TOPIC 3b
Early Imperial China

3b.1 Overview

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LEARNING SEQUENCE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this topic students will investigate:

- The physical features of the ancient society and how they influenced the civilisation that developed there 3b.3
- Roles of key groups in the ancient society in this period (such as kings, emperors, priests, merchants, craftsmen, scholars, peasants, women), including the influence of law and religion 3b.4–3b.8
- The significant beliefs, values and practices of the ancient society, with a particular emphasis on at least one of the following areas: warfare, or death and funerary customs 3b.5, 3b.6, 3b.8, 3b.9, 3b.10
- Contacts and conflicts within and/or with other societies, resulting in developments such as the expansion of trade, the rise of empires and the spread of philosophies and beliefs 3b.2, 3b.10, 3b.11
- The role of a significant individual in the ancient Asian world, for example Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, Confucius or Qin Shi Huang Di 3b.4, 3b.6

3b.1.1 Introduction

Two hundred years ago, China was largely cut off from the rest of the world. French general Napoleon Bonaparte supposedly pointed to China on a map and said, ‘There, is a sleeping giant. Let him sleep! If he awakes, he will shake the world.’

Today, with a population of over 1.3 billion, significant technological advances and industrial growth, and one of the world’s most rapidly expanding economies, China seems to be on the path to becoming the global superpower of the twenty-first century.

This chapter explores some of the sources that have helped us to know about China’s long and rich history and its early development from a group of separate, warring states to a powerful and unified empire whose cities, government, scientific knowledge and achievements were highly advanced in their time.
3b.2 Chronology

3b.2.1 Pre-Imperial China

People first came to live in China over 8000 years ago. Around 6500 years ago, they began to create villages in fertile farming lands along the Huang and Yangtze rivers. They lived in small communities, separated by mountains and rivers, and often in different climatic zones. In the centuries that followed, people from various ethnic groups formed a series of separate kingdoms and created different societies in China’s many areas and environments.

Over a period of about 1300 years, local rulers gained control of larger areas of land. Chinese records indicate that three ruling families — the Xia, the Shang and the Zhou — became the first of the many dynasties to rule in China. Dynasties are families whose members control government over several generations. While none of these ruled all of China’s vast territory, the Shang and the Zhou established long-lasting control over a large area of it.
c.2070–1650 BCE: the Xia
According to legend, the Xia king Yu the Great impressed people by building dams and canals to control the floodwaters of the Huang River. Yu supposedly named his son the next ruler, and so began over 400 years of rule by the Xia dynasty.

Archaeological evidence of a culture at Erlitou in Henan Province and beyond suggests that the Xia (pronounced shar) may have lived in central and western Henan Province. Historians are not sure if they existed in both reality and legend. They would like to find written sources to link the Erlitou culture to the Xia dynasty.

c.1650–1050 BCE: the Shang
The Shang people left written records on oracle bones, animal bones used in ceremonies when people wanted to gain advice from the gods. They used a script similar to that of modern Chinese. Oracle bones contain the earliest record of China’s history and provide information on farming, hunting, fishing, religious customs and warfare. This shows that the Shang were literate and that the Chinese language has existed since the second millennium BCE.

The Shang people also produced huge quantities of bronze objects including weaponry and vessels, and beautiful pottery and jade items. The 1976 discovery of the 3000-year-old tomb of Lady Fu Hao, with its bronze and jade treasures still intact, provided significant evidence of this.

The Shang rulers:
• created efficient organisation in each of their seven cities
• taxed people heavily to pay for the construction of grand palaces
• gave land to local leaders who promised to provide them with armies in time of war, and animals, grain and farm labour throughout the year. This was an early form of feudalism.

The Shang used soldiers to enforce their will. Punishments for disobedience included castration (removing a man’s testicles), other forms of mutilation, slavery or death. The dynasty ended when people revolted against the harsh rule of the last Shang king, Zhou Xin.

c.1050–221 BCE: the Zhou
The Zhou (pronounced jo) people came from the Wei valley. They claimed that the mandate of heaven had passed from the Shang to the Zhou leader Wu Wang.

The Zhou strengthened feudalism by allowing nobles to control and use much of the king’s land in return for paying taxes and providing soldiers. The nobles then divided the land among the peasants, who could farm it in return for working on the nobles’ property and serving as soldiers if needed.
c.475–221 BCE: the Warring States

During the second half of the Zhou dynasty, the nobles tried to gain power for themselves. China experienced the chaos and confusion of the Warring States period. At the beginning of this period, about 150 states were fighting one another. By the end of the Warring States period, only seven large states remained — Chu, Han, Qi, Qin, Wei, Yan and Zhao. Each had its own king and army. The leader of the state of Qin (china) — which was known for its ruthless fighting techniques and for beheading its enemies — emerged as the strongest. In 221 BCE, the Qin leader Ying Zheng finally overthrew the Zhou dynasty.

This 39-year-old Qin leader renamed himself Qin Shi Huangdi (china shur hwung-dee), meaning ‘supreme emperor of the first generation’. He was China’s first emperor and began the period called Imperial China. Among periods of disunity, this system of imperial rule lasted from 221 BCE to 1911 CE.

3b.2.2 Early Imperial China

c.221–206 BCE: the Qin

Qin Shi Huangdi established one central government to control people who had fought one another for centuries. He forced the main families who had opposed him to live in his capital, Xianyang (pronounced she-an yang). His officials went around the country collecting weapons, which they melted down.

Qin Shi Huangdi increased his control over China through the way he organised his government (see section 3b.4) and also through building projects, which included joining existing walls to form the Great Wall of China (see SOURCE 3).

SOURCE 3 A twenty-first-century artist’s impression of the building features of the Great Wall of China and its use for defence

RETOFILE

Ancient historian Sima Qian recorded the first emperor’s name as Qin Shi Huangdi and as Qin Shi Huang. The longer version is closer to the emperor’s intention of joining the words huang (‘imperial’) and di (‘ruler’) to create the word huangdi for ‘emperor’.
By the time of his death, Qin Shi Huangdi’s power had come under threat from people both within and outside his court. High taxes and food shortages caused rebellion against the two emperors who followed. After eight years of war, a peasant named Liu Pang (pronounced le-you pang) defeated the armies of Qin Shi Huangdi’s successors. Using the name Gaozu, he became founder of the Han dynasty.

**c. 206 BCE – c.220 CE: the Han**

Gaozu (c.250–195 BCE) promised to rule China differently. He gained support by promising to get rid of many of the unpopular aspects of Qin rule. He disbanded his armies and excused men with young families from military service. He also reduced taxes, made laws easier to understand and encouraged ex-soldiers to become farmers. He refused gifts and bribes and rewarded those who served him well.

At the same time, he continued the Qin system of legalism (see section 3b.4) in a more relaxed form.

**Han Wudi (c.157–87 BCE)**

Han Wudi, the seventh Han emperor, ruled China for 54 years. He reformed its government and its empire so that it became even larger than that of the Roman Empire in the west.

Han Wudi based his administration on the teachings of the philosopher Confucius (see section 3b.6). He made sure that the officials in charge of day-to-day decision making were men chosen for their ability and not for their family’s importance and connections. He welcomed the advice of China’s scholars, especially their suggestion of establishing a university.

Han Wudi’s determination to expand China’s territory ultimately placed a huge tax burden on his people. He:

- taxed them by forcing men (including prisoners) to come and fight with his army
- taxed other important resources such as salt, which was essential to the peasants’ diet, and iron, which was the main material used to make people’s work tools
- used spies to report on anyone who tried to avoid paying taxes.

These measures, as well as his harsh treatment of anyone who opposed him, caused people to turn against Han Wudi. The power of the Han dynasty began to weaken.

**The Red Eyebrows**

About halfway through the rule of the Han dynasty, Wang Mang, a government official, took power briefly between 9 and 23 CE. He promised to take land from the wealthy and give it to the peasants. However, he failed to gain support from other government officials, who came from the wealthy landowning families that Wang Mang wanted to destroy.

China’s peasants blamed him for the famine that hit China at this time. They created an army called the Red Eyebrows that fought and eventually killed Wang Mang.

