China is the world’s oldest continuous civilisation. For thousands of years it remained isolated from the western world. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries China suffered invasions, revolutions and civil wars in which many millions of people died. Now, in the early twenty-first century, China is emerging as the world’s next great superpower.

China has the biggest population and the fastest growing economy in the world. Its amazing industrial growth has increased the world’s awareness of environmental issues, especially global warming. We know that if each person in China were to cause as much pollution as the average Australian, then our planet would become unlivable.

China has great influence in our part of the world — the Asia-Pacific region. It is extremely important to Australia as a trading partner. During the economic crisis that hit the world in 2008 it was China’s need for Australia’s exports of minerals and energy that saved Australia from suffering the high levels of unemployment that struck the United States and Europe.
As you work through this chapter, look for information that will help you to answer these questions:

1. How did ancient China’s natural environment influence its civilisation?
2. How was ancient Chinese society organised and governed?
3. What were the main characteristics of ancient Chinese culture and religion?
4. How do written and archaeological sources help us understand ancient China?
5. Why did ancient Chinese dynasties rise and fall?
6. What is the significance of the heritage of ancient China?

Big questions

Starter questions

1. What things do you own that were made in China?
2. What does Australia sell to China?
3. Can you think of other ways in which China has influenced life in modern Australia?
4. Do you know which ancient civilisation invented gunpowder and introduced kung fu?
From huge structures such as the Great Wall of China to the writings of ancient Chinese poets and historians, there are many primary sources that provide evidence of ancient China.

We know that at least 6000 years ago people settled in farming villages along China’s Huang River (Yellow River). Shang dynasty inscriptions refer to harvests, rainfall, crops, silk and domesticated animals. Through inscriptions on bronze weapons, armour and vessels, and on tortoiseshell and bones, we know that by Shang times the Chinese had developed writing. Inscriptions show that they believed that China was a place of civilisation surrounded by barbarians. Discoveries of cast-iron implements from Eastern Zhou times show that iron was then being used to make tools and weapons for the expanding armies. Iron gave those armies a great advantage over enemies who still used softer, bronze weapons.

Archaeological finds, including artworks and jade burial suits, tell us about the rich cultures that existed during the Qin (pronounced chin) and Han dynasties.

The most exciting find of all was the discovery in 1974 by local peasants of a huge buried army of life-size terracotta warriors. They stood guard over the tomb of China’s First Emperor, Qin Shihuang. Archaeologists estimate that the complex surrounding the tomb contains at least 7000 clay warriors, 600 clay horses and many weapons. Two bronze chariots, each made up of more than 3000 pieces, were also found.
Chapter 8: Ancient China

1. Explain how Source 1 provides evidence of a writing system during the Shang dynasty.

2. Study Source 2. Describe the terracotta warriors. How can you tell they were not mass-produced? What can you tell from them about the emperor’s army, his wealth and his power?

3. Read Source 3. Discuss the following questions in groups and report your findings to the class.
   a. Why were crossbows installed in the tomb?
   b. Why might the constellations of the sky have been represented on the roof of the tomb?
   c. Why were the concubines and workers buried with the emperor?
   d. What does the sacrifice of women and workers suggest about the rights of these two groups in ancient China?
   e. What do you think the Chinese thought about life after death?

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**Source 2**
Some of the thousands of terracotta warriors that were buried around the tomb of China’s first emperor.

In the ninth moon the First Emperor was buried in Mount Li . . . he employed his soldiery, to the number of 700 000, to bore down . . . and there a foundation of bronze was laid and the sarcophagus placed thereon. Rare objects and costly jewels were collected . . . in vast quantities. Artificers were ordered to construct mechanical crossbows, which, if anyone were to enter, would immediately discharge their arrows . . . On the roof were delineated the constellations of the sky, on the floor the geographical divisions of the earth . . .

The Second Emperor said, ‘It is not fitting that the concubines of my late father who are without children should leave him now’; and accordingly he ordered them to accompany the dead monarch to the next world . . . someone suggested that the workmen who had made the machinery and concealed the treasure knew the great value of the latter . . . Therefore, so soon as the ceremony was over . . . the mausoleum was closed, so that not one of the workmen escaped.

**Source 3**
From Sima Qian’s book Shiji. Sima Qian was a Chinese historian who lived from about 145 to 86 BCE (during the Han dynasty).

