Han Contacts with Other Cultures

If YOU were there...

You are a trader traveling along the Silk Road to China. This is your first journey, but you have heard many stories about the country. You know the trip will be hard, through mountains and deserts and terrible weather. While you expect to make a good profit from silk, you are also curious about China and its people.

What do you expect to find in China?

Building Background

During the Han dynasty Chinese society returned its focus to Confucian ideas, and new inventions were developed. In addition, increased trade allowed other countries to learn about the rich culture of China.

Farming and Manufacturing

Many advances in manufacturing took place during the Han dynasty. As a result, productivity increased and the empire prospered. These changes paved the way for China to make contact with people of other cultures.

Key Terms

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By the Han period, the Chinese had become master ironworkers. They manufactured iron swords and armor that made the army more powerful.

Farmers also gained from advances in iron. The iron plow and the wheelbarrow, a single-wheeled cart, increased farm output. With a wheelbarrow a farmer could haul more than 300 pounds all by himself. With an iron plow, he could till more land and raise more food.

Another item that increased in production during the Han dynasty was silk, a soft, light, highly valued fabric. For centuries, Chinese women had known the complicated methods needed to raise silkworms, unwind the silk threads of their cocoons, and then prepare the threads for dyeing and weaving. The Chinese were determined to keep their procedure for making silk a secret. Revealing these secrets was punishable by death.

During the Han period, weavers used foot-powered looms to weave silk threads into beautiful fabric. Garments made from this silk were very expensive.

**Reading Check** Finding Main Ideas How did advances in technology affect farming and silk production?

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**Trade Routes**

Chinese goods, especially silk and fine pottery, were highly valued by people in other lands. During the Han period, the value of these goods to people outside China helped increase trade.

**Expansion of Trade**

Trade increased partly because Han armies conquered lands deep in Central Asia. Leaders there told the Han generals that people who lived still farther west wanted silk. At the same time, Emperor Wudi wanted strong, sturdy Central Asian horses for his army. China’s leaders saw that they could make a profit by bringing silk to Central Asia and trading the cloth for the horses. The Central Asian peoples would then take the silk west and trade it for other products they wanted.

**The Silk Road**

Traders used a series of overland routes to take Chinese goods to distant buyers. The most famous trade route was known as the Silk Road. This 4,000-mile-long network of routes stretched westward from China across Asia’s deserts and mountain ranges, through the Middle East, until it reached the Mediterranean Sea.

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**The Impact Today**

China still produces about 50 percent of the world’s silk.

**Academic Vocabulary**

procedure the way a task is accomplished

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**Children's Museum of Art, Boston**

The technique for making silk was a well-kept secret in ancient China, as silk was a valuable trade good in distant lands. Workers made silk from the cocoons of silkworms, just as they do today.
Chinese traders did not travel the entire Silk Road. Upon reaching Central Asia, they sold their goods to local traders who would take them the rest of the way.

Traveling the Silk Road was difficult. Hundreds of men and camels loaded down with valuable goods, including silks and jade, formed groups. They traveled the Silk Road together for protection. Armed guards were hired to protect traders from bandits who stole cargo and water, a precious necessity. Weather presented other dangers. Traders faced icy blizzards, desert heat, and blinding sandstorms.

Named after the most famous item transported along it, the Silk Road was worth its many risks. Silk was so popular in Rome, for example, that China grew wealthy from that trade relationship alone. Traders returned from Rome with silver, gold, precious stones, and horses.

**Reading Check** Summarizing Why did Chinese trade expand under Han rule?

**Buddhism Comes to China**

When the Chinese people came into contact with other civilizations, they exchanged ideas along with trade goods. Among these ideas was a new religion. In the first century AD Buddhism spread from India to China along the Silk Road and other trade routes.

**Arrival of a New Religion**

Over time, the Han government became less stable. People ignored laws, and violence was common. As rebellions flared up, millions of peasants went hungry. Life became violent and uncertain. Many Chinese looked to Daoism or Confucianism to find out why they had to suffer so much, but they didn’t find helpful answers.

Buddhism seemed to provide more hope than the traditional Chinese beliefs did. It offered rebirth and relief from suffering. This promise was a major reason the Chinese people embraced Buddhism.
Impact on China
At first, Indian Buddhists had trouble explaining their religion to the Chinese. Then they used ideas found in Daoism to help describe Buddhist beliefs. Many people grew curious about Buddhism.

Before long, Buddhism caught on in China with both the poor and the upper classes. By AD 200, Buddhist altars stood in the emperor’s palace.

Buddhism’s introduction to China is an example of diffusion, the spread of ideas from one culture to another. Elements of Chinese culture changed in response to the new faith. For example, scholars translated Buddhist texts into Chinese. Many Chinese became Buddhist monks and nuns. Artists carved towering statues of Buddha into mountain walls.

READING CHECK Finding Main Ideas How did Chinese people learn of Buddhism?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW Under the Han, trade brought new goods and ideas, including Buddhism, to China. In the next chapter you’ll read about the religion of another people—the Jews.