Historians use this break in Han rule to divide it into the periods of Early (or Western) Han rule and of Later (or Eastern) Han rule, when the Han moved their capital to the eastern city of Luoyang.

**Eunuchs and Yellow Turbans: the fall of the Han**

The Han dynasty regained power, although poor decisions weakened its rule. Family members often took on important roles for which they lacked the skills to carry out effectively. Eunuchs (officials who had been castrated) increased their influence by organising more of the tasks that Han family members failed to perform. War between the eunuchs and palace officials during the years 168–170 CE was further evidence of the weakness of the Han.

Problems among the peasantry weakened the government even further. Population growth led to a shortage of farmland. Many peasants could not afford to buy food or pay taxes. The rebellion (184–204 CE) of a group known as the Yellow Turbans again showed that the Han dynasty could not maintain its control over China.

The Han dynasty finally lost power in 220 CE after a rebellion led by army leaders. For nearly 400 years after that, China was divided under the rule of families in different regions. In 589 CE, the Sui dynasty re-established China’s unified empire.
3b.2 Activities

To answer questions online and to receive immediate feedback and sample responses for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au. Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

Check knowledge and understanding
1. Name the first three of China’s dynasties.
2. Explain the terms feudalism and mandate of heaven.
3. List the results of the Warring States period.
4. What did Qin Shi Huangdi and Gaozu have in common?
5. Identify the factors that affected rulers’ abilities to keep power in early Imperial China.

Develop source skills
6. Use SOURCE 4 to identify:
   (a) the names and dates of the dynasties that ruled China from c.2070 BCE to c.220 CE
   (b) the name for the period of instability that came at the end of the Zhou dynasty
   (c) the names of two periods of instability that occurred during the Han dynasty.

An ongoing task
7. As you learn about early Imperial China, aim to get a clear idea of:
   (a) its important events and people
   (b) the order in which they appeared
   (c) the time period to which they belonged
   (d) the motives and actions of particular individuals and groups and the consequences of these.

Check your knowledge of this at the end of the chapter.

3b.3 Physical features

3b.3.1 Geography of China

China is a huge country, far bigger than Australia and more than half the size of Europe. It stretches over 3000 kilometres across east Asia:
- from the mountainous areas of Tibet and the Himalayas in the west
- through forests and deserts in central China
- to the 1800-kilometre tropical coastline of the Pacific Ocean in the east.

China is made up of many different climates, terrains and soils, and its rivers and mountains are key features of China’s geography. China’s geography and climate divide it into two main areas (see SOURCE 1):
1. an eastern section, comprising about one-third of its land area, that is China’s historic and farming heartland
2. the remaining two-thirds, comprising China’s land to the north and west, where both the climate and the landforms make the area unsuitable for farming.

China’s civilisation developed in the river valleys of the eastern section:
- firstly the Huang River (or Huang He) and then
- the Yangtze River (or Chang Jiang)
- the Xi River and
- the Zhu Jiang Delta.
These rivers provided water supplies and transport routes, and also caused significant floods. In its journey across China, the Huang collected loess in its riverbed. When the river flooded, this loess enriched the soils along the Huang’s banks and created rich farmland along the course of the river in the north China plain. Early farming activities were grain production in the areas adjoining the Huang in the north, and rice production in the areas adjoining the Yangtze in the south.

In China’s south-west, the upper levels of the Tibetan plateau averaged 4000 metres in height. Here, the land was too cold and inaccessible for farming. In the north and west, the large areas of the Gobi and Taklamakan deserts meant that the land there was too hot and dry.

**SOURCE 1** Map showing China’s main geographical features, with inset map showing China’s location within Asia

3b.3.2 Natural boundaries

The landforms and climate of early Imperial China provided many natural boundaries that largely cut it off from contact with other cultures. Its core area fell within the boundaries of the 1000-metre-high mountain ranges to the west, the Great Wall to the north (see section 3b.2) and the Pacific Ocean to the east.

The mountains and deserts of the west separated the culture that grew up in the east from the influences of other civilisations in Asia and Europe.

**The Middle Kingdom**

As a result of their isolation, the Chinese developed a distinctive civilisation, which for centuries did not come into contact with the influence of other cultures. People came to think of the area where they lived as the **Middle Kingdom**, the place that is ‘the centre of civilisation’. This idea is expressed in the word
SOURCE 2 Photos showing some of China’s main geographical features today. (a) The Yangtze River; (b) the Gobi Desert; (c) the Himalayan mountains.

 Zhōngguó, the Mandarin name for China (see SOURCE 3). They thought that the people beyond this world were uncivilised.

When the trade routes of the Silk Road (see section 3b.10) began to grow under the Han dynasty, these became the means of encouraging the exchange of ideas between China and the cultures of India, Egypt, Persia, Arabia and Rome. People learned that there were other civilisations outside China.

SOURCE 3 The traditional characters that make up Zhōngguó, the Mandarin name for China. The first character represents middle and the second character represents kingdom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>中</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Zhong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>国</td>
<td>Kingdom</td>
<td>Guo</td>
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3b.4 Qin Shi Huangdi’s government

3b.4.1 China’s first emperor

Qin Shi Huangdi’s original name was Ying Zheng. He was 13 when he became King Zheng of the state of Qin, 23 when he began to play a role in national decision-making, and 39 when, after defeating six rival states, he united China under his rule. He kept his position as King of Qin despite the attempt of two of his advisers to overthrow him and two failed assassination plots against him.

Qin Shi Huangdi (259–210 BCE) unified China in name when he became its emperor in 221 BCE and established a central government, based in his capital Xianyang (pronounced she-an-yang), to rule the peoples of what had previously been the seven ‘warring states’. He made his rule more secure by making his enemy’s families live under his eye in Xianyang, and sending his officials out to destroy enemy weaponry.

SOURCE 1 An eighteenth-century artist’s image of China's first emperor, known as Qin Shi Huangdi
Qin Shi Huangdi introduced a number of other measures to improve the state of his empire and increase and secure his control over its vast land area. These included building projects, new forms of government control, and intolerance of any opposition.

**Building projects**

Qin Shi Huangdi’s most famous building projects were the Great Wall of China (see section 3b.2), to protect China from invasion from the north, and his tomb with its army of terracotta warriors (see section 3b.9). He also ordered the construction of five major roads and bridges to link Xianyang with the rest of the empire and make trade easier.

**Standardisation**

Qin Shi Huangdi strengthened his government’s authority by creating common standards for many aspects of everyday life. He:

- enforced a common coinage
- ordered all households to be registered for taxation
- placed households into groups, with each group responsible for the wrongdoing of any of its members
- introduced a single system of weights and measures
- introduced the ‘Small Seal’ script, which became the form of writing used by government officials and educated Chinese. This established the principle that a country needed a commonly accepted writing script.
- applied the same laws and punishments throughout the whole of China
- ordered that cart axles all be made to a standard width — a practical idea, because it meant that wheel ruts worn into the earth roads would be the same width throughout China.

**Government organisation**

Qin Shi Huangdi divided China into 36 areas and sent three officials to govern each area.

- One official organised control of the army.
- Another organised taxation, law and daily life.
- The third checked that all was going according to the emperor’s orders.

Qin Shi Huangdi rejected feudalism (see section 3b.2) in favour of government from the centre. He ruled through an ‘army’ of officials who were organised into ranks, each having different levels of power and seniority. The system made it possible for people to be promoted according to their ability. People could advance to higher ranks through a set system of rewards. For example, decapitating an enemy in battle could earn a soldier promotion to the next rank.

**Legalism limits opposition**

Qin Shi Huangdi’s government was based on legalism, a system that would not tolerate any opposition to his rule. He rewarded those who obeyed him and punished those who did not. Those who did not obey the emperor risked torture, hard labour and death.

Legalism was also a system of thought control. The emperor forbade people to talk about happy memories of life under other rulers and denied them the right to criticise the present.

**The burning of the books**

In 213 BCE, an educated man suggested that Qin Shi Huangdi introduce some of the ideas of earlier dynasties — thus implying that the ‘old ways’ were better. Qin Shi Huangdi ordered that the man and his supporters be executed. All of their books were burned, except those on farming, medicine, fortune-telling and the Qin dynasty and its achievements. Four hundred and sixty scholars tried to hide ancient court
records, histories and the works of philosophers like Confucius. Soldiers executed these scholars by burying them alive. Other scholars who survived learned books by heart to keep the knowledge for future generations.

