

Week 2 Social Studies - Read the following text about Ancient China's contributions to civilization. Pick three contributions and write how these three are the most important. Each contribution must have one paragraph of writing dedicated to its importance.

The Contributions of the China's Ancient Dynasties

The following text is from the Ducksters Website

The civilization of Ancient China dates back thousands of years. Over this long period of time much of China was ruled by different dynasties.

### **What is a dynasty?**

A dynasty is when one family rules a country or region over a long period of time. Generally, the head of the family will be the ruler of the land, like an emperor or king. When that ruler dies, another member of the family will take power, usually the oldest son. When a new family takes control, then a new dynasty begins.



The first Emperor of China  
*Qin Shi Huangdi* by Unknown

### **Mandate of Heaven**

The Mandate of Heaven is what the Chinese people believed gave their rulers the right to be king or emperor. It meant that the gods had blessed that person with the right to rule. A ruler had to be a good and just ruler to keep the Mandate of Heaven. When a ruler or dynasty lost power, this meant that they must also have lost the Mandate of Heaven.

### **Major Dynasties**

Here are the major dynasties in the history of Ancient China:

**Xia** (2205 to 1575 BC) - The first dynasty in China, very little is known about the Xia.

**Shang** (1570 to 1045 BC) - The Shang ruled much of the area along the Yellow River. Their last

capital city was the great city of Yin.

**Zhou** (1045 to 256 BC) - The longest ruling dynasty in the history of China, the Zhou first used the Mandate of Heaven to justify their rule. Much of the land was ruled by feudal lords who were relatives of the Zhou family.

**Qin** (221 BC to 206 BC) - The beginning of the Chinese Empire, Shi Huangdi became the first Chinese Emperor. Although this was a short dynasty much was accomplished including the beginning of the Great Wall; standards were set for weights, measures, and money; many roads and canals were built; and a single type of writing was used throughout the country. All of these advancements would be used in future dynasties to make China strong.

**Han** (206 BC to 220 AD) - The Han dynasty established the civil service to create a strong and organized government. Paper and porcelain were also invented during this time. The Han also embraced Confucianism, poetry, and literature.

**Six Dynasties** (222 to 581 AD) - A period of time where China was not united under a single leader.

**Sui** (589 to 618 AD) - The Sui unite China again under one rule. They also expanded the Great Wall and built the Grand Canal.

**Tang** (618 - 907) - A period of peace and prosperity, the Tang rule is sometimes known as the Golden Age of Ancient China. Arts, literature, and technology all flourish. The capital city Chang'an becomes the world's largest city.

**Five Dynasties** (907 - 960) - A peasant rebellion takes down the Tang dynasty and ushers in a period of division.

**Song** (960 - 1279) - Reunited under the Song, China becomes a world leader in science and technology including inventions such as gunpowder and the compass.

**Yuan** (1279 - 1368) - After the Mongols defeated the Song in a long war, Kublai Khan, a Mongol leader, established the Yuan dynasty.

**Ming** (1368 - 1644) - The last of the great Chinese dynasties, the Ming finished the Great Wall and built the Forbidden City, an enormous palace for the Emperor. The Ming came into power by overthrowing the rule of the Mongols.

Week 3 - Read the text below. When finished create a timeline tracking the development of ideas regarding governance and the rise and fall of the dynasties. Use 8 ½ x 11 paper, landscape (on its side or hot dog style), draw a line through the middle of the paper. Remember, you are basically doing a number line and while in BC (left side) the numbers count down or backwards, one zero is passed the numbers begin to climb. On the back of your timeline write about which time period you think was the most successful for the people and why you think it was successful (Hint: use the facts on your timeline as evidence).

## Chinese Government through the Dynasties

The Xia Dynasty (c. 2070–1600 BC) — Early Bronze Age China

Possibly **the first dynasty** in ancient China, it's generally believed that [the Xia Dynasty](#) consisted of several clans living alongside the Yellow River. Most of the evidence for the Xia Dynasty, including its name, is perhaps just legend.

There was a Bronze Age [Yellow River civilization](#) at this time at Erlitou in Henan; however, artifacts don't show conclusively that this was the Xia Dynasty of later writings.

Ancient China (c. 1600–221 BC)



*Ancient bronze objects*

Chinese civilization began along the Yellow River in the **Shang era**, and spread from there when Bronze Age culture reached its peak.

Then, traditional Chinese philosophies, such as Confucianism and Daoism, developed in the **feudal Zhou era** as China expanded in territory and population. Feudalism is an organization of society, in land owning aristocrats provided land for those who were poor to work. The poor farmers would pay rents with either money, but more often it was with produce, or the animals they raised. The farmers would sell or trade their extra for what they needed. Merchants and artisans made products and the farmers would trade with them. This society was self sufficient and rarely needed products outside of its own organization. However, land owning aristocrats (the privileged due to wealth and status), were cruel to farmers, merchants, and artisans. The aristocrats did, however, establish an army which protected the people from marauders. Aristocrats paid taxes to whomever ruled over their lands and promised men and support in times of conflict.