Section 5 Assessment

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People
1. a. Describe How did wheelbarrows help farmers?
   b. Summarize How was silk made in ancient China?
   c. Elaborate Why did the Chinese keep silk-making methods a secret?
2. a. Identify Where did the Silk Road begin and end?
   b. Elaborate What information would you use to support the argument that the silk trade must have been very valuable?
3. a. Identify What is diffusion?
   b. Make Generalizations What Buddhist beliefs appealed to millions of Chinese peasants?

Critical Thinking
4. Categorizing Copy the chart here. Use it and your notes on trade to identify goods and ideas that were exchanged along the Silk Road, both into and out of China.

5. Evaluating the Importance of Events Not all the important events in history are wars or invasions. What peaceful events in this section changed Chinese history? Write down some ideas.

Focus on Speaking
The Silk Road was a long trade route that stretched across the heart of Asia. Along this route, an active trade developed between China and Southwest Asia by about 100 BC. By AD 100, the Silk Road connected Han China in the east with the Roman Empire in the west.

The main goods traded along the Silk Road were luxury goods—ones that were small, light, and expensive. These included goods like silk, spices, and gold. Because they were small and valuable, merchants could carry these goods long distances and still sell them for a large profit. As a result, people in both the east and the west were able to buy luxury goods that were unavailable at home.

**Goods from the West** Roman merchants like this man grew rich from Silk Road trade. Merchants in the west traded goods like those you see here—wool, amber, and gold.
**Goods from the East**  Chinese merchants also got rich from Silk Road trade. Valuable Asian goods included silk cloth, jade objects, and spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger that didn’t grow in Europe.

**A Network of Roads**  The Silk Road was actually a network of roads that linked trading centers in Asia. Most merchants only traveled a small part of the Silk Road, selling their goods along the way to other traders from distant lands.

**INTERPRETING MAPS**

1. **Place**  What two empires did the Silk Road connect by AD 100?
2. **Movement**  What were some goods traded along the Silk Road?
Conducting Internet Research

Understand the Skill

The Internet is a huge network of computers that are linked together. You can connect to this network from a personal computer or from a computer at a public library or school. Once connected, you can go to places called Web sites. Web sites consist of one or more Web pages. Each page contains information that you can view on the computer screen.

Governments, businesses, individuals, and many different types of organizations such as universities, news organizations, and libraries have Web sites. Most library Web sites allow users to search their card catalog electronically. Many libraries also have databases on their Web sites. A database is a large collection of related information that is organized by topic.

The Internet can be a very good reference source. It allows you to gather information on almost any topic without ever having to leave your chair. However, finding the information you need can sometimes be difficult. Having the skill to use the Internet efficiently increases its usefulness.

Learn the Skill

There are millions of Web sites on the Internet. This can make it hard to locate specific information. The following steps will help you in doing research on the Internet.

1. Use a search engine. This is a Web site that searches other sites. Type a word or phrase related to your topic into the search engine. It will list Web pages that might contain information on your topic. Clicking on an entry in this list will bring that page to your screen.

2. Study the Web page. Read the information to see if it is useful. You can print the page on the computer's printer or take notes. If you take notes, be sure to include the page's URL. This is its location or “address” on the Internet. You need this as the source of the information.

3. Use hyperlinks. Many Web pages have connections, called hyperlinks, to related information on the site or on other Web sites. Clicking on these links will take you to those pages. You can follow their links to even more pages, collecting information as you go.

4. Return to your results list. If the information or hyperlinks on a Web page are not useful, return to the list of pages that your search engine produced and repeat the process.

The Internet is a useful tool. But remember that information on the Internet is no different than printed resources. It must be evaluated with the same care and critical thinking as other resources.

Practice and Apply the Skill

Answer the following questions to apply the guidelines to Internet research on ancient China.

1. How would you begin if you wanted information about the Qin Dynasty from the Internet?
2. What words might you type into a search engine to find information about Confucianism?
3. Use a school computer to research the Great Wall of China. What kinds of pages did your search produce? Evaluate the usefulness of each type.
Chapter Review

Visual Summary

Use the visual summary below to help you review the main ideas of the chapter.

Chinese civilization began along the Huang He (Yellow River).

During the Zhou dynasty, armies fought for power, and the ideas of Confucius spread.

The Qin dynasty unified China with a strong government.

During the Han dynasty, China made advances in learning, and Buddhism spread.

Reviewing Vocabulary, Terms, and People

Match the “I” statement with the person or thing that might have made the statement. Not all of the choices will be used.

a. jade  
b. innovation  
c. lord  
d. oracle  
e. peasant  
f. Confucius  
g. Daoism  
h. Shi Huangdi  
i. seismograph  
j. wheelbarrow  
k. Great Wall  
l. Legalism

1. “I stressed the importance of living in harmony with nature.”
2. “I took a name that means ‘first emperor.’”
3. “I stressed that people needed to be controlled with strict laws.”
4. “I am a beautiful, hard gemstone that the Chinese made into many objects.”
5. “I was built to keep invaders from attacking China.”
6. “I can measure the strength of an earthquake.”
7. “I am a person of high rank.”
8. “I am a new idea, method, or device.”
9. “I emphasized the importance of moral values and respect for the family.”
10. “I am a farmer who tills a small plot of land.”