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**Analysis and Use of Sources**
1. Explain how Source 1 provides evidence of a writing system during the Shang dynasty.
2. Study Source 2. Describe the terracotta warriors. How can you tell they were not mass-produced? What can you tell from them about the emperor’s army, his wealth and his power?
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   a. Why were crossbows installed in the tomb?
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**Artificer** craftsperson or inventor
**Concubines** women who lived with the emperor in a sexual relationship but were not married to him
**Constellations** groups of stars
**Mausoleum** large tomb structure
8.2 China’s civilisation begins

The ancient Chinese saw their country as the centre of the world. Until about 126 BCE they were unaware of the existence of other civilisations. According to legends in the ancient books of China, there was once a ‘golden age’ in which the arts of civilisation, morals and good government were established. The legends tell of a dynasty called the Xia (pronounced shar). It is possible that this dynasty ruled a state in China from about the twenty-first century BCE to the seventeenth century BCE, when its last king was overthrown. However, we have no primary evidence of its existence.

The mandate of heaven

From earliest times, Chinese rulers based their authority on the mandate of heaven. This meant they had been chosen by the gods to rule. However, a ruler who failed to protect the people from floods, famine, wars or other disasters was considered to have lost the mandate of heaven and could be overthrown.

China’s earliest dynasties

The first dynasty for which we have evidence is the Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BCE). The Shang rulers were often at war with neighbouring groups. Their dynasty fell when the Zhou (pronounced jo) defeated them and set up a new dynasty. Historians divide the Zhou dynasty into two periods: the Western Zhou dynasty (1045–771 BCE) and the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770–256 BCE), under which the capital was moved to the east.

The Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Under the Eastern Zhou rulers, royal authority was weak. There were many wars between local lords, who controlled their own states within the Zhou kingdom. The stronger states defeated and took over the weaker states. Finally seven states — Qin, Han, Zhao, Wei, Ch’u, Yan and Qi — remained to fight for control of northern China.

Did you know?

The name ‘China’ comes from the name of the Chinese state Qin. People in India and Central Asia must have known of Qin’s existence by about 300 BCE because by that time the word ‘China’ appeared in their languages. Modern Chinese call their country Zhongguo. In Eastern Zhou times, Zhongguo meant the central states of China.
Chapter 8: Ancient China

EXPLANATION AND COMMUNICATION
1. Explain the idea of the mandate of heaven.
2. How could a ruler lose the mandate of heaven?
3. Why do you think the Xia dynasty is often referred to as the ‘legendary’ Xia dynasty?
4. Why do we know more about the Shang and Zhou dynasties?
5. What was the Warring States period?

ANALYSIS AND USE OF SOURCES
   a. How big was China in Shang and Zhou times compared with modern China?

7. Study Source 2.
   a. During the Warring States period, which states occupied land surrounding river valleys?
   b. Which states would appear to have had the most advantages in these wars?

mandate of heaven: Chinese expression meaning that a ruler had been chosen by the gods.
8.3 The people of ancient China

Chinese society was headed by rulers who were supported by lords, the landowning gentry (whose position was based on inherited status, wealth and education) and bureaucrats. These classes had authority over large populations of peasants, landless labourers, artisans and some slaves.

The ruling classes

- Ancient Chinese rulers had great power. This is shown by Shang dynasty tombs containing war chariots and the bodies of thousands of followers. These people must have been sacrificed to serve their rulers in the afterlife.
- Below the supreme ruler were the powerful lords. They governed the states, such as Zhao, Qin and Wei, within the kingdom.
- Next came the landowning gentry. The warrior gentry headed the lords’ armies. Bureaucrats were also recruited from the gentry, but they had to be scholars to become government officials. The lords of ancient China were often at war with neighbouring nomadic tribes to China’s north and west. They also made war on each other. Warriors fought at first in chariots and later on horseback. The lords and warrior gentry regarded war almost as a sporting contest. When not fighting they spent much of their time hunting, feasting or attending ceremonies and entertainments at court.

Upper-class women had servants and luxuries. However, as girls they were considered inferior to boys. When they married they were treated as the property of their wealthy husbands, who were allowed to have several wives.

The struggling peasants

Most of the people were powerless peasants whose lives changed little over thousands of years. They reared sheep, pigs, poultry, buffalo and oxen, and grew grains such as wheat, millet and barley. Most peasants were tenants who worked fields owned by the lords or gentry. They had to give their landlords about half of everything they produced, as well as paying taxes to the government. Times could be so hard that they were forced to sell their children into slavery.

Did you know?

In ancient China ornaments and jewellery were worn by women and men as a badge of their social rank. This made it easy to tell at a glance their position in society.
Peasants had to cope with natural disasters, such as floods and famine, and with the constant threat of war. Most of the infantry in the armies were conscripted peasants. In hand-to-hand fighting their main weapons were at first halberds with bronze blades. Later they used swords made from bronze or iron. Many foot soldiers died in battle. Those who were captured could expect to be executed or condemned to slavery.

