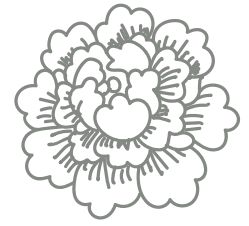


Ancient China: The First Four Dynasties



Four ancient dynasties, or families of rulers, led China from 1600 BCE to 220 CE. Read the description of each dynasty. Then, answer the questions on page 2.

Shang Dynasty

(ca. 1600 BCE - ca. 1046 BCE)



The **Shang** (pronounced *shong*) dynasty was the first Chinese family in recorded history to start a ruling dynasty. During the Shang dynasty, scholars produced the first examples of Chinese writing. They carved questions onto animal bones

and used those **oracle bones** to try to predict the future. During the Shang dynasty, Chinese workers combined metals, such as tin and copper, to make bronze. Bronze was a strong metal, ideal for making long-lasting tools.

IMAGE: Oracle bone carvings are the oldest known form of Chinese writing.

Zhou Dynasty

(ca. 1046 BCE - 256 BCE)



The **Zhou** (pronounced *jow*) dynasty took control from the Shang dynasty and fought many wars trying to keep power. Because of the constant warfare, many Zhou scholars considered ways to create a more peaceful society. For

example, the poet Lao Tzu wrote about learning to live in harmony with nature. The Zhou scholar Confucius focused on morality and honor. His teachings became the official philosophy of the Chinese empire.

IMAGE: This is a drawing of Confucius, whose teachings are still highly respected all over the world!

Qin Dynasty

(221 BCE - 206 BCE)



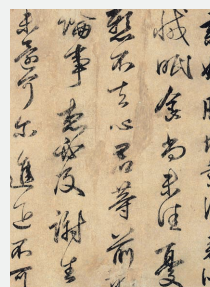
The **Qin** (pronounced *chin*) dynasty ruled for only a short time but is famous for unifying China. Architects and workers during the

Qin dynasty built the first part of China's Great Wall, defending the northern border of the empire. They also constructed a replica army of **terracotta**, or clay, soldiers that is still famous today!

IMAGE: The Qin emperor ordered the creation of a Terracotta Army of life-sized clay soldiers to protect his tomb.

Han Dynasty

(206 BCE - 220 CE)

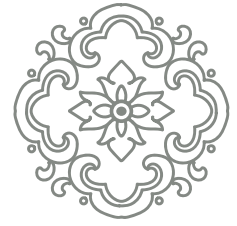


The **Han** (pronounced *hon*) dynasty marked a golden age of progress and cultural advancements for China. During the Han dynasty, people from across Europe and Asia traded goods on a route called the Silk Road. People traveled

thousands of miles to buy silk, since it was only produced in China! Writing also expanded during this era, with the development of new processes to make paper and a form of decorative writing called **calligraphy**.

IMAGE: Han writers used brushes and ink to form each Chinese word, or character.

Ancient China: The First Four Dynasties



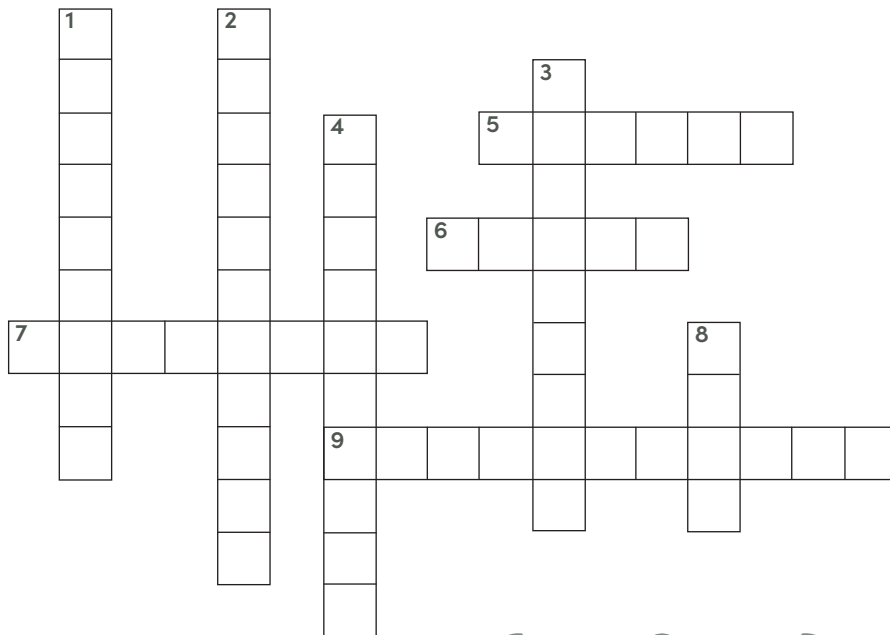
Show what you know! Use the information on page 1 to complete the questions.

1. Why was bronze an important invention for the people of the Shang dynasty?

2. Why did scholars like Confucius and Lao Tzu encourage people to live harmonious lives during the Zhou dynasty?

3. Why did people across Asia and Europe need to travel to China to buy silk? Can you think of a product today that people make great efforts to get?

4. Use the vocabulary terms in the descriptions to complete the crossword puzzle.



Across

5. Shang dynasty metal that combined tin and copper
6. first dynasty in recorded Chinese history
7. famous route traveled by Han dynasty traders
9. early examples of Chinese writing found on animal parts and used for fortune-telling

Down

1. Zhou scholar who wrote rules for living with honor and morality
2. beautiful writing created with brushes during the Han dynasty
3. border to defend northern China that was first built during the Qin dynasty
4. material used to create the Qin dynasty's clay army
8. dynasty marked by frequent warfare