People called this event ‘the burning of the books’. Scholars could not forgive this crime against learning. After Qin Shi Huangdi’s death, they preferred to record his cruelty rather than mention his achievements.

**SOURCE 2** An eighteenth-century painting illustrating the execution of scholars and the ‘burning of the books’

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<tr>
<td>Qin Shi Huangdi died while on a journey in search of an elixir that would enable him to live forever. His advisers tried to hide his death by attaching dead fish to the carriage to cover up the smell of his body on the journey back to Xianyang.</td>
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**3b.4.2 Skill builder: Identifying perspectives and interpretations**

Historians try to identify the perspective — attitudes, values and experiences — that shapes an author’s viewpoint. Often an author’s choice of words indicates a certain bias (prejudice for or against someone or something). Identifying the influences on an author’s view of a particular person or situation helps us judge the value of what he or she has to say.

Sima Qian (pronounced su-ma chen) (c.145–88 BCE) was a scholar and a supporter of the Confucian values of honesty and integrity. In **SOURCE 3** below, he writes during the time of the Han, who have overturned Qin Shi Huangdi’s policies. His emotive language conveys a negative view of the first emperor.

**SOURCE 3** A description of Qin Shi Huangdi from the historian Sima Qian’s work, *Shiji* (‘Records of the Historian’) which he wrote c.100 BCE

A supporter of Confucianism

Emotive language

... a waspish nose, eyes like slits, a chicken breast and a voice like a jackal. ... When in difficulties, he willingly humbles himself; when successful, he swallows men up without a scruple.


1. Why is the time at which Sima Qian is writing relevant to what he has to say?
2. What is Sima Qian’s opinion of Qin Shi Huangdi and, based on your knowledge, is there evidence to support it?
3b.5 Society, status and roles

3b.5.1 Social structure

During the time of the Zhou dynasty, China’s social structure developed around the idea of people belonging to one of the ‘four occupations’ (see SOURCE 1):

- the Shi — a ruling group of nobles, scholars and officials
- the Nong — peasant farmers
- the Gong — artisans and craftspeople
- the Shang — merchants and traders.

Officials held different status according to their rank within the government, and it was possible (although not easy) for people to move from one grouping to another within society.

The most respected group were the scholars, followed by the farmers, whose crops were essential to life. The Chinese generally looked down on merchants and thought that living from trade was a lowly occupation. There was also a slave population of about 60,000 (out of a total population of about 60 million). Slaves worked either for government officials or in farming or household work for individual owners.

While the Shi valued the peasants as food producers and criticised the merchants for their money-making and money-lending activities, it was the peasants who remained poor and the merchants who often achieved great wealth.

3b.5.2 The emperor

The emperor was the most important person in ancient Chinese society and he ruled over these four groups. His position gave him:

- the power to expect and enforce people’s obedience to his will
- the responsibility to protect the people and their livelihoods.

In return, the people expected him to behave in a manner that showed he was worthy of being their emperor.

SOURCE 1 Diagram showing key groups in ancient Chinese society and their status in the ‘pecking order’ of Chinese life. It is based on the writings of Ban Gu, a poet and historian from the first century CE.
3b.5.3 Peasants
About 90 per cent of early Imperial China’s 60 million people lived the hard life of peasants, working as farmers and living in small farming communities. For many, life was a constant struggle to retain the one or two hectares of land they owned and avoid going into debt (see section 3b.7).

3b.5.4 The other ten per cent
Among the other ten per cent of Chinese society were people who worked as scholars (people who are well educated and expert in a particular branch of learning), civil servants, skilled and unskilled labourers, craftspeople and merchants.

Civil servants
From about 900 BCE, China had a civil service to carry out the day-to-day work of government throughout the city. If they were taken on, young men gained access to a good income and high status working in local, provincial or national government. During the time of the Han dynasty, more than 135,000 men worked as civil servants in one of the levels of Chinese government. To begin with, they needed someone to recommend them for this work. This usually resulted in nobles recommending other nobles. From 124 BCE, would-be civil servants had to acquire a university education, specialising in the study of Confucius (see section 3b.6), and compete in a public examination which would decide their fate. Local officials decided who was allowed to compete and study was very time-consuming, so the opportunity was not open to everyone.

In 605 CE, Emperor Wang of the Sui dynasty introduced a system of public examinations that allowed young men from any class in Chinese society to compete for these positions.

Artisans and craftspeople
Artisans and craftspeople produced many of the goods that were essential to daily life. Their skills were handed down from one generation to another. Those who were successful might have been established businesses with other people working for them. The production of clay pottery was an important source of work in ancient China. Thousands of people took on difficult and poorly paid work digging for clay. Skilled artisans gained work making pottery for government and private workshops.

Excavations of Han tombs have revealed many examples of Chinese boxes, bowls, plates, shields and even coffins that have survived because of the lacquer coating (made from the sap of the lacquer tree) which has preserved them. Fragments of Han period textiles have also survived. Textiles and lacquerware provide evidence of the skills of those who made and decorated them.
Merchants
Merchants, despite being ranked at the bottom of Chinese society, were among its wealthiest members. They made their money through activities such as money-lending and the export of luxury goods, such as silk. Some dynasties refused them entry into the civil service.

3b.5.5 Women’s role
Confucius (see section 3b.6) taught that women were inferior to men. People put this into practice in everyday life. Families preferred male children and very poor families sometimes killed their baby daughters. A baby girl slept on the floor as a symbol of her inferiority.

When she married, a girl went to live with her husband’s parents. Society accepted the Confucian teaching that a man’s first duty and strongest relationship was with his parents.

Marriage did not often provide women with the loving companionship people might expect today. A married woman obeyed and cared for her parents-in-law without complaint. She gained status in their eyes when she produced a male child. Few girls had the opportunity to gain an education.

SOURCE 3 Photo showing examples of Western Han era lacquerware found in a tomb at Changsha, China, in 1972

3b.5 Activities
To answer questions online and to receive immediate feedback and sample responses for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au. Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

Check knowledge and understanding
1. Explain which group you would have liked to belong to in early Imperial China.
2. What forms of work did people do apart from farming?
3. Identify an advantage and a disadvantage of a merchant’s life.
4. How were women’s roles restricted in early Imperial China?

Develop source skills
5. In what ways could SOURCES 1, 2 and 3 be useful to a historian?

3b.6 Beliefs, values and practices
3b.6.1 Laozi and Daoism
Ancient Chinese religious and spiritual beliefs are found in Confucianism and in the religions Daoism and Buddhism. All three are still influential today.

Historians question whether Laozi actually existed. They know that the beliefs and ideas associated with him emerged during the troubled latter period of the Zhou dynasty.

According to legend, Laozi (‘old master’), was born c.604 BCE and died c.531 BCE. This would mean that he was born nearly 50 years before Confucius and died while Confucius was still a young man.

SOURCE 1 An extract from the Daodejing, a work from the sixth century BCE. Laozi was supposedly the author, and it contains the main ideas of Daoism.

The highest good is like water. Water is generous to all things and is without conflict. It does not compete. It dwells in the low places which people think are unimportant. Thus it comes near to the Dao … The Dao is like the rivers flowing into the sea.
People honour Laozi as the founder and teacher of Daoism (pronounced *dowism*) and the belief system known as ‘the Dao’ or ‘the way’. Daoism taught that if people lived simply and in harmony with nature and avoided ambition, wealth and possessions, then their world would be balanced. Daoism teaches the idea of *yin and yang*: the two forces that, when together, symbolise balance and harmony.

Daoists focused on living simply and practising silence, stillness and meditation. They believed that people who followed ‘the way’ could live forever and that these ‘immortals’ had special powers — for example, making themselves invisible and raising people from the dead.

**3b.6.2 Confucius**

Confucius (c.551 BCE–479 BCE) lived during the Zhou dynasty, when people were looking for ideas on how to live together more successfully. He was a teacher and *philosopher* — someone who studies beliefs and morals to gain wisdom and understanding. Confucius provided guidelines for this and, as a result, gained great and lasting influence. Following his death, his students recorded his teachings in the work known as the *Analects*.

