

The Shang and Zhou Dynasties of China

1. Please read the passage and answer the questions that follow:

A family that rules a country for a long period of time is called a dynasty. There were many dynasties in Chinese history. The first dynasty of China was the Shang dynasty. Most people in Shang China were farmers. Chinese civilization began in the Yellow River Valley (The Chinese call this river the Huang He River.) Chinese craftsmen or artisans made beautiful jewelry out of wood, ivory, and jade. Artisans also used bronze. The Chinese developed writing during the Shang dynasty. There are over 3,000 characters in Chinese writing. The Shang dynasty lasted over 500 years (1766 B.C.-1050 B.C.).

The next dynasty of China was the Zhou dynasty. It lasted from 1027 B.C. – 221 B.C. The Zhou conquered the Shang. Since most ancient Chinese believed that their ruler was chosen by the gods in Heaven, and that Heaven could overthrow a bad ruler, the Chinese believed that the Zhou were chosen to rule. They believed that the Zhou had the Mandate of Heaven or the right to rule. The Zhou dynasty lasted a very long time but towards the end of the Zhou dynasty, there was a great deal of fighting in China. During this time of fighting, two important Chinese philosophies developed: Confucianism and Daoism. Confucianism was founded by Confucius. He believed that it was important to preserve the social order. Therefore, people had to do what they were supposed to do. Daoism was founded by Lao-zi. He believed that people should live in harmony, respect nature, and act according to their true natures.

Questions:

A- List three important facts about the Shang dynasty:

B- List three important facts about the Zhou dynasty:

C- Define the following terms: Dynasty and Mandate of Heaven

2. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow:

Confucius was a philosopher in ancient China around 500 BC. His main idea was that people could achieve peace by doing their duty, and cooperating with society. If people rebelled, and everyone tried to do his or her own thing, then the world would be full of fighting and unhappiness. So people should obey the law, and do what the emperor and government officials told them to do. Also, people should do their duty to their parents and take good care of their children, and people should do their duty to their ancestors and to the gods. At the same time, the government should do its duty to the people, and not abuse them or ask too much of them. The emperor should be cooperative and helpful to the people, just as the people were helpful and cooperative to him.

Because Confucius wanted to make government officials behave better, the Chinese government did not like him while he was alive. But after Confucius died, later emperors of China did use many of his ideas. Of course they mainly liked the idea that people should obey the government, and they weren't so interested in the idea that the government should help the people!

Here's an example of a story people told about Confucius: Zi Lu, they say, asked Confucius, "When we hear a good idea, should we start to do it right away?" Confucius told him no. "First, you should always ask someone with more experience." Later on, Ran You asked Confucius the same question. But this time Confucius said, "Yes, of course you should do it right away." There was another student who had heard both of these conversations and was very confused. He asked Confucius why he had answered the same question in two different ways. Ran You has a hard time making a decision," Confucius said. "So I encouraged him to be bolder. Zi Lu sometimes decides things too quickly. So I reminded him to be careful. Naturally different people should get different answers. "

Questions:

A- Explain the philosophy or way of thinking of Confucius.

B- Do you agree or disagree with Confucius? Explain your answer.

3. Answer the following questions:

A. Which belief is most closely associated with the philosophy of Confucianism?

- (1) nirvana
- (2) reincarnation
- (3) prayer
- (4) filial piety (sons obey fathers)

B. One similarity between the ancient civilizations in Egypt and in China is that they developed

- (1) nomadic lifestyles
- (2) monotheistic belief systems
- (3) democratic governments
- (4) written forms of communication

C. The exchange of silks and spices and the spread of Buddhism along the Silk Roads are examples of

- (1) cultural diffusion
- (2) self-sufficiency
- (3) ethnocentrism
- (4) desertification

D. The technology of papermaking traveled from China to Baghdad along the

- (1) Saharan caravan trails
- (2) Trans-Siberian Railway
- (3) Silk Roads
- (4) Suez Canal

E. Which civilization first developed a civil service system, invented gunpowder, and manufactured porcelain?

- (1) Aztec
- (2) Chinese
- (3) Japanese
- (4) Roman

G. One way in which the Huang He, the Indus, and the Nile civilizations were similar is that they each

- (1) flourished by trading salt and gold
- (2) suffered repeated invasions
- (3) developed monotheistic religions
- (4) originated in river valleys

4. Matching:

Mandate of Heaven	A. It is a ruling family. For many years, the Chinese were governed by ruling families.
Shang	B. It is a geographic feature. It surrounded China and isolated China in the past.
Dynasty	C. It is a Chinese philosophy. It seeks to maintain the social order. The subject must obey the emperor.
Great Wall of China	D. It is an important Chinese river. It was the birthplace of civilization in China.
Silk Road	E. It is a Chinese philosophy. It encourages people to respect nature, live in harmony, and be themselves.
Huang He	F. It was the first dynasty of China. Most people were farmers. Artisans worked in ivory and jade.
Confucianism	G. It is the Chinese belief that the gods chose the emperor but can also remove the emperor.
Daoism	H. It conquered the Shang. Confucianism and Daoism developed.
Mountain	I. It was built to protect China from nomadic invaders.
Zhou	J. It was a famous trading route that connected China to the Middle East and Europe.

5. Do you prefer the philosophy of Confucianism or Daoism? Explain your answer.