The lowest classes

Below the peasants came artisans, merchants and slaves. Artisans were skilled craftsmen such as armourers, metalworkers and carpenters. They were a small class because their products were mostly for the ruling classes. Merchants, who conducted businesses and trade, were an even smaller and lower class. Although some merchants were wealthy, they were not considered to play a useful role and were ranked just above slaves. There were fewer slaves in China than in many other ancient societies. Many slaves had been taken as prisoners of war. Others suffered slavery as punishment for crimes (sometimes committed by their relatives rather than themselves). Still others were peasants who were sold as slaves to pay debts.

EXPLANATION AND COMMUNICATION

1. Draw a social pyramid to show the position of different classes in ancient China.
2. Why did peasants suffer in wars no matter which side won?
3. How could people become slaves in ancient China?
4. Why were merchants regarded as belonging to one of the lowest social classes, even though they might be wealthy?

ANALYSIS AND USE OF SOURCES

5. Which of Sources 1 to 4 were made for war and which were made for peaceful purposes? How do you know?
6. Which social classes do you think would have purchased each of these four items?

PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS

7. In groups, write and perform a role-play of an imaginary discussion between peasants and members of the ruling classes on the topic of war. Try to suggest the feelings each would have about war and why their feelings would differ greatly.
In our time China faces enormous environmental problems. Since the late twentieth century China’s rapid economic growth has produced thousands of new factories making goods that are exported around the world. This industrial growth has depended on vast numbers of new power stations. Air pollution in many Chinese cities is so bad that when the 2008 Olympics were held in Beijing, many factories had to stop production and thousands of cars had to be taken off the roads. These problems are now huge, but even in ancient times China’s population had a serious impact on its environment.

China’s natural environments
China is a vast country with a wide range of climates and landscapes. It has plateaus and mountains in the west, deserts and grasslands in the north, forests in the north-east, hills and low mountains in the south and plains along the coast. China’s climate also varies greatly. Beijing has freezing winters while coastal southern China is subtropical.

In ancient times China at first consisted mainly of the area around the fertile valleys of the Huang and Yangtze rivers. It was not until Han dynasty times that the outer areas were brought under Chinese control (see spread 8.2). Then, as now, more than 90 per cent of China’s people lived in the country’s heartland in the east, where the rivers provided water for agriculture. But these rivers often flooded, causing massive damage and loss of life.

A big population
One in every four people in the modern world is Chinese. Researchers have found that even in ancient times China’s population was huge but that it could rise and fall rapidly. They estimate:

- in Qin dynasty times (221–206 BCE) China had about 20 million people
- by 1 CE there were about 60 million people
- by 220 CE the population had fallen to about 40 million
- China’s population took almost another thousand years to surpass 60 million.
The rapid population growth during the first Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE) was made possible by peace, improved farming methods and irrigation. However, these advances involved clearing forests and cultivating grasslands. Farming along the upper reaches of the Huang River caused massive soil erosion, filling the river with the mud that gave it the name ‘Yellow River’. The falling population by 220 CE was probably caused mainly by deaths in rebellions and by soil erosion and famines.

Native animal populations fell as humans took ever more of their habitat. In our time China’s pandas have barely been saved from extinction. In ancient times, elephants and rhinoceroses roamed across much of China. The rhinoceros was driven to extinction and elephants now survive in only a few protected areas of the south-west.
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The oldest Chinese religious ideas involved worshipping gods of the sun, rivers and mountains. People worshipped ancestors and believed in good and evil spirits. Ancient China was also influenced by three great and lasting traditions — Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. China was tolerant of different beliefs partly because Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism encouraged tolerance.

Confucius (551–479 BCE)

Amid the ongoing wars of the second half of the Zhou dynasty, philosophers taught ideas to solve the problems of their age. Confucius (K’ung Fu-tse) is regarded as the greatest of these thinkers. Born into a minor noble family, his education qualified him to become a high official. Instead he became a philosopher who taught about life and government. Some of his disciples gained high positions during the Warring States period, but Confucius himself never held anything more than a low post.

The philosophy of Confucius

What we know of Confucius comes from a book called Lun-yu (The Analects). It is a collection of his sayings recorded by his followers. Confucius was not concerned with religion, but rather with how personal and governmental good conduct could ensure a just and harmonious society. He taught the ideals of family duty and believed that superior people behaved humanely. He taught that government should exist for the people’s welfare and that people would follow a good ruler who led by example. He tried without success to convince the rulers of each of the states to restore good government.

Source 1: An ancient drawing of Confucius made many centuries after his death

Source 2: From The Analects

The princes of today are greedy in their search after material goods. They indulge themselves in pleasure and neglect their duties and carry themselves with a proud air. They take all they can from the people and invade the territory of good rulers against the will of the people, and they go out to get what they want without regard for what is right. That is the way of the modern rulers ...

