



Ancient China Vocabulary

Key Terms:

Loess: Fertile yellow soil

Dikes: Earthen walls built along a river to protect from floods

Bureaucracy: Government organized into different levels and tasks

Animism: Belief that spirits inhabit everything

Oracle Bones: Cattle bones or tortoise shells on which Chinese priests would write questions and then interpret answers from the cracks that formed when the bones are heated

Dialects: Variations of a language

Calligraphy: Chinese art of writing

Autocracy: Government in which the ruler holds absolute power

Civil Service System: Centralized system that runs the day-to-day business of government

Leveling: Policy in which government uses price controls to balance the economic effects of surpluses or shortages

Great Wall of China: Wall built and expanded upon by early rulers of China to protect from invasion

Silk Road: Trade route stretching from China to the Mediterranean

Yin: Force that is female, dark and passive

Yang: Force that is male, bright and active

Analects: Collection of the ideas and teachings of Confucius

Dao De Jing: Compilation of Laozi's teachings on Daoism

Legalism: School of Chinese philosophy concerned with politics

Genealogy: Record of a family history

Acupuncture: Chinese medical practice of inserting needles into certain areas of the body

Five Classics: Texts used to train scholars and civil servants in ancient China

Important People:

Xia: Line of kings ruling over a late Neolithic people in the Huang He River region of China starting in about 2000 BC

Shang: Invaders of the Huang He River valley who came to power sometime between 1750 and 1500 BC and established the first dynasty of China

Zhou: People who overthrew the Shang Dynasty of China in 1122 BC

Qin: Dynasty that came to power in China in 221 BC under which the first true empire of China was created

Han: Dynasty of rulers that ruled a centralized and growing empire in China

Cheng: Founder of the Qin Dynasty

Liu Bang: A commoner who became a Qin general and founded the Han Dynasty

Liu Ch'e: The longest ruling Han emperor who ruled from 140 BC to 87 BC

Confucius: Founder of Confucianism

Laozi: Founder of Daoism