

# **China: From Past to Present**

## **Part Two: Life in the Ancient Capital Cities**

**Teacher's Guide**

**China: From Past to Present  
Part Two: Life in the  
Ancient Capital Cities**

**Produced by  
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**China: From Past to Present**  
**Part Two: Life in the Ancient Capital Cities**  
**Viewing Time: 15 minutes plus a one-minute,**  
**five-question Video Quiz**  
**Grades 5-9**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES**

*China: From Past to Present* was filmed in locations across China and Nepal, as well as in the United States. It offers a fascinating look at the long history, varied geography, and amazing civilization of the world's largest nation. The series is made up of two fifteen-minute and one twenty-minute programs. **Part One** takes a look at China's geography, traditional religions, and beliefs. **Part Two** examines life in the ancient capital cities of Xian and Beijing. **Part Three** presents some of the most important changes in government in China from the time of the first emperor up to modern times. Important topics such as the Silk Road and the Great Wall of China are presented in this program.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM**

This fifteen-minute program examines life past and present in China's ancient capital cities of Xian and Beijing. The following topics are presented:

- City Defenses, Towers, and Neighborhoods
- Traditional Food and Markets
- The Emperors of China
- The Forbidden City

## LINKS TO CURRICULUM STANDARDS

### **McREL Standards**

#### **World History Standards**

#### ***Era 3 - Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 B.C. - 300 A.D.***

**Standard 9:** Understand how major religions and large-scale empires arose in China and India from 500 B.C. to 300 A.D.

##### Grades 5-6

5. Understands the fundamental elements of Chinese society under the early imperial dynasties (e.g., the life of Confucius and the fundamentals of Confucianism and Taoism, what life was like for ordinary people in ancient China as illustrated in Chinese folktales).

7. Understands the origins of Buddhism and fundamental Buddhist beliefs.

##### Grades 7-8

3. Understands fundamental social, political, and cultural characteristics of Chinese society under early imperial dynasties.

#### ***Era 4 - Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300-1000 A.D.***

**Standard 25.** Understands major global trends from 1000 to 1500 A.D.

### **Historical Understanding Standards**

**Standard 2:** Understands the historical perspective

##### Grades 7-8

1. Understands that specific individuals and the values those individuals held had an impact on history.

2. Analyzes the influence specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history.

Grades 9-12

1. Analyzes the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history.

**Geography Standards**

**The World in Spatial Terms**

**Standard 2:** Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment

Grades 6-8

1. Knows the location of physical and human features on maps and globes (e.g., cultures; land forms; climate regions).

Grades 9-12

1. Knows the approximate locations of major political and economic cultures.

**Places and Regions**

**Standard 4:** Understands the physical and human characteristics of place.

Grade 6-8

1. Knows the human characteristics of places (e.g., cultural characteristics such as religion, language, politics, technology, family structure, gender, population characteristics, land uses, levels of development).

**Human Systems**

**Standard 10:** Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Grade 6-8

2. Knows ways in which communities reflect the cultural background of their inhabitants (e.g., distinctive building styles)

Grade 9-12

1. Knows how cultures influence the characteristics of regions.

2. Understands how human characteristics make specific regions of the world distinctive (e.g., the impact of Buddhism in shaping social attitudes in Southeast Asia).

### **INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES**

Before presenting this lesson to your students, we suggest that you preview the program, review the guide, and the accompanying Blackline Master activities in order to familiarize yourself with their content.

As you review the materials presented in this guide, you may find it necessary to make some changes, additions, or deletions to meet the specific needs of your class. We encourage you to do so; for only by tailoring this program to your class will they obtain the maximum instructional benefits afforded by the materials.

### **PRE-TEST**

**Pre-Test** is an assessment tool intended to gauge student comprehension of the objectives prior to viewing the program. Explain that they are not expected to get all the answers correct. You can remind your students that these are key concepts that they should focus on while watching the program.

