General World Cultures

Chapter 26- China

**seismograph**- a device for measuring earthquakes

**classless society**- a society in which no group of people has more wealth, power, or status than any other

**class struggle**- the struggle between the upper class and the lower class

**invest**- to spend money for something, such as business, that may return a profit

**jade**- a hard stone that is usually green

**The Land and the People**

\* China is an East Asian country that has the world’s largest population- about 1.2 billion people. Roughly one out of five people (20%) are Chinese. Yet in land size, China ranks only third. Most of its people live in the eastern third of the country, where low plains, gentle hills, and broad river valleys offer good farmland. The rest of the country is filled with deserts and mountains, which can hardly be farmed at all. The Himalayas- the world’s tallest mountains- loom in the southwest. The Gobi, a desert, covers much of northern China.

\* China has two great rivers, the Huang He and the Chang Jiang. These rivers have been used for both transportation and irrigation since ancient times. The Huang he is known to Westerners as the Yellow River. The Chang Jiang, known to Westerners as the Yangtze, is the world’s third longest river.

\* The river floods often. It brings so much **silt** down from the mountains. Silt is fine clay, sand, or other materials deposited as sediment in a channel or harbor.

\* Thus, the riverbed keeps rising, which pushes the water level higher. The Chinese have built dikes to contain the river. Many times, floods ruin crops and caused famines in China. In the 1930s, four million people died of hunger after such floods.

\* The heartland of China is divided into three main areas: North China, South China, and the Sichuan Basin.

\* North China is a center of political power. It has China’s richest soil, but the climate is cold and dry. South China has long been the source of China’s economic power. It has less fertile soil, but the climate is mild and humid. Rice, tea, cotton, and citrus fruits grow well there. The Sichuan Basin lies in the southwest. It has good farmland and it also has valuable minerals.

\* Beijing, the main city in North China, is the nation’s capital. Shanghai, one of the world’s biggest cities, is in South China.

\* About 94% of China’s people are from an ethnic group called Han Chinese (from the Han dynasty). Their writing is in characters not letter. They may be pronounced differently but have the same meaning.

**Treasures From the Past**

\* China was already great and old in the days of ancient Greece. Yet when Greek culture faded, China’s kept growing. Dynasties rose and fell, but each one built on what had come before. Modern China thus inherits a long and brilliant legacy.

\* The Chinese knew how to cast bronze and iron 3,000 years ago. By then, they had already invented silk cloth, crossbows, and bendable metal armor.. Later, during the Han dynasty, they built labor-saving devices such as the wheelbarrow.

\* The invented windmills, sundials, water-powered hammers, and mechanical clocks. A harness invented by the Chinese allowed a horse to pull a heavy load without choking. The Chinese stirrup made horseback riding easier.

\* The Golden Age of China came during the Tan and Song dynasties. In this era, which lasted roughly from A.D. 600 to 1200, the Chinese invented gunpowder, printing, and the compass. Earlier, they had invented paper and the first **seismograph**. The West learned of these inventions later, after the Mongols had opened up world trade.

\* The ancient Chinese built some of history’s most dramatic structures, such as the Great Wall. It was created 2300 years ago. Contrary to myth, you cannot see the Great Wall of China from space without the aid of a telescope or some other device.

The emperor built the wall to keep out the warring nomads of Central Asia.

\* Another great structure is the Grand Canal, built in the 7th century. It is the world’s longest canal- about 1,000 miles. It connects the Chang River to the cities of the north. It did much to improve trade and travel in China. Today, after 1,300 years, most of it is still in use.

**The Teachings of Confucius**

\* Few figures have influenced China as much as Confucius. The great teacher and philosopher was born about 2500 years ago. Confucius developed a new moral code. His students wrote down his sayings in a collection called the Analects.

Here is a site with some of his saying. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/c/confucius.html>

You will interpret some of these with the help of your teacher. Then you will try some on your own.

\* Confucius put the family at the center of life. He saw five key relationships in society as a whole. One key relationship was that between a ruler and his subjects. Another relationship is between a father and his son. Yet another relationship is between and elder (older) brother and a younger brother. The other two key relationships were between a husband and his wife, and between two friends.

\* In each relationship, Confucius said, one side is higher than the other. What do you think this means? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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That means one side should be more respectful to the other. For example, the son must honor, obey, and respect his father. The father will protect and teach his son.

\* Confucius though education, not birth, made a person noble. In the Han dynasty, the teachings of Confucius became the basis of the Chinese government. Scholars became the ruling class in China.

\* Confucius and his ideas still are part of Chinese society. Family is still important, as well as respect for elders. The Chinese believe that people can improve themselves through effort and study. Communism has lessened the importance of Confucius to modern China.

**Communism Comes to China**

\* In 1911, a revolution overthrew the Chinese emperor. In the years that followed, two parties competed for power. One group favored capitalism, the other Communism.

\* In 1934, Chiang Kai-shek tried to eliminate the Communist army. However, the Communists led what became known as their famous **Long March**. About 100,000 people- mostly teenagers- started on this 6,000-mile walk to safety. More than 80,000 of them died along the way. Yet the Long March was a success, because the Communists spread their ideas as they marched. After the Long March, they began winning Chinese peasants over to their side.

