



China: *Discussion Guide*

Overview

China has a rich and complex history, dating back around 3,000 years. Explore China's past as well as its present, learning about how the oldest dynasty was uncovered, how the Forbidden City developed, and how the Great Wall of China was built. Then stop for a visit in modern-day China, bustling with activity and booming with economic growth. This country, home to one-fifth of the world's population, is a major force in today's world.

Classroom Activities

1. Show the "Lost City of Shang" segment from the *Civilizations: Fall of Power* video.
 - **Pre-Viewing Activity:** Ask students, "What do you know about ancient Chinese civilization?" Tell students that China is one of the world's oldest civilizations, dating back more than 3,000 years. Introduce the Shang Dynasty as a civilization that existed before 1000 B.C., the earliest Chinese dynasty confirmed by archaeological evidence.
 - **Discussion:** Based on what they can infer from the video, ask students to describe the culture of the Shang Dynasty. Discuss how archaeologists learn about culture through artifacts and specifically what the vessels, weapons, writing, and bones told them about the Shang people.
 - **Glossary:** Ask students to define the terms *dynasty*, *emperor*, *archaeologist*, *artifact*, *Anyang*, *Shang*, and *civilization*. Have them keep glossaries of terms pertaining to China, adding to them throughout the unit.
 - **Journal Writing:** Based on the information from the video, ask students to imagine that they live in the lost city of Shang, an aristocratic and agrarian society. Have them create journal entries that reflect the culture of that time.
 - **Simulation:** Have students stage a mock archaeological dig. Encourage them to search for ancient Shang artifacts on the Internet. Ask them to study these items and comment on what they reveal about the Shang civilization. The following Web sites have photographs of Shang artifacts:

- www.wisc.edu/arth/ah370/ah370s2.html
 - www.art-and-archaeology.com/timelines/china/shang.html
 - <http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/archae/2fuhmain.htm>
- **Language:** Show students Chinese calligraphy, explaining that it is an ancient Chinese art form dating back 3,000 years with characters that began as pictures. For more information about Chinese calligraphy, view the video segment “Writing Chinese” from *China: People and Places*. (Access to unitedstreaming is required.)
 - **Mythology:** Invite students to read aloud ancient Chinese legends and myths, such as the Chinese creation myth about the creator Pan-Ku.
 - **Research:** The video refers to elements characteristic of Chinese religion, including ancestor worship and sacrifice. Ask students to research and report on religions and philosophies of China such as the following: Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and folk religion.
2. Show “The Forbidden City” segment from the *Assignment Discovery: When Civilizations End* video. (Access to unitedstreaming is required.)
- **Pre-Viewing Activity:** Introduce students to the Forbidden City in the center of Beijing, the imperial palace during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Still standing today as the Palace Museum, it is the world’s largest palace complex.
 - **Timeline:** To help students put information from the video into perspective, have them construct a timeline of Chinese history showing these dates:
 - Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644
 - Qing Dynasty, 1644-1912
 - Construction of Forbidden City, 1407-20
 - Emperor Kangxi, 1661-1722
 - British negotiations for Chinese trade, 1793-1800s
 - Emperor Yongzheng, 1723-35
 - Boxer Rebellion, 1900
 - **Discussion:** After viewing the video, lead a discussion about the Forbidden City by asking these questions: When was the Forbidden City built? Why was it called forbidden? What is an imperial government? What kind of government did the Chinese establish? What do you know about average workers’ lives?
 - **Biography:** Invite students to read and report on biographical articles about one of the Chinese emperors mentioned in the video (Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong) or another important figure in Chinese history.

- **Color Symbolism:** The Forbidden City uses red and yellow heavily. Ask students to summarize what the video explains about the symbolism of yellow and red in Chinese culture. Compare the symbolism of colors in different cultures, and discuss how an understanding of color symbolism is important in relating to people from a different culture.
3. Show the “China’s Great Wall” segment from the *World History: Pre-History* video. (Access to unitedstreaming is required.)
- **Pre-Viewing Activity:** Ask students: What symbolizes China to you? Tell them that for many people, the symbol of China is its Great Wall, and this video segment explains why. Explain that the emperor referred to in the video is Shi Huangdi, which means “first emperor.”
 - **Discussion:** During the Qin Dynasty, when centralized government was established and territory was expanded, the greatest achievement was the Great Wall. Lead a discussion by asking: Why was the Great Wall built? What effect did the wall have on China? What were the results of building the wall?
 - **Geography:** Show a map of China today, which has a population of about 1.3 billion people. Have students point out the following, and discuss their impact:
 - China’s size (3.7 million square miles)
 - China’s location (eastern Asia)
 - China’s neighbors (e.g., India, Pakistan, Russia, North Korea, Vietnam)
 - China’s major rivers (Yangtze, Yellow)
 - China’s major geographical features (desert, mountains)
 - **Mapping:** Trace the Great Wall on a map of China, explaining that 4,000 miles of wall were built in 12 years. Discuss how this feat was accomplished. In addition, trace the route of the Silk Road on a map, and discuss how the Wall increased trade along the Silk Road, as well as how Chinese culture was affected as a result.
 - **Photography:** Show students photographs of the Great Wall of China. Discuss what it symbolizes about Chinese culture.
4. Show the “Modern China: The People’s Republic of China” segment from the *China From Past to Present: The Silk Road, the Great Wall, Changes in Government* video. (Access to unitedstreaming is required.)

- **Global Comparisons:** Have students identify an aspect of Chinese government or culture to compare with American government or culture (e.g., lawmaking, education). Ask students to research this topic and present a comparison chart.
- **Current Events:** Have students clip articles about current events in China, and then note the patterns they find (e.g., references to the rapid expansion of the Chinese economy).
- **Discussion:** Ask students: What accounts for the rapid growth of the Chinese economy? Why is the country becoming increasingly capitalistic?
- **History:** Emphasize that merchants have been integral to Chinese culture throughout history. For more information, have students view “The Merchants of China” segment from the video *Asia’s Global Influence*. (Access to unitedstreaming is required.)
- **Demonstration:** Have students bring to class a picture of an element of Chinese culture, such as a Chinese scroll painting, silk, a pagoda, chopsticks, a fan, calligraphy, a musical instrument, or martial arts. Encourage them to research and report on this element of Chinese culture.
- **Travel Brochure:** Invite students to write travel brochures encouraging tourists to travel to China. Suggest that students highlight attractive aspects of the Chinese land, landmarks, and culture.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL’s Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following world history standards:

- World History
 - Understands how major religious and large-scale empires arose in the Mediterranean Basin, China, and India from 500 BCE to 300 CE
 - Understands major developments in East Asia and Southeast Asia in the era of the Tang Dynasty from 600 to 900 CE
 - Understands the rise of the Mongol Empire and its consequences for Eurasian peoples from 1200 to 1350
 - Understands major global trends since World War II

The National Council for the Social Studies

The National Council of Teachers of Social Studies has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies subjects. To view the standards online, visit www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/.

This lesson plan addresses the following social studies standards:

- Culture
 - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.
- People, Places, and Environments
 - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.
- Time Continuity, and Change
 - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time.
- Global Connections
 - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.