

# THE HAN DYNASTY

## Mark It on the Map

- Have students locate China on a world map. Then have them use the scale to determine approximately how many miles it is from their state capital to China's capital, Beijing.
- Read about Zhang Qian on page 19, and make a list of the places he visited. Give each place a number. List places in chronological order. Then locate the sites on the map on page 4. Write the number of the site in the corresponding site location. Connect the dots to see Zhang Qian's "itinerary."

## Vocabulary

dynasty	dowager
consorts	aristocrats
concubines	jade

## Introduction

Bring to class several newspapers that include articles on current events in China. Divide the class into groups and give each group a newspaper. Ask each group to read its article about China and then report on it to the class. Discuss with the class what these articles tell about China's place in world affairs.

## Questions for Discussion

- How did two rebels manage to start a revolt with a "divine omen"? What was the omen? Which dynasty were they seeking to destroy?
- Who was Sima Qian? What did he write? What was the focus of the work?
- How did Liu Bang come to be ruler of China? What name did he take when he became ruler? Under what name was he worshipped?
- What is the significance of the title "Son of Heaven"?
- By custom, what role did women play in Han society?
- What was Wu Di's criterion for selecting government officials? In what way did he differ from his predecessors?
- What programs did Wu Di implement to weaken the control of the aristocrats?
- What effect did Zhang Qian's travels have on China's economy? Why?
- Why and how did the Emperor Wu Di implement Confucian ideas? What were his reasons for doing so?
- What is jade and how is it fashioned into jewels and other objects?
- Why do scholars think the ancient Chinese dressed a dead person in jade?
- What is meant by the Former (Western) Han dynasty? The Later (Eastern) Han dynasty?
- Why did Wang Mang's policies lead to his fall from power?
- Name and describe three technological advances made during the Han dynasty.
- What are ming-qi? Explain their relationship to Han ideas about life, death, and immortality.
- Why are ming-qi important for archaeologists and historians?
- In what ways did the Ban family help today's historians? What were its contributions to Chinese history?
- How was the first paper made? Who is credited with inventing paper?
- What were Confucius' views about music?

## Writing Workout

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Consider the saying of Confucius found on page 2. Write an essay detailing your explanation of the phrase and giving examples to support your interpretation.
- Explain the significance of Wu Di's name. Then tell how he lived up to the meaning of his name.
- In essay form, explain the policies Wu Di implemented to raise revenue for his projects.

- Of all the rulers described in this issue, whose actions do you think were most beneficial for China? Why?
- Write an essay detailing the advice you think Wu Di would give the current president of the United States. Be sure to include a reason for each piece of advice.
- Explain what is meant by the Confucian principle that “society resembled an extended family.” (See page 20.)
- Make a list of the different uses the ancient Chinese found for jade. (See pages 24–28.)
- Look closely at the burial suit of Liu Sheng on pages 24–25. Read the article on pages 24–28. Using your observations as a guide, write a detailed description of the burial suit to present to someone who has no image of the suit.
- Explain why excavations of burial sites such as Liu Sheng’s are important.
- Make a list of the similarities and dissimilarities between the city of Chang’an and your city or town.
- Read about the “flying horse” on pages 34 and 36; read also the caption about the cover. Look closely at the images of the two figures. Then write an essay describing them for someone who has no access to the images. Include also your feelings about the artistic beauty of each piece.
- Make a list of the moral advice Ban Zhao included in her “Lessons for Women.” Next to each entry write whether you agree or disagree and why.

## Think About It

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- What does the case of Li Ling—including Sima Qian’s involvement—tell you about life in China at the time?
- Consider the principle of ruling by a “Mandate of Heaven”? What do you think the merits of such a system are? Can such a system be abused? How?
- Wu Di paid special attention to China’s borders. Was this a wise use of military power and funds? Be specific with your answers.
- After reading about the many Han rulers described in this issue, what characteristics were common to all? Think of other leaders you have studied, or are in power in today’s world. Do these people share the same characteristics? Must anyone in a position of power possess these characteristics? Be specific with your answers.
- Do you agree with Wu Di’s treatment of Gongsun Hong? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- Show students pictures of finely carved jade objects. Give them a few minutes to study the images and then ask them to suggest reasons why the ancient Chinese considered jade symbolic of the “inner beauty” of human beings.
- Consider all the rulers included in the issue. Think about the policies, personality traits, and circumstances that lead to the decline of a dynasty, a ruler, or a civilization. Explain each policy, etc., and how it contributed to a ruler’s downfall.
- As news of the Three Gorges Dam project spread throughout the archaeological community, archaeologists began seeking ways to study areas that would soon be under water. Was this necessary? Why is the study of ancient sites important, or is it important?
- Ban Chao wrote that at age 14 she “took up the dustpan and broom.” What do her comments reveal about Chinese customs and beliefs at the time?