### **STUDENT PREPARATION**

Set up a Learning Center with pictures, maps, diagrams, and charts, etc., relevant to the topics presented in this program. For example, the important buildings of the Forbidden City, Chinese emperors and their wives, court officials and servants in the Forbidden City, bell and drum towers, traditional festivals, and foods.

Visit <http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxasia.htm> for free printable outline maps of China and Asia.

Pass out copies of **Blackline Master #5, Timeline and Timeline Activity**, that includes historical events within this region and copies of **Blackline Masters #6 and #6a, Vocabulary**, that includes definitions for geographical terms and historical names and places referred to in this program.

### **STUDENT OBJECTIVES**

After viewing the program and completing the follow-up activities, students should be able to:

- Explain how human characteristics make specific regions of the world distinctive: how traditional Chinese towns were structured and how people lived in ancient China.
- Describe some of the ways that communities in ancient China reflected the cultural background of their inhabitants (e.g., distinctive building styles—the Forbidden City, China's ancient fortified towns, foods, forms of relaxation, family life, festivals, etc.).
- Describe how specific individuals and the values those individuals held impacted history—in this case, the influence of Confucius and the Chinese emperors on the administration of the government of China.

### **INTRODUCING THE PROGRAM**

Duplicate and administer **Blackline Master #1, Pre-Test**. Remind your students that they are not expected to know all the answers. Suggest that they use these questions as a guide for taking notes on the key concepts while viewing the program.

## **VIEW THE PROGRAM**

Running Time: 15 minutes plus a one-minute, five-question Video Quiz.

**Hand out Blackline Master #3, Video Quiz, and Blackline Master #7a, Map of Asia**, that may be used for note-taking while viewing the program.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

After viewing the program, you may find it helpful to discuss these topics as a class. (You may also choose to use these topics to begin a discussion prior to viewing the program.)

- A comparison of the lives of Chinese emperors and European kings.
- Discuss the history and subject matter of China's imperial examinations.
- The role of Confucian ideals in the Chinese imperial government and the design of the Forbidden City.
- The role of Confucian ideals in interpersonal and family relationships.

## **DESCRIPTION OF BLACKLINE MASTERS**

**Blackline Master #1, Pre-Test**, is an assessment tool intended to gauge student comprehension of the objectives prior to viewing the program.

**Blackline Master #2, Post-Test**, is an assessment tool to be administered after viewing the program and completing additional activities. The results of this assessment can be compared to the results of the Pre-Test to determine the change in student comprehension before and after participation in this lesson.

**Blackline Master #3, Video Quiz**, is intended to reinforce the key concepts of the program following the presentation of the program. Student awareness that a **Video Quiz** will be given also helps promote attention to the video presentation.

**Blackline Master #4, Crossword Puzzle**, is a puzzle game based on information presented in the Vocabulary List.

**Blackline Master #5, Timeline and Timeline Activity**, presents important dates in Chinese history and includes a "fill-in-the-blank" exercise.

**Blackline Masters #6 and #6a, Vocabulary List and Activity**, includes important names, people, places, and terms relating to events that occurred during this era in history with a "fill-in-the-blank" exercise.

**Blackline Masters #7 and #7a, Map Exercise of China**, includes a map of Asia and a list of items for the student to locate and label. This activity could be expanded into a research project that promotes using a variety of outside educational resources.

### **EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Research papers, oral reports, news reports, or PowerPoint® presentations could be done on the following subjects:

- A comparison of the lives of Chinese emperors and European kings.
- The history and subject matter of China's imperial examinations.
- The role of Confucian ideals in the Chinese imperial government.

- The role of Confucian ideals in interpersonal and family relationships.
- Daily life in the Forbidden City.
- Daily life in the ancient capital of Xian.
- Traditional Chinese symbols, colors, and superstitions.

### **ANSWER KEY**

#### **Blackline Master #1, Pre-Test**

1. True
2. True
3. False. The Forbidden City was the home of the emperor and his family and was the place from which the imperial government of China was administered.
4. True
5. True

#### **Blackline Master #2, Post-Test**

##### **A. True or False**

1. False. The U.S. population has always been smaller than China's population.
2. False. Mao Zedong led the Communist revolution.
3. False. It was Confucius, not Aristotle.
4. True
5. False. Xian, not Shanghai, was the capital city.

