

# WINDOWS INTO CHINA'S HISTORY

*A Resource for Students and Educators*

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CHINA'S HISTORY



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pleasure that the Bowers Museum presents this Resource Guide for Students and Educators with our goal to provide worldwide virtual access to the themes and artifacts that are found in the museum's eight permanent exhibitions.

There are a number of people deserving of special thanks who contributed to this extraordinary project. First, and most importantly, I would like to thank Victoria Gerard, Bowers' Vice President of Programs and Collections, for her amazing leadership; and, the entire education and collections team, particularly Laura Belani, Mark Bustamante, Sasha Deming, Carmen Hernandez and Diane Navarro, for their important collaboration. Thank you to Pamela M. Pease, Ph.D., the Content Editor and Designer, for her vision in creating this guide. I am also grateful to the Bowers Museum Board of Governors and Staff for their continued hard work and support of our mission to enrich lives through the world's finest arts and cultures.

Please enjoy this interesting and enriching compendium with our compliments.

Peter C. Keller, Ph.D.  
President  
Bowers Museum

The works of art featured in this educational resource represent some of the treasures of the Shanghai Museum, the sister museum of the Bowers Museum. Thank you to them for their continued partnership.

## COVER ART

*Great Wall of China at the Jinshanling Section*

Photograph ©Sean Pavone

# WINDOWS INTO CHINA'S HISTORY



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### Intro to China's History

Meher McArthur, Asian Art Curator, Educator and Author

China is one of the world's most ancient continuous **civilizations**, extending back over 7000 years. It is one of the largest countries in terms of land mass, and it is also the most populous country with a current population of 1.4 billion, nearly one-fifth of the world's total population. At various times in its history, it has been the most politically and economically powerful nation in the world. It has been the source of many important **innovations**—such as gun powder, the compass and silk—that have profoundly impacted the rest of the world.

We are fortunate to have access to much information about Chinese history. The Chinese invented paper and printing, and they have had a writing system for over 2000 years. Consequently, the Chinese have been able to keep written historical records for longer than most cultures. Also, the Chinese have long buried their treasures with them in tombs. Archaeological **excavations** of these tombs have provided objects that reveal valuable information about the ancient people who were buried there, including the names of some.

Over the centuries, China has undergone many changes in terms of its geographic size, population and political structure. It began, as did many cultures, with a number of Neolithic settlements and evolved into city-states and then a vast, powerful **empire** that controlled many neighboring regions. There are several patterns in Chinese history. One pattern is the cycle of political unification and disintegration, particularly until the end of the first millennium CE. Under the Shang (1500-1050 CE), an area of China was unified under this first major **dynasty**. This continued for some time under the Zhou dynasty (1050-221 BCE), but the latter part of the Zhou dynasty was characterized by a number of warring states vying for power. The Qin defeated the other states and then established the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE), which was then overthrown by the Han (206 BCE-220 CE), which unified China for many centuries. After the collapse of the Han in the 3rd century CE, several centuries of turmoil followed, but the country was again unified under the Sui (581-618) and the Tang (618-906). The Tang eventually collapsed and conflict again erupted until the Liao (907-1125) and Song (960-1279) dynasties unified sections of China.

## MODULE ONE: INTRO / FOCUS QUESTIONS

Chinese history has also been characterized by cycles of foreign versus Chinese rule. Preventing foreign invasion was a preoccupation of many Chinese rulers and inspired the construction of one of the wonders of the world, the **Great Wall of China**. From as early as the Qin dynasty, the emperor Qin Shihuangdi began construction of a great stone wall to keep out northern invaders. The wall was only partially successful. Over the centuries, either sections of China or the entire country fell under foreign control. In the 5th and 6th centuries, the Turkic Wei rulers controlled parts of northern China, and in the 10th and then the 12th centuries, the Liao and Jin seized control of different areas of northern China. The native Chinese Song dynasty only managed to hold on to certain areas. In the 14th century, the whole of China was conquered by the Mongols, who formed the Yuan dynasty. The Chinese Ming dynasty overthrew the Mongols in the late 14th century, but by the 17th century, the Manchu seized power and formed China's last dynasty, the Qing.

A final pattern worth noting is that historically Chinese culture, though very distinct from others in many ways, has always been a successful blend of the native and the foreign. The various golden ages of Chinese culture, specifically the Han, Tang and Song dynasties, were times of flourishing international trade, when foreign goods and ideas seeped into Chinese culture. The famous **Silk Road**, a network of trade routes that extended from China through Central Asia and the Near East all the way to Rome from the 1st to 12th century CE, provided a channel for Middle Eastern products, such as Persian metalwork and cobalt blue pigment, as well as foreign religions such as Buddhism, all of which profoundly impacted Chinese culture and art. When China was ruled by foreign powers, these rulers did not seek to replace Chinese culture with their own but allowed aspects of both cultures to flourish side by side and even harmonize.

When studying an important culture such as China, it helps to read as much as possible about the culture and its people. However, it is perhaps even more important to look at its art. Human beings are visual creatures and we respond on a very basic level to art. When we look at an artwork, we often have an emotional reaction such as delight, disgust or amazement. We may also react intellectually and ask ourselves what it is, what it is made of, what it was made for. These questions begin to open our minds to the history of the object and of the culture from which it came. We are fortunate to be able to experience works of art from other cultures in our museums. We can start with the art itself and then begin a deeper study of the culture to which it belongs.

**Focus Questions:**

- What makes a civilization strong?
- Why do some governments last for centuries and others collapse?
- What is a dynasty? How is it different from other forms of government?
- What qualities make good leaders?
- What qualities make good citizens?
- Can you think of a time when the quote below applied in your daily life?

“I HEAR AND I FORGET  
I SEE AND I REMEMBER  
I DO AND I UNDERSTAND.”

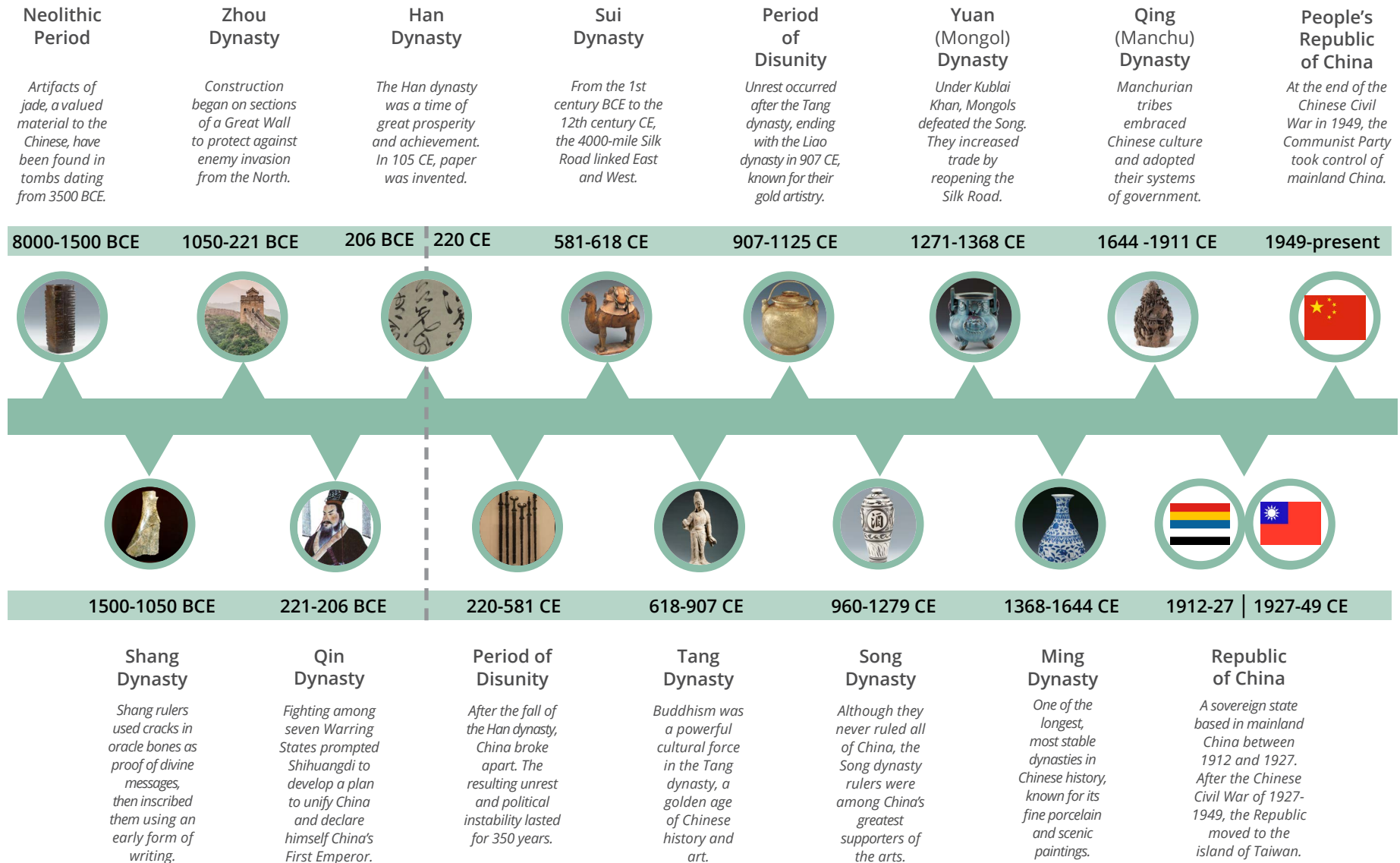
—CONFUCIUS

CHINESE TEACHER  
AND PHILOSOPHER

# MODULE ONE TIMELINE: CHINESE HISTORY

In ancient China, the years 8000-1500 BCE represented a transition in human history from small nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers to a more settled, agricultural lifestyle.

Known as the **Neolithic Period** or “New Stone Age,” it marks the use of stone tools, the production of pottery and the emergence of historical records of the Chinese Empire.

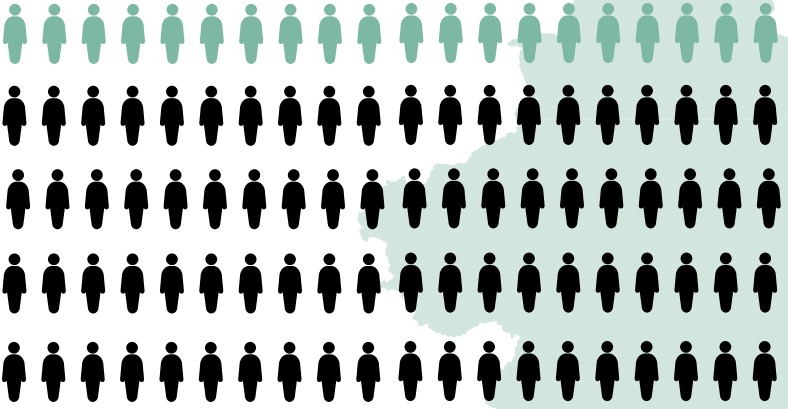




# MODULE ONE MAP: THE CHINESE EMPIRE

**China** is one of the world's oldest civilizations. One out of every five people in the world today lives in China.

Its boundaries have expanded and contracted over the centuries. Today, the country measures approximately **3,250 miles east to west** and **3400 miles north to south**, for a total of **3,624,807 square miles** or **6.3% of the world's land mass**.



One of every five people in the world today lives in China

### COMPARE

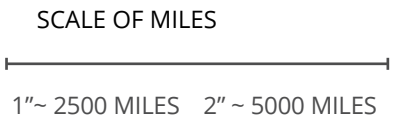
#### LAND AREA

Total World 57 268 900 sq miles (100%)  
 China 3,624,807 sq miles (6.3 %)  
 US 3,531,837 sq miles (6.1%)

#### POPULATION

Total World 7.8 billion people (100%)  
 China 1.5 billion people (19%)  
 US 331,000,000 people (4.2%)

### MAP OF CHINA



## MODULE ONE ACTIVITY: CHINESE PROVERBS

Proverbs are short, inspirational “words of wisdom.”

Can you connect each proverb in Column 1 with its meaning in Column 2?

