

China Vocabulary

1. Geography: Mountains protected and isolated China in the past. The Yellow River or Huang He River was a birthplace of early civilization in China.
2. There were many Chinese dynasties (ruling families). Important dynasties are the Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han, Sui, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing.
3. The Mandate of Heaven was the Chinese belief that the emperor received the right to rule from the gods but could lose the right to rule if corrupt or incompetent.
4. The Mandate of Heaven led to the dynastic cycle as an old dynasty fell and a new dynasty claimed the Mandate of Heaven or right to rule.
5. Confucianism (c. 500 B.C.E.) was an important Chinese philosophy. It stated that order was important. Therefore, inferiors had to obey superiors and superiors had to set a good example. The Five Relationships were emperor and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. Children had to respect parents and ancestors (filial piety).
6. Legalism was a Chinese philosophy that was based on the belief that people were selfish and only harsh punishments would ensure proper behavior. During the Qin dynasty, the emperor (Shih Huang-ti) used Legalism. Although the Qin Dynasty (221 B.C.E. – 206 B.C.E.) only lasted 15 years, it unified China with a uniform system of writing and a uniform system of weights and measures. The Qin dynasty also started construction on the Great Wall of China. The Wall was created to prevent invasions. The Wall was not completed until the Ming Dynasty.
7. Confucianism was eventually adopted as the philosophy of many dynasties. The examination system was created during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. – 220 C.E. /A.D.). The Han Dynasty is frequently compared to the Roman Empire because it encouraged trade (Silk Roads) and established principles that affected China for many years. In the examination system, man had to pass a rigorous examination to work in government. Confucius encouraged education for men.
8. Daoism was a Chinese philosophy that stressed the importance of nature and living naturally. The Yin-Yang is an important Daoist symbol.
9. Buddhism entered China through cultural diffusion.
10. The Chinese considered China the Middle Kingdom. This ethnocentric view meant that China was the “central kingdom” – China was superior.
11. The Silk Road was an important trade route that connected China to the Middle East and ultimately, the Mediterranean Sea. Cultural diffusion occurred.
12. A golden age occurred during the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties. A golden age is a time of prosperity and great achievements.
13. Chinese inventions include paper, the compass, gunpowder, and printing.
14. The Mongols conquered China and established the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Kublai Khan was an important emperor of the Yuan dynasty. Marco Polo visited China during the Yuan dynasty and met Kublai Khan. Writings about his travels increased European interest in China.
15. Admiral Zheng He (1371-1433) was a Chinese explorer during the Ming dynasty. His ships traveled throughout the Indian Ocean and even reached the east coast of Africa. A Chinese emperor eventually ordered the expeditions stopped because he saw no value in the expeditions.
16. A Ming emperor ended Zheng He’s voyages as China became increasingly isolationist.
17. The Qing dynasty (1644-1911) was the last Chinese dynasty. The rulers of the Qing dynasty were Manchurians. The Manchus had invaded China and claimed the Mandate of Heaven.
18. The British defeated the Chinese in the Opium Wars (1839-1860). The British sold opium, an addictive drug to China. Chinese officials tried to end the trade. War ensued and Britain won. European powers gained spheres of influence in China. The British even received Hong Kong but Hong Kong was eventually returned to China in 1997.
19. The Boxer Rebellion (1900) was an attempt to remove foreigners from China. The Boxer Rebellion failed but the desire for a China free of foreign control increased.
20. In 1911, China became a republic. Dr. Sun Yat-sen (Sun Yixian) was the leader of the Kuomintang, the Nationalist Party.

21. The Japanese invaded China in the 1930s. Japanese soldiers committed many atrocities in China, especially during the Rape of Nanjing (1937). The Japanese wanted China's natural resources. The Japanese invaded Manchuria for its resources.
22. Mao Zedong was the leader of the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese Communist Party defeated the Nationalists under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi). China became a communist nation in 1949. Mao Zedong had the support of the peasants and used guerrilla warfare. Mao granted legal equality to men and women.
23. Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward (1957) was a five-year plan to industrialize China and collectivize agriculture. It failed and a famine ensued.
24. After the failure of the Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong began the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution (began 1966), Mao punished his enemies and those harboring anti-communist sentiments. The Red Guards were students who punished anyone suspected of harboring anti-communist sentiments.
25. The Communists adopted the One-Child policy to reduce China's population.
26. After the death of Mao Zedong (1976), Deng Xiaoping became the leader of communist China. Deng Xiaoping introduced elements of the free market to China to increase productivity. In Deng Xiaoping's Four Modernizations, the Chinese economy moved towards increased capitalism.
27. However, Deng Xiaoping did not allow freedom of speech or freedom of the press. When pro-democracy students gathered in Tiananmen Square (1989), Deng ordered the army to stop the protests.
28. Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997. The British had taken Hong Kong during the Opium Wars.
29. The Three Gorges Dam was built in China to control flooding.