\* In 1949, Mao and his army entered Beijing, the capital of China. Mao and his followers set up the People’s Republic of China as a new Communist nation. Mao had three main goals:

1.) end hunger and poverty in China

2.) build a self-sufficient economy

3.) create a **classless society**

Mao thought crime and violence came out of **class struggle**. He felt the struggle was between those who had more and those who had less. If there were no classes, there could be no class struggles. Do you agree with this opinion here in America?

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Mao wanted a society in which everyone was equal.

\* The Communists did improve the Chinese economy. The built dams on the Huang He that brought flooding under control. Famine was no longer a common problem in China. China has no extreme poverty and no homeless people.

\* The Communists could not end the class struggle completely. In 1965, Mao Zedong said that the Communists themselves had become a new upper class. He called on people to overthrow Communists who had become selfish and greedy. Thus began China’s Cultural Revolution. Millions of educated people lost their jobs. many people were jailed, and some were even killed. The economy was ruined.

\* After Mao’s death in 1975, Deng Xiaoping took charge. He did not care about a classless society. He just wanted the economy to work. He invited foreign countries to **invest** money in China. Chinese people were allowed to start small businesses and work for their profit.

**China Today**

\* Today, most of the farms in China are worked by single families. These families lease land from the government. The families have to grow and sell a certain amount of food to the government at a fixed price. If they can raise more food, they are free to sell the extra food to anyone else for whatever price they can get.

Does this system seem fair to you? Does this sound like something that we learned about that occurred after the Civil War? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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This is called the Responsibility System. Under this system, China grows more than enough food for its people.

\* The leaders of China also give factory managers freedom to make their own decisions now. This, too, has helped the economy run more smoothly. China’s industries are growing about 7% every year. This is about six times as fast as industries are growing in the United States.

\* With the breakup of the Soviet Union, China became the only major Communist country. In 1993, Jiang Zemin became president. Under his control China’s economy has kept growing. Despite some protests against China’s human rights policies, the U.S. opened trade with China in 2000.

**Medicine in China**

\* China has a system of traditional medicine very different from that of the West. To the best of your ability, describe our system of medicine in the United States. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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This system is based on a belief in qi, a life energy. Chinese doctors say that qi is made up of two opposite forces: yin and yang. When yin and yang are in balance, qi flows freely through a person’s body. The person is healthy. When the forces are out of balance, qi slows down. The person gets ill.

\* Chinese healers restore the balance with herbal medicines. Acupuncture is also widely used in China. With acupuncture, needles are pushed into certain parts of the body to relieve pain and treat illness.

\* In China, the Communist government built many hospitals and health-care centers where both Western and traditional Chinese medicines are used. To care for its vast rural population, the government has trained “barefoot doctors.” These health-care workers treat minor illnesses and give physicians time to deal with more serious medical problems.

**The One-Child Family**

\* The Chinese people have long valued large families. That is one reason why the country has more than a billion people. The government knows that it must control population growth. Since the 1970s, therefore, China has encouraged the country’s system of one-child families. The government offers a reward to families that agree to have only one child. Families that have more than one child have to pay heavy fines. This program has cut China’s birth rate in half.

\* Unfortunately, the Communists have not been able to change the fact that most Chinese parents prefer to have boys. Traditionally, only boys carry on the family line. If a one-child family has a girl, the family line ends. Sometimes, the government makes exceptions to the one-child rule. If the first child is a girl, a family may be allowed to have another child.

**Chinese Arts**

\* Chinese civilization has produced many forms of art. Bronze pottery and sculptures were cast by Chinese artists more than 3,000 years ago. Chinese artists also developed pottery to a high art. Between the 900s and 1200s, they perfected porcelain, an especially fine, thin type of baked clay pottery. In the West, fine pottery has come to be known simply as China.

\* Chinese sculptors often work in **jade**. Even today, jade carving is a fine craft in China. The Chinese people see Calligraphy as the finest of the arts.

\* Under Communism, such traditional Chinese arts have suffered. The Chinese Communists have demanded that art express political ideas. Modern Chinese artists create posters showing workers as heroes. They use bold colors and a realistic style.

\* Dance companies perform ballets based on the theme of class struggle and revolution.

**Taiwan**

\* Known as the “other China”, moved towards democracy. It is highly urban and industrial. It makes CD player, cars, etc. Its middle class is growing. It has a well-equipped army. Though small in size, it is one of Asia’s most powerful countries.

**Hong Kong**

\* Contrary to popular belief, Hong Kong is not related in any way to King Kong. It is a city on the southern coast of China. It is one of the world’s busiest capital centers. For years, Hong Kong was a British colony. The British only leased the land. In 1997, the lease ran out. The People’s Republic of China took over Hong Kong.

\* The change in government has weakened Hong Kong’s economy. Even the Chinese government agreed to make no changes in Hong Kong for 50 years. Many wealthy Chinese business people have left Hong Kong for places like Canada and the United States.