##### **B. Fill in the blanks**

1. Gobi, Himalayan
2. Forbidden City
3. Empress
4. Emperor
5. (Lunar) New Year's

##### **C. Short answer**

Tall, extremely thick walls surrounded most important Chinese cities of long ago. And they possessed a defensive, water-filled moat for added protection from invading



### Blackline Master #5, Timeline Activity

1. 1420 A.D.
2. 1934 A.D.
3. 1279 A.D.
4. 5,000 B.C.
5. 221 B.C.

### Blackline Master #6, Vocabulary Activity

1. virtue
2. imperial
3. polygamous
4. Mao Zedong
5. pronouncements (decrees or declarations are acceptable as well).

### Blackline Master #7, Map Exercise of China



## **RESOURCES**

### **Web sites for teachers:**

About Geography

<http://geography.about.com/>

What You Need to Know About: Geography. Home page has links to maps, as well as to sites dealing with physical, political, cultural, historical, and economical topics pertaining to world geography.

About Geography

<http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxusa.htm>

Free printable outline maps of China and Asia.

Chinese Philosophy Yin and Yang

<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/CHPHIL/YINYANG.HTM>

A very helpful and concise explanation of yin and yang. Includes links to information on other Chinese beliefs.

Chinese Philosophy Confucius

<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/CHPHIL/CONF.HTM>

A very helpful and concise explanation of the ideas of Confucius. Includes a link to a glossary of terms related to Confucianism.

The Road to Ancient China

<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/listchinamr3.html>

An Internet resource specifically designed for classroom use that includes links to many sites on ancient Chinese, arts and crafts, literature, religions and traditions.

Dragons of China

<http://www.ninedragonbaguazhang.com/dragons.htm>

Nice illustrations and descriptions of Chinese dragons, including the types and legends associated with them.

### **Books for the classroom:**

*Dorling Kindersley Children's Atlas.* Dorling Kindersley Publishing, London: DK Publishing, Revised edition September, 2003, ISBN 0789458454.

A beautiful children's atlas that is organized by continent, then broken down by country. It is packed with maps, photographs, illustrations, and diagrams that examine the physical and human of geography of the world. There are many fun-filled facts that pertain to each country and a useful glossary.

*The Ancient Chinese.* Silver Burdett Company, Morristown, N.J. Silver Burdett, 1981, ISBN 0382064461.

Learn about the ancient Chinese by perusing this resource packed with descriptions and illustrations of life in China from over 3,500 years ago to present day.

*Dorling Kindersley Eyewitness Books Ancient China.* Cotterell, Arthur, Dorling Kindersley Publishing: New York, NY, 2000, ISBN 0789458667.

A very informative guide to the history of the Chinese empire and the customs and traditions of its people. Loaded with photographs and descriptions.

*Ancient China.* Simpson, Judith, Time-Life Books, Weldon Owen Pty Limited, Australia: 1996, ISBN 0809492482.

Useful reference includes colorful illustrations and descriptions depicting life in ancient China: food, clothing, myths and symbols, art, ways of thinking, new ideas, and a timeline of the Dynasties of Ancient China.

**SCRIPT OF NARRATION**  
**China: From Past to Present**  
**Part Two: Life in the Ancient Capital Cities**

The ancient civilization of China developed over a period of three thousand, seven hundred years. Interestingly, in spite of its enormous geographical size and huge population, for most of its history, China had little contact with people from the other great civilizations of Asia, even less with people from the great civilizations of Europe, almost none with people from the civilizations of Africa, and none at all with people from the civilizations on the distant continents of North and South America. This was due to the fact that huge mountains, enormous deserts, and the Pacific Ocean encircled China. And the Chinese even constructed a "Great Wall" to help stop foreign invaders. As a result, Chinese civilization developed largely on its own, without major influences from the "outside world." Its unique civilization thrived in part because Chinese emperors established unusual and effective methods of governing, while Chinese philosophers and religious leaders helped to develop guidelines for proper behavior that promoted social harmony and strong families. And all of these things came together to create an amazing civilization that has endured throughout the ages.