### COLUMN 1 PROVERB

1. Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you.
2. The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.  
The second best time is today.
3. Give someone a fish and you feed them for a day.  
Teach a person to fish and you feed them for life.
4. Teachers open the door.  
You must enter by yourself.
5. Do not believe that you will reach your destination without leaving the shore.
6. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

### COLUMN 2 MEANING

- A. Big goals are achieved through many small actions.
- B. You are responsible for your own learning.
- C. Treat others as you would like to be treated.
- D. If you want to achieve something, you may have to take some risk.
- E. Giving someone something helps them today.  
Teaching someone something helps them forever.
- F. Don't worry about what you should have, already done, just take action now.

Match the proverb with its meaning. Then, write your own proverb to express an idea you have learned to be true;

MODULE TWO:

# CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS



## MODULE TWO: CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

### China's Great Rivers

Rivers have been vital in the development of civilizations. They are a source of water for growing food, and they provide channels to transport people, food, trade goods and information, all of which have an impact on culture. In China, three main rivers have been important in the development of its civilization.

China's main river is the Yellow (*Huang*) River. It winds 3,000 miles through northern China, from the plateau of Tibet to the Yellow Sea. The river derives its name from the millions of tons of yellowish-brown silt (sand or clay) that it picks up along its journey and then deposits as it approaches the sea through the Yellow River Valley.

The Yellow River is often referred to as the "Cradle of Chinese Civilization" because the silt is highly fertile and, in Neolithic times, agricultural communities rose up where it was deposited, planting such crops as wheat, green onions, ginger, peaches and plums.

Prone to flooding, the Yellow River has been both a blessing and a curse for farmers over the centuries.

Although farmers tried to control flooding by building walls or levees to keep the river within its banks, large quantities of silt caused the riverbeds to rise and the water to pour over the levees. One of the branches of the Yellow River is the Wei River, which is also considered a cradle of Chinese civilization. It was near this river that many Neolithic peoples settled, and where the Qin, Han and Tang dynasties eventually established their capitals.

Further south is the Yangzi (Yangtze), China's longest river. The Yangzi is world's third longest river—after the Nile in Africa and the Amazon in South America.



Upper portion, Yangzi (Yangtze) River which originates in the Tibetan Plateau, Sichuan Province  
Photograph by Yangchao

The Yangzi is often regarded as the dividing point between northern and southern China, both geographically and culturally. The agriculture and artistic output of northern and southern China have long been distinct.

Just as the Yellow River has provided fertile soil in the north, the Yangzi has been the source of water for growing food in the south, with rice being the primary crop. It is also prone to devastating floods which prompted the construction of the environmentally-controversial Three Gorges Dam, completed in 2003.



Painted Pottery Jar with Spiral Pattern  
Banshan Type  
Neolithic Period (2600-2300 BCE)

### The Neolithic Period

From 8000 BCE to 1500 BCE, China's Neolithic or New Stone Age culture emerged. It was marked by the development of settled communities who relied mainly on agriculture and raising animals instead of a **nomadic** life moving from place to place to hunt and gather food. New Stone Age settlements were located along the main river systems because of the resources they provided. Rivers that were important in early China are the Yellow River in central and northern China and the Yangzi River in southern and eastern China.

During the Neolithic Period, pottery was created to produce and store food. The painted jar from the Banshan culture (left) is typical of vessels produced in the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE. It was built by hand, without a potter's wheel, and was probably finished by beating the surface with a paddle to create a smooth finish. Small handles were added at the waist of the jar. Spiral and other geometric patterns were painted around the shoulder and neck of the jar with black and red pigments. Finally, the jar would have been fired at a low temperature.

Such vessels were not merely useful but were probably enjoyed for their spectacular decoration.



Jade *Cong* with Human Face Design  
Liangzhu Culture  
Neolithic Period (3100-2200 BCE)

### Jade: Stone of Heaven

To the Chinese, there is no material as valuable as jade. It has been worked in China since the Neolithic period, when it was likely found in the eastern province of Jiangsu. Jade, specifically **nephrite**, is translucent with a matte surface that is often described as waxy or oily. Nephrite is too hard to carve. In ancient times, forms and details were abraded using stone and bamboo tools and abrasive sand.



Green Nephrite Jade River Cobble  
Hotan, Xinjiang Province, China

The hardness and durability of jade led to its association with immortality and heaven, so it has long been used in burials to decorate the deceased and preserve their spirits. Known as *yu*, it is also closely associated with Imperial power. Jade jewelry and personal items have always been symbols of rank and wealth.

Ceremonial items made from jade have been found in tombs dating as early as 3500 BC. From about 2500 BC, two distinctive types of jade objects were being buried in large numbers with the deceased.

The first type is the *cong* (left), a tall cylinder with a square cross-section and a round hole. The purpose of these two forms is unclear, but they are thought to have had a ceremonial function. One theory is that they symbolize Heaven (the circle) and Earth (the square).



*Bi* Disk from Liangzhu Culture  
Nephrite Jade

The second type is the *bi* (above), a jade disc with a hole in the center. These discs were generally plain, though later ritual discs were often decorated.

### Early Chinese Dynasties

A dynasty is a sequence of rulers from the same family. Dynasties were the accepted form of ruler succession in medieval Europe and Imperial China.

#### The Mandate of Heaven

The Mandate of Heaven was a Chinese principle that rulers used to validate their rule. It had four key parts:

- The right to rule is granted by heaven
- It requires rulers' just and able performance
- Because there is only one heaven, there can only be one ruler
- The mandate is based on the virtue of the leader  
Thus if a ruler was deemed not virtuous, they could be removed from the throne

The right to rule was not limited to one dynasty. This gave other dynasties the right to claim the Mandate of Heaven as well, and with it the position of ruler.

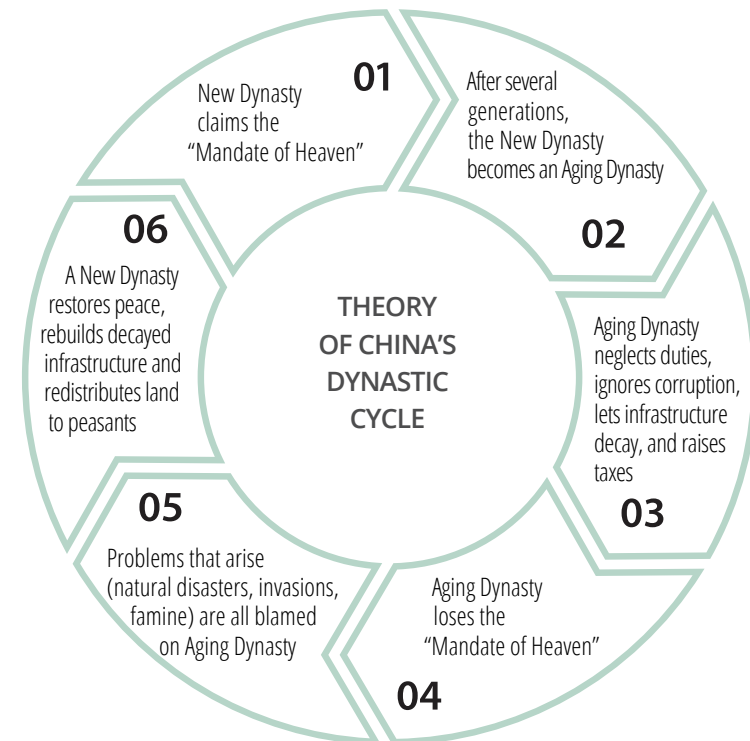
#### 1. Xia Dynasty (2070-1600 BCE)

The Xia dynasty was the first government to emerge in ancient China and became the first to adhere to the policy of dynastic **succession**; thus making it the first dynasty of China. It was regarded as a mythical construct until excavations in the late 20th century CE uncovered sites which matched descriptions in earlier historians' accounts.

#### CONCEPT

### CHINESE DYNASTIES

**A dynasty is a sequence of rulers from the same family.** Dynasties were the accepted form of succession in medieval Europe and Imperial China and still exist today in **absolute monarchies** such as Saudi Arabia and in **constitutional monarchies** such as the United Kingdom and Japan.



## MODULE TWO: CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS



Modeled after Minneapolis Institute of Art dynasty maps

### 2. Shang Dynasty (1500-1050 BC)

The Shang dynasty was the earliest Chinese dynasty confirmed by both texts and archaeology. The Shang ruled from Henan province, from the capital at Erligang in the first phase (c. 1500-1400 BCE), then later from Anyang (c. 1300 BCE). Their cities were walled, well-organized and contained a highly stratified society. At the top was the king, who was considered to be a spiritual go-between linking his family and subjects with the gods.

The Shang dynasty is the era of China's first great Bronze Age. The Shang people cast elaborately decorated bronze vessels in which they served food and wine as offerings to the ancestors.



Bronze *You* Wine Container  
Late Shang  
(13th-11th century BCE)

This bronze *you* wine vessel is an example of the expert bronze casting of the Shang dynasty. First, they created a clay mold comprised of an inner and outer mold, both made in several pieces. Next, they carved elaborate designs into the inside wall of pieces of the outer mold, joined the pieces together, then poured liquid bronze into the space between the inner and outer mold. When the bronze hardened, they broke off the outer clay mold and were left with a vessel with protruding flanges on the four corners where the pieces were joined. These were incorporated into the decorative scheme of the bronzes.

The designs on these vessels are very ornate and mystical. They often feature faces of dragons, birds facing each other, and monster masks known as *taotie*.



## MODULE TWO: CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

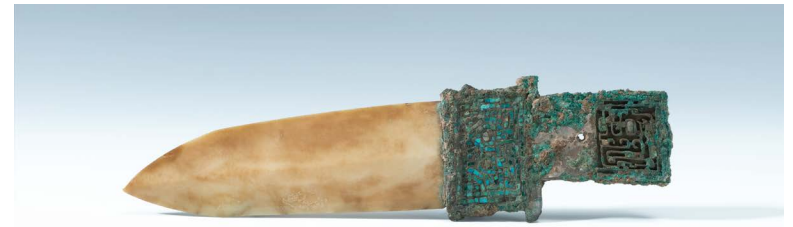
The Shang dynasty was known for its large and powerful army. They fought in mass formations under the command of the King, using bronze to make new weapons such as the **halberd** (a mix of spear and battle axe) and the *ge* or dagger-blade.

To ensure the health and prosperity of his family and subjects, the King was charged with performing rituals to communicate with his royal ancestors, who then spoke on his behalf to Shang Di, the god who ruled over all other spirits. Part of this communication with the spirit world involved **oracle bones**, used in divination rituals.

Many tombs from this period have been excavated to reveal oracle bones, bronze ritual vessels, jade ritual objects, personal ornaments and animal figures, and personal items decorated with ivory, gold and turquoise.

Arguably the most important cultural development in the Shang dynasty is the early form of writing found on the oracle bones used in divination rituals by Shang rulers. Questions about the weather, harvests, births and battles were incised with a sharp instrument into these bones, usually the shoulder blades of oxen or tortoise shells. Heat was then applied to the bones, causing cracks to appear at certain points.

These cracks were interpreted as answers to questions. For example, as an answer to the question, "Will tomorrow's battle be successful?" a crack in a certain place would mean "Yes," while in another place it would be read as "No." This first Chinese writing was highly pictorial. There appear to have been a total of 2000 characters used.



Ge (dagger-blade) Knife with a Turquoise Inlaid Bronze Handle  
Late Shang Dynasty (13th-11th century. BCE)



Oracle (Ox) Bone  
with Inscription  
Late Shang  
Wuyi Wending Period  
(12th-11th century BCE)

### **Story: *Listening to the Bones***

Shu Ping looked at his twin sister Si Ping as they both crouched behind the silk curtain which hung in back of the king's throne in the royal palace in northern China. They weren't supposed to be there, and they both knew they'd be in big trouble if anyone saw them. They wiggled their eyebrows at each other and kept very quiet.

Their father was a royal official at the court of King Wu Ding. His job was to help Wu Ding when the king needed to find the answers to important questions. Everyone knew that the ancestors spoke through the oracle bones and gave wise advice. Right now the king badly needed some.

For months, the sun had shone every day, and no rain had fallen from the sky. The wheat crop was dying of thirst. Instead of fat green grains of wheat, all that could be seen was dry, brown stalks baking in the sun. Without wheat, the people of the Shang lands would go hungry this next year, and misery would be everywhere. How could the rain be persuaded to come back and bring life to the fields and water to the streams and rivers?

