

Artifact Box

Huang Ho River Civilization – Ancient China

While teaching and learning about ancient China, there are many content statements from Ohio's New Learning Standards that are pulled from as well as many language arts skills derived from the Common Core State Standards. Below is a list of standards that can be integrated into teaching.

<p>Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere Strand: History Topic: Historical Thinking and Skills Content Statement: 1. Events can be arranged in order of occurrence using the conventions of B.C. and A.D. or B.C.E. and C.E.</p>
<p>Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere Strand: History Topic: Early Civilizations Content Statement: 2. Early civilizations (India, Egypt, China and Mesopotamia) with unique governments, economic systems, social structures, religions, technologies and agricultural practices and products flourished as a result of favorable geographic characteristics. The cultural practices and products of these early civilizations can be used to help understand the Eastern Hemisphere today.</p>
<p>Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere Strand: Geography Topic: Places and Regions Content Statement: 5. Regions can be determined, classified and compared using various criteria (e.g., landform, climate, population, cultural, or economic).</p>
<p>Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere Strand: Geography Topic: Human Systems Content Statement: 6. Variations among physical environments within the Eastern Hemisphere influence human activities. Human activities also alter the physical environment.</p>
<p>Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere Strand: Geography Topic: Human Systems Content Statement: 7. Political, environmental, social and economic factors cause people, products and ideas to move from place to place in the Eastern Hemisphere in the past and today.</p>

<p>Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere Strand: Economics Topic: Scarcity Content Statement: 14. When regions and/or countries specialize, global trade occurs.</p>
<p>Reading Informational Text: 6th Grade Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.</p>
<p>Reading Informational Text: 6th Grade Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: RI.6.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.</p>
<p>Writing: 6th Grade Text Types and Purposes: W.6.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.</p>
<p>Writing: 6th Grade Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.6.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.</p>
<p>Speaking and Listening: 6th Grade Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.6.4 Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation</p>
<p>Speaking and Listening: 6th Grade Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.6.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.</p>

Introduction:

The earliest Chinese civilization settled thousands of years ago in the northern Yellow River Valley around 4,000 BCE. The Yellow River may also be referred to as the Huang Ho or Huanghe He. The Yellow River flows across China for more than 2,900 miles. The river gets its name from the yellow silt it carries. There were also early farming settlements that occurred along the Yangtze River, also known as Chang Jiang, in the southern part of China. This river is

even longer, flowing 3,400 miles across China. These rivers influenced the development of the ancient Chinese civilization greatly. They merge together to create a food-producing area producing 10% of the land that is fertile enough to produce crop.

Throughout time, the small river settlements grew into states. The rival states fought for control over the territories. Rulers of stronger states ruled the lands and people they conquered. In ancient China the time periods were divided up into dynasties depending on who was ruling. Powerful families passed down control of their kingdoms. During the ancient civilization of China, there were five main dynasties that ruled. Each of these dynasties helped to impact the future of China by adding various elements such as religions, technologies, arts, and great pieces of architecture. The first dynasty to rule in ancient China was the Xia Dynasty during the late Neolithic period, which reigned from 2100 – 1600 BCE. Little is known about this dynasty and for a long time was believed to be mythical. The founder of the Xia Dynasty was Emperor Yu. During this time, a writing system was starting to form. The Xia capital was near present day Yangcheng.

The second ancient dynasty was the Shang dynasty that lasted from 1600 – 1050 BCE. This dynasty is known for the invention of bronze. The Shang dynasty forged weapons and other objects such as pieces of arts or vessels from bronze. Wealthy soldiers used bronze weapons in battle. The next dynasty was the Zhou Dynasty which was from 1050 – 256 BCE. Throughout this era, Daoism and Confucianism began. Iron was used to forge crossbows and plows so farmers could more easily grow food. Crossbows were used to shoot cable across canyons, which was the first step in building hanging bridges. The Mandate of Heaven was also used during the Zhou dynasty. The ancient Chinese believed that the gods would send trouble if they were displeased in the earthly ruler. The Qin dynasty ruled from 221 – 206 BCE. Even though this dynasty only lasted 15 years, it left a large impact on current day China. The most famous leader was King Zheng who united the kingdoms. This dynasty focused more on the legal aspect of the government as well as inventing many new technologies. He ordered the construction of the Great Wall in order to defend his empire from invaders. He also created a new money system and collected taxes. He sought to guarantee an afterlife by building a magnificent tomb with thousands of terracotta warriors. This was unearthed in 1974.