Ancient China finally **fractured into warring kingdoms** for 200 years, and its reunification marked the start of the imperial China age.

The Shang Dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BC)

[The Shang Dynasty](#) was **the first to have historical records remaining**. Many bronze objects and jade articles, which date back to 1600 BC, have been found to support these early archaeological records.

The **earliest form of Chinese writing** – oracle bones – was found. The inscriptions on animal bones had pictographic characters. The Shang Dynasty's capital was Yin (Anyang) and its territory stretched between the lower reaches of the Yellow and Yangtze rivers.

The Zhou Dynasty (1045-221 BC)

After the Shang era, the larger **Zhou era** territory was divided by a network of feudal states and was ruled over by kings.

The king of Zhou only had direct control over a small portion of the realm and received tributes (taxes and goods) from the feudal states.



*Confucius lived in the Spring and Autumn Period and had a strong influence on China's subsequent history.*

The first part of the Zhou era was called **the Western Zhou** (1045–771 BC). It was a fairly peaceful time but, after 770 BC, the Zhou king lost his authority and seven prominent states emerged.

This era was divided into **three periods**: the Western Zhou Dynasty (1045–771 BC); the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BC), and [the Warring States Period](#) (475–221 BC). It marked the transition from tribal society to feudal society.

Major philosophies and religions emerged that were the basis of Chinese beliefs in later eras, such as **Confucianism and Daoism**.

Imperial China (221 BC – 1912 AD)

From the first centralized feudal empire, the Qin Dynasty, which was established in 221 BC, until the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, this period is known as the imperial era of China.

The imperial China period makes up **the bulk of Chinese history**. With the cyclical (cyclic means to go round and round in cycles) rise and fall of dynasties, Chinese civilization was cultivated and prospered in times of peace, then reformed (academic word for changed) after rebellions and conquests.

The Qin and Han Dynasties (221BC –220 AD)

The Qin and Han dynasties were **the initial period of the Chinese empire**. During this period, a number of institutions were established that laid the foundation of the basic political system for the next 2,000 years.

The short-lived Qin Dynasty was **the first to unite China** as a country under an emperor instead of a ruling clan. A bureaucratic (this is where government tasks are divided into departments and a person was appointed to oversee a particular aspect of governing) government was introduced, and was continued by the less extreme Han Dynasty. Some of the special offices of governing created may have included taxation, population, food production, military, etc.

The Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC)



*The Terracotta Army represent the army that changed China's history by uniting the country.*

[The First Emperor](#) — Qin Shi Huang was first to use the title of emperor in China. He and his Qin state united China by conquering the other warring states, and he ruled with an iron fist.

Qin Shi Huang **centralized the power** of the empire after he took the throne and set up a system of laws. He standardized units of weight and measurements, as well as the writing system.

[The Qin Dynasty](#) was the **first and shortest imperial dynasty** in China. It was famous for great building projects, such as the Great Wall and the Terracotta Army, which guarded the First Emperor's burial objects and was to protect him in his afterlife.

During the later period of the Qin Dynasty, **Liu Bang**, a peasant leader, overthrew the unpopular Qin regime and established the Han Dynasty.

The Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD)

**The longest imperial dynasty**, the Han Dynasty, was known for starting the Silk Road trade and connecting China with Central Asia and Europe.



*The Silk Road featured strongly in China's history as a gateway for trade and cultural exchange.*

In the Han Dynasty, a **bureaucratic system** in which promotion was based on merit was established and Confucianism was adopted by the state for national governance. What's more, agriculture, handicrafts, and commerce developed rapidly.

During the reign of Emperor Wudi (r. 140–87 BC), the Han regime prospered most. The **multiethnic country became more united** during the Han regime.

The Han Dynasty was **one of the most powerful and important dynasties** in China's history. It had far-reaching impacts for every dynasty that followed it.

China's Dark Ages (220–581)

When the Han Dynasty fell into decline, it **fractured** into the [Three Kingdoms Period](#) (220–265). After the Three Kingdoms Period came [the Jin Dynasty](#), which then conquered most of China (265–420).

Its hold on power was tenuous, however, and China again fractured, this time into the [Southern and Northern Dynasties](#) (420–589).

During this messy time, many religions emerged and **Buddhism was popular** among the barbarian kingdoms in North China.

After almost 400 years of chaos ended, **the Sui Dynasty eventually unified China again** in 581 AD.