Wu Ding gathered his most trusted advisors and wise men and told them to prepare the oracle bones. "Look," whispered Shu Ping, "there's father. He's brought the bones."

"Yes, a tortoise shell and two sheep shoulder bones," answered her brother. "It was a lot of work to clean and smooth them and drill

holes in the back for the fire, wasn't it? We did a good job helping father. They should crack well. Look, he's holding the tortoise shell." As they watched, the king held the oracle bone in his hands. Looking carefully at it, he asked, "Will the rain come to save our people from starvation and death?"

As the crowd held its breath, the chief shaman came forward with a red-hot metal rod and pushed it into the holes which had been drilled into the back of the bone. A faint cracking sound could be heard throughout the room as the heat split the bone slightly, and everyone breathed out a sigh.

The twins' father stepped forward with the chief shaman at his side and looked carefully at the patterns the cracks had made in the bone. The king leaned over. Si Ping and Shu Ping could hardly keep themselves from creeping out from behind the throne to see for themselves.

"Ah," breathed the king. "I can see that this crack says the rain will come if we are patient and don't forget the ancestors." "Ah," echoed the roomful of people. "Yes, we must look to them for wisdom in all we do."

"Chief recorder, come here," commanded the king. "Write the correct characters along the edges of these cracks so that all may know the words of the ancestors." Shu Ping and Si Ping looked at each other and nodded. Without a word they crept as silently as mice out of the room and into the great courtyard of the palace. They looked up in the sky, hoping to see some signs of clouds gathering, but the sky remained clear blue. "I guess it takes the ancestors time to arrange

## MODULE TWO: CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

things,” said Shu Ping. “Let’s visit Grandmother and tell her what the bones said.”

They crossed the courtyard and found Grandmother in her apartment near the goldfish pond. They took off their shoes before they stepped into her room. Of course Grandmother scolded them for hiding behind the king’s throne, but as they sat down, she put a plate of dried peaches in front of them.

“I know the ancestors will keep their word and allow the rain to fall,” said Grandmother, “but perhaps we also need help from the great archer.” “Great archer?” they asked. “Who’s that and what did he do?” “Listen,” said Grandmother. “I’ll tell you the story.”



*In the days of long ago, when men lived in peace with each other, the ten suns lived in the great branches of the Fu-Sang tree. Each day one of them would float off the tree and journey across the sky, bringing light and warmth to the earth. No one on the Earth knew that there were ten of them since no one had ever seen more than one at a time.*

*But one day, and no one knows why this happened, they decided to all go together across the sky. Perhaps they were just bored and wanted to do something different. But what a dreadful thing for the people on Earth. The heat was fearful! The light was blinding! The cattle were parched with thirst, and the crops dried and withered in the field. Even the Emperor himself was powerless to stop this. This was when the Great Ruler thought of Yi, his most skilled and powerful archer with his great bow and long*

*arrows. He sent messengers to all the ends of the Earth to find him. When Yi arrived, he was taken out very early to see the dawn. Imagine his astonishment when he saw the ten suns boiling out of the east, burning the Earth so that the very stones on the ground blistered the feet of men.*

*“The suns must die,” said Yi, “or there will be no more life on Earth.” “But remember,” cautioned the Emperor, “we must keep one sun or we are doomed to everlasting cold and darkness.”*

*Yi prepared himself by choosing his ten best arrows, one for each of nine suns. He stepped into the marketplace, took aim, and zing! —an arrow flew up and pierced one of the suns. Black feathers drifted down to the ground, and the people remembered that the old magicians had called the sun “the golden crow.”*

*Again and again Yi aimed his arrows at the suns, and one by one black feathers fell to the ground. The air grew cooler, and water began to flow in the rivers. At last only one sun, one beautiful life-giving sun, was left. Great towers of white clouds began to build in the sky which would bring rain to the burned earth, and the people rejoiced.*



“Listen,” said Grandmother. “What do you hear?” “Rain drops!” shouted Shu Ping and Si Ping together. “The king read the oracle bones correctly,” Grandmother said. “When we honor our ancestors, they provide all that we need.”

MODULE THREE:

# DYNASTIES 1050 BCE - 220 CE



### 3. Zhou Dynasty (1050-221 BCE)

The Zhou dynasty is the longest dynasty in China's history. It is divided into two parts—the Western Zhou dynasty from c. 1050 BCE when the Zhou conquered the Shang, to 771 BCE when nomadic invasions forced the Zhou to move eastward. From then onwards, during the Eastern Zhou dynasty, China was actually divided into many states which were often at war. This period lasted until 221 BCE, when the Qin state unified China.

#### Western Zhou 1027-771 BCE

The Zhou were a people from Western China who shared some cultural traditions with the Shang such as the Chinese language, oracle bone divination and other religious rituals. They overthrew the Shang in c.1050 BCE and established their capital at modern-day Xi'an, in Shaanxi province. The king maintained control over distant territories by assigning these lands to relatives who ruled them as fiefs. They continued many of the artistic traditions of the Shang, in particular the creation of jades and bronzes for ritual purposes. Many of the bronzes of this period feature long inscriptions that reveal information about the function of the pieces and the rituals of the peoples who used them.

#### Eastern Zhou 770-221 BCE

In 770 BCE, the Zhou fled eastwards from invading nomads and set up their new capital at Luoyang in Henan province. From here, they shared power over their territory with a number of equally or more powerful rulers. The first part of the Eastern Zhou period is often referred to as the *Spring and Autumn Period* (770-476 BCE),



Modeled after Minneapolis Institute of Art dynasty maps

By the late 5th century BCE, Zhou power over the region had disintegrated. The various kingdoms fought with each other for supremacy. This period is known as the *Warring States Period* (475-221 BCE).

Despite the great political instability of the Eastern Zhou period, this was a time of economic expansion. Cities grew up within the kingdoms and trade developed among them. The introduction of iron tools for plowing increased agricultural output. The political and social instability of this period also inspired several major philosophers, including Confucius (551-479 BCE) and Laozi (6th century BCE) to develop philosophies for creating social stability and harmony. During this time the legendary Sun Tzu wrote *The Art of War*, a work that is still recognized as the oldest strategy guide.

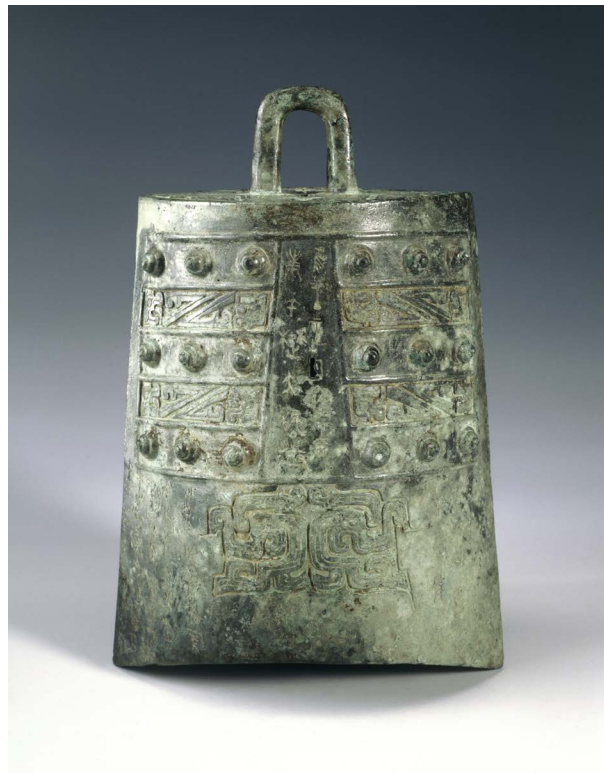
## MODULE THREE: DYNASTIES 1050 BCE-220 CE

Art, music and literature also flourished in this period, as can be seen in the quality of the jades and bronzes excavated from burial sites, the variety of musical instruments, and the texts from this period that have been passed down over the centuries.

Nine bronze bells, or **zhong**, were excavated from the tomb of a high-ranking official named Deng from the state of Chu, which occupied a large area of southern China including modern Shanghai. They were designed to hang together on a wooden frame. A musician would kneel

or sit in front of the bells and strike the flat sections of the bells with a wooden hammer.

Each bell was a slightly different size. The sides of each bell were made thicker at the top and thinner below. These variations in size and thickness produced a wide range of tones when struck. Groups of bells like this were played in an ensemble with other musical instruments such as chimes, zithers and pipes. It is believed that music was performed on these instruments as part of both religious and court rituals as well as at banquets and celebrations. Chinese believed the music of bells had a calming effect on the mind. Music was often accompanied by singing and dancing. Some songs from this period have been preserved in the Chinese classic known as the *Book of Songs*.



The Zhong of Deng,  
an official of the State of Chu  
Early Spring and Autumn Period  
(770-700 BCE)



Bronze Mirror with Three Stylized Dragons  
Warring States Period (403-221 BCE)

The Zhou dynasty is considered to be China's second great Bronze Age. This bronze mirror is typical of luxury items in the Warring States Period. Its reverse side is decorated with geometric patterns of swirling, interlacing lines that are barely recognizable as the bodies of three dragons writhing among the clouds. In the dynamic style of this period, the dragons appear to be spewing out thunderbolts. Such a mirror would have been used by an aristocratic lady and buried with her as a treasured item in her tomb.

### Three Chinese Philosophies

Three philosophies have co-existed in China since the 6th century BCE.

#### Confucianism

Confucianism arose in China at about the same time as Daoism. While Daoism stresses the metaphysical aspects of the universe and the importance of following its natural flow, Confucianism is based in human and social relationships. Its system of thought guides people in correct moral behavior with the aim of creating a harmonious and prosperous society.

#### Confucian Rituals and Symbols

Confucius was given a god-like status and is still worshipped in Confucian temples. However, a more important Confucian ritual practice is to honor one's ancestors in regular rites and rituals, including a funeral appropriate to the status and character of the deceased, the sweeping clean of family graves and the regular offering of food and wine at family shrines.

Ritual vessels of porcelain and metal were specially made to hold these offerings. Calligraphic inscriptions contain the sayings of Confucius and paintings made of flowers and plants are believed to symbolize certain virtues. The plum, bamboo and pine are known as the Three Friends of Winter. They represent qualities to which people should aspire. Plums blossom when there is still snow on the ground and represent resilience. Bamboo bends in the wind without breaking and represents flexibility. Pine is an evergreen and symbolizes long life and endurance.

#### FEATURED PHILOSOPHER

## CONFUCIUS

**Confucius** (551-479 BCE) lived during the Warring States period, when the states of the Zhou dynasty were at war with each other. A scholar and philosopher in the State of Lu (in present Shandong province), he traveled around the empire trying to persuade kings to follow his advice on how to rule. He compared a ruler and his subjects to a parent and child. It was the role of the parent, he believed, to behave with decorum and compassion towards his or her child. In return, the child should show respect toward the parent.



Portrait of Confucius (551-479 BCE)  
Gouache on paper, c. 1770

Confucius believed that if rulers behaved virtuously by showing compassion and respect towards their own parents and ancestors, their subjects would be content. Peace and prosperity would prevail. His advice was not heeded during his lifetime, but his followers recorded his teachings. Over the centuries, many rulers embraced aspects of his philosophy and based their ideals about government officials on an understanding of the teachings of Confucius.

FEATURED PHILOSOPHY

## DAOISM



Yin/Yang Symbol

Daoism (also spelled Taoism) refers to the force or flow of energy of the universe. The word *dao* means “the way.” The yin-yang symbol holds its roots in Daoism. The yin, or dark swirl, represents the female, shadows, and the trough of a wave. The yang, or light swirl, represents the male, brightness, and the crest of the wave. Both yin and yang contain an element of their opposite, shown by the contrasting dot inside both shapes. People must learn from both to achieve balance in their lives.

FEATURED PHILOSOPHY

## BUDDHISM



Seated Buddha  
China  
Jnzi Photos  
Asian Civilisations Museum

Buddhism is one of three “ways” or philosophies of life that co-existed peacefully in ancient China. The religion of Buddhism is based on the teachings of Buddha (the “enlightened one”) who lived in northern India in the 6th century BCE. Buddha taught that if people give up their attachment to worldly desires, they will be released from an endless cycle of suffering, death and rebirth. They will eventually reach a state of bliss known as Nirvana.



