**Chinese Cultural History through Poetry and Food**

**Targeted Grade Level**- 6th Grade

**Subject area**- World History

**Skills to be addressed**- mapping, interpreting poetry, analyzing photographs

**Essential questions**-

1. How did geography affect life in ancient China?
2. What do Shang artifacts reveal about this civilization?
3. How did Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism influence political rule in ancient China?
4. What was life like in medieval China?
5. What role did Buddhism play in medieval China?

**Major Understandings-**

1. Location of ancient China.
2. Location of the Shang, Zhou, Qin and Han dynasties.
3. Impact of physical geography on the settlement of ancient China.
4. Impact of Confucianism on political rule in ancient China.
5. Role of Buddhism in medieval China.
6. Daily life in medieval China.

**Lesson One**

Geography of China

Tell the students that they will learn about civilizations of ancient China, including the rise of dynasties, and the developments of trade with western cultures.

Create a KWL chart. Ask the students what they already know about ancient China and what they want to learn.

Give the students a blank map and a physical map of China. They will then answer the questions and label the map.

1. Locate the Huang He (Yellow River) and the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River) on your map. Label them.
2. The Plateau of Tibet is located between what two mountain ranges? Label the mountain ranges and the plateau on your map.
3. Locate the Taklimakan and the Gobi deserts on your map. Label them.
4. Locate the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea on your map. Label them.
5. In what ways might these seas have influenced China’s history?
6. Use the maps in your book to compare the sizes of the Shang, Zhou, Qin, and Han empires. Which empire controlled the largest area?
7. Under which empire did ancient China control territories that are not part of present-day China?
8. What geographical features are shared by all four ancient Chinese empires?
9. The majority ethnic group in China today calls itself the “Han people”. Why do you think this is so?
10. If you could choose anywhere in ancient China to build a new city, in which location do you think your city would have the greatest chance of success? Why?
11. Why do you think that the area controlled by earlier dynasties grew larger under the control of each new dynasty?

## Lesson Two

Objective: the students will be able to discuss how river valleys, mountains and deserts influenced the development of Chinese civilization.

Materials: Spielvogel, Jackson J. "Early China." *World History Journey across Time*. New York, NY: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2008. Print.

Duration: two 53 minute class periods

1. The students will make a foldable to help them organize information about the important people in the early history of China.
2. We will then look at a picture of the Great Wall and give a brief history of it.
3. We will then preview the chapter by looking at a timeline.
4. The teacher will ask the students to define the term *warlords*. We will then discuss the social and economic conditions that create warlords and how they can be prevented or resolved. The students will then be able to discuss a conflict that they resolved peacefully.
5. We will then begin reading the Section on China’s First Civilizations. Students will be reading to learn why rivers were important to the development of China.
6. When finished reading the page, we will discuss the map about the Geography of China. Students will be asked: what is the name of the desert on China’s northern border with Mongolia? And what effect did China’s mountains and deserts have on its history? Answers: Gobi, and limited farmland
7. The students will then read about the Shang Dynasty. Before reading, they will look at a map and answer the following questions: what rivers were found within the borders of the Shang dynasty? And in what part of the Shang kingdom was Anyang found? Answers: Huang He and Chang Jiang and northern, near the Huang He
8. Students will read about whom the Shang were, the Chinese language and Shang artists. After finishing reading this section, the students will compare the Shang customs regarding their relatives’ needs in the afterlife with those of the ancient Egyptians.
9. The students will then answer the question what was the role of the Shang warlords? Answer: commanders of their own armies and part of the upper class.
10. Students will then read about the Zhou Dynasty.
11. Before they begin, the teacher will ask, who gives you permission to do the things you do? Your mother? Teacher? Read to find out how the rulers of the Zhou dynasty turned to the heavens for permission to rule.
12. The students will look at a map of the Zhou Empire. They will be asked the following questions: what body of water made up the eastern border of Zhou territory? Why did the Zhou divide their kingdom into smaller territories?
13. When finished reading the section, the students will be asked: what was the chief duty of Chinese kings? Answer: to carry out religious rituals.
14. When finished, the students will be asked to describe how rivers, mountains, and deserts helped shape China’s civilizations.
15. The students will summarize the main ideas read about in the section- China’s first civilizations formed in river valleys, the rulers of the Shang dynasty controlled the area around the Huang He valley and the Zhou dynasty replaced the Shang and claimed to rule with the Mandate of Heaven. During the Zhou dynasty, farming methods improved and trade increased.
16. Students will then define the Mandate of Heaven and describe its effects on the rulers and people of ancient China.
17. Students will answer the section review for homework and study for a quiz on the section the following day.
18. Assessment: Answers to homework questions and responses to sections quiz.