Confucius travelled around China trying to convince others to follow his ideas. He taught that a worthy person would be honest, loyal, self-sacrificing, loving, well mannered and have good moral standards (see **SOURCE 4**). To him, evil in a person was the result of a poor upbringing. Education helped create worthy people and justice in society. Confucius also believed that government officials should be chosen because of their ability and honesty, not because of their wealth.

Confucius influenced the Chinese view of life more than anyone else. Even if people became Buddhists or Daoists, they generally remained Confucianists. In 134 BCE, Confucianism became the official belief system of the Chinese government. His ideas and attitudes provided the code of behaviour that guided Chinese society for more than 2000 years.

**Family life**

Confucianism taught that family members should be loyal to one another and respect and obey their elders. Grandparents, parents and children lived together in the same household and followed the Confucian rules of behaviour. The desires of the individual had little importance when compared with those of the family — especially its older members.

The oldest man was the official head of the family. The oldest woman controlled and organised the household. Parents chose marriage partners for their children and brought children up to be obedient to their wishes. A girl would move in with her husband’s family, who expected her to obey both her husband and her parents-in-law.
Confucius encouraged people to think of families as including the dead as well as the living. People offered sacrifices to their ancestors and hoped that their ancestors would protect them and provide them with good fortune.

**SOURCE 4** A list of some of the teachings of Confucius

- The family is the basis of society, and the ruler of a country should treat people as his children.
- If members of a family care for one another and if the young show respect for their elders, there will be good government, peace and harmony.
- Everyone has his/her own place in the world. It is a duty to respect those above you and not question your position in society.
- Everyone wants wealth and admiration, but if you can only get them through living the wrong way, you must give them up.
- Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you.
- Learning without thinking is a waste of effort. Thinking without learning is dangerous.

**3b.6.3 Buddha**

Buddhism’s name comes from the title *Buddha*, meaning ‘the enlightened one’, which people gave to its founder, Prince Siddhartha Gautama (c.563–480 BCE). Buddha gave up his life as a prince in India to search for enlightenment (wisdom and inner peace). He learned through studying with other teachers and through meditation. He then taught others and treated all people equally, regardless of their sex or position in society.

Buddhism teaches the ‘four noble truths’:
1. All existence is suffering.
2. Suffering is caused by desire.
3. Nirvana is the stage where people are beyond individual needs, desires or suffering.
4. People can achieve nirvana through ‘the eightfold path’, which reflects ethical behaviour, wisdom and mental discipline.

**SOURCE 5** Buddha image at the Jade Buddha temple in Shanghai, China
Buddhism teaches that people are born again (reincarnated) after they die and go on being reincarnated until they reach nirvana.

Buddhism spread to China via the Silk Road in the first century CE. It emerged as an important outside influence on Chinese culture, becoming the official religion in northern China during the fourth century CE. Today, there are about 300 million Buddhists worldwide.

### 3b.6 Activities

To answer questions online and to receive immediate feedback and sample responses for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au. Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

**Check knowledge and understanding**
1. Name the three spiritual influences on the ancient Chinese. List their similarities and differences.
2. What might someone mean if they said that you could be ‘a Confucian at work, a Daoist in retirement and a Buddhist on your deathbed’?

**Develop source skills**
1. According to SOURCE 1, what features of water make it similar to the Dao?
2. Describe the way the sculptor has portrayed Confucius in SOURCE 3.
3. What is your opinion of the code of behaviour outlined in SOURCE 4?
4. Describe the way the sculptor has portrayed Buddha in SOURCE 5.

### 3b.7 Farming life

#### 3b.7.1 A peasant’s life

A peasant’s life revolved around the cycle of the farming year — ploughing in springtime; caring for the crops during the summer months; harvesting in autumn; and repairing tools and farming equipment in the relatively quiet period of the winter months.

Under the Shang and Zhou dynasties, the peasants did not own their land. However, by the time of the Han dynasty, most peasants owned a small area of land and gave part of their crops to the government as tax.

Landless peasants had to work the land of a landowner, who might expect as much as 30 per cent of the rice crop as payment. In addition, the emperor often demanded a tax of another 20 per cent of the crop and a month’s labour each year on his land and building projects. The peasants’ survival therefore depended on the quality and quantity of the crop they produced. In addition to these hardships, peasants faced floods, earthquakes and famines.

#### 3b.7.2 Working the land

People did most farm work by hand, using tools made of wood, bone or horn. Few people could afford either iron ploughs or the oxen to pull them along. Men kept the rice fields under water by means of a trough containing a belt of wooden paddles. By treading the paddles with their feet to turn them, the men were able to lift the water from the river to the fields.

Humans also pulled carts that took goods to and from the market villages scattered around the countryside. Horses were in short supply and expensive to keep, so only the very wealthy or those on government business could afford to use them.

The typical farming household consisted of four to five people all actively involved in farm work. Often households would join together on dyke-building or irrigation projects.
The struggle to survive

During the first half of the Han dynasty’s rule there were 20 periods of drought, flood or famine. Peasants took drastic measures to cope with natural disasters and ensure the survival of their sons. Parents killed the babies they could no longer feed, sold their children into slavery and sometimes even resorted to cannibalism to ensure their own survival.

During this time of hardship, the government was worried about the smaller amounts of produce it was receiving in taxes. Therefore, instead of helping the peasants, the government often increased the percentage of the crop that peasants had to pay in tax.

During the winter ‘rest’ period, officials required all peasant males aged 23–36 to spend one month working for the government on defences, irrigation and flood control. At times, the emperor called up young men for compulsory military service. Rich landlords did not have to pay tax or work on these government projects.

Irrigation

Qin governor Li Bing began the Dujiangyan irrigation system in c.256 BCE, during the Warring States period. The system is still in use today and is now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Li Bing’s goal was to control the spring flooding of China’s Min River. To do this, he had workers construct an artificial levee — a build-up of land to help prevent flooding — that divided the river into two
channels, one for irrigation and one to control excess water. Work teams achieved this by redirecting part of the river’s flow through a mountain and out to the Chengdu Plain beyond. After an eight-year effort, they had created a twenty-metre wide channel through the mountain, solved the flood problem and provided water that successfully irrigated additional farmland.

**The ‘dragon backbone’ machine**

Peasants needed a good supply of water to achieve a successful crop. At first, people did this manually by filling buckets and transporting water to their crops. In c.100 CE, someone invented the ‘dragon-backbone machine’, a chain pump that took water from lower levels to higher, flooded terraces where rice was grown. Eventually, people used this irrigation machine throughout China.

To work the machine, two people had to stand on pedals and use their feet to keep turning a cogwheel that moved a kind of wooden conveyor belt called the ‘endless chain’. The conveyor belt ran behind them at a downwards angle to a stream or irrigation canal. As the workers turned the cogwheel backwards, they made the machine pump water uphill and into an irrigation ditch that peasants had dug higher up.

**Han attitudes**

The Han emperors came to accept the idea that it was their role to serve the needs of their people and, over time, became more reasonable in their demands. They realised that if they did not keep people happy enough to continue working on the land, then the whole country would suffer.

The Han emperors encouraged peasants to use improved farming techniques and iron tools, ploughs and gear wheels for turning machinery. These changes helped peasants increase the size of their harvest and therefore also create more tax income for the government.

**SOURCE 2**

An artist’s impression of peasants using the ‘dragon-backbone machine’, invented c.100 CE. It was used to transport water to the flooded terraces where they were growing rice. Notice the small roof above the workers to protect them from the sun.

3b.7 Activities

To answer questions online and to receive immediate feedback and sample responses for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au. Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

**Check knowledge and understanding**

1. Create a mind map showing the main characteristics of peasant life during the Han dynasty.

**Develop source skills**

2. Look at the pictures shown in SOURCES 1 and 2.
   (a) What impression of peasant life does each one create?
   (b) What impression does each create of how the peasants felt about their lives and the work they did?
   (c) Explain which of the two seems to be more realistic and why you think this.
   (d) What do you think were the purposes of each of the artists?
   (e) Explain how they could be useful to a historian investigating peasants’ working lives in ancient China.
3b.8 Everyday life

3b.8.1 Clothing and status

People judged someone’s position in society by the fabrics and accessories he or she wore. Laws limited the decoration and colour of clothing that people could wear.