## 4. Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE)



Modeled after Minneapolis Institute of Art dynasty maps

The Qin Empire was China's first empire. From 475 to 221 BCE, seven warring states—the Qin, Zhao, Han, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi—fought for land and power. By developing a master strategy that included forming alliances with the Qi and Yan, controlling the Chu and Wei, and conquering the Han and Zhao, Shihuangdi was able to unify China and declare himself the First Emperor.

He then began to unify the culture by standardizing communication and transportation throughout the empire. Shihuangdi undertook building projects such as roads and canals, the Great Wall, and a tomb with clay warriors to guard him in the afterlife. Boundaries and systems he established in China lasted for 2000 years.

### FEATURED ARTIFACT

## TERRA COTTA WARRIORS

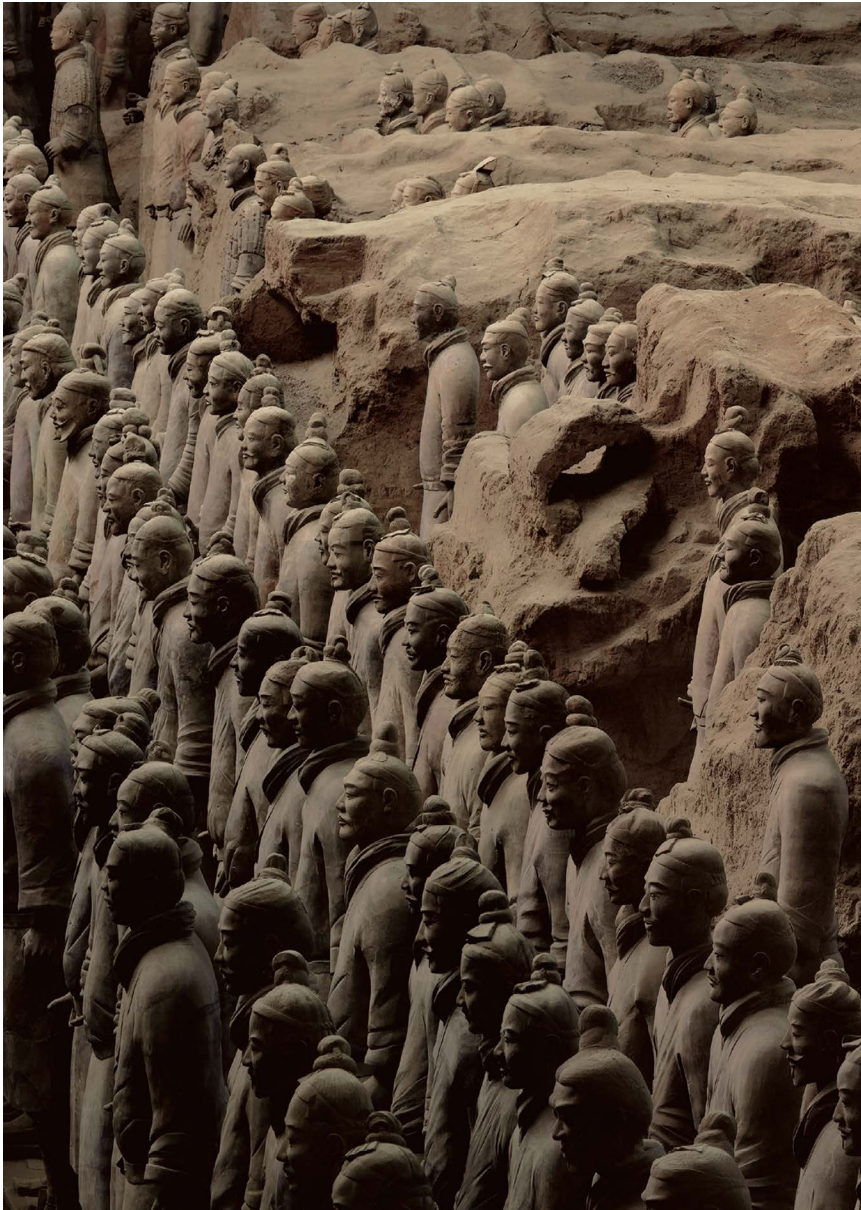
The city of Xi'an on the Wei River in northwestern China was chosen as the capital of the first dynasty by its first Emperor, **Qin Shihuangdi** (259-210 BCE). From this city, he controlled an extensive empire, and it was here that he planned to rule in the afterlife. Just outside the city, he ordered the construction of an elaborate complex with a central tomb surrounded by several pits containing an army of over 8,000 life-size soldiers, horses and chariots made out of clay.

Farmers digging a well rediscovered the clay figures in 1974. This seems fitting as it was actually farmers who built the tomb complex. It reportedly took 700,000 workers over 40 years to build the tomb and the surrounding burial pits.

The Terra Cotta Warriors are visited by people from all over the world. The tomb of the Emperor itself has not been excavated, but it is believed to have been built as a model of the Qin Empire.



Kneeling Archer  
Photograph by Wang Da-Gang



Terra Cotta Warriors, Xi'an China  
Photograph by Wang Da Gang

The Terracotta Army was built both to protect Qin Shihuangdi and to demonstrate his great power in the afterlife. Today, over forty years after its discovery, a museum the size of an airplane hangar houses the army.

The Terra Cotta Warriors are a marvel of ceramic technology and mass production. The figures were made of a low-firing clay derived from a dusty yellow soil called loess. The basic forms of the soldiers were built using molds—one for the front, another for the back, and separate molds for the limbs. Then, the basic form was coated with soft clay and the details of faces, hairstyles and armor were carved by hand to demonstrate the ethnic diversity and individuality of the soldiers in the Imperial Army.

Thousands of warriors were all set out in formation with their backs to the emperor, ready to protect him from attack.

Although the Qin dynasty lasted only 15 years, the influence of the First Emperor has continued to this day. In addition to the Terra Cotta Warriors, his accomplishments and innovations included:

- Unifying the seven Warring States, ending centuries of war
- Linking and adding to the Great Wall of China in order to protect his citizens from invasions from the North
- Abolishing the inheritance of titles and offices, creating a strict hierarchy based on merit
- Pioneering the use of mass production to make weapons and agricultural tools
- Creating a single currency to promote trade

### 5. Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)

The Han dynasty was an extremely important period in Chinese history. Though interrupted briefly by the revolutionary Wang Mang, who overthrew the government and formed the Xin dynasty (9-23 CE), the Han ruled for almost four centuries—the Western Han (206 BCE-9 CE) and the Eastern Han (25-220 CE)—and reinforced many of the foundations of Chinese society and culture established by the Qin.

Roughly contemporary with the Roman Empire in the West, the Han dynasty was a time of territorial expansion into southern and southwestern China, Korea, Vietnam and Central Asia. The government enjoyed economic prosperity, in part due to its monopolies over mining, coinage, salt and iron. It fed its revenues from these industries into factories producing various goods, including bronzes, weapons for war, lacquers and textiles.

The Han dynasty also saw increased trade and communication with Western and other Asian cultures along the Silk Road, a network of overland trade routes through Central Asia to the Roman Empire, and sea routes to Burma and India. Central Asian horses were greatly desired in China for their strength and speed in battle, while Chinese silks were among the most coveted items in the West. Contact with other cultures brought with it not only foreign ideas and goods, but also foreign symbolism and motifs, which artists eagerly incorporated into the decorative scheme of bronzes, lacquer wares, textiles and ceramics.



In government, the Han rulers established the basis for the Chinese civil service system, encouraging learning as a means to gain social status. Confucian texts, which were banished and destroyed under the Qin, became the required reading for people wishing to enter government service and remained so until the early 20th century.

Paper was perfected in the 2nd century CE and the first Chinese dictionary, comprising more than 9000 characters, was compiled at around the same time. Alongside Confucianism, Daoism also flourished, and Buddhism was introduced from India in the 1st century CE, though it did not gain a large following until later.

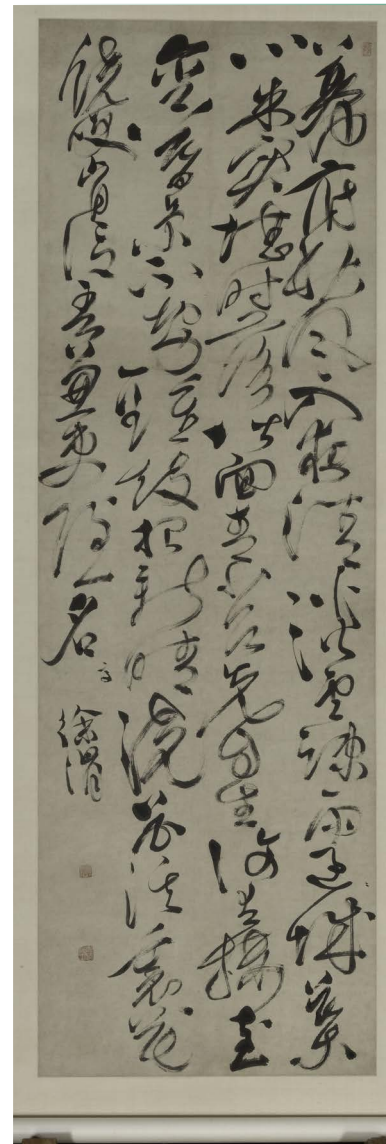


Yellow-Glazed Dog  
Earthenware Pottery  
Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)

### Ceramic Animal Figures

The great tomb complex of the First Emperor Qin Shihuangdi set a trend for burials that was to continue for centuries. The creation of ceramic replicas of people and animals were designed to replace the human and animal sacrifices that were made in royal burials in previous centuries. During the Han dynasty, models of dogs, horses, pigs and other animals—as well as figures of dancers, acrobats and ladies of the court—were created out of clay to accompany the spirit of the deceased to the afterlife. They were intended to provide the type of comfort and entertainment he or she enjoyed when alive.

Ceramic dogs were typical in royal tombs, serving both as companions and protectors of the deceased. Also popular were guardians charged with protecting the contents of the tomb from robbers and evil spirits. These mythical creatures had the head of a dragon, the body of a lion and the wings of a bird. They were inspired by fantastic creatures from the West brought into China via the Silk Road.



Septasyllabic Octonary  
Cursive Script by Xu Wei  
Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)

### The Invention of Paper

Since around the 2nd century BCE, the Chinese had made a paper-like material from soaking and pounding plant fibers and rags, but it was not light enough to provide a good, portable writing surface. The official invention of paper is generally credited to a Chinese government official called Cai Lun (c. 50-121), who pioneered paper made from the pulp of mulberry bark. According to tradition, the Han Emperor Hedi (79-106) sought a portable and inexpensive writing surface and instructed Cai Lun to perfect the quality of paper.

Cai Lun was from Hunan province in Southern China, where locals made cloth by soaking and beating mulberry bark fibers. He likely adapted this practice by making pulp from the bark fibers and then mixing the pulp with water which he then poured onto a bamboo screen to form paper sheets. In the year 105 CE, the Emperor officially announced the invention of paper. His official Cai Lun was handsomely rewarded.

# CALLIGRAPHY

## WRITING CHINESE

One of the methods used to expand and unify the Chinese Empire was to establish a common writing system consisting of thousands of pictographic characters. Having a standard way of communicating helped spread knowledge and ideas.

- Study the origin and meaning of basic Chinese characters.
- Learn to read and write ten Chinese characters.



Above: "Calligraphy" Translated to Chinese (simplified)  
 Right: "Chop" Artist's Mark or Symbol



## THE ARTIST'S SIGNATURE

### CALLIGRAPHY

Literally, "beautiful writing," a respected art form in China. Characters are written with a brush and ink on paper or silk in a number of different styles.

### CHOP

The Chinese chop is used to sign artwork and documents. A chop is a stamp that uses red ink. It is made of stone, ivory or metal.

## SPEAKING CHINESE

Hello!	Ni hao! .....(Nee haow)
How are you?	Ni hao ma? .....(Nee haow ma?)
I am (insert name)	Wo shi ... (for girls) .....Wo shir ... (for boys)
I am American	Wo shi Meiguoren .....(Wo shir May-gwo-rin)
I am Chinese	Wo shi Zhongguoren .....(Wo shir Jong-gwo-rin)
I like you	Wo xihuan ni .....(Wo shee-hwang nee)
I like Chinese art	Wo xihuan Zhongguo meishu ..... .....(Wo shee-hwang jong-gwo may-shoo)

## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE TO CHINESE SOUNDS

Chinese words are written in the Roman alphabet using the **pinyin** system.