**Lesson Three**

Politics in Medieval China

Objectives: Students will be able to-

1. View a Confucian examination room and draw conclusions about the nature of the exam.
2. Discuss the political structure characteristic of the Tang Dynasty.
3. Compare and contrast the medieval Chinese political system to the modern Chinese political system.

Materials: Confucian exam room- [http://www.csupomona.edu/~plin/ls201/images/scholar\_cell\_big.jpg](http://www.csupomona.edu/%7Eplin/ls201/images/scholar_cell_big.jpg)

Background information on the political structures of the Tang and Sung dynasties- <http://www.paulnoll.com/China/Dynasty/dynasty-Tang.html>

[http://www.csupomona.edu/~plin/ls201/confucian3.html](http://www.csupomona.edu/%7Eplin/ls201/confucian3.html)

<http://library.thinkquest.org/12255/library/dynasty/sung.html?tqskip1=1&tqtime=0826>

Introduction-

Begin by reviewing and defining the term “dynasty”. What constitutes a dynasty in historical terms? Make sure students are familiar with the differences between kings and emperors. Discuss with students different types of governments- democracy, oligarchy, monarchy, etc. Then discuss the definition of an aristocracy and a meritocracy. Finally, have a class discussion about civil service exams.

Then give the class a set of laptops and go to the website-<http://www.csupomona.edu/~plin/ls201/images/scholar_cell_big.jpg>

View the picture and then answer the following questions:

1. Describe the objects in the examination room.
2. Why do you think there is a blanket in the examination room? What might this tell you about the exam?
3. How does this examination room compare to other rooms where you have taken an exam?
4. Do you think this would be a comfortable or an uncomfortable environment to take a test?
5. During the Tang Dynasty, the passing rate for these exams was about two percent. Why do you think so many people took the exam even though it was likely that they would not pass the exam?
6. Forty-seven percent of the people who passed the examinations were from families with no official connections. How did the Confucian civil service exam change the nature of power during the Tang Dynasty?

**Lesson Four**

Objectives: Students will be able to

1. Analyze and interpret photographs.
2. Understand the rise and spread of Buddhism.
3. Debate the economic and political consequences of the rise of Buddhism as a social and religious movement in medieval China.

Websites: The Longmen Grottoes, Hene Province, China  
<http://gochina.about.com/od/zhengzhou/p/Longmen.htm>   
  
The Crowned Buddha at the Southern Leigutaidong Cave  
<http://www.miho.or.jp/english/member/shangrila/vol8/eshan8_2.htm>   
  
Background Information:   
  
Five Minute Introduction to Buddha  
<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/5minbud.htm>   
  
A History of Chinese Buddhism  
[http://web.archive.org/web/20070304205701/http://villa.lakes.com/cdpatton/Buddha/](http://web.archive.org/web/20070304205701/http:/villa.lakes.com/cdpatton/Buddha/)  
  *(Link is to an archive)*

Longmen Grottoes  
<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/henan/luoyang/longmen.htm>  
<http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Art/Grottoes/grottoes.html#longmen>

Thomas Jefferson Memorial   
<http://www.nps.gov/thje/index.htm>   
  
Abraham Lincoln Memorial   
<http://www.nps.gov/linc/index.htm>

Students will need to have an understanding of the basic principles and theories of Buddhism before beginning this lesson. Students should have an understanding of the origin of Buddhism in India and the spread of Buddhism to China during the Tang and Sung Dynasties. If the students do not have this knowledge, then spend a couple of class periods introducing these concepts to them.

Display the following picture to the class <http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/db_fengxian-grotto-longmen-E1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/longmen_48.html&h=399&w=600&sz=101&tbnid=JpUL55Gle6rGfM:&tbnh=90&tbnw=135&zoom=1&usg=__57PYF9umdcYYiKECDzVcCDoZOu0=&docid=LsfuTJOQIJdyjM&sa=X&ei=h89QUM3UAoTbyAGl0IC4CA&ved=0CC0Q9QEwAQ&dur=378>

1. How many statues can you see? How large are these statues and how can you tell?
2. Describe these statues. How are they dressed? Are they sitting or standing?
3. What are the expressions on these statues’ faces?
4. Who do these statues represent?
5. What can you infer is the relationship between the people of medieval China and these statues?

