

Name _____ Date _____

Ancient China

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b''

Notes

In ancient times, China's geography and large size kept its people isolated from other cultures. Many of its earliest peoples settled along the Huang He River, or Yellow River, including the Shang Dynasty. The Shang Dynasty is one of the earliest Chinese dynasties historians have studied, and Shang culture dates back to around 1600 BCE. During the Shang Dynasty, the Chinese worked with bronze tools, made beautiful objects out of jade stone, and developed a written language. The Chinese alphabet doesn't use letters to stand for the sounds of different words like the Latin alphabet; instead, it's logographic. This means that the language uses characters to represent words or meanings instead of letters. This makes it easier to communicate with people who pronounce the same words differently.

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2. b'

Notes

Ancient Chinese kings believed they had been chosen by the gods to rule. They called this the Mandate of Heaven. If a ruler was cruel or unjust, this right could be taken away and given to another leader. The Zhou Dynasty introduced the Mandate of Heaven and used this concept to overthrow the Shang and legitimize their rule.

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The Zhou didn't have a centralized government. Instead, China functioned as a collection of separately governed provinces, whose feudal rulers professed allegiance to the Zhou emperor. Over time, these smaller kingdoms amassed more and more power, coming into conflict with each other and with the Zhou dynasty. The following centuries were so full of violence that they are now known as the Warring States Period.

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3. b'

Qin Shi Huang became the king of the Qin state in 246 BCE at the young age of 13 and became the emperor of a unified China in 221 BCE after conquering six other states. China went through significant changes during his reign. He laid the foundation for the Great Wall and standardized the Chinese writing system.

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The Qin Dynasty adopted Legalism as their official state ideology. Legalism was based on the belief that people were inherently bad and inclined toward selfish and criminal behavior and that extremely harsh laws and punishment were necessary to avoid chaos. However, this ideology was what contributed to the fall of the Qin Dynasty. People were not happy with the oppressive rule and decided to revolt and ultimately overthrew the Qin.

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4. b'

The Han Dynasty emerged after the fall of the Qin Dynasty in 202 BCE. During the Qin Dynasty, many Confucian texts and records were either confiscated or burned by Qin Shi Huang because he feared that they would undermine his authority and power. However, with the start of the Han Empire, Confucianism was revived, and efforts were made to collect any remaining Confucian documents.

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The Han Empire adopted Confucianism as the official state ideology and established Confucian schools. Confucian classics that survived the Qin Dynasty were used as main parts of school curricula. Studying Confucianism was necessary in order to take civil service exams, and many government officials were Confucian scholars.

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