### Vowels

a	a, as in Alice
e	u, as in sung
i	ir, after certain consonants
	ee, after others
ou	o, as in toe
u	oo

### Consonants

C	ts	(Cong = tson)
Q	ch	(Qin = Chin)
X	sh	(Xi'an = Shee-an)
Z	dz	(Zeng = Dzung)
Zh	j	(Zhou = Jo)

MODULE FOUR:

# DYNASTIES 220 - 1279 CE



## MODULE FOUR: DYNASTIES 220-1279 CE

### Periods of Disunity

Throughout China's history, there were occasionally periods of unrest or "disunity" when the empire broke apart into separate states who struggled for power. One of those periods (220-581 CE) followed the Han dynasty which ended in 220 CE. It preceded the Sui dynasty which ruled from 581-618 CE. During those years, a foreign state invaded the north, while various dynasties fought each other for power in the south.

Another period of unrest would occur several hundreds of years later, following the Tang dynasty which ruled from 618-906 CE. From 907-960 CE, China was once again divided into North and South. Part of the north fell under foreign rule. In the south, many small states struggled for dominance in a period known as the Five Dynasties.

Despite these interruptions, the Chinese Empire continued to exist.

### 6. Sui Dynasty (581-618 CE)

The Sui was a brief but extremely influential dynasty in Chinese history. It re-unified northern and southern China and set the foundation for the great Tang dynasty which followed. This 30-year period was ruled by two emperors, Wendi and Yangdi. Although ruthless, both had great energy and vision. Wendi established law and order after centuries of civil strife and set up a complex system of centralized government. He also oversaw construction of the Grand Canal system that linked China's great rivers, thereby improving internal transportation and communication.



Modeled after Minneapolis Institute of Art dynasty maps

His successor, Yangdi, also strengthened the country's government and **infrastructure**. Pursuing an active **foreign policy**, he established colonies along trade routes to the West, attempting to annex Korea, and he initiated diplomatic relations with Japan.

Both emperors were devout Buddhists and built a number of cave temples and Buddhist images, and encouraged the Chinese people to practice the faith. Their reign ended after several unsuccessful foreign campaigns depleted Yangdi's military and resources. The Chinese people, who had been forced by the emperor into building many civil works projects such as extending the Great Wall and building the canals, rose up against the government.



## THE SILK ROAD

From the first century BCE to roughly the 12th century CE, the **Silk Road** extended more than 4000 miles from central China through Central Asia and the Near East all the way to Rome. Merchants from many regions, including India and Persia, traveled along these routes, buying and selling their products in cities and towns along the way. They traveled in **caravans**, riding on horses or camels. Two-humped camels were chosen as beasts of burden because of their strength and ability to travel for days without drinking water.

**Silk**, first developed by the Chinese as early as 5000 BCE, is a beautiful cloth woven from threads produced by caterpillars of *Bombyx mori* moths, whose diet consists of leaves from the mulberry tree. For centuries, the Chinese guarded the secrets of its manufacture, but word of this wondrous fabric—which keeps the wearer warm in winter and cool in summer—quickly reached the Roman Empire. Demand for silk led China to establish a major international trade route which met the demand for silk and also enabled artistic, cultural and religious traditions to spread both eastward and westward.



## Linking East and West

This polychrome pottery camel is symbolic of trade between China and the West along the Silk Road. Bactrian two-humped camels carried goods across the desert terrain. They were highly valued for this role. Model camels were placed in tombs as symbols of status. This earthenware camel is glazed in the three-color *sancai* style—a yellow glaze from iron, a green glaze from copper and a transparent glaze through which the cream-colored clay is visible.



Polychrome Pottery Camel  
Sui Dynasty (581-618 CE)



## 7. Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE)



Stone Bodhisattva  
Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE)

The Tang dynasty is considered a golden age in Chinese history and art. China's culture flourished and foreign trade resulted in great prosperity for the empire. Following in the footsteps of the Han, the Tang expanded west into Central Asia and east into Korea, parts of Mongolia, Manchuria and Vietnam. This was a great period of overland trade with the West along the Silk Road and sea trade with Chinese who exported ceramics to Southeast and Western Asia, and India. By the first half of the 8th century, during the reign of Emperor Xuangzong (712-756), China was the richest and most powerful empire in the world. Its arts flourished under his rule, although the end of his rule marked the start of a decline in government control that ultimately led to the collapse of the dynasty.

Landscape painting, ceramics and metalwork enjoyed considerable **patronage** both within and outside of China during this time. Chinese styles and techniques blended with Western influences that entered China from the Silk Road to create a dynamic style and new artistic forms. Buddhism was a powerful cultural force for much of the period and the arts of Buddhism, especially painting and sculpture, enjoyed a golden age within China, and exerted much influence on other East Asian cultures as well.

Unlike some major religions, Buddhism did not seek to replace other spiritual beliefs, such as Daoism and Confucianism but existed in harmony with them. With imperial support, Chinese pilgrims visited India and Nepal, brought back Buddhist texts and translated them into Chinese. Buddhist temples were built, and sculptures and painting were commissioned. Images of the Buddha, with a full, round face and a stern, powerful expression, were popular in China, Korea and Japan. In the latter part of the Tang dynasty, when the government was beginning to stumble, the Buddhist religion was blamed for the country's troubles. Its spiritual leaders were forbidden to practice their faith and many paintings and sculptures were destroyed.

This stone Bodhisattva represents a person who earned entrance to Nirvana, the ultimate goal of Buddhism, but delayed entering Nirvana in order to help others.

## MODULE FOUR: DYNASTIES 220-1279 CE



China became the largest and most powerful nation in the world during the Tang dynasty. During this time period, China expanded its reach west to central Asia and south to Vietnam, increasing trade with foreign lands. Its capital city (present-day Xi'an) was the most populous city in the world at that time.

In addition to its territorial expansion, the Tang dynasty became known for many accomplishments; among them the creation of an examination to screen candidates for civil service, the invention of gunpowder, and advancement in the treatment of several medical conditions. In its great cities and palaces, art, literature and foreign trade flourished, as did the development of woodblock printing and fine porcelain.

During the Tang dynasty, China became a melting pot for many cultures and beliefs. The Tang dynasty is considered by many to be China's "Classical Age," when some of the country's most outstanding art was created.



Red Agate *Yuan* (dish) with Intricate Design  
Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE)

This dish, carved out of agate in the form of an open flower, is typical of the most elegant Tang forms. Vessels in natural forms were imported into China from Western and Central Asia along the Silk Road during this period and undoubtedly influenced Chinese style.

Red agate is valued for its healing properties, and symbolizes both longevity and good luck. These pieces were produced in China in other materials including jade, porcelain and lacquered wood. Such an elegant dish would likely have been made for a member of the Imperial court.

### 8. Liao Dynasty (907-1125 CE)

After the Tang dynasty, a semi-nomadic people called the Qidan (also spelled Khitan) took control of northeastern China and founded the Liao dynasty, establishing one of their capitals in Beijing. The Liao preserved their own semi-pastoral culture, their own Mongolian language and an economy that was based on horses, sheep and agriculture. However, they also adopted various aspects of the Tang administrative system, the Chinese language and Chinese Buddhism. They were patrons of the arts and blended their own art forms and motifs with those from China and other neighboring cultures.



A Pair of Dragon-Headed Gold Bangles with Floral Motif  
Liao Dynasty (907-1125 CE)

This elegant gold jar was probably made with gold mined in the Altai Mountains in Mongolia. It is typical of the exquisite metalwork of the Liao dynasty. The abundance of natural motifs such as ducks, parrots and flowers on luxury items made by Liao artisans reflects their semi-nomadic origins.

Gold Jar with a Loop Handle and a Motif of Birds and Flowers  
Liao Dynasty (907-1125 CE)

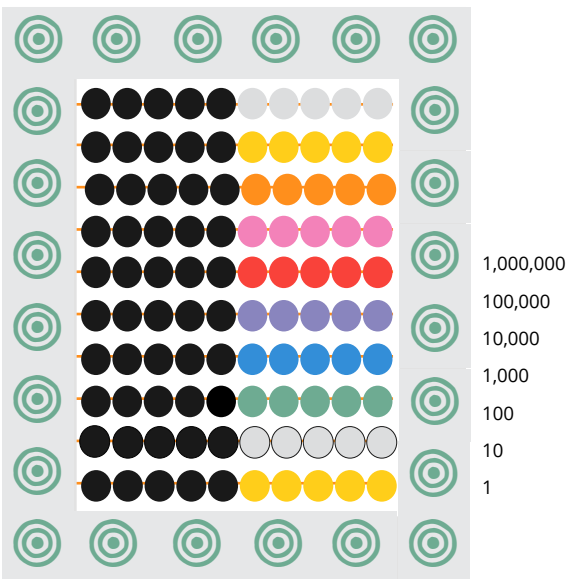


Modeled after Minneapolis Institute of Art dynasty maps

Personal appearance was important to the people of China. Men and women wore ornaments both as adornment and as a sign of social status. Chinese women wore elegant hairstyles decorated with combs and hairpins made of gold, silver and jade. Men wore garment hooks and belt buckles made of bronze, sometimes inlaid with silver or turquoise. Their designs were elaborate, featuring bird, insect and dragon motifs.

Mirrors were used by the ancient Chinese who believed they reflected harmony between people and their surroundings. Although a mirror might be used as a looking glass, its primary purpose was contained in the message expressed on the back of the mirror, which was decorated with elaborate carvings of astrological symbols.

# MODULE FOUR MATH ACTIVITY: COMPUTE WITH AN ABACUS



An **abacus** or counting frame is a calculating tool used in China, the Middle East, Europe and Russia for thousands of years before the development of a written system of numbers. An abacus consists of a number of rows of movable beads which represent **digits**.

There are several types of abacus. A Chinese abacus is called a **suan-pan**. It has two rows of beads at the top and five at the bottom. This one is a simple **10-bead abacus**. Beads slide on thin rods or wires built into a frame. You can use it to do mathematical calculations including addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. It can also handle more complex tasks. Today, computers and calculators have mostly replaced the abacus. However, they are still used to teach math. In some parts of the world, they are still used as a tool for merchants and traders.

To make a simple abacus, use pre-cut 8"x10" mat boards (inside opening 5"x7") for the frame. The colors of beads you choose are up to you. Tools and steps are listed here. **Adult help is recommended.**

**STEP 1**  
Using a ruler and pencil, divide the long side of the frame opening into 10 equal sections.

**STEP 2**  
Cut 10 skewers to measure 7" long. Load 10 beads on each skewer.

**STEP 3**  
You can load all the skewers with the same color or mix it up as you wish.

**STEP 4**  
Using the sections you marked off as guides, use a **hot** glue gun to add glue on top of each line on both sides of the frame. Place a skewer on top of each line.

**STEP 5**  
When all glue is dry, add another line of glue to the left and right edges of each skewer. Then, gently place the 2nd piece of mat board on top.

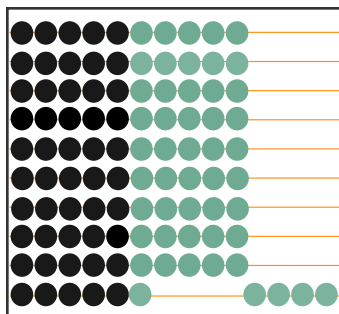
One row of beads represents multiples of ten. Each bead on the bottom row is worth 1, each bead on the second row from the bottom is worth  $10 \times 1$  (10), each bead on the third row from the bottom equals  $10 \times 10$  (100), and so on.

- PENCIL / ERASER
- 10 WOOD SKEWERS
- 2 PC. 8' X10" MAT BOARD
- RULER
- 100 PONY BEADS
- HOT** GLUE GUN
- SCISSORS
- GLUE STICKS

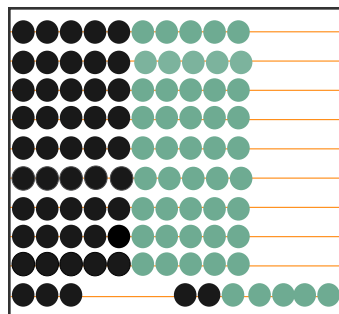
## MODULE FOUR MATH ACTIVITY: COMPUTE WITH AN ABACUS

Let's try two simple exercises using the 10-bead abacus. The first two introduce addition and subtraction to students new to the abacus. The third is a division problem. Apps and videos are available online to walk students of all levels through equations using this ancient computation tool. For these examples, we will use an abacus with fewer colors to make the operations easier to follow. Once you understand the concept of how the abacus works, try more challenging equations.