The nobility had the legal right to wear silk and jewellery made of expensive materials such as brass, gold, jade and silver. Both men and women wore long robes with a wide belt or sash at the waist. Under their robes, women often wore trousers gathered into cuffs at the ankles. They wore shoes and boots made of silk and leather, and in winter they wore furs for extra warmth.

Colour and pattern were other indications of status and the type of work someone did. Only the emperor could wear yellow or a garment showing symbols of the emperor’s power, such as a five-clawed dragon or images of the moon and the constellations. Government officials could wear clothing embroidered with an image of a crane; generals could wear clothing embroidered with the image of a unicorn.

Peasants wore clothing made of fabric woven from plant fibres, such as hemp, nettles or grasses. Both men and women wore trousers and short, belted robes — a style well suited to manual labour. In winter, they wore multiple layers of clothing and animal skins for extra warmth.

3b.8.2 Food

The wealthy enjoyed banquets and would spare no expense to provide large quantities of unusual foods. Such dishes might include turtle, deer, dog, mutton, ox or pig; baked owl; breast of panther; slices of raw meat seasoned with ginger and topped with ant eggs; or snails preserved in vinegar. The hosts hired jugglers and musicians to entertain their guests, who were often criticised for drunken behaviour.

Peasants could not afford meat and lived on vegetables, millet, noodles and steamed buns. Many peasants hunted small animals and caught fish but sometimes even fish were taxed. In southern China, rice was the main food. To add flavour to their meals, people used a variety of herbs and spices and also sesame seeds, soy beans and chilli peppers.

3b.8.3 Architecture

Few buildings survive from early Imperial China. What we know about its architecture comes mainly from archaeological sites, tomb models and information in Chinese literature and painting.

The architecture of early Imperial China was based on three key ideas:
1. an emphasis on the horizontal, with buildings being long and low
2. curved roofs supported by columns, rather than walls, so that it looked as though they were floating above the ground
3. the use of symmetry to create both a physical and spiritual balance and harmony like that emphasised in religious philosophies such as Daoism (see section 3b.6).
In the early years of the Han dynasty, people’s interest in Buddhism created the desire for them to construct pagodas — multi-storeyed Buddhist temples, rising to a point at the top. Design also followed practical needs, such as buildings facing away from the wind.

**The homes of the wealthy**

The wealthy built large and spacious homes, often around one or more courtyards, either enclosed or open, depending on the local climate. Gardens featured bamboo, peonies and wisteria as well as lily ponds and ornamental bridges. The wealthy enclosed their homes behind high walls, interspersed with watchtowers, to protect them from the world beyond.

**SOURCE 2** A modern artist’s impression of a wealthy person’s home during the Han period. The image is based on archaeological remains and tomb models.
Peasants’ homes

Peasants lived in one- or two-roomed houses of timber and mud. They had a thatched or sometimes tiled roof, a dirt floor and perhaps a few items of furniture. Houses like this were grouped together in small villages, which also included a temple and a larger residence for the village landlord. Some better-off peasants might have a mud wall around their house to create an enclosed farmyard for animals. The village itself was usually surrounded by a wall as protection from invaders.

3b.8.4 City life

Less than 10 per cent of ancient China’s population lived in cities. Many cities had walls around them for protection. The walled city of Xianyang became China’s capital in 220 BCE. The Han dynasty created its capital city, Chang’an (modern-day Xian), on virtually the same site.

The government officials, entertainers, merchants, nobles and soldiers who crowded into Xianyang lived ‘as closely as the teeth of a comb’. The wealthy clustered around the emperor’s palace and other important buildings in the northern part of Xianyang, while the poor lived in the cheaper housing found in the southern section of the city.

SOURCE 3 Chinese life under the Han

A The marketplace
As in Xianyang, large and lively marketplaces were usually just inside the city gates. This allowed access by travelling merchants. Merchants were looked down on by society even if they were rich. They were not seen as contributing in the way farmers did. Goods from all over China and the known world were sold and traded in the market.

B People you might see
In the noisy markets, people bought and sold food and animals. There were musicians, acrobats, jugglers, letter writers, dentists and craftworkers.

C Livestock available
Owl, panther, deer, dog, pig, ant eggs, snails and turtles were mostly bought by the rich.

D City walls
Ancient Chinese cities were circled by two walls. City walls were built to protect the people. If you visit China today, you will still be able to see the remains of these walls in many cities. The inner wall was called cheng and the outer wall was called guo. Often moats, called chi, surrounded these walls. The inner city was called geng, and together they were known as cheng chi.

E Family values
Rich and poor people lived in extended family groups. Their belief in Confucian values strengthened family ties. Ancestor worship and respect for elders were important values.

F Crafts and goods
Murals, jade jewellery and carvings, glazed pottery, silk goods, and objects made from cast iron such as ploughs were bought and sold.

G Women
According to Confucian principles, women were subordinate to men, and life was difficult for females living in a male-dominated society. A daughter was given no education and worked under the direction of her mother. Her father decided whom she would marry. Once married, a girl would live with her husband’s family and obey her mother-in-law. A female had no status until she gave birth to a male child.
The city markets, just inside one of Xianyang’s entrance gates, attracted people from all social classes. The wealthy (or their servants) came in search of exotic foods such as ant eggs, deer, dogs, snails, turtles and even panthers. They also looked for rich silk fabrics and fine pottery in the stalls of skilled artisans and craftspeople. The poor bought the foodstuffs essential to their survival and sold the food and goods that, for them, were luxuries.

3b.8.5 Funerary customs

Wealthy Chinese prepared for their eventual death while hoping that various potions might prolong their lives. Burial customs showed their belief in life after death. Like the ancient Egyptians, they wanted to be buried with things that would be useful to them in the next life and show their high status (see section 3b.9).

For the wealthy, this meant that architects designed wonderful tombs for them and artisans created the beautiful tomb decorations that would enhance them. Sculptures and artworks were often included to show how the wealthy person had been waited on by servants and had lived in great comfort. Some tombs even contained inscriptions showing how much each item had cost. They also had inscriptions listing evidence of the deceased person’s good life.

Up until the time of Qin Shi Huangdi, the emperor’s servants were sometimes buried alive with him. From the time of Qin Shi Huangdi onward, the emperor ordered clay models of servants and animals as an indication of his status.

Tombs of Han dynasty emperors were built underground within a large walled complex. They included buildings, gateways, observation towers and avenues along which stone figures, in human and animal form, stood guard.

Ancestor worship

The Qingming Festival, during which people visited their ancestors’ graves, bringing offerings and paying their respects, originated in the seventh century BCE. Confucius put great emphasis on people worshiping their dead ancestors. This strengthened family ties and knowledge of family history.

Over time, these celebrations became more and more costly and could last for up to three days. In 732 CE, Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang dynasty decreed that the Qingming Festival would be a day-long event held on the 104th day after the winter solstice. That would be the only day on which people could hold formal ceremonies at their ancestors’ graves.
3b.8 Activities

To answer questions online and to receive immediate feedback and sample responses for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au. Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

Check knowledge and understanding
1. How did clothing reveal people's status in society?
2. Provide two other examples of how wealthy people's experiences differed from those of the poor.
3. Use dot points to summarise the main features of the city Xianyang/Chang’an.

Develop source skills
4. From SOURCE 2, identify three features of Chinese architecture.
5. What types of information does SOURCE 3 provide about everyday life in China at this time?

3b.9 Site study: the mausoleum of Qin Shi Huangdi

3b.9.1 Construction, concealment and discovery

Qin Shi Huangdi began organising the construction of his mausoleum (tomb complex) in c.246 BCE, long before he became China’s emperor. As he gained more power, the plans for the tomb became more and more grand. Almost until his death in 210 BCE, work on the Emperor’s mausoleum was ongoing and involved hundreds of thousands of workers over a construction zone with an area of 56 square kilometres.

