

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Ancient Civilization of China

By Anita Kim Venegas



Let's begin with a definition of ancient: something from the very distant past that is no longer in existence. It is common today to hear someone



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is ruled by an emperor. The emperor will pass the leadership to his son, and the son will pass the leadership to his son. Over the last 2,000 years, there have been four dynasties: the Song, the Yuan, the Ming, and the Qing. Each time the basic needs of clean water, food, and safety were not provided, the people revolted against the ruling dynasty. A new leader from a different family would take over the ruling of the country, and a new dynasty would begin. The Qing Dynasty ended in 1912 when events in China caused turbulence among the people. The population was growing quickly, resulting in food shortages and famine. A revolution by the peasants ended the ruling power of the emperor, who lived in the Forbidden City in Beijing. Many leaders have made significant changes over the last 100 years following the end of the Qing Dynasty.

Throughout the history of ancient China, the Chinese invented many items that we use often: paper, kites, umbrellas, the compass, dominoes, fireworks,

gunpowder, movable type, and the world's first paper money. Most people think of rice as the staple crop of China, but it's not the only one. Wheat is a staple crop as well, used more for making noodles than for baking bread. Rice was, and still is, grown in the warmer climate of the southern provinces; wheat is grown in the cooler climate of the northern areas.

Daily life was difficult. Most families lived in small villages, planting and harvesting rice as well as vegetables, while raising pigs, goats, and chickens. Many farmers today continue to live as they did centuries ago. Since China's population is the largest of any country on Earth, farmers will always be needed to raise animals and grow crops for the people.

Perhaps the oldest structure in China is the Great Wall. Building



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Great Wall stretches for 13,000 miles across China. Guard towers were placed strategically along the path. The towers were lit up with fire to warn citizens of approaching armies. Most of the Great Wall that visitors see today was built during the Ming dynasty, from 1368 to 1644.

Today, China is undergoing great change. City streets are jammed with cars and buses, skyscrapers seem to touch the clouds, and high speed trains whiz past flooded rice fields. But take a trip into the countryside, and you will step back in time to the years of ancient China.

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1. Based on the information in the article, how did we learn much of what we know today about ancient China?
  - a. Great-grandparents passed down stories.



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3. Which list of items were **not** invented by the Chinese?
  - a. dominoes, kites, and paper money
  - b. umbrellas, movable type, and gunpowder
  - c. chewing gum, coins, and stamps
  - d. paper and fireworks
4. Why is farming an important aspect of Chinese society, both in ancient times and today?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Why did the ancient Chinese people build the Great Wall of China?  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.



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5. \_\_\_\_\_ emperor
6. \_\_\_\_\_ archaeologists
7. \_\_\_\_\_ dynasty
8. \_\_\_\_\_ artifacts
9. \_\_\_\_\_ revolution
10. \_\_\_\_\_ peasants
- family tree
- e. items made by humans that have historical and cultural value
- f. a crop that a group of people, a region, or a country relies on as a primary source of food
- g. an instrument used to determine the direction of magnetic north
- h. poor farmers who hold a low social status
- i. people who study human history through analyzing physical remains and artifacts
- j. shortage of food

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In the article, "The Ancient Civilization of China," you learned about one of the oldest structures in China, the Great Wall. This incredible wall stretches 13,000 miles across China, and the oldest parts of the wall are 2,300 years old!



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# The Ancient Civilization



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**country's large population.**

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5. Why did the ancient Chinese people build the Great Wall of China?

**They built the wall to keep out invaders from the north.**

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9. c. revolution

10. h. peasants

h. poor farmers who hold a low social status

i. people who study human history through analyzing physical remains and artifacts

j. shortage of food