

Dynasties and Discoveries: Ancient China

Learning objective: To understand the significance of the Shang Dynasty and the legacy of Ancient Chinese inventions.

Use your knowledge of the Shang Dynasty and Ancient Chinese civilisation to answer the questions below. Think carefully about how these historical developments still influence our lives today.

Ellie the elephant has been busy reading about the Shang Dynasty, which began along the banks of the Yellow River. This era was famous for its incredible bronze work and the development of early writing on oracle bones. Ancient China was a society defined by respect for ancestors, strict social hierarchies, and the invention of technologies that changed the world, from silk production to paper-making. As the civilisation expanded, trade routes like the Silk Road connected China to the rest of the world, allowing goods, ideas, and inventions to travel across continents.

Word bank: Dynasty · Oracle bones · Silk Road · Ancestor worship · Bronze casting · Calligraphy · Emperor · Yellow River

1. Explain why the Yellow River was essential for the development of early Chinese settlements. (2 marks)

2. Identify two ways in which the invention of silk or paper-making impacted the global economy during ancient times. (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast the importance of bronze casting in the Shang Dynasty with the use of modern metals today. (3 marks)

4. Justify your answer: Why do historians consider the invention of a formal writing system one of the most important achievements of the Shang Dynasty? (3 marks)

5. What might happen if the Silk Road had never been established? Describe the potential impact on the exchange of goods and cultural ideas. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw an example of an oracle bone with early Chinese characters inscribed on it, or sketch a pattern inspired by traditional Shang Dynasty bronze vessels.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are a merchant travelling the Silk Road. Write a short diary entry describing one item you are carrying to trade, the challenges of your journey, and one new idea or invention you have learned about from a traveller you met along the way.