By the time of his death Confucius had many followers. The best known of them was Mencius (372–289 BCE), who did succeed in influencing the rulers of his age. Confucius’s ideas were to survive and influence Chinese thought right up to modern times, as his ideal of the official as a scholar–gentleman replaced the earlier ideal of the warrior noble.

Source 3: From The Analects

When the ruler himself does what is right, he will have influence over people without giving commands, and when the ruler does not do what is right, all his commands will be of no avail.
Daoism

According to legend, Daoist ideas were first taught by a man call Laozi, who lived around the same time as Confucius. However, there is no evidence that Laozi existed. The main teaching in ancient Daoist texts is the need to retire from worldly concerns and follow the Dao (‘the way’). Daoism holds that nature works in harmony and that people should see themselves as parts of nature in order to find happiness and health. Another Daoist belief was that it was possible to become immortal. Daoists developed the martial art of kung fu and the idea of the yin and yang, complementary opposing forces that together produce harmony and balance.

Buddhism

Founded in India in the sixth century BCE, Buddhism expresses the teachings of the Buddha (born Siddhartha Gautama in about 563 BCE), who gave up worldly pleasures and devoted his life to the search for enlightenment. Central ideas of Buddhism are that suffering is caused by desire and that people have many lives. In each of these lives, people should try to live better until they reach nirvana. Then it is unnecessary to be reborn, as nirvana is a state of bliss free from the cares of the world. Buddhism came into China via the Silk Road (see spread 8.8) and became an important influence by the late first century CE.

EXPLANATION AND COMMUNICATION
1. When did Confucius live?
2. When did the ideas of Confucius begin to influence Chinese thought?
3. Describe the main ideas of Daoism.
4. What were the basic ideas of Buddhism?

ANALYSIS AND USE OF SOURCES
5. Read Sources 2 and 3 and explain:
   a. why Confucius was critical of the rulers of his time
   b. what he regarded as the qualities of a good ruler.

PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS
6. Conduct a ‘press conference’ with Confucius. One member of the class should play the part of Confucius. Others should play the roles of reporters. Questions should aim to reveal his ideas and his attempts to convince rulers to adopt them.

HISTORICAL QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH
7. Look at Sources 4 and 5 and use the internet to find out what influence Daoist ideas have today.
The height and width of the Great Wall vary along its length. On average, the wall is 7 metres high and 5 metres wide.

Qin Shihuang began linking existing short walls built by earlier rulers into one continuous wall to protect his empire from attacks from the north.

The Great Wall of China is the world’s biggest single construction project. It is more than 5000 kilometres long and has 20 000 watchtowers and 10 000 beacon towers. The present wall is much longer and stronger than that completed under the Qin. It took many more centuries to complete, and over time its construction may have cost a million lives.
Throughout successive dynasties, the wall was extended and repaired. Most of the present wall was built between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The wall was topped by a road wide enough in parts to accommodate marching soldiers, horsemen and chariots.

Soldiers on the watchtowers would signal an attack by lighting a fire.

Watchtowers were protected by battlements. Soldiers would fire arrows down on the enemy as they tried to scale the wall.
An extract from the laws of the state of Qin before 221 BCE. Under the Qin emperors such laws operated throughout China.

When five men jointly rob something worth one cash or more, they should have their left foot amputated, be tattooed, and be made convict labourers. If fewer than five men were involved but what they robbed was worth more than 660 cash, they should be tattooed, their noses cut off, and made convict labourers...

Suppose the holder of a low rank stole a sheep. Before the case was judged, he falsely accused someone else of stealing a pig... He should be left intact and made a convict labourer.

Anyone who kills a child without authorisation is to be made a convict labourer. This does not apply to killing a deformed or abnormal newborn.

Suppose A ran away from her husband and married B... After they are caught, what should the sentence be? They should be tattooed and made convict labourers... Convict labourers... are to be manacled and fettered.

Xiongnu the ancient Chinese name for the nomadic Turkic tribes of Central Asia.
Reforms of the Qin

To strengthen central rule and make China more efficient, Qin Shihuang introduced many reforms.

- Separate states were replaced with central rule and one set of laws.
- The calendar and people’s dress were made the same throughout the empire.
- A single form of writing, a single system of weights and measures and a single currency (money) were to be used throughout the empire. This made trade and taxation more efficient.
- His new capital was Xianyang. Highways were built from it to unite the country, and new trading cities were founded.
- He ordered that all carts were to have the same axle width. This made it possible for carts to move more easily along the dirt roads as the wheels of all carts could travel in the same wheel ruts.