The final dynasty in the ancient Chinese civilization was the Han dynasty, which reigned from 206 BCE – 220 CE. The first Han emperor was Gao Zu. The Han dynasty expanded the borders of China significantly. Buddhism evolved during this time frame. Also, Sima Qian restored lost records and wrote a book that reported historical events. This dynasty is well recognized as the era where Chinese government and culture was imprinted for the next 2,000 years. There are many different ways to describe and demonstrate the ancient civilization of China. Below are multiple artifacts that represent different aspects of the ancient civilization. Government, writing systems, social structure, religions, and many other aspects can be seen!

Artifacts:

Oracle Bone (Government / Writing System)

Oracle bones were used frequently during ancient China, however they were made popular during the Shang dynasty. The ancient Chinese used animal bones and turtle shells to inscribe different messages and questions that they needed answered. Emperors would have their royal oracle scratch a question using characters into the bone or shell. For example, the emperor might ask the question “The king is going to conduct a military campaign. Will he be protected?” (Schomp, 2004). Then, a royal priest would touch the back of the bone or shell with an extremely hot piece of metal. The heat would cause the stone to crack and break in various ways surrounding the question. Then, the cracks would be interpreted and read to communicate the spirits’ answer to the question. The emperor would continually receive help and guidance from ancestors’ spirits through the use of oracle bones.



In order to communicate with the spirits, the questions had to be written on the stone. Chinese writing appeared more than 3,000 years ago, and the earliest writings can be seen on Shang oracle bones. Writing evolved throughout ancient China, and many different forms emerged depending on where the settlement was geographically. In the third century BCE, the First Emperor decided to combine the different forms of writing and create a standardized writing system. During the Han dynasty, the writing system was further developed and with slight changes, is representative of the writing system that is used in present day China. The ancient Chinese used characters that represent a word or part of word. Oracle bones are the earliest example of writing and the government’s direct interaction with the gods and spirits.

Teaching Idea:

Oracle bones could be presented to the class as a way to introduce the ancient Chinese civilization’s writing system as well as famous emperors. There are many artifacts that show how kings interacted with oracle bones. Students could choose a famous emperor and research that person in depth. What did the king contribute? Are there any artifacts that directly represent the king? When did the king rule? What was occurring during that time period? Students could then present their kings in a “wax museum” format. This would be a good opportunity to invite parents and others from the community into the classroom. Also, if time permitted, it would be interesting to have students investigate the Chinese writing system. It would be interesting for students to examine how the Chinese writing system differs from the English writing system. Students could even practice writing some Chinese characters or creating their own “oracle bones” like I did with rock, paint, and a paintbrush.

Pyramid (Social Structure):

Throughout ancient China the different social classes shifted slightly. However, people usually fell into one of the five major social classes. The social classes could be grouped into a pyramid format. At the top of the pyramid and the highest social class was the king and his family. The king and his family were the most respected and had the most amount of control and influence. This higher status was also shared with wealthy soldiers. The second highest social class was the Shi. This class consisted of scholars – primarily through the Zhou and Shang dynasties. The Shi were permitted to ride chariots and serve as commanders in battle. People were usually chosen from this class to serve in civil services for their country. The next social



class was the Nong. The Nong consisted of peasant farmers since the civilization depended on the agriculture for survival. Even though the farmers were seen as a higher social class, they were not permitted to enjoy privileges of the higher social classes, but were seen as important contributors to society. The Gong class consisted of craftsmen and artisans who were classified as laborers. These people developed goods, crafts, and services. Since they did not own any land like the peasant farmers, their social class was lower. They did not enjoy privileges and rights that higher social classes were allowed to partake in. Finally, the lowest social class in ancient China was the Shang. Traders and merchants made up this social class and were not seen as a higher class because they were simply transporting goods that were made by others. They themselves never made any goods. At times during ancient China, slavery was common. Slaves would then comprise the lowest of social classes.

Gender also played a role in determining social class. For example, young women could not attend school to become scholars, take examinations or become government officials. Usually, men tended to work in the fields as farmers, create weapons out of bronze, or act as merchants. Women and girls primarily made clothing, cooked meals, and were involved in all stages of silk production.

