

Summary: Ancient China

The Geography of China

China is one of the largest countries in the world. There are huge mountains and dry plateaus in the west. In the east, there are low coastal plains. China's major rivers flow to the east. Ancient China was cut off from the rest of the world by high mountains, deserts, and the ocean.

China's physical features affected how people lived. Some settled near the Huang He, Chiang, and Xi rivers, where there was good farmland. People in different regions had different ways of life. Rulers took control of more of China. With time, the people became more alike.

Dynasties and Inventions

Different families ruled China. In 221 B.C.E. the Qin dynasty began China's first organized state. They built roads and canals. They forced workers to add to the 1,500-mile-long Great Wall of China. It was built to keep invaders away.

The Chinese invented many kinds of paper. They may have been the first to invent the compass. They invented pottery called porcelain. Today, it is called "china." The Chinese made silk, a soft cloth made from silkworm cocoons.

Silk and Trade

The Han dynasty began in 206 B.C.E. During the Han dynasty, traders began to use the Silk Road to trade with the rest of Asia and Europe. Traders also carried ideas. Buddhism traveled from India to China along the Silk Road.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

dynasty *noun*, a family that rules for several generations in a row

compass *noun*, a tool with a magnetic needle that points north

Silk Road *noun*, the long route that linked China with Asia and Europe



After You Read

REVIEW In what ways did the physical features of China affect its early people?

Circle the sentence that tells how China's landforms affected its connection to the rest of the world. Underline the sentence that tells where people settled.

REVIEW What advances did the Chinese make that we find useful today?

Circle the things the Chinese invented.

REVIEW In what ways was the Silk Road important to the Chinese? Draw a box around the sentence that tells why the Silk Road was important to traders.