The fall of the Qin

Qin Shihuang wanted to live forever. He sent hundreds of men and women to sea on rafts in search of the secret of everlasting life, but none ever returned. He surrounded himself with fortune-tellers and others who promised to find him immortality. Despite these efforts he died at the age of 49 in 210 BCE, while on a journey. His chief minister, Li Si (pronounced lee shir), and others pretended for a while that the emperor was still alive. This gave them time to forge a decree that would place their choice of successor on the throne. It was summer, however, and the body of the emperor soon began to smell, so Li Si ordered a cart filled with rotting fish to follow the imperial carriage to disguise the smell. Only later did they announce the emperor’s death, which was possibly due to poisoning by mercury, commonly used in ‘immortality’ drugs.

His successor, the Second Emperor, lasted only a few years. Higher taxes and forced labour had made the lives of the peasants unbearable. Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been conscripted to build palaces, roads and the emperor’s tomb and to link the Great Wall and serve in the army. A peasant rebellion from 209 to 206 BCE destroyed the Qin dynasty. Liu Bang, a leader of the rebellion, became the new emperor and founded the Han Dynasty. Qin Shihuang thought he had founded a dynasty that would last for thousands of emperors. He failed in this. He had, however, turned a group of rival states into an empire and created a central system of government that lasted until the twentieth century.
What are different perspectives and interpretations?

There will always be different interpretations in any study of history because different conclusions can often be drawn from the same primary source evidence. Primary sources often give different perspectives, because not everyone will have seen an event or problem from the same point of view.

Some primary sources are biased (one-sided or prejudiced) or were created as propaganda (attempts to persuade people to accept a biased view).

Why is it important to recognise different perspectives, especially bias and propaganda?

To find the truth on any matter, we have to be aware that what someone says or writes about it may be one-sided and an attempt to persuade and possibly to deceive. This is as important when trying to make up our minds on current issues as it is in trying to understand the past. For example, when buying a product you do not necessarily trust what advertisements say about it.

How to recognise different perspectives in primary sources

When you read an interpretation of a historical event or development you need to ask:

1. What is the subject or main idea of the source?
2. Who created the source?
3. Why was it written?
4. Does it try to persuade and if so how does it do this?
5. Is the source supported or contradicted by the evidence of other sources?

The example of Qin Shihuang’s achievements

Qin Shihuang wanted to be seen as a great and powerful ruler who brought peace and happiness to his people. Source 1 is an example of his propaganda. Sources 2 and 3 provide other evidence. The five questions have been applied to Source 1.

1. What is the subject or main idea of the source?
   The main idea is that the First Emperor’s reforms have unified China, given its people certainty about the laws, protected them from wrongdoers and made them hardworking, responsible, happy and grateful to their ruler.

2. Who created the source?
   Qin Shihuang ordered it to be written.

3. Why was the source written?
   It was written to tell people that the emperor acted for their benefit.

4. Does it try to persuade and if so how does it do this?
   It tries to persuade by giving a distorted account of what was happening.

5. Is the source supported or contradicted by the evidence of other sources?
   Source 2 supports the statement about measures and weights. Source 3 contradicts most of the source by accusing the Qin rulers of causing misery and suffering rather than happiness.

Source 1: From an inscription ordered by Qin Shihuang. It was carved in 219 BCE.

…Great are the Emperor’s achievements …
All people under heaven
Work with a common purpose.
Tools and measures are the same …
The written script is made the same …
He defines the laws, leaving no one in doubt,
Making known what is forbidden …
No evil is tolerated,
So all strive to be excellent people …
None dare to be lazy …
The ordinary people know peace …
People help each other,
There are no robbers or thieves:
People delight in his rule …
Wherever life is found,
All acknowledge his supreme rule …

It makes no mention of forced labour, high taxes and the cruelty of the emperor’s punishments.
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Source 2  From a Qin imperial edict. When the First Emperor decided to standardise weights and measures, his order was published on bronze plates. Attached to the plates were wooden measures.

In the twenty-sixth year of his reign [221 BCE], the Emperor unified all the lands under heaven, brought peace to the people, and mounted the throne as Emperor. [He] ordered the prime minister to reform the measures and weights. For those who do not know the new system, this [object] is a standard model for making more copies.

Source 3  Hsun-tzu, a Confucian scholar of the third century BCE, commenting on the methods of the rulers of the state of Qin in the last years of the Warring States period. These same methods were used throughout China under the Qin dynasty.

The Qin rulers employ their people harshly, terrorise them with authority, embitter them with hardship, bribe them with rewards, and destroy them with punishments.