Teaching Idea:

One teaching idea for social structure and the different classes is having students break into groups of five and role playing. Students would each receive a card with their role on it (one per social class). Then, students could research and read information about their social class and how the different social classes interacted. Then, students could write a script for a play that demonstrated the jobs and privileges of the different social classes. Each student would have their assigned role and be responsible for helping the other students understand their social class. This would benefit students by examining how the different social classes interacted and what / who each social class consisted of.

Bronze, Silk, and Jade (Economics and Movement):

Bronze, silk, and jade were three elements that were extremely important and influential in the ancient Chinese economy and trade with other civilizations. Bronze became frequently used in the Shang dynasty. They forged weapons that only wealthy soldiers could use. Poor soldiers were only permitted stone weapons. The Shang dynasty also decorated bronze vessels and containers as well as used these containers for food and wine for religious rituals. In the Han dynasty, bronze was used for weapons and coins. The ancient Chinese were the first to make silk, and the production of silk was a large economic endeavor. There were government run factories, private workshops, and small home operations. Clothing was made for emperors, his family, and other nobility. The Chinese strived to keep the art of silk making a secret for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. They created a monopoly on silk and bronze until other civilizations discovered how to produce them. Jade was also important, and archaeologists have found jade objects from the early Neolithic period, which was about 5000 BCE. Jade stands for beauty, grace, and purity, and was used to make jewelry and other ornaments. Kings and other nobility were buried in jade plated armor, ornaments, and vessels.



All three of these products were traded along the Silk Road. Ancient Chinese merchants facilitated foreign trade along this route with other rich civilizations to the west. The Silk Road stretched about 5,000 miles through some of the world's most harsh regions. Merchants traveled in caravans. Goods made from bronze, silk, and jade were traded along the Silk Road. Only luxury items were traded, and the Chinese were known for trading silk for gold from the Roman Empire.

Teaching Idea:

Students could examine the different trade routes, including the Silk Road. The different routes could be drawn on a large map. Students could predict what the Chinese would trade for. After completing research, students could write a journal entry from the point of view of a merchant along the Silk Road. Students would need to include information like what goods they were trading and for what, the difficulties they face, and the secrets of silk or bronze production. This would also be a good opportunity to integrate economics instruction. Students could start to understand the concepts of trade and barter. The concept of monopoly would also be beneficial to introduce. What happens when a country monopolizes a particular good or service? What good did the ancient Chinese monopolize? How did this affect their economy? Students could be introduced to these types of questions that would hopefully promote deeper economic thinking.

Wheat and Rice (Agricultural Products and Practices):

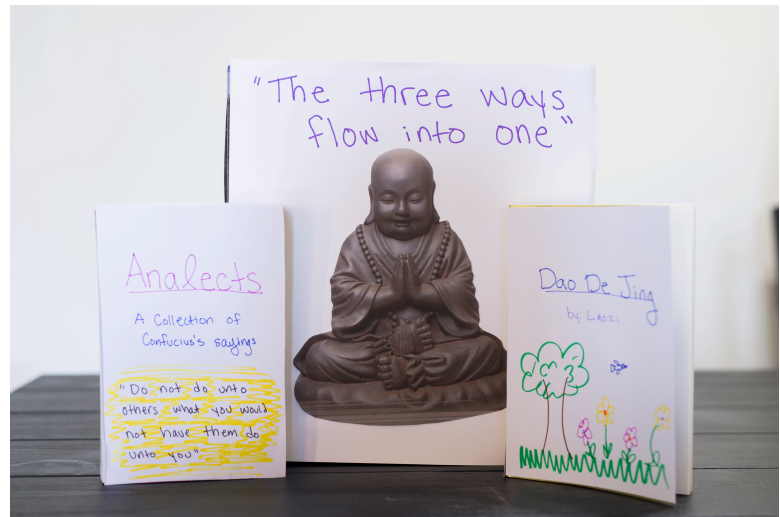
The ancient Chinese civilization grew a variety of crops depending on the region. In northern China, there is little rainfall and the winters are bitter cold. Therefore, the ancient Chinese grew mainly wheat and millet in northern China. However, in the southern region of China, the weather was warmer and water. The Chinese were able to grow rice, beans, gourds, snow peas, strawberries, dates, and melons. These crops helped to supply the population with food to eat. The ancient Chinese were also avid hunters. They also grew hemp plants that provided fibers that were woven into clothes and paper. Peasant farmers worked together as a family. The men and boys worked the fields while the women and daughters made family clothing, meals, and raised silkworms. Children worked alongside their parents farming and caring for livestock on the farms. Farming was very difficult and floods or droughts could destroy an entire year's harvest. Farmers could be forced to sell all possessions and even their children into slavery. The ancient Chinese were also known for using slash-and-burn farming techniques. Farming also introduced great technologies. For example, during the Han dynasty the iron plow was invented which helped farmers to cut deeper furrows. Also, better irrigation systems were developed which was extremely useful in the cultivation of rice.

