

## 31. “China’s Great Wall”

by Core Knowledge Staff

Long ago, in the cold, northern lands beyond the boundaries of China, a group of nomads lived by raising animals. They rode on horses, herding sheep and goats in search of grass for grazing. Life was hard for these nomadic people. Perhaps that is why they became such fierce warriors. They regularly crossed into China on horseback, stealing food, gold, and animals.

The Chinese thought of many ways to keep the attackers out. All along the northern border of China they built walls of earth, stone, and wood. The materials they used depended upon what was readily available in the areas where they lived. For hundreds of years, the Chinese built many separate walls to keep out northern invaders. But it was not until the rule of China’s “First Emperor” that the decision was made to connect the many walls together into one long wall. That was over two thousand years ago.

Work continued on the Great Wall for another fifteen hundred years! Soldiers, prisoners, and peasants struggled to obey the orders of each new and powerful emperor of China who wanted to finish the wall. It was not an easy task. The wall stretched out across the land, often built on the highest ground, like mountain ridges, to make it even more difficult for invaders to cross. The work was very dangerous, and many workers died in the process.

Spanning four thousand miles across northern China, the Great Wall was built to act like a fort. At places along the way, watchtowers were built. At one time there were nearly twenty-five thousand watchtowers. Soldiers kept watch for invading warriors. If they sensed danger, they used flags and drums to send signals from tower to tower.

With all of that hard work, do you think the Great Wall protected the Chinese as planned? It did for much of Chinese history. There were times, however, when some determined warriors broke through the wall. On two occasions, lasting for hundreds of years each, nomads from Central Asia forced the Chinese people to live under their harsh rule.

**Word Count: 345**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTIONS

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Comprehension Questions

### “China’s Great Wall”

*Assess each student’s comprehension of the selection by asking him or her to respond orally to the following questions one on one with you:*

1. ***Inferential*** Why did the Chinese begin to build walls?
  - » to keep out the nomads and attackers who were stealing food, gold, and animals
2. ***Literal*** Why was it difficult to build the Great Wall?
  - » because it was very long and was often built on the highest ground
3. ***Literal*** Did the Great Wall protect the Chinese as planned? How do you know?
  - » For much of Chinese history it did. However, there were times when determined warriors broke through the wall.