Developing my skills

In 213 BCE, Qin Shihuang ordered the burning of many books. He followed this up by executing hundreds of scholars who kept their books. Source 4 gives the official reasons for these harsh measures. Now use the five questions to see if you can recognise the bias in this source. Source 6 provides other evidence.

Source 4  Advice given by Prime Minister Li Si to Qin Shihuang

Your Majesty rules a unified Empire in which the difference between right and wrong is as clear as your own total authority. Yet there are people who unofficially spread teachings that are against official orders . . . they openly criticise your commands . . . The people are thus encouraged to be disrespectful. If this lying is not stopped the imperial authority will be weak . . . all people owning books . . . should destroy them.

Source 5  Qin Shihuang

Source 6  From Sima Qian's book Shiji

But the First Emperor was greedy and short-sighted, confident in his own wisdom, never trusting his meritorious officials, never getting to know his people . . . outlawing books and writings, making the laws and penalties much harsher, putting deceit and force foremost and humanity and righteousness last, leading the whole world in violence and cruelty.
8.8 The rise and fall of the Han

The fall of the Qin dynasty was followed by four years of bloody civil war before Liu Bang defeated his rivals and became the first ruler of the Han dynasty. This dynasty lasted, except for a brief interruption, for four centuries and made important achievements in education, science and trade. The Han dynasty had such influence on later dynasties that Chinese people in our time call themselves ‘Han’ people.

Han reforms

Liu Bang did not want to share the same fate as the Qin dynasty so he took steps to restore prosperity. The size of the army was reduced. He also reduced taxes on the peasants and encouraged farming to ensure plentiful supplies of food. As a result, China’s population reached 60 million by the end of the first century BCE. However, landlords continued to exploit the peasants.

A system of state education was founded. It included a Great Academy, in which boys studied the classic books of Confucianism. No girls were enrolled. The boys were expected to memorise what they studied and were not allowed to criticise or challenge ideas. Through examinations they were selected for positions as bureaucrats in the civil service.

China expands

China expanded under the Han. In 138 BCE Emperor Wudi (140–87 BCE) sent Zhang Qian and 99 others on a mission to establish relations with people

Source 1: Chinese life under the Han

A The marketplace
As in Xianyang, large and lively marketplaces were usually just inside the city gates. This allowed access by travelling merchants. Merchants were looked down on by society even if they were rich. They were not seen as contributing in the way farmers did. Goods from all over China and the known world were sold and traded in the market.

B People you might see
In the noisy markets, people bought and sold food and animals. There were musicians, acrobats, jugglers, letter writers, dentists and craftworkers.

C Livestock available
Owl, panther, deer, dog, pig, ant eggs, snails and turtles were mostly bought by the rich.

D City walls
Ancient Chinese cities were circled by two walls. City walls were built to protect the people. If you visit China today, you will still be able to see the remains of these walls in many cities. The inner wall was called cheng and the outer wall was called guo. Often moats, called chi, surrounded these walls. The inner city was called geng, and together they were known as cheng chi.
The Han dynasty is usually regarded as more tolerant than the Qin dynasty. However, when the great historian Sima Qian dared to speak in defence of an officer who was unfairly blamed for a Chinese defeat by the Xiongnu, Emperor Wudi had Sima Qian castrated and thrown into prison.

In the remote west. After twice being captured and enslaved by the Xiongnu and twice escaping, Zhang returned in 125 BCE with stories of civilisations that China had never heard of before. Zhang Qian was sent on two further missions to find a trade route to Central Asia and India. In the following years, Chinese rule was extended into the north of Korea in 109 BCE, and from Korea the influence of Chinese culture spread to Japan. Much of what is now southeastern China and western China was brought under Han control by about 102 BCE.

The Silk Road

By the early first century BCE further Chinese missions led to the founding of the famous Silk Road. From this time onward, camel trains loaded with valuable silk were able to make the hazardous journey from China through the deserts and mountains of Central Asia to India, Persia and the Roman Empire. Traders from other lands used the Silk Road to bring products including jade, silver and Roman glassware to China.
The rich get richer and the poor get poorer

To control newly conquered territories, the Han rulers deported many local people and settled their lands with Chinese. The ruling classes and merchants benefited from this growth of the empire, but the ordinary people of China paid a terrible price. The Han rulers paid for wars of conquest through increased taxes on the peasants. Many peasants had to sell their land to pay taxes. Others were so desperate that they were forced to sell their children or themselves into slavery.

Wang Mang

The peasants became more desperate while powerful landlords became richer. Even among the privileged there were people who saw this as unjust.
Wang Mang was an official who had support from many Confucian scholars. In 9 CE he seized control of China from the infant Han emperor and set up the Hsin dynasty. In his first year as ruler, Wang Mang proclaimed many reforms.