**City Defenses, Towers, and Neighborhoods**

China's capital cities were of utmost importance because they were where the emperors lived and directed the activities of government. In order to better understand the civilization of China, it is fascinating to see how life was, and still is, lived in the old capital of Xian and the new capital of Beijing.

One thousand, three hundred years ago, the population of Xian, seen here in modern times, exceeded one million people, which made it one of the largest cities in the world

back then. Like other important Chinese cities, Xian was surrounded by tall, extremely thick walls. And it possessed a defensive, water-filled moat for added protection from invading armies. The cities of ancient China could only be entered by passing through city gates, like the one seen here. Soldiers guarded these entrances, and they patrolled the walls, as well. The gates were located in each of the city's four walls. And they opened to the four directions: north, south, east, and west. From the gates, wide, straight streets crossed the city in a grid pattern.

At the center of Xian, where the four roads from the main gates meet, a huge bell tower stands. At dawn, each day in Chinese cities, the city bell was rung like a sort of ancient alarm clock to signal that the gates were opening. And at dusk, a large drum would sound from a nearby drum tower to signal that the gates were closing for the day. Here we see the 700 year-old drum tower of Beijing.

And this is Beijing's incredible bell tower. From high up in this tower, where the city's huge bell is located, it is possible to look down upon a typical old Chinese neighborhood. This is a place with narrow streets, lined with small traditional houses, where ordinary families have lived for centuries. And where it is still common to find five generations living happily together.

In China, elderly people are the most highly respected members of society. And in public squares it is quite typical to find groups of older people at their leisure, playing board games and cards, while nearby, their grandchildren amuse themselves with colorful kites; for the ancient art of kite flying is one of the most common forms of recreation in China.

The biggest holiday in China is the Lunar New Year's Festival. And it is probably the celebration the Chinese people love the most, because it is a time for fireworks, for music, for dragons. And it is the time when teams of lion dancers, like these, don brilliant costumes and charge through the streets to drive the previous year's evil spirits out of the neighborhood.

### **Traditional Foods and Markets**

Besides their traditional festivals and forms of relaxation, the Chinese have long enjoyed many traditional types of food, as well. For example, stuffed steamed dumplings of many different shapes and sizes are a very popular favorite. The Chinese also love to eat noodles; in fact, they invented them. And it is not unusual to see people mysteriously making noodles by hand.

The open markets found in the Chinese cities of today are good places to learn about some interesting Chinese eating habits. For they are places where farmers and fishermen come to sell the things they have raised or caught, and where city people come to buy them. Here you not only find colorful vegetables and an amazing array of mushrooms, but also all kinds of meat, including the meat of dogs and cats, and the meat of far more exotic animals, too.

Because the Chinese expect the raw materials they use in cooking to be as fresh as possible, you will always find all sorts of live creatures for sale in the markets as well, creatures such as crabs, frogs, turtles, snakes, and even the large larvae of certain insects, because all of these things can end up as ingredients in traditional Chinese cooking.

### **The Emperors of China**

The emperors of China led quite different lives from the people who visited the public food markets each day. For many centuries, the emperors of China were the most powerful men on Earth. That was because they ruled over what was, and still is, the world's most populous country. By way of comparison, back in the 1790s when China's population stood at 350 million people, that of United States, which had just formed as a nation, was around three million, five hundred thousand people, a mere one hundredth of China's population. And, at the same time, Europe's most populous country, France, had about 20 million citizens, less than six percent of China's population.

The emperors of China were known as the "Sons of Heaven," because they were believed to have been divinely chosen to serve as a link between the gods in heaven and the people on Earth. Because of their extremely exalted social position, the emperors rarely walked anywhere, instead they were carried about in palanquins, portable chairs, like this one.

The Chinese emperors chose their successors from among their many sons, selecting the one they thought could do the best job. For even though these rulers possessed almost limitless power and wealth, the emperor's role in Chinese society was an extremely difficult one.