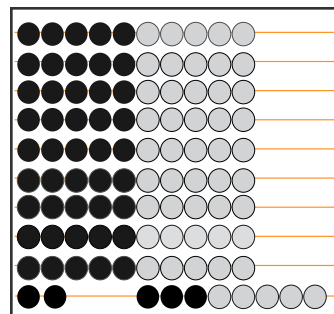
**Addition Problem:  $4 + 3 = ?$**   
Slide 4 beads from left to right



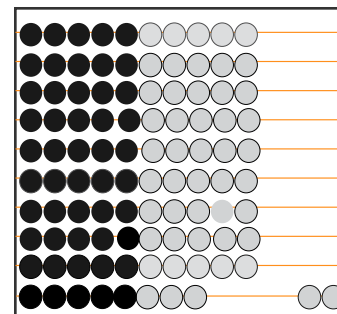
Add 3 more beads left to right.  
Count a total of 7 beads



**Subtraction Problem:  $8 - 6 = ?$**   
Slide 8 beads from left to right

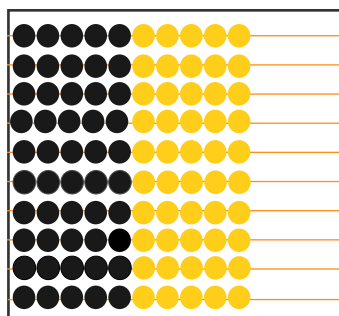


Minus 6 beads from right to left  
Count a total of 2 remaining beads.

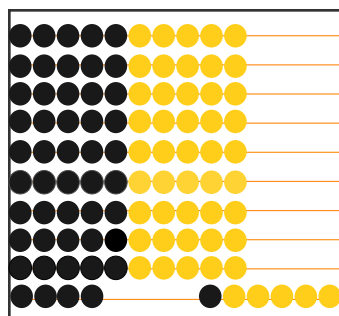


**DIVISION:** Multiplication and Division are opposite operations. Think of dividing as sharing. For example, let's try dividing single-digit numbers. If there are 6 pieces of candy and 2 people, how many pieces will each person get? ( $6 \div 2 = ?$ ) Below you can see how that problem is calculated on an abacus. More complex problems using 2- or 3-digit numbers include "borrowing" from the 10s or 100s row of beads.

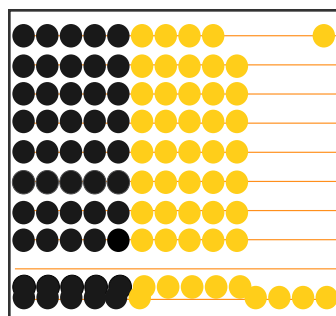
**Division Problem:  $6 \div 2 = ?$**   
The top row is used as a tally.



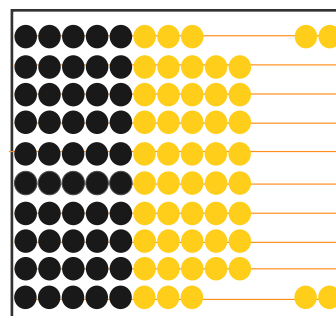
On the bottom row, slide 6 beads from left to right.



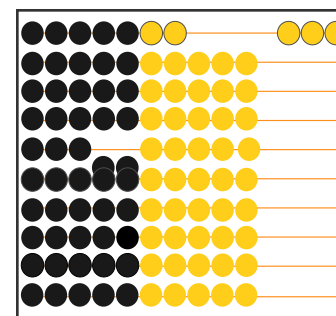
To divide 6 beads by 2, slide 2 beads back and tally 1 at the top.



Slide a 2nd group of 2 back, and tally another 2nd bead at the top.



When a 3rd group of 2 is moved your answer is in the top row.



MODULE FIVE:

# DYNASTIES 960 - 1911<sub>CE</sub>





Modeled after Minneapolis Institute of Art dynasty maps

### 9. Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)

The Song dynasty is divided into two periods—the Northern Song from 960-1127 CE, with its capital in modern-day Henan province, and the Southern Song (1128-1279 CE) with its capital in modern-day Hangzhou. Unlike some earlier dynasties, the Song dynasty never ruled the whole of China.

#### Northern Song (960-1127 CE)

The Song did not possess the military might and expansionist spirit of the Han and Tang dynasties. Although they maintained large armies to protect the northern borders from the Liao and other peoples, the Song showed less interest in military activities than previous rulers and actually subordinated the military to civil officials within

government. However, they did encourage foreign trade with northern China and the Liao and Jin peoples, and via sea with Indian and Islamic merchants trading in Southeast Asia. Trade was a source of revenue for the government, and much of it was spent on the patronage of Chinese culture.

The Song emperors were among China's greatest supporters of the arts, promoting traditional painting, calligraphy, ceramics and other art forms. This interest in the past inspired the Chinese to collect, research and write about antiques. Woodblock printing was used to produce handbooks, encyclopedias and other texts. The emperors sought to strengthen their reign by connecting themselves with ancient Chinese moral values, often the subject of paintings.

In the early 12th century, the Northern Song dynasty was weakened by extravagance, corruption and ineffective government. The capital was overthrown, and the court fled south to establish a new capital in Hangzhou.

#### Southern Song (1127-1279 CE)

The Southern Song dynasty, although smaller than earlier empires, had a population of roughly 100 million people. It was prosperous, enjoying an agricultural revolution which introduced new strains of rice and more efficient farming tools. There was also an industrial revolution which improved the production of gold, silver, lead and tin. Ceramic kilns produced porcelain and celadon, while new techniques made it possible to print books on a large scale and led to the official introduction of paper money. Both Confucianism and Buddhism thrived during this period.



Vase with Black Characters "Ji Xiang Zui Hai"  
Cizhou Ware  
Song Dynasty 906-1279 CE



Covered Jar with Incised Pattern  
Longquan Ware  
Southern Song Dynasty 1127-1279 CE



## MODULE FIVE: DYNASTIES 960-1911 CE



Modeled after Minneapolis Institute of Art dynasty maps

### 10. Yuan Dynasty (Mongols) 1271-1368 CE

In 1279, Mongols led by Kublai Khan moved south and defeated the Southern Song. They gave their new dynasty the Chinese name Yuan. They established a winter capital in present-day Beijing and a summer capital in Shangdu (Xanadu) in present-day Mongolia. The boundaries of the Yuan Dynasty extended beyond those of present-day China. A military government was composed of both Mongols and Chinese. Scholars were not encouraged to enter government service—as a result, many channeled their energies into writing and painting.

The Mongols encouraged trade with the West and reopened the Silk Road, leading to an increase in European and Middle Eastern visitors

to China, most famously Italy's Marco Polo. With new people came new ideas, including Christian missionaries, Muslim merchants and scientists.

Although the Mongols were not great patrons of Chinese art works, including blue-and-white porcelains and green-glazed celadons. These and other artifacts were greatly admired in the West. Decorative arts of the Yuan dynasty, like this jade belt hook feature hunt scenes with birds, dragons and fantastic beasts.



Jade Belt Hook with Design of Falcon Catching a Swan  
Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 CE)

This ceramic incense burner was made at the Jun kilns in northern China. It is modeled after a Zhou dynasty food vessel in both form and decoration, and is glazed in celadon. An animal mask is embossed on the side, with a splash of copper red pigment typical of wares of this period. This piece was probably used in temple rituals.



Jun Ware Incense Burner  
Glazed Stoneware  
Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 CE)

### 11. Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)

The Ming dynasty was one of the longest and most stable in Chinese history. It was founded in 1368 when Chinese general Zhu Yuanzhang, who was of humble origins, succeeded in pushing the weakened Mongol rulers back into inner Mongolia. He seized the throne as the first Chinese emperor to rule over the whole of China in over 200 years. The capital was moved to Beijing in 1421 under the third Ming emperor in an attempt to better defend China's northern borders.

At the start of the dynasty, all heads of government ministries were required to report directly to the Emperor, a policy that could only succeed under engaged and thoughtful rulers. The early Ming emperors wanted to improve the quality of life for all their subjects—from farmers to artists to merchants. Ming emperors ruled with kindness and generosity.

With both Imperial patronage and increased foreign demand, many Chinese arts thrived during this period, including bird-and-flower and landscape paintings, porcelains, lacquer ware and textiles. Color-printed painting manuals were published to train the population in painting techniques.

During this time, relationships increased with the outside world. The Chinese sent out maritime expeditions, and many Europeans arrived in China to establish trade relations. Portuguese Jesuits arrived in the late 16th century hoping to convert the Chinese to Christianity.



They were welcomed by the Chinese government, but more for their knowledge of astronomy and other sciences than for spiritual leadership.

The civil service system perfected during the Ming dynasty resulted in almost all top officials entering the bureaucracy by passing a government exam. The governmental structure established by the Ming continued through the Qing (Manchu) dynasty, lasting until the dynastic system ended in 1911.

## MING PORCELAIN



Blue and White Vase with Interlaced Floral Patterns  
*Jingdezhen ware*  
 Jiajing Reign (1522-1566 CE)  
 Ming Dynasty

## Porcelain

Porcelain is a translucent (semi-transparent) ceramic material, made of a fine white clay called kaolin mixed with crushed stone. It can be shaped on a potter's wheel or molded by hand. When fired at extremely high temperatures, it becomes waterproof and so strong that even steel cannot scratch it.

Porcelain was invented in China over several centuries. By the early Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), a high level of whiteness and translucency was achieved. Porcelain was a luxury product for the use of nobles and emperors, and for centuries no one but the Chinese knew how to make it. By the time of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 AD), porcelain was being exported to Asia and Europe.



Detail, Blue and White Vase  
*Jingdezhen ware*  
 Jiajing Reign (1522-1566 CE)  
 Ming Dynasty

The Ming dynasty controlled much of the porcelain trade, which was expanded to Asia, Africa and Europe via the Silk Road. In 1517, Portuguese merchants began direct trade by sea with the Ming dynasty, and in 1598, Dutch merchants followed. Some of the most well-known Chinese porcelain art styles arrived in Europe in the 17th century, such as the coveted “blue-and-white” wares brought by Dutch sailors.



Three-Colored Duck-Shaped Censor  
Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)

## The “Scholar” in Chinese Culture

For centuries, the **scholar** was a central figure in Chinese culture. As early as the Han dynasty, government officials were hired based on academic merit, so a good education was very important. A scholar had typically mastered the four great arts: poetry, calligraphy, painting and music, and possessed the Confucian virtues of integrity, flexibility and resilience. They were patrons of art, producers of art and subjects of art, often appearing as figures in landscape paintings.



Bamboo Brush Holder  
Carved with Ladies in Courtyard  
Late Ming (1st half of 17th century)

Brush pots such as the one pictured here, held brushes used for painting, calligraphy and poetry composition. Though sometimes made from jade or ivory, bamboo was considered best for use by the scholar, because of its humble nature and its symbolism. The bamboo plant sways in strong winds but does not break, symbolizing integrity and flexibility of character.

Hanging scroll paintings featured dramatic landscapes and intimate figural scenes from the domestic life of women during the Ming dynasty. These visual stories were “time-based” precursors of the arts of film and animation.

## MODULE FIVE: DYNASTIES 960-1911 CE



Modeled after Minneapolis Institute of Art dynasty maps

### 12. Qing Dynasty (Manchu) 1644-1911 CE

Manchurian tribes took control of China in 1644 and proclaimed the Qing dynasty. More than earlier invaders, they embraced Chinese culture, adopted the Chinese bureaucratic system of government and became patrons of the Chinese arts. The reign of the Qianlong Emperor from 1736-96 is considered a Golden Age when China, with its population of 200 million, became the wealthiest country in the world.

China expanded its territories to include Tibet and parts of Central Asia, received tributes from several other Asian nations and increased trade to an unprecedented level, including with the Europeans.