According to historian Sima Qian (see SOURCE 1), after Qin Shi Huang’s funeral, the new emperor ordered that workers who knew the secrets of the tomb complex be buried alive within it. The complex itself was covered with a massive mound of earth, planted with trees and bushes to make it look like it was just part of the landscape.

Thieves and fire may have destroyed some of the mausoleum in the years immediately after Qin Shi Huang’s death. In modern times, people knew that there were some ancient remains there, but had no idea of their quality, extent and significance.

SOURCE 1
Historian Sima Qian’s description of the construction and contents of Qin Shi Huangdi’s tomb from his work Shiji, written c.100 BCE.

As soon as the First Emperor became King of Qin, excavations and building were started at Mount Li, while after he won the empire more than 700 000 conscripts from all parts of the empire worked there. They dug through three subterranean [underground] streams and poured molten copper for the outer coffin, and the tomb was fitted with models of palaces, pavilions [large tents] and offices, as well as fine vessels, precious stones and rarities. Artisans were ordered to fix up crossbows so that any thief breaking in would be shot. All the country’s streams, the Yellow River and the Yangtze were reproduced in quicksilver [mercury] and by some mechanical means made to flow into a miniature ocean. The heavenly constellations [groups of stars] were shown above and the regions of the Earth below. The candles were made of whale oil to ensure their burning for the longest possible death. The Second Emperor decreed: ‘It is not right to send away those of my father’s ladies who had no sons’. Accordingly, all these ladies were ordered to follow the First Emperor to the grave. After their interment [confinement] someone pointed out that the artisans who had made the mechanical contrivances might disclose all the treasure that was in the tomb; therefore after the burial and sealing up of the treasures, the middle gate was shut and the outer gate closed to imprison all the artisans and labourers, so that not one came out. Trees and grass were planted over the mausoleum [magnificent tomb] to make it seem like a hill.

Adapted from Hsien-yi and Gladys Young, op. cit.
The contents of the site remained largely hidden until 29 March 1974, when a group of farmers were searching over 1.5 kilometres from the tomb mound for an underground water supply to irrigate their drought-stricken fields. Five metres below ground, they found a pit containing broken pieces of terracotta and what turned out to be thousands of life-sized terracotta soldiers. In the decades since, many people have described this find as ‘the eighth wonder of the ancient world’.

3b.9.2 Excavation and investigation

Qin Shi Huangdi’s chosen burial site is located at the bottom of Mount Li, near Xian in China’s Shaanxi province. Hidden within and around the mound is an underground city, designed as a smaller version of the layout of Xianyang, the capital of the Qin empire. In its centre is a palace, and in the centre of that is Qin Shi Huangdi’s tomb. The complex also contains buildings intended as offices, towers, halls, stables, an armory and grand houses. Ancient sources point to the existence of many treasures.

SOURCE 2 Photo showing the tree-covered mound as it looks today. The mound was originally as high as 115 metres, but by 1974 it had worn away to only 43 metres.

SOURCE 3 Diagram showing the layout of the burial complex

Key
- Mausoleum, architectural remains
- City gate
- Kiln site
- Excavated grave site
- Builder’s graveyards
- Stable pits
- Inner city wall
- Outer city wall
- Kiln site
- Terracotta warriors and horses
- Bronze chariots and horses
- Brick house
- Yuchi River
So far, the Chinese government has not given anyone permission to excavate the tomb itself. Scientists have detected high levels of mercury in soil samples from around the tomb area. Some think that the tomb itself might be surrounded by a river of liquid mercury. This is a poisonous and highly dangerous substance for anyone coming into contact with it. It may be years before excavation techniques have progressed enough to ensure that the contents of the tomb, and the experts investigating them, can be protected.

To date, archaeologists have focused mainly on excavating the pits containing the terracotta warriors and examining and restoring these figures, which are over 2000 years old. These have survived largely intact because of the earth and wood structures that protected them and the brick paving on which they stood.

3b.9.3 An army for eternity

The terracotta warriors’ site is the most famous and most visited archaeological site in China today. It is part of Qin Shi Huangdi’s mausoleum and is located just 1.6 kilometres east of his tomb at Mount Li. The terracotta sculptures placed there more than 2200 years ago were meant to both guard his tomb and accompany him to the afterlife.

Since 1974, archaeologists have excavated the area around the tomb and put together thousands of pieces of broken pottery to recreate carriages, soldiers, birds and animals. It is a huge and ongoing task.

To date, they have uncovered 7400 terracotta warriors; a group that look like acrobats and wrestlers; and another 68 figures depicting commanders, guards and officials. They have also found terracotta horses, bronze chariots and many different weapons. These have all come from three pits within a burial site that is over seven kilometres square.
The figures are life-sized models of different types of soldiers — infantry, cavalry and charioteers. They vary in height from 1.39 metres to 1.95 metres according to rank. The tallest are the generals. Each soldier has individual facial features created from eight basic facial moulds. They stand in the pits in military formation, in their terracotta armour, like an army ready to do battle. Their task was to guard Qin Shi Huangdi’s tomb against would-be tomb robbers and accompany him to the afterlife.

SOURCE 6 A photograph showing two of eight different types of figures found within the pits: (a) a kneeling archer and (b) a general

RETROFILE
Archaeologists think that the skeletons they have discovered in the pits are those of convicts who helped to construct the tomb and others who were made to follow the emperor on his journey into the next life.

3b.9.5 Skill builder: Perspective and interpretation
The words people use provide clues to their interpretation of information — the message they want to get across — and to the perspective that may have influenced this interpretation. Knowing this, and something about the person and the time in which he/she is writing, helps us to understand this better.

Audrey Topping, the author of SOURCE 7, had, as a teenager, spent two years in China where her father was a diplomat working for the Canadian government. She writes from the viewpoint of a westerner (a person with a western European or North American background). At the same time, she has a better-than-average knowledge of China and is pleased to see China’s greater contact with the wider world after decades of isolation. Read SOURCE 7 and its annotations, then answer the question below.
What do Audrey Topping’s comments and experiences and the timing of her visit indicate about her perspective on the terracotta warriors?

3b.9.4 Significance

Qin Shi Huangdi feared death and constantly sent people in search of an elixir (a medicine) that would enable him to live forever. What is known of his tomb and its layout shows us that, in the event of his death, he wanted to be sure he would be buried in grand style, re-creating what he would need to continue living in the next world as he had in this world. This shows us that the idea of life continuing after death was an important feature of ancient Chinese funerary beliefs.

The existence of the terracotta warriors marks a difference between earlier Chinese tombs, in which people often buried live attendants with the deceased person, and Han dynasty tombs, in which pottery statues replaced the idea of live sacrifice.

The terracotta warriors provide a great deal of information about Chinese weaponry, battledress and military strategy. In particular, historians have been fascinated to learn that, as protection against rust, people had coated Qin-era swords in chromium oxide — a technique used in Europe and the Americas only in the last 300 years.

The museum

Today the site is incorporated within a museum complex consisting of three pits of exhibits built on top of the original site. The complex includes bookstalls, a cinema, an information centre, restaurants, and stores selling tourist memorabilia and reproductions of the warriors.

UNESCO added the Mausoleum of the first Qin Emperor to the World Heritage List in 1987.
3b.10 Contact, trade and warfare

3b.10.1 The growth of China’s empire

In pre- and early Imperial China, China’s dynasties continually expanded their territory.
- The Shang kingdom covered about 100,000 square kilometres around the floodplain of the Huang River in northern China.

SOURCE 1 Map of China’s present-day borders compared to the extent of the areas controlled by China’s early dynasties
• The Zhou people came from the Wei valley to the west of Shang territory. They gained control of the Shang lands and of territory as far south as the Yangtze valley and as far north-east as the shores of the Yellow Sea.
• Qin leaders defeated the other warring states and drew these into Qin territory.
• Under Han Wudi, China took control of land in central Asia in the west; Manchuria and Korea in the north; and Yunnan, Hainan Island and Vietnam in the south.

3b.10.2 Military structure
China’s early armies were small, poorly equipped and mainly made up of peasants forced to fight on behalf of their feudal lords. The lords had the advantage of fighting from their chariots, whereas the peasants were foot soldiers. Without reliable supplies, these armies often had to retreat from any territory they had won.