### **The Forbidden City**

In the capital city of Beijing, the emperors and their extended families lived in a vast complex of imperial buildings known as the Forbidden City. And by visiting it, we can greatly improve our understanding of how the emperors of China lived many centuries ago.

To begin with, every aspect of the design of the Forbidden City and of the government administration that it housed was based on the ideals of the great Chinese philosopher Confucius. Construction began here in the year 1420. And when it was finished, this complex of buildings had nearly 9,000 rooms. And each day roughly 80,000 people could be found either working or living here.

In the old days, ordinary people were not allowed to enter the Forbidden City, but now anyone that can afford the price of admission can do so. Today, the journey into the Forbidden City begins here at the Tiananmen Gate, or the Gate of Heavenly Peace.

For over six centuries, the emperors of China came to this gate to make important public pronouncements. And it was also from here back in 1949 that communist leader Mao Zedong, whose portrait adorns the gate, officially declared the birth of the People's Republic of China.

On the other side of the Gate of Heavenly Peace is a large courtyard. This courtyard extends out from the imposing, heavily fortified Meridian Gate. Historically this was the main entrance to the Forbidden City. Because the Meridian Gate is the south gate, the direction the Chinese associate with masculinity and power, naturally this gate's central doorway was for the use of the emperor alone. On the other side of this doorway is another huge courtyard. Through it flows a small stream called the "Golden Water River" that is crossed by five stone bridges. Each bridge represents a different Chinese virtue; for example, the virtue of intelligence or the virtue of courtesy.

On the other side of the Golden Water River, visitors pass by some big metal pots that once stored water for fighting fires. After that they are greeted by a pair of large bronze

lions that symbolize imperial power. These lions acted as doorkeepers to ward off evil spirits, and stood at the foot of another gate, the Gate of Supreme Harmony. Passing through this gate imperial visitors entered the largest of the inner courtyards.

Across this courtyard is where the first of the three great Palaces of Harmony is located. These palaces were the most important buildings in the Forbidden City. And they are slightly higher than any of the other buildings. The largest palace seen here, called the Palace of Supreme Harmony, was where the emperors were married, celebrated their birthdays, and announced the names of those who had passed the imperial examinations.

During most such great events, the emperor sat inside the palace on this throne while bands of court musicians played amazing music to entertain him.

Behind the Palace of Supreme Harmony are the two other Palaces of Harmony. Inside the smaller one, the Palace of Middle Harmony, the emperor sat on this throne when he met with high officials and performed certain ceremonies. The last of the three great palaces is called the Palace of Preserving Harmony. Inside this palace, the emperor sat on this throne and oversaw the final stages of the imperial examinations. These tests were extremely difficult, but for those who passed them, a lifetime job in the emperor's government was all but guaranteed to them. And the man with the highest score was honored by being invited to stand on the head of this statue.

After descending from the raised area where the Three Great Palaces are located, another, much smaller gate, the Gate of Heavenly Purity, is reached, where two more statues of lions stand guard. The area beyond this gate was strictly "off-limits" even to the most privileged visitors,

because this was where the emperor actually lived. Chinese emperors had lots of children and lots of wives. And the emperor's highest- ranking wife received the title of empress.

On the other side of the wall, from where the emperor and empress lived, are the Imperial Gardens. This park-like area is filled with trees, unusual rocks, and several small buildings constructed for the enjoyment of the emperor and his family. And beyond the gardens it is possible to exit the Forbidden City through its northern, feminine, gate, The Gate of Divine Prowess, and return once again to the world of ordinary human beings.

### **Video Quiz**

1. True or False? China was never very isolated from the other great civilizations of the world.
2. True or False? In ancient China, the activities that took place in the bell and drum towers were related to time of day.
3. True or False? Elderly people have traditionally been treated with great respect in China.
4. True or False? For centuries the emperors of China were the most powerful rulers on Earth.
5. True or False? In ancient China, imperial examinations had to be passed in order to obtain a job in the emperor's government.

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