- All land was to become the property of the emperor so that the estates of big landlords could be given to the peasants.
- The slave trade was to be banned.
- Government loans were to be given to peasants at low interest rates. This would have helped peasants who had to borrow from moneylenders at high interest to pay taxes but lost everything when their debts became too big to repay.

The fall of the Hsin dynasty

The privileged classes forced Wang Mang to abandon these reforms and so peasant revolts began in 14 CE. Four years later, led by a secret society called the Red Eyebrows, the rebels attacked towns, killing officials and landlords. When powerful members of the old ruling family joined the fight against Wang Mang, his armies were defeated. Wang Mang was killed and beheaded in 23 CE. This was the end of the Hsin dynasty. The armies of the old ruling family crushed the Red Eyebrows and in 25 CE a new Han emperor took the throne.

The Eastern Han dynasty

The second period of Han rule is called the Eastern Han dynasty because the capital was moved to the east. So many people had died in the rebellion that there was now enough land for the peasants. Large areas of state land were given to them and taxes were reduced. But the big landowners benefited most from these reforms. They paid the lower taxes but continued to take at least half the harvest of their tenant farmers. Increasingly, the great landowning families were becoming more powerful than the Han government.
8.9 The heritage of China

There are many legacies of ancient China. One of the most significant was the system of rule by emperors, which persisted until 1911. Even in modern times, Chinese leaders have continued to exercise powers that are not very different from those of the emperors. China’s heritage also includes traces of the ancient past such as the Great Wall and the amazing discoveries from Qin and Han tombs. Perhaps the most remarkable part of China’s heritage is the scale of discoveries and inventions that originated in ancient China, in many cases long before similar developments occurred in the western world.

Many things we take for granted today were invented by the people of ancient China. Here is a list of some of the more important ones:

- paper
- printing
- decimal system
- wheelbarrow
- seismograph
- matches
- gunpowder
- parachute
- kung fu/wushu
- cast iron
- ink
- helicopter
- rotor and propeller
- horse collar
- silk
- kite
- rocket
- compass
- umbrella
- printed book
- fan
- abacus
- origami
- cannon
- bomb
- acupuncture
- spinning wheel
- iron plowshare
- paper money
- chopsticks.

The four great inventions

Four great inventions of ancient China were the compass, paper, printing and gunpowder. These inventions encouraged human advances in education and exploration.

Compass

The Chinese invented the magnetic compass. Compasses were first used to ensure houses were built facing a direction that was in harmony with nature.

Paper and printing

The inventions of paper and printing were to have an enormous impact on people’s lives. The earliest paper was made by mixing rags, rope, bark and even fishing nets in a watery solution and crushing the material down to a wet pulp (see Source 2). The disintegrating fibres were used to create sheets of paper, which were used for many things including umbrellas, clothing, toilet paper, curtains, money and wallpaper. Paper revolutionised communication. Traditionally silk had been used for writing, but it was expensive. Paper was cheaper, so more people could afford to use it for writing.

Following the invention of block printing (see Source 3) in 750 CE, every Chinese scholar and public servant bought copies of the most important books for their shelves. With paper, records could be kept and instructions sent more easily and more often. Today we still rely heavily on paper for communication.

Gunpowder

From very early times the Chinese searched for a drug that would give the emperor eternal life. By accident they discovered gunpowder. At first, gunpowder was used in fireworks for entertainment and in religious ceremonies. Later it was used in making simple bombs. Lengths of heavy bamboo were loaded with gunpowder
and a fuse set in the side. When cast iron was developed, pipes were loaded to create the first cannons. The Chinese then developed cannons that fired arrows with individual rockets attached — the first multi-stage rocket. Flame-throwers, mines and hand grenades were also used by Chinese armies.

**Medicine**

Acupuncture appears to have been used in China since the third century BCE. Needles were understood to block or stimulate the flow of yin and yang to certain areas of the body. The ancient Chinese were also the first to understand blood circulation and by 200 CE were using an anaesthetic based on hemp. Possibly the first human dissection was carried out on the body of a criminal in 16 CE by a doctor and a skilled butcher. Human dissection was soon banned, though, as it conflicted with the Confucian belief in the purity of the body.

**Seismographs**

Zhang Heng invented the world’s first seismograph — an instrument for detecting earthquakes — in 132 BCE. An earth tremor caused a ball to be released from a dragon’s mouth and fall into a toad’s mouth farthest away from the earthquake epicentre. This showed the emperor the direction of the disaster.