Qing emperors were extravagant in their building projects. They embellished the capital with impressive new buildings, and expanded the summer palace north of Beijing. These projects were made possible by revenues generated by the influx of large sums of imported silver and copper. However, this increase in metal coinage caused inflation and economic hardships for the country's peasants, and by the early 19th century, a number of successful uprisings had seriously damaged the government's wealth and prestige.

During the Qing dynasty, some of the most outstanding works of art were miniature landscapes carved out of wood, bamboo, and ivory.

These miniature worlds feature pavilions, bridges, pine trees, people and gods carved in great detail. Smaller examples may have been placed in a scholar's cabinet or desk as objects of contemplation and inspiration. Larger examples carved out of boulders of jade and other stones, were made for display in the Imperial Palace.

Miniature Mountain Village  
Bamboo Root Carved  
with the Scene of  
Birthday Congratulations  
Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 CE)



## MODULE FIVE ACTIVITY: VISUAL STORYTELLING



Ladies, Handscroll  
Du Jin  
Ink and colors on silk  
Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

### Ming Dynasty Silk Painting

On the following page, you will find 20 panels of a time-based series of silk damask paintings made during the Ming Dynasty. They tell the story of a group of women spending a leisurely afternoon together. Carefully look at this series of paintings. Zoom in to see if you can follow the storyline of action from one panel to the next. Write a paragraph describing what you think is happening in this sequence of images.

Then, try telling your own visual narrative on the Storyboard panels that follow.

## MODULE FIVE ACTIVITY: VISUAL STORYTELLING



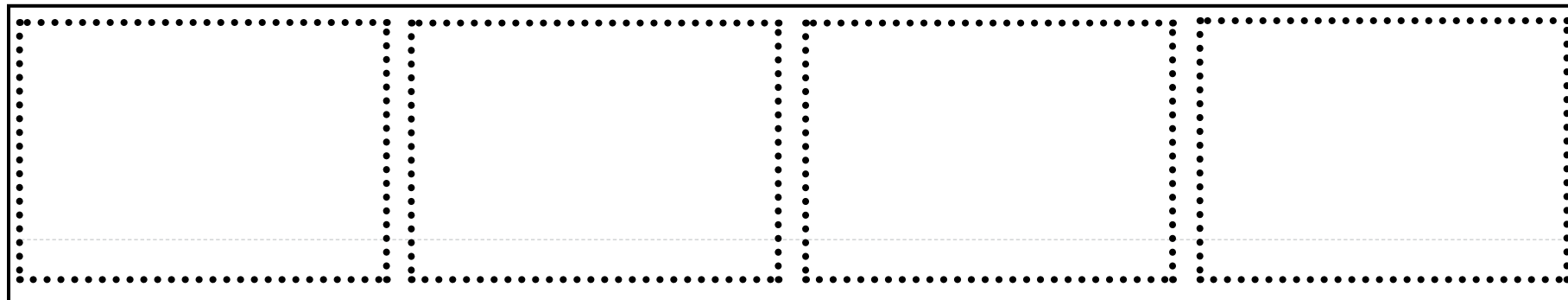
Du Jin was a Chinese painter of landscapes, human figures, flowers, and animals. He was active during the years 1465-1509.

Ladies, Handscroll  
Du Jin  
Ink and colors on silk  
Ming Dynasty

## MODULE FIVE ACTIVITY: VISUAL STORYTELLING

The idea behind the Ming Dynasty silk painting is still used today in many creative fields. Animators, film makers and illustrators use **storyboards** to plan and create series of time-based actions in animations, comic strips, movies, and children's books. If you wanted to shoot a video for

a movie trailer or create a picture book, you might use a storyboard to figure out the flow of images that you feel would convey your ideas. Experiment with the example of a simple story about a flower blooming, then create your own on a topic that interests you!

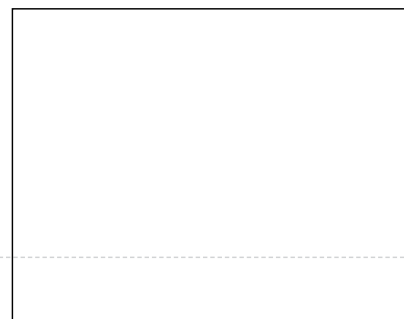


1. I plant a seed in the ground.

2. Sunshine and rain help it grow.

3. The first sprout comes up.

4. Soon a beautiful flower blooms.



1.

2.

3.

4.

The frames of a storyboard can be quick sketches or photographs. The numbered boxes above provide a quick description of the action. Need some ideas for a story? Here are a few suggestions to get you brainstorming: My morning routine, my most embarrassing moment, how I learned to ride a bike, my first cooking adventure, my favorite pastime, the first day of school, etc. For additional inspiration, look at the comic section of an online newspaper to see how creative pros tell a simple story in words and pictures.



MODULE SIX:

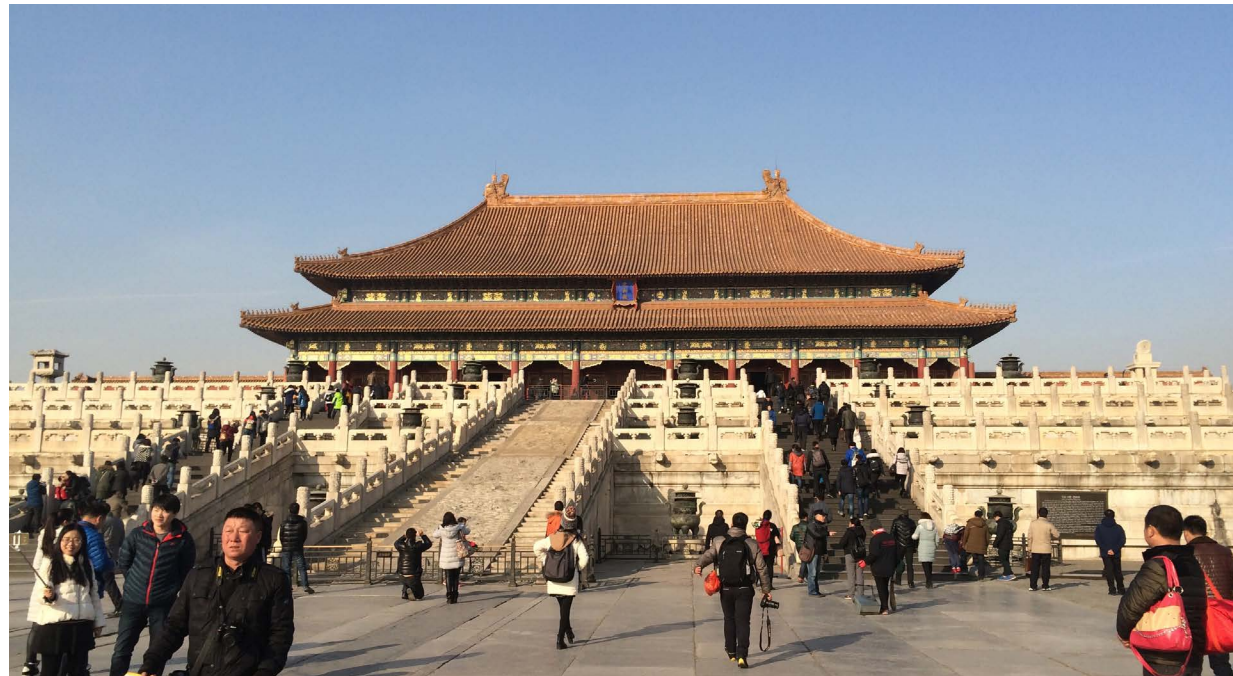
# PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



### **The Last Emperor (1644-1911)**

The Qing dynasty was successful during its first 150 years of Imperial rule. The first two Manchu emperors were wise leaders. After that time, however, China began to cling to past traditions out of their fear of change. As a result, their economy and technology suffered. When Great Britain declared war on China in 1893 over disputes regarding the opium trade, the emperor was too weak to resist.

The last Qing emperor, Pu-Yi (1906-1967) was placed on the throne at the age of three. Because he was too young to govern, he lived a life of splendor in the Imperial Palace during the Ming and Qing dynasties, which was also known as the "Forbidden City." Commoners were prohibited from entering the Forbidden City without permission. Pu-Yi was sheltered from the outside world. When he was six, Chinese rebels overthrew their Manchu rulers and declared China a Republic. Pu-Yi was forced to step down in 1912, bringing 2,000 years of Imperial rule to an end.



*The Forbidden City, Beijing, China.* Photograph by Dr. Peter Keller, Bowers Museum.

### **The Republic of China**

For several years, different leaders fought for control of China. In 1928 the Nationalists, a group led by Chiang Kai-shek, took control. During invasions by Japan in the 1930s and World War II (1939–45), however, the Chinese Communist Party grew strong. Civil war soon broke out between the Nationalists and the Communists. China's leader, Mao Zedong, led the revolution that brought communism to the country in 1949. Defeated, the Nationalists fled to the island of Taiwan. Communists renamed the country the People's Republic of China.

### **People's Republic of China**

In 1958, Mao started a program called the Great Leap Forward to modernize China's economy. The plan failed, and many people died of starvation. In 1966, Mao began the Cultural Revolution, which lasted for 11 years. Instead of strengthening communism, it led to widespread chaos, and was one of the most difficult periods in Chinese history. The leaders who followed Mao tried to restore order by instituting reforms. Where China's communist government once owned most businesses and farms in the country, today individuals are allowed to own businesses, helping to grow the economy. In 1982, China's constitution declared that its citizens enjoy freedom of expression; however, it is considered a privilege, not a right, and is tightly restricted by various laws and regulations.

With its desire for status as a global power, China has also initiated efforts to improve relationships with other countries. One sign of progress came in 2001, when the International Olympic Committee chose Beijing to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Academic and cultural exchanges are also an important aspect of international relations between countries.





Jadeite Bottle with Dragon and Cloud Design  
Modern Era

### Synthesis: Modern China

Modern China is a country of contrasts where a blend of ancient traditions and modern technology co-exist. In China you can find mountain villages with mud dwellings and rice plantations where a bicycle is the main form of transportation. There are also a growing number of giant cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai with futuristic architecture and busy industrial and commercial centers.

China is vast, measuring more than three billion square miles, about one-fourteenth of the earth's land. China's most significant characteristic is the size of its population—one of every five humans is of Chinese nationality.

Over the years, China has alternated between making forward progress and returning to relative isolation from the world stage. In the late 1980s, they instituted an "open-door policy" which allowed foreign investment and encouraged economic development.

In the 60 years since the Communists came to power, China continues to toggle between efforts to restrict citizens' freedoms and discourage dissent and taking steps to engage with the rest of the world both economically and culturally.

