Road. For example, missionaries from India traveled to China along the road. They brought Buddhism with them. By the end of the Han dynasty, Buddhism was a major religion in China.

### Tradition and Learning

- <sup>25</sup> Tradition and learning flourished during the Han dynasty.

| Tradition   | Learning   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rulers wanted to bring back respect for tradition</li><li>• Returned to the teachings of Confucius</li><li>• Civil service required study of Confucianism</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poetry flourished</li><li>• Scholars created first dictionary</li><li>• Sima Qian wrote the a history of China ✓</li></ul> |

#### Key Terms

**Silk Road** (silk rohd) *n.* an ancient trade route between China and Europe

**silk** (silk) *n.* a valuable cloth, made by silkworms



### Target Reading Skill

The main idea of the section titled “The Silk Road” is “Both goods and ideas were exchanged along the Silk Road.”

In the bracketed paragraphs find one example of each.

Goods: \_\_\_\_\_

Ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

### ✓ Reading Check

What are silkworms?

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### ✓ Reading Check

What contribution to learning did Sima Qian make?

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## Vocabulary Strategy

In the bracketed paragraph, a signal word is used to show cause and effect. Find the signal word and circle it.



Then write the cause and effect below.

Cause: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Effect: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## ✓ Reading Check

What did the Chinese write on before they invented paper?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Han Technology

Because the Han government was stable, the Chinese worked on improving their society. At this time, China was the most advanced civilization in the world. Farming tools were improved. The Chinese invented many devices. These things did not reach Europe for many centuries.

The Chinese made advances in the arts, in bronze-working, building temples and palaces, and in jade carvings. They also made discoveries in the field of medicine. They learned about herbal remedies and acupuncture. Besides improving farm tools, they also invented the compass and the rudder, a device used to steer ships.

One of the most important Chinese inventions was paper. At first, the Chinese used wood scrolls and bones to keep records. Later, they wrote messages and even whole books on silk. Then, around A.D. 105, they invented paper. Paper helped learning and the arts in China. After several centuries, the use of paper spread across Asia and into Europe. Paper replaced papyrus from Egypt as the material for scrolls and books. ✓

The Han dynasty ended in the A.D. 200s. But its deeds were not forgotten. People in China still call themselves “the children of Han.”

## Review Questions

1. How did the Silk Road get its name?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. In what ways did the Han dynasty show a respect for Chinese traditions?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Key Term

**Sima Qian** (sih MAH chen) *n.* (c. 145–85 B.C.) a Chinese scholar who wrote the most important history of ancient China, *Historical Records*

## Chapter 5 Assessment

1. The Chinese called the Huang River “China’s Sorrow” because
  - A. it was so long.
  - B. it was the muddiest river in the world.
  - C. its floods could be very destructive.
  - D. its water was poisonous to both people and crops.
2. What is the Mandate of Heaven?
  - A. a Chinese religion based on the ideas of Confucius
  - B. the idea used to support a king’s right to rule his people
  - C. the belief that soldiers killed in battle will go directly to heaven
  - D. none of the above
3. The main goal of Confucianism was to
  - A. serve as a religion that would unify the people of China.
  - B. live in harmony with nature.
  - C. provide training for members of the Chinese civil service.
  - D. bring order to society.
4. How did Shi Huangdi try to control people’s thoughts?
  - A. He replaced Confucianism with legalism.
  - B. He ordered books to be burned.
  - C. He had scholars killed when they protested.
  - D. all of the above
5. During which dynasty was paper invented?
  - A. the Shang dynasty
  - B. the Zhou dynasty
  - C. the Qin dynasty
  - D. the Han dynasty

### Short Answer Question

Why was the Silk Road important?

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