Military methods improved during the Warring States period with some leaders, like Qin Shi Huangdi, benefitting from ideas put forward by Sunzi centuries earlier.

Sunzi and The Art of War
The Art of War is one of the most famous books on military strategy ever written. It was written by Sunzi in c.512 BCE. People today consult it not only for its ideas on military tactics, but also for tactics that can be applied in the business world.

Sunzi, himself a successful general, emphasised the value of being able to respond quickly and effectively to take advantage of new conditions, rather than just following a plan step by step without any consideration of changing circumstances. Some of his key ideas are:
• calculate the chances of victory before going to war
• avoid direct conflict
• unity is essential to the strength of an army
• do not create opportunities for the enemy to defeat you
• work out what the enemy is thinking so you can outsmart him
• use the environment as a weapon
• use spies to find out what the enemy is doing.

Qin and Han armies
The Qin and Han emperors improved on the military reforms of the Warring States period. They kept permanent armies of professionally trained soldiers, led by generals, who were promoted according to ability. This meant that they had men to respond to threats quickly and fight lengthy campaigns. As the Han relied mainly on volunteer soldiers, their permanent army was smaller than that of the Qin, so they had to increase it in times of war.

Fighting methods
Armies mainly consisted of infantry (foot soldiers) who fought hand-to-hand using spears, knives, daggers and sometimes axes. There were also small groups of cavalry (soldiers on horseback). Three-man chariots, with a driver, an archer and a soldier wielding a halberd (a bronze dagger mounted on a pole) to protect the horses, were a feature of warfare until the third century BCE.

Han Wudi imported large horses from Central Asia to replace the Mongolian ponies they had used until then. These gave the cavalry the advantage of greater speed and animals that could bear the weight of heavier armour and weaponry.

3b.10.3 Voyages of trade: the Silk Road
The Chinese learned how to make silk in about the third millennium BCE. They kept the secret of how to make it until about 200 BCE. People placed a high value on silk and used it for luxury clothing and scrolls, to pay taxes, to pay for services, and to reward achievements. Merchants traded silk within China and with
The trading route known as the Silk Road existed from very early times. Its establishment helped make China the leading silk producer in the world. Using this route, Chinese traders sold silk to Babylon, Greece, India and Rome, gaining China links with western Asia and Europe. Traders from other lands used the same route to sell their local products (such as walnuts, cucumbers, hemp plants and grape vines) to the Chinese.

The Silk Road officially came into existence during the Han dynasty. It is based on a route taken by Zhang Qian (pronounced jee-ung chee-an). Zhang Qian undertook this journey to find allies who would help the Han people defeat their enemy, the Xiongnu tribe. This route provided a means of travel through lands known for their difficult terrain and temperatures ranging from minus 20 °C in winter to 50 °C in summer.

The introduction of Buddhism to China came via the Silk Road. Buddhism created cultural links between China, India and the Middle East. Over many centuries, Chinese merchants gained great wealth from their trade along the Silk Road and, as a result, improved their status within Chinese society.

### 3b.10 Activities

To answer questions online and to receive **immediate feedback** and **sample responses** for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au. Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

**Check knowledge and understanding**

1. How did China’s empire change between the time of the Shang and Han Wudi?
2. Who was Sunzi and why did he become famous?
3. List three improvements to China’s military in early imperial China.
4. Why was the Silk Road important?

**Develop source skills**

5. Use **SOURCE 1** to describe how the land controlled by the Han compared with that controlled by earlier dynasties.
6. How could a historian use **SOURCE 2**?

### 3b.11 Early China’s legacy

#### 3b.11.1 The heritage of China

By 1500 CE, China’s civilisation represented a very high level of human achievement. It had developed from separate warring states into a powerful unified empire. Its cities, government, scientific knowledge and cultural achievements were far in advance of those in other areas of the world at the same time. People made many of these achievements in the period up to the end of the Han.
3b.11.2 Technology and medicine
Iron making
Iron replaced bronze as the preferred material for weaponry and farm tools in the late Zhou dynasty. The Chinese developed iron-making methods that were very effective. They used bellows, for example, to provide furnaces with a constant supply of air. This created the steady high temperatures that were needed to produce cast iron and steel — a combination of iron and carbon.

The four great inventions
China takes pride in its ‘four great inventions’: the compass, paper, printing and gunpowder. The first two of these — paper and the compass — had their origins in early Imperial China.

Paper
Chinese inventors made paper from silk and later from wood pulp. As early as the second century BCE, the Chinese used paper for padding and wrapping. Although a court official named Cai Lun created the basis of modern paper making in 105 CE, archaeological sources indicate that writing paper may have existed in China as early as 8 BCE.

Han officials made great use of paper for record keeping throughout the empire, and this invention also led to the development of toilet paper — significant in the improvement of health standards.

The compass
The magnetic compass shows direction in relation to the Earth’s magnetic poles. During the Qin dynasty, Chinese fortune tellers began using lodestone (magnetite) — a mineral with magnetic properties that arranges itself in a north–south direction. Through this they discovered the basics of what would become the magnetic compass.
During the Han dynasty, people used magnetite in a spoon-shaped implement that always pointed south when placed on a square stone slab. Much later, c.1040–44 CE, during the Song dynasty, people began to use this knowledge to create implements for deciding direction.

The Chinese also invented rudders for ships, fishing reels and a single-wheel wheelbarrow. Such equipment only came into use elsewhere in the world more than 1000 years later.

**Geography and astronomy**

The achievements of the Han dynasty in the east rivalled those of the Roman Empire in the west.

Their already advanced understanding of astronomy helped them to develop accurate water clocks that rang every 15 minutes.

The scientist and inventor Zhang Heng (79–139 CE) made an important contribution to our understanding of geography through his invention of a grid system that made maps easier to follow. Zhang Heng is probably best known for inventing the first seismograph, which measures the intensity of an earthquake.

**Acupuncture and CHM**

Chinese interest in nutrition, surgery and healing goes back to the time of the Zhou dynasty. Chinese doctors recognised the links between health and a person’s eating habits and emotions. They encouraged their patients to avoid stress and strive for harmony in their lives.
Chinese doctors used **acupuncture** — the insertion of long, sharp needles under the skin — to alleviate pain and promote healing. They based their use of this on the belief that illness resulted from an imbalance in the forces of yin and yang, which needed to be balanced to maintain good health.

The people of early imperial China also:

- understood blood circulation
- injected people against diseases like smallpox
- were using, by 200 CE, general anaesthetics made from Indian hemp.

Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) dates back to the third century BCE. It involves the use of natural products to treat medical problems. People who followed the Daoist religion supported it, and Daoist doctors were very successful in identifying the healing properties of different herbs and plant extracts.

Today people all over the world practise traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) through acupuncture and herbal medicine. People who practise traditional western medicine also investigate its benefits.

### 3b.11.3 Literature and learning

Han Gaozu encouraged the replacement of works lost during the burning of the books and also allowed people once again to learn about the ideas of Confucius. The Han re-established the importance of learning and encouraged the production of new works. From 100–121 CE, Xu Shen, a famous Han scholar, worked on the first comprehensive dictionary of Chinese characters. Han scholars also wrote textbooks on botany, chemistry and zoology.

Up until this time, the goal of many writers was to produce works that contained a moral lesson or that taught people important knowledge. During the Han period, poets began to create works that described human emotions and that showed an appreciation of the beauty of nature.

**Tai chi**

*Tai chi* developed in China over 2000 years ago as a ‘soft’ martial art — a method of unarmed self-defence. It is popular worldwide among people who want to combine physical exercise with training of the mind. Tai chi involves practice of a series of exercises that help the body to relax and the mind to become more focused and disciplined. In many areas of Australia, you can often see people gathered in groups outdoors to practise tai chi together.

### 3b.11 Activities

To answer questions online and to receive **immediate feedback** and **sample responses** for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au. *Note:* Question numbers may vary slightly.

#### Check knowledge and understanding

1. Identify the technological developments made in early Imperial China. List them in order from most important to least important, and explain the reasons for your first and last choices.
2. List three important features of literature and learning during the Han period.