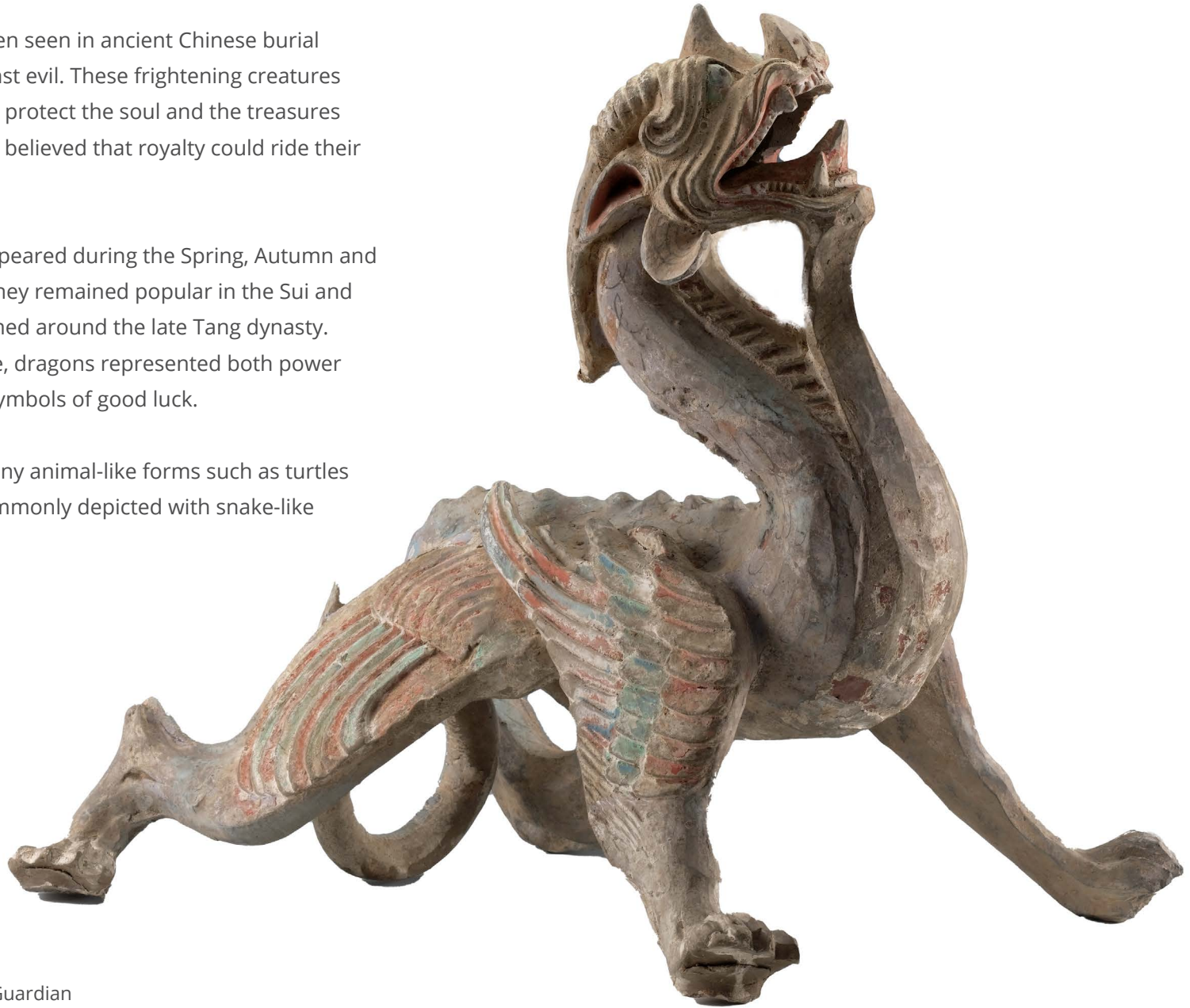
One of the ways to promote international understanding and cooperation is cultural exchanges via museum exhibitions and the performing arts. Bowers Museum has partnered with China in recent years to present over 10 exhibitions.

## MODULE SIX CAPSTONE PROJECT: SCULPT A CLAY DRAGON

Tomb guardians were often seen in ancient Chinese burial places as protectors against evil. These frightening creatures were put inside a tomb to protect the soul and the treasures buried nearby. It was also believed that royalty could ride their dragons to the **afterlife**.

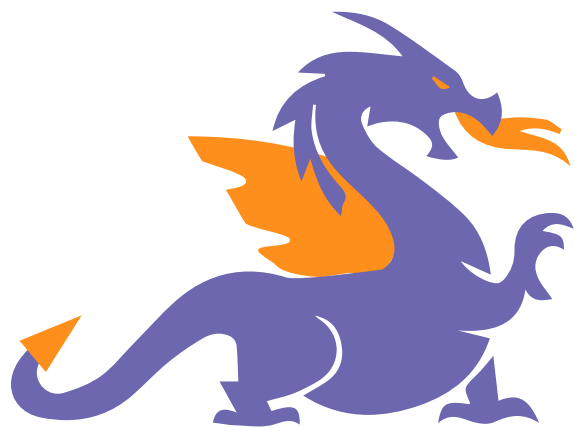
Dragon guardians first appeared during the Spring, Autumn and Warring States periods. They remained popular in the Sui and Tang dynasties and vanished around the late Tang dynasty. In Ancient Chinese culture, dragons represented both power and wisdom. They were symbols of good luck.

Chinese dragons have many animal-like forms such as turtles and fish, but are most commonly depicted with snake-like bodies with four legs.



Painted Pottery Tomb Guardian  
Earthenware  
Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)

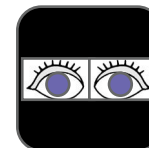
## MODULE SIX CAPSTONE PROJECT: SCULPT A CLAY DRAGON



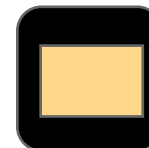
How would you like to have your own personal protector? Sculpt a friendly, fierce or fancy dragon following these six steps. No two dragons will look alike.

Before you begin, put down an old piece of cardboard to serve as a workspace. It will also help you move your dragon when it's finished. You can use either clay (more strong) or play-dough (more flexible) to create your dragon.

### Materials



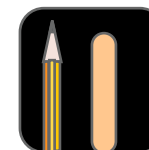
Imagination and observation skills



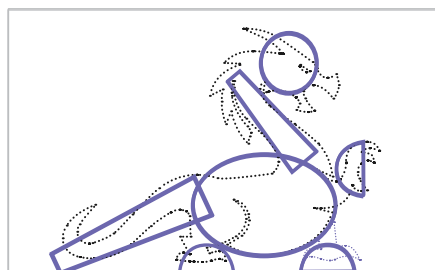
Piece of cardboard



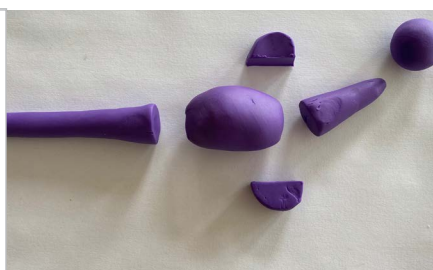
Modeling clay or play dough



Popsicle stick to blend clay. Pencil or other tool to add texture to clay



Look closely at the picture of the dragon to see the big shapes that form its body.



Roll clay to make three-dimensional shapes: a big egg shape for the body, a round ball for the head, long wedge shapes for neck and tail, and four small half-circle shapes for feet.



Begin to shape the wedge pieces for the neck and tail and attach them to the body. Use a popsicle stick or blunt end of a pencil to join and blend the clay.



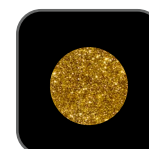
Flatten a contrasting color clay, then cut or shape the dragon's eyes, wings and fiery tongue.



Use the blunt end of a pencil or stick to attach and blend pieces together, and to texture the wings and the dragon's skin to simulate scales.



Add the final details for your special dragon. Then name your personal protector.



Optional: Glitter, googly eyes, pipe cleaners, etc. to decorate your dragon.

## GLOSSARY

**Abacus:** A counting frame used to do mathematical operations.

**Afterlife:** Belief in an existence after death.

**Ancestor:** A person, typically more remote than a grandparent, from whom one is descended.

**Bronze:** An alloy of copper and tin used to cast sculptures.

**Buddhism:** A religion based on the teachings of Buddha the “Enlightened One,” who lived in northern India in the 6th century BCE. He taught that suffering is caused by attachment, and advocated for a life of moderation.

**Calligraphy:** Literally “beautiful writing,” one of the most respected art forms in China. Chinese characters are written with a brush and ink on paper or silk in a number of different styles.

**Celadon:** A glaze that derives its color from tiny quantities of iron oxide that turn green in an oxygen-starved kiln.

**Chop:** In China, the chop has the same weight and authority as a signature does in Western culture. Chops are commonly seen on Chinese artwork, but they’re also used for everyday documents.

**Civilization:** A culture or particular society at a particular time and place.

**Confucianism:** A philosophy based on the teachings of Confucius, who lived in China in the 6th century BCE. He taught the importance of relationships, particularly between ruler and subject and parent and child.

**Daoism:** (pronounced “dow-ism” also spelled Taoism). An ancient Chinese philosophy based on the concept of the Dao or “Way,” a force that inhabits the universe. The 6th-century teachings of philosopher Laozi stressed the importance of living in harmony.

**Digits:** Numbers from 0 to 9.

**Divination:** The art of predicting future events using supernatural powers.

**Dynasty:** A succession of rulers who belong to the same family or line and rule for generations.

**Earthenware:** A low-firing clay (up to 1000 degrees centigrade) that results in porous, unglazed ceramics such as roof tiles or flower pots.

**Empire:** A group of states or countries under a single ruler.

**Emperor or Empress:** The ruler of an Empire.

**Excavations:** Digging at an archaeological site to study artifacts left behind by other cultures.

**Foreign policy:** A government’s strategy in dealing with other nations.

**Generations:** All of the people born and living at about the same time. The average period of time (generally 20-30 years), during which children are born and grow up, become adults, and begin to have their own children. A grandparent, parent and child represent three generations.

**Glaze:** A glassy coating added to ceramics for protection and decoration.

**Great Wall of China:** A 2000 mile system of fortified walls with a roadway on top, constructed to defend against invasion.

**Halberd:** A two-handed weapon that has an axe blade on one side and a spear on the other side.

**Han Chinese:** China is composed of 56 ethnic groups. Han Chinese (or Hanzu) account for 92% of China’s population or 1.4 billion people.

**Infrastructure:** Physical structures or facilities needed to operate a society, such as roads or bridges.

**Inkstone:** A smooth, shallow tray of stone or pottery used to grind ink.

## GLOSSARY

**Innovations:** New ideas tried in response to a problem or opportunity.

**Jade:** A semiprecious gemstone, usually green, used for ornamental carvings and jewelry. **Nephrite** is a less valuable form of jade.

**Lacquer:** A black or red coating made from the sap of the lacquer tree and applied to objects to make them resistant to water, heat, and insects.

**Manchus:** A northern nomadic people from Manchuria, who conquered the Han Chinese and established the Qing dynasty in 1644 CE.

**Mandate of Heaven:** The divine right to rule claimed by China's early kings and emperors.

**Monarchy:** A system of government, in which a king or queen rules a kingdom or empire. In a **constitutional monarchy**, power is limited by a constitution. In an **absolute monarchy**, power is unlimited.

**Mongols:** A nomadic people who originated in the Central Asian plateau, in what is now Mongolia, China and Russia.

**Neolithic Period:** The "New Stone Age," the period of transition from a nomadic, hunting existence to a more settled, agricultural lifestyle.

**Nirvana:** A transcendent state without suffering, desire or self.

**Nomadic:** A lifestyle that involves moving from place to place, usually according to the seasons, in search of food and water.

**Oracle Bones:** Animal bones and shells used in divination on which questions were written. When heated, cracks provided answers.

**Pagoda:** A multi-story Asian temple with a tapering tower where each story has its own roof.

**Patronage:** Support that an organization or individual gives to another, often in the arts.

**Peasant:** A small farmer or person who lives in the country.

**Pictograph:** Writing with pictures. An ancient script made up of pictures that evolved into a written language.

**Pinyin:** A system for writing the Chinese language used to teach Mandarin Chinese, which is normally written with Chinese characters. It uses the Latin alphabet, sometimes with diacritic marks to indicate tone.

**Porcelain:** A high-firing clay (c. 1300 degrees centigrade) resulting in a pure white, translucent, non-porous ceramic, often glazed.

**Proverb:** A short statement of truth, wisdom, inspiration or advice.

**Silk:** A soft, lustrous fiber produced by silkworms.

**Silk Road:** A network of trade routes that extended from China through Central Asia all the way to Rome in the 1st to 12th centuries CE.

**Storyboard:** A time-based sequence of drawings, often with words, used to plan for production of a story in print, movie, or animation.

**Suan-Pan:** A traditional Chinese abacus consisting of 7 rows of beads: (two above and 5 below a horizontal wooden rod), used to calculate mathematical operations.)

**Succession:** The order in which one person takes over or inherits a title, position or throne.

**Taotie mask:** A monster face found on early bronzes, jades and other burial objects.

**Terra Cotta:** A reddish-brown clay that is fired but not glazed.

**Theory:** An idea or hypothesis that explains how things work.

**Zhong:** An ancient bronze bell with flat sides to be struck with a hammer.



## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### LINK TO CONTENT STANDARDS ON BOWERS MUSEUM WEBSITE

#### CONTENT STANDARDS

The projects and activities in this teacher and student resource guide address California Content Standards for the Arts, English Language Arts, History/Social Studies, Science and Technology.

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Shanghai Museum  
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Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain\_CC-BY-2.0
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Da Gang
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- Page 54 4AC\_Art Icons\_Clay Dragon Project\_Pamela Pease  
4AC\_Clay Dragon Project Images\_2020\_Bowers Museum

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