**Teaching Idea:**

In order to teach agriculture, students could be engaged in an exploration of regions. Students could explore how the concepts of climate, latitude, longitude, and geographical features such as rivers, mountains, and valleys. Students could examine how these different concepts affect the ability to grow different crops. It would also be beneficial for students to examine what happens when a major disaster happens such as a flood or a drought. Another idea would be to have students assume the role of a farmer or a farmer's child. They could write a story about their experiences working on the farm or what their duties would be.

Books and Buddha (Religion):

In the ancient Chinese civilization, they believed in a creator god called Di, but also worshipped earth spirits. Many people believed that the spirits of their ancestors watched over them. There were three belief/religion systems that came to dominate ancient Chinese culture: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Confucianism was the belief in human goodness, the importance of duty and respect, and the value of study and education. Kong Fuzi was known as Confucius. The belief system taught that well being depended on order and morality. A good ruler honored spirits and showed kindness and mercy to people. The book, *Analects*, was a collection of Confucius's sayings, such as the golden rule: "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you". In 124 BCE, Han emperor Wudi founded an imperial university where young men could study this book. Another belief system was Daoism which means "the Path" or "the Way". It was the goal to imitate the peaceful and quiet ways of nature. The father of Daoism was Laozi who wrote *Dao De Jing*. The book outlines that people must live a simple life and tune into the natural world by using special diets, yoga, and "magic potions". By doing this, people would earn eternal life. Finally, Buddhism came from India as the Han dynasty began to fall. The followers of Buddhism did not value possessions or worldly success. They believed that all unhappiness was caused by desire. It was encouraged to follow Buddha ("Enlightened One") and the Eightfold Noble Path, which included understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, moral effect, mindfulness, and concentration. It was very common for ancient Chinese to blend all three faiths together: "The three ways flow into one" was a common saying.



Teaching Idea:

One way to teach religions is to have a student centered approach. I think a jigsaw approach would be most beneficial. Students could become experts on one of the three religions. Students could use books, articles, and artifacts to research and collect information. Students could then team up with others of the same religion and decide how to effectively present the information. Students could choose how to present the information. If you wanted to more precise, you could require students to create a theatre box that showed how an ancient Chinese would engage in that religion. For example, what activities would promote the religion? Was there a particular way that the followers worshipped? Students could present this information through an interactive theatre box by creating characters and acting out the information.

Paper, Wheelbarrow, and Compass (Technology):

The ancient Chinese can be credited with numerous technologies that affect us in present day society! For example, paper was one of the most important. The world's oldest piece of paper was made from pounded hemp fibers during the Han dynasty. The Chinese would use calligraphy techniques to write on paper. The wheelbarrow was also created in order to help move crops from field to field or to the merchant to sell. The magnetic compass was also an invention that helped merchants navigate. The first seismograph was invented by Zhang Heng during the Han dynasty and was used to identify earthquakes or movement



underground. Some other technologies that the ancient Chinese invented were the following: crossbows, iron plows, ship's rudder, water wheels used to run factory machines, harnesses for horses and other domesticated animals, medicines made from herbs and minerals, prescriptions that included special diets and exercise, moveable type, religions, toilet paper, matches, and kites.

Teaching Idea:

One teaching activity is to gather a couple different technologies that the ancient Chinese invented and lay them on butcher paper. Students walk around to the different artifacts and write their comments or ask questions about the objects. They record their thoughts on the butcher paper or respond to other's comments or questions. Students should try to discover what all the artifacts have in common. Eventually, students could come to the conclusion with the help of the teacher that the ancient Chinese developed all the artifacts. Students could pick one of the objects and research the development of the object in more depth. Students could then write a short research paper. This activity could be a good way to introduce the lasting effects that the ancient Chinese civilization had on not only present day China, but also the present day world in general.

Resources:

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