

Name: _____

Date: _____



Dynasty

From at least 1766BC to the twentieth century of the Common Era, China was ruled by dynasties. A dynasty is a ruling family that passes control from one generation to the next. One Chinese dynasty lasted more than 800 years, while another lasted only fifteen years. The ancient Chinese people often supported their rulers because of what they called the Mandate of Heaven. The ancient Chinese believed their ancestors in heaven had chosen their leaders. The people would rebel against a weak leader if they believed he had lost the Mandate of Heaven.

The Shang Dynasty ruled China from approximately 1766BC to about 1040BC. The Shang were the first dynasty to leave written records. The Shang rulers expanded the borders of their kingdom to include all of the land between Mongolia and the Pacific Ocean. The Shang practiced human sacrifice. If a king died, many of his subjects would join the ruler in his grave. Some people were beheaded first but others were buried alive. When a Shang king died, his next oldest brother replaced him. When there were no brothers, the oldest nephew became king.

The Chou were nomads who lived west of the Shang. The Chou overthrew the Shang and ruled China from 1040BC to the third century before the Common Era. The Chou gained power in part from their ability to extract iron. They used the metal to create powerful weapons.

The Chou developed a feudal system in China. In a feudal system, the rulers appoint nobles to control smaller parts of an empire. The nobles divided the land into farms for extended families. An extended family might include many generations and would often include cousins and second cousins. The families were loyal to their nobles and the nobles were in turn loyal to the Chou rulers. The Chou rulers taxed their subjects, but they used the wealth they collected to build huge walls around their cities to defend the citizens from nomadic warriors. The Chou also built roads, irrigation systems, and dams.

The Chou dynasty ended slowly as nobles became more powerful. Eventually, the nobles became more powerful than the emperor in a period that became known as the Age of Warring States. It was during this period that a great teacher named Confucius tried to develop

good government.

The Ch'in state managed to unify China by 221BC. The Ch'in rulers clearly explained and strictly enforced laws. They standardized weights and measures and carried out irrigation projects. The Ch'in also gave peasant farmers the land they lived on. The West first learned of China during the Ch'in dynasty. It is from Ch'in that we get the word China.

A group known as the Legalists influenced the Ch'in Dynasty. The Legalists tried to suppress all thoughts that disagreed with their philosophy. People who discussed ideas not approved by the Legalists faced execution. One Ch'in ruler ordered 460 scholars to be buried alive because the scholars disagreed with the teachings of the Legalists.

China grew into a powerful empire during the Han Dynasty, between 202BC and AD220. Scholars trained in the teachings of Confucius ran the Han governments with great skill. During the Han Dynasty, the Chinese invented paper, Chinese writers recorded the history of their land, and the Chinese first learned of Buddhism.

The last Chinese dynasty to rule came from Manchuria, in northeast China. The Manchus were unable to stop other nations from interfering with China. The British defeated China in the Opium Wars. The outsiders seized Hong Kong, but more importantly, the British forced the Chinese government to allow them to sell a dangerous drug called opium to the Chinese people. Japan seized the island of Formosa, which later became known as Taiwan. By the turn of the twentieth century, foreigners had overrun China. Parts of China were ruled by British, French, American, German, Russian, and Japanese forces. The Chinese people believed that the Manchus had lost the Mandate of Heaven. Many people began to support a group known as the Nationalists, who pledged to free China from foreign rule. In 1911, the Nationalists drove from power a six-year-old boy, who was the last of the Manchu rulers.

Timeline

In the space below, draw a timeline that identifies the end of the Shang Dynasty, the Chou Dynasty, the Age of Warring States, the Han Dynasty, the end of the Manchu Dynasty and today.



*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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The Dynasties of China

Hsia (c. 2200-1766BC) -- Most historians believed the Hsia to be a mythical dynasty, but recent archaeological findings have verified their existence.

Shang (1766- c.1040BC) -- Excavations have confirmed descriptions in ancient Chinese literature of a highly developed culture. The Shang Dynasty was distinguished by an aristocratic government, great artistry in bronze, a writing system still in use today, an agricultural economy, and armies of thousands whose commanders rode in chariots.

Chou (c.1040BC- 256BC) -- The semi-nomadic Chou people from northwestern China overthrew the Shang king. The Chou court developed a feudal society in China.

Ch'in (221BC-206BC) -- The group of warlords known as the Legalists strengthened state power and control over the people. Weights and measures, and the Chinese writing system were unified. Chinese defenses were strengthened by creating the Great Wall.

Han (206BC-AD220) -- The Han Dynasty is often compared to the Roman Empire. It is considered the "Golden Age of Chinese History." Today the Chinese word for Chinese person means "a man of Han."

Sui (589-618) -- The Sui, Tang and Song Dynasties were quite similar. The short-lived Sui dynasty reunified China after four hundred years of fragmentation.

Tang (960-1279) -- Li Yuan was a Sui general who founded the Tang Dynasty, the largest, wealthiest, and most populous in the world at that time. The Tang based their laws on based on Confucian thought.

Song (1279-1368) -- The Song Dynasty continued the flowering of Chinese culture.

Yuan (1279-1368) -- Kublai Khan established the Yuan Dynasty after his Mongol tribes defeated China. The Yuan encouraged Europeans to travel overland to China; Marco Polo was the most famous of the early Europeans to make the journey.

Ming (1368-1644) -- Founded by a Buddhist monk who led a peasant army to victory over the Mongols.

Qing (1644-1911) -- Founded by conquerors from Manchuria in 1644, the Qing was the last imperial dynasty of China. When it was overthrown in 1911, China became a republic.

Answer in complete sentences

Use the reading passage to find the correct answers.

*1. What was the Mandate of Heaven?

*2. Why do we not know if any dynasties preceded the Shang?

*3. Explain why historians do not have an exact date for the ending of the Chou dynasty.

4. Why did the Legalists order that many Chinese books be burned?

*5. Were the Manchus a strong or a weak dynasty? Support your answers with facts from the text or outside research.

6. Why did many Chinese people support the Nationalists at the beginning of the twentieth century?

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.