#### Develop source skills

3. Use **SOURCE 1** to devise a set of instructions on how to make paper.
4. Find out how Zhang Heng’s seismograph (**SOURCE 2**) was able to detect earthquakes. Record your findings in the form of an annotated sketch explaining how it works.
5. Explain what **SOURCES 3A and 3b** show us about the continuity of early Imperial China in our own time.
3b.12 Research project: A virtual tour of ancient China

Numerous videos and interactivities are embedded just where you need them, at the point of learning, in your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au.

3b.12.1 Scenario and task

The Chinese government wants to attract more visitors to share the country’s fabulous history. As part of the marketing strategy, you have been asked to create a possible visitor itinerary for a historical tour of China.

You will use Google Maps to create an interactive map of China, which provides the location and details of possible venues to visit. These should be ancient sites that people could visit now in modern China. Your interactive map will help people learn more about China’s past and should entice them to visit. Your potential visitors will want to know the following:
• What will I see?
• Why is it important?
• When did this happen or which Chinese dynasty does it represent?
• Who made or created it?

3b.12.2 Process

• Watch the introductory video at the beginning of this subtopic. Then, working in small groups, undertake research that will help you create an interactive Google Map of China.
• Devise a list of historically significant tourist sites that you would like to include in your map. (Hint: A visit to a travel agent might help you identify some great places to visit in China.)
• Visit the Resources tab and view the selection of images from ancient Chinese sites that have been provided for you to use in your Google Map.
• Now start your research. Make notes about interesting facts and ideas that you discover about each of the sites as you go. You might want to insert features such as ‘Amazing facts’ and ‘Did you know?’ into your Google Map. Try to use at least three sources of information about each site. Be sure to enter the source for any information you find online. Google Maps lets you build in hyperlinks to other sites.
• Use the ‘Creating a Google Map’ guide in the Resources tab to help you create your Google Map of ancient Chinese sites.
• On your map, use pins to add images and approximately 100 words about each of your must-visit sites. Try to use persuasive language that makes your site sound interesting; for example, ‘the remarkably lifelike and individual terracotta warriors’ sounds better than ‘the terracotta warriors’.
• Be sure to give your interactive map a test run before you submit it. Do all the pins work? Is it informative and entertaining? You might like to compare your map with another group’s map.
• When you are happy with your completed map, submit it via email to your teacher for assessment!

3b.13 Review

3b.13.1 Review

KEY TERMS

civilisation  a society that has developed towns and has complex forms of art, science, religion and government
feudalism  a system in which the ruler owned all the land and subdivided it among important subjects in return for their loyalty and for taxes paid in money, goods or services. The system encouraged loyalty both to the ruler and to the local lord.
imperial  describes a country unified under a government ruled by an emperor or empress
loess  a rich yellow soil made up of clay and silt
mandate of heaven  the idea that a leader could rule as long as the gods judged his actions to be in keeping with the natural order of the universe. This meant ruling with wisdom, justice and balance.

Middle Kingdom  the land between heaven and Earth and the centre of the world

3b.13 Activities

To answer questions online and to receive immediate feedback and sample responses for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au. Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

Go online to access additional end of topic resources such as interactivities and printable worksheets.

3b.13 Activity 1:  Check your understanding
3b.13 Activity 2:  Practise your historical skills
3b.13 Activity 3:  Multiple choice quiz
Practise your historical skills
Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts

1. Which of Qin Shi Huangdi’s policies would have benefited China? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Place the following in the correct chronological order: the Han dynasty, the Qin dynasty and the Warring States period.
3. Select and record the most correct answer to complete each of the following statements.
   (a) People believed oracle bones:
       [a] would give them good luck
       [b] could provide answers to their questions
       [c] were useful for acupuncture
       [d] were the remains of a prehistoric animal.
   (b) The Silk Road was:
       [a] one of five major roads linking Xianyang with the rest of Qin Shi Huangdi’s empire
       [b] the nickname for the road on top of the Great Wall of China
       [c] a trading route through western Asia to Europe
       [d] the centre of China’s silk industry.
   (c) The mandate of heaven was the belief that:
       [a] the gods no longer supported the ruler
       [b] it was time for someone else to take power
       [c] the ruler would soon die
       [d] the gods approved of the ruler.
   (d) The Middle Kingdom is a term:
       [a] referring to an area where barbarians live
       [b] referring to China’s geographical position within Asia
       [c] expressing the idea that China is at the centre of the world
       [d] meaning ‘where barbarians live’.
   (e) Buddhists see enlightenment as:
       [a] one of the most important teachings of Daoism
       [b] a state of wisdom and inner peace
       [c] a form of meditation
       [d] the stage before Nirvana.

Analysis and use of sources

4. What types of information does SOURCE 1 provide? For what topic(s) could a historian use this information?
5. Identify the origin and purpose of SOURCE 2.

SOURCE 1 Photograph showing archaeologists engaged in restoration work on warriors from pit 1 of Qin Shi Huangdi’s tomb

SOURCE 2 An extract from Admonitions for Women by Ban Zhao (c.48–c.116 CE). Ban Zhao was a very well-educated woman who served as a teacher to the empress and the ladies of her court. She also completed the work her brother began in writing a history of the Han dynasty.

If a husband be unworthy, then he possesses nothing by which to control his wife. If a wife be unworthy, then she possesses nothing with which to serve her husband. If a husband does not control his wife, then he loses his authority. If a wife does not serve her husband, then right principles [the natural order] are neglected and destroyed. As a matter of fact, in practice these two [the controlling of women by men and the serving of men by women] work out in the same way.

Now examine the gentlemen of the present age. They only know that wives must be controlled and that the husband’s authority must be maintained. They therefore teach their boys to read books and [study] histories. But they do not in the least understand how husbands and masters are to be served or how rites and right principles are to be maintained.

Yet only to teach men and not to teach women — is this not ignoring the reciprocal relation between them? According to the Rites, book learning begins at the age of eight, and at the age of fifteen one goes off to school. Why, however, should this principle not apply to girls as well as boys?
Perspectives and interpretations

6. Use **SOURCE 2** to identify Ban Zhao’s point of view regarding relationships between men and women.

7. Use **SOURCE 3** to answer the following questions.
   (a) What is the meaning of this saying from Confucius?
   (b) Which parts of this extract give clues to Confucius’s attitude towards women?
   (c) What does it show about his attitude towards women?
   (d) Is this a primary or secondary source for someone studying ancient China?

**SOURCE 3** An extract from the *Analects* in which Confucius expresses his attitude towards women and servants

Women and servants are most difficult to nurture. If one is close to them, they lose their reserve, while if one is distant, they feel resentful.

Empathetic understanding

8. What do you think motivated Ban Zhao to write the comment shown in **SOURCE 2**?

Research

9. Choose an event from Qin Shi Huangdi’s period as emperor. Use the ‘W’ questions (who? what? when? where? why? how?) to undertake research on this event. Devise five questions to guide your research into this event. Communicate the results of your research by one of the following methods:
   (a) writing and illustrating a report which would be suitable for the front page of a modern newspaper
   (b) working in a small group to present your results in the form of a television news broadcast in which your story is the leading news item.

10. List ten resources that are useful and relevant for the topic you chose in question 9.

Explanation and communication

11. An ongoing task
   As you investigated early Imperial China, you were asked to get a clear idea of its key events and their consequences; its chronology; its people and their actions and motivations. Test your knowledge of this by completing the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Person/Group</th>
<th>Event/Action</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burning of the books</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Red Eyebrows’ fought, defeated and killed him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168–170 BCE</td>
<td>Han Wudi</td>
<td>Wanted people to have good moral standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. When Gaozu became emperor, he told the people:
   I promise you just three laws:
   Anyone who kills anyone shall suffer death.
   Anyone who wounds another or steals shall be given a punishment that fits the crime.
   All the laws of the Qin are abolished.’
   If you could have only three laws to govern our society, what would they be? Share your laws and reasons in small groups.

13. Using desktop-publishing software and an image bank, create an advertisement to attract tourists to visit the museum of the terracotta warriors.

14. Imagine you are an inventor and you want to advertise your ‘miracle writing material’ — paper. Design a poster for the world market outlining the uses and advantages paper has over silk, bamboo and stone tablets.