Class Discussion:

1. Why are the Longmen Caves of China historically significant?
2. Why do you think Buddhism was widely adopted and accepted in China during the early half of the Tang Dynasty?
3. How did the rise of Buddhism affect the political and economic climate of medieval China?

Compare and Contrast: The students will compare and contrast Buddhist statues to the Jefferson Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial. How are they similar and different physically? What are the similarities and differences in what they represent?

**Lesson Five**

Objective: The students will be able to

1. Analyze and interpret a poem from the Tang Dynasty.
2. Discuss life in medieval China.
3. Evaluate the poet’s commentary on life in medieval China.

Resources:

"Alone in her Beauty" by Du Fu  
<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/chinese/tangeng.html>

Scroll down to Du Fu’s poem, “Alone in Her Beauty”  
  
Tang Dynasty Literature  
<http://www.angelfire.com/journal2/wen/tang.html>

Chinese Poetry  
<http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Poetry/tangshi.html>

Wang Wei  
<http://www.chinese-poems.com/wang.html>

Review different forms of poetry- five-character ancient-verse, seven-character regular verse. Interpret a modern-day poem together as a class.

1. What type of poem are you reading?
2. What is the main focus of the poem?
3. What is the poet’s message?
4. What conclusions can we draw about the time period from reading this poem?

As a class, read Du Fu’s poem, “Alone in Her Beauty”. After reading ask:

1. What type of poem is this (five-character or seven-character, ancient or regular)?
2. Who is the main character in the poem?
3. What happens to the main character of the poem?
4. What does Du Fu mean when he writes, “When trouble arose in the Kuan district, her brothers and close kin were killed. What use were their high offices…”?
5. What does Du Fu mean when he writes, “The brook was pure in its mountain source, but away from the mountain its waters darken”?
6. Why do you believe Du Fu titled his poem, “Alone in Her Beauty”?
7. What message do you think Du Fu is trying to convey?
8. What can we learn about gender relations in medieval China from Du Fu’s poem?
9. What conclusions can we draw from Du Fu’s poem about life in medieval China?

Wrap-Up

1. What can we learn about medieval Chinese society from reading poems written by Tang Dynasty poets?
2. Is it possible to recognize bias in poetry? Do we see any biases in Tang Dynasty poetry? If so, what are they?
3. Are the poems of the Tang Dynasty considered important in modern Chinese society? Why or why not?

Have students write a poem from the perspective of a Tang or Sung Dynasty poet.

**Lesson Six**

Show the Chinese Food PowerPoint presentation.

Chinese Food Responses

1. After seeing the PowerPoint presentation, what are some similarities between Chinese food and food that you eat here in the United States?
2. What are some differences between Chinese food and food that you eat here in the United States?
3. Choose one of the slides of Chinese food that you are not familiar with and research it.
   1. From which part of China does this dish originate?
   2. What ingredients are in this dish?
   3. How is the dish prepared?
4. Write an essay about the history of rice.
5. What do you know about rice?
6. What are some examples of varieties of rice?
7. When did rice begin to be cultivated?
8. Where did rice begin to be cultivated? Are there different theories about where rice began to be cultivated? Which one do you think is correct and why?
9. Where did rice spread? In what direction and to what countries?
10. What can rice be used for?
11. What are some nutritional values of rice?
12. Go to <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/miracle-rice.html> and build a rice paddy. What are the steps to building a rice paddy? List, describe and illustrate each step.

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|  | http://glencoe.mcgraw-hill.com/olcweb/styles/shared/spacer.gif You are a researcher for an agricultural company. You must convince small farmers in rural China that genetically engineered rice is the answer to having more rice in the future. Create a simple cause-and-effect chart outlining the problems associated with the rice crisis and the solutions that genetically modified rice could provide for Asia. |
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<http://www-plb.ucdavis.edu/labs/rost/Rice/introduction/intro.html>

<http://www.duke.edu/web/soc142/team3/Group%20Rice/History.htm>

<http://archaeology.about.com/od/domestications/a/rice.htm>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/miracle-rice.html>