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

SECTION 1 (Pages 160–165)

11. a. Identify In what region did the Shang dynasty develop?
    
b. Analyze How did China’s geography contribute to the country’s isolation?
    
c. Evaluate Considering the evidence, do you think the Xia dynasty was really China’s first dynasty or a myth? Explain your answer.
SECTION 2 (Pages 166–171)

12. a. **Identify** Which Chinese philosophy encouraged strict laws and severe punishments to keep order?
   b. **Analyze** How would Confucianism benefit Chinese emperors?
   c. **Evaluate** Would you be happier under a government influenced by Legalism or by Daoism? In which type of government would there be more order? Explain your answers.

SECTION 3 (Pages 172–176)

13. a. **Describe** What were the main reasons for the fall of the Qin dynasty?
   b. **Make Inferences** Why did Shi Huangdi’s armies destroy city walls and take weapons from people they conquered?
   c. **Evaluate** Shi Huangdi was a powerful ruler. Was his rule good or bad for China? Why?

SECTION 4 (Pages 178–183)

14. a. **Identify** During the Han dynasty, who belonged to the first and second social groups?
   b. **Analyze** What was the purpose of the exam system during Wudi’s rule?
   c. **Elaborate** What inventions show that the Chinese studied nature?

SECTION 5 (Pages 186–189)

15. a. **Identify** What factors led to the growth of trade during the Han dynasty?
   b. **Draw Conclusions** Who do you think wore silk garments in China?
   c. **Predict** What might have happened if the Chinese had told foreign visitors how to make silk?

Reviewing Themes

16. **Politics** Why might historians differ in their views of Shi Huangdi’s success as a ruler?
17. **Society and Culture** How did Confucianism affect people’s roles in their family, in government, and in society?

Using the Internet

18. **Activity: Solving Problems** Confucius was one of the most influential teachers in Chinese history. His ideas suggested ways to restore order in Chinese society. Using your online textbook, research Confucianism. Take note of the political and cultural problems Confucianism tried to address. Then investigate some of the current political and cultural problems in the United States. Could Confucianism solve problems in the United States? Prepare a persuasive argument to support your answer.

Reading Skills

19. **Summarizing Historical Texts** From the chapter, choose a subsection under a blue headline. For each paragraph within that subsection, write a sentence that summarizes the paragraph’s main idea. Continue with the other subsections under the blue heading to create a study guide.

Social Studies Skills

20. **Conducting Internet Research** Find a topic in the chapter about which you would like to know more. Use the Internet to explore your topic. Compare the sources you find to determine which seem most complete and reliable. Write a short paragraph about your results.

21. **Giving Your Oral Presentation** You have chosen a person or event and know why your choice was important to Chinese history. Now you must convince your classmates.

   First, write a brief description of what the person did or what happened during the event. Then summarize why your person or event is important to Chinese history.

   When you give your oral presentation, use vivid language to create pictures in your listeners’ minds. Also, use a clear but lively tone of voice.
Standardized Test Practice

1. The connecting link between serving one's father and serving one's mother is love. The connecting link between serving one's father and serving one's prince is reverence [respect]. Thus the mother [brings forth] love, while the prince brings forth reverence. But to the father belong both—love and reverence . . . Likewise, to serve one's elders reverently paves the way for civic obedience.

The observation and advice in this passage best express the teachings of
A  Buddhism.
B  Confucianism.
C  Daoism.
D  Legalism.

2. Which feature of China's physical geography did not separate its early people from the rest of the world?
A  the Gobi
B  the Huang-He
C  the Pacific Ocean
D  the Tibetan Plateau

3. How did the Qin emperor Shi Huangdi unify and control China in the 200s BC?
A  He created districts and counties that were governed by appointed officials.
B  He gave land to China's nobles so that they would be loyal to him.
C  He dissolved the army so that it could not be used against him by his enemies.
D  He established the Silk Road to get goods from far away.

4. Which of the following developments in China is an example of diffusion?
A  the growth of manufacturing and trade
B  the building of the Great Wall
C  the spread of Buddhism from India
D  the use of inventions to improve farming

5. Which dynasty's rulers created a government based on the ideas of Confucius?
A  the Shang dynasty
B  the Zhou dynasty
C  the Qin dynasty
D  the Han dynasty

Connecting with Past Learnings

6. In your studies of ancient India, you learned about the Hindu belief in rebirth. Which belief system that influenced early China also emphasized rebirth?
A  Buddhism
B  Confucianism
C  Daoism
D  Legalism

7. What characteristic did early civilization in Mesopotamia share with early civilization in China?
A  Both developed paper.
B  Both were influenced by Buddhism.
C  Both built ziggurats.
D  Both first developed in river valleys.