Kites

Kites were first made out of bamboo and silk, and later paper. They were used mostly during festivals, but they were also used in battle to frighten enemies (by creating unusual sounds through the strings) and to send signals to the troops. Kites were even used for fishing and for scaring birds away from crops.
In this chapter you have learned about ancient China from the times of the Shang dynasty (1600–1046 BCE) to the fall of the Eastern Han dynasty in 220 CE. This period covers much of the time of the Egyptian New Kingdom, the Greek city-states and the Roman Empire. You studied some of ancient China’s rulers, its people, and its ideas and achievements. You have also learned about:

- ways in which China’s physical features influenced the development of its civilisation
- significant ancient Chinese beliefs such as Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism
- the importance of China’s contacts with other societies
- peasant rebellions and other conflicts within ancient Chinese society.

Quick quiz
1. What does Source 1 reveal about the examination system in Han dynasty China?
2. Work in groups to draft an example of the type of question the students might have been expected to answer.

Back to the big questions
At the beginning of this chapter several big questions were posed. Use the knowledge you have gained to answer these questions.
1. How did ancient China’s natural environment influence its civilisation?
2. How was ancient Chinese society organised and governed?
3. What were the main characteristics of ancient Chinese culture and religion?
4. How do written and archaeological sources help us understand ancient China?
5. Why did ancient Chinese dynasties rise and fall?
6. What is the significance of the heritage of ancient China?
1 List two things you knew about ancient China before studying this topic.
2 List five things you learned about ancient China by studying this chapter. Rank them in what you consider to be their order of importance.
3 Give reasons for your ranking.
4 Name one thing you have learned about ancient China that surprised you, and explain why.
5 Which topics did you enjoy most? Why?
6 Which activities did you find most helpful in increasing your understanding of this topic?
7 Which activities did you find least helpful? Why?
8 How do you think these activities could have been made more helpful?
Using ICT

projectsplus

A virtual tour of ancient China

SEARCHLIGHT ID: PRO-0009

Scenario
The Chinese government wants to attract more visitors to share the country’s fabulous history. As part of the marketing strategy, you have been asked to create a possible visitor itinerary for a historical tour of China.

Your task
You will use Google Maps to create an interactive map of China, which provides the location and details of possible venues to visit. These should be ancient sites that people could visit now in modern China. Your interactive map will help people learn more about China’s past and should entice them to visit. Your potential visitors will want to know the following:

- What will I see?
- Why is it important?
- When did this happen or which Chinese dynasty does it represent?
- Who made or created it?

Process
- Open your ProjectsPLUS application for this chapter, located in your eBookPLUS. Watch your introductory video lesson and then click the ‘Start Project’ button and set up your project group. You can complete this project individually or invite other members of your class to form a group. Save your settings and the project will be launched.
- Visit your Media Centre and view the selection of images from ancient Chinese sites that have been provided for you to use in your Google Map. You can also view the sample Google Map model to see the kind of map you will be creating.
- Navigate to your Research Forum. To help you get started, a selection of suggested tourist sites has been pre-loaded. To discover extra
information about each of these historically significant sites in China, find at least three sources other than the textbook. (Hint: A visit to a travel agent might help you identify some great places to visit in China.) Enter your findings as articles under each topic. If there are additional tourist sites you would like to include in your map, you can add these as topics in your Research Forum and enter articles under these too. You can view and comment on other group members’ articles and rate the information they have entered. Be sure to enter the source for any information you find online. Google Maps lets you build in hyperlinks to other sites.

- Make notes of cool facts and intriguing ideas that you discover. You might want to insert features such as ‘Amazing facts’ and ‘Did you know?’ into your Google Map.
- Use the ‘Creating a Google Map’ guide in your Media Centre to help you create your Google Map of ancient Chinese sites.
- On your map, use pins to add images and approximately 100 words about each of your must-visit sites. Try to use persuasive language that makes your site sound interesting; for example, ‘the remarkably lifelike and individual terracotta warriors’ sounds better than ‘the terracotta warriors’.
- Be sure to give your interactive map a test run before you submit it. Do all the pins work? Is it informative and entertaining? You might like to compare your map with a friend’s map.
- Email your Google Map to your teacher then print the research report from your ProjectsPLUS Research Forum and hand this in to complete your project.

**Digital Resources for this Chapter**

**Sources: Ancient China**

In this video lesson, you will visit the Confucius Institute in Brisbane and learn about the everyday life of men, women and children in ancient China through many inventions that are still a part of society today.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: ELES-1093

**Ancient China Timeline**

Use this fun interactivity to create a visual timeline of key events in ancient China.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2939

**Confucius Says**

Download this interactive learning object and learn about a significant individual in ancient Chinese history, Confucius. You must make everyday decisions based on values. Play as yourself or as a Confucian and see whether you would have lived appropriately in ancient China.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: LO-0072 (PC only)