## Then and Now

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Consider Wu Di’s border policies. Think of the United States’ border policies. Are there any similarities? Dissimilarities? How do border policies reflect the thinking of a country’s officials?
- Bring to class several encyclopedias (the volume that includes “jade”). Have students research where jade is found today and for what purposes it is used today.

➔ Read about the types of music in Han society on page 43. Is there anything comparable in our society today? Give specific reasons for your answer and explain why you have given such an answer.

## Between the Lines

Have students read the description of Liu Bang in the caption on page 9. Then have them discuss the meaning of each phrase of the description, and what the author might have been trying to say.

## Get Into Art

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- ➔ Read about Zhang Qian on page 19. Then illustrate the various events in his life, with an explanation of each incident written below the illustration. Use the images in the issue as a guide for your illustrations.
- ➔ Pretend you are living in the Han dynasty and are preparing your gravesite. Make a list of the ming-qi you want buried with you and include your reason for each. Then draw or design each one for the workers and sculptors you will commission to make your ming-qi.
- ➔ Bring magazines to class that have a variety of images of modern-day musicians, instruments, dancers, and acrobats. Make copies of the illustration on pages 42–43. Have students make a collage of musicians (past and present). Have them pair the ancient figures with the modern figures.

## Class Projects

- ➔ Divide the class into seven groups. Assign each group one of the people described in the issue: Sima Qian, Liu Bang, Empress Lu, Wu Di, Wang Mang, Liu Xiu, and Zhang Jue. Ask each group to research their person, then write a biography and present it to the class. Make sure the presentations are in chronological order. Note: On poster paper, or on the board, create a time line. Have each group mark pertinent dates for its person on the time line and then use the time line when presenting the “biography.”
- ➔ Divide the class into three groups. Assign one the task of reading about Zhang Heng’s earthquake detectors on page 32; the second group the task of reading about the method of obtaining salt in Sichuan province on pages 33 and 35; and the third group the task of reading about making lacquerware on page 34. Bring books to class about modern methods of detecting earthquakes, producing salt, and making lacquerware. Have each group prepare a visual presentation (with a spokesperson to explain this presentation) about the ancient Chinese method and the present-day method. Have them stress similarities and dissimilarities between the two.

## Research Projects

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- ➔ Have students research when silk production began in China. Why was silk so highly prized, and where it was exported?
- ➔ Have students research what is meant by the “Silk Road.” Describe the route, its importance, and China’s role. Have students trace the Silk Road on the map on page 4.
- ➔ Have students research different breeds of horses. Let students find the “Mongol pony” and the thoroughbred horses of Ferghana, both mentioned in the article on Zhang Qian on page 19.
- ➔ Have students research acupuncture and the basics of this medical practice. You may have another group research where and when it began and where it is practiced today.
- ➔ Have students find articles from news and science magazines with information about the Three Gorges Dam. Have students present their findings to the class. Note if any articles include mention of the Han dynasty. If so, relate it to the information in this issue.

➔ Bring books to class about papermaking today and explain to the class how today's paper is made. Read about papermaking in ancient China on pages 38-39. Make two columns on the board. Have students list the similarities between the two methods in one column, the dissimilarities between the two in the other.

### **Working With Words**

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- ➔ Turn to page 5 and practice reading the Chinese names—pinyin form—using the pronunciation key when necessary. Refer to the chart as you read through the issue.
- ➔ Make a copy of pages 22–23. Cut out each word and expression. Divide the class into five groups, and assign each group one of the words or expressions. Bring magazines with illustrations that may be cut out, and ask each group to make a collage that visually illustrates the “history” of its word or expression. Then have each group show the rest of the class its collage and see if anyone can guess the word or expression.
- ➔ Read aloud the word derivations on pages 22–23. Ask each student to compose a five-sentence essay that includes the five words or expressions. All five sentences must relate to the same theme, and the meaning of each word or expression must be clear.

### **Just for Fun**

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- ➔ Try making your own paper by following the directions on page 40.
- ➔ Play the “match-up” game about Chinese musical instruments on pages 44–45.
- ➔ Bring books to class that have photos of ancient and modern Chinese instruments. Cover the captions and text. Let the students see if they can name the instruments based on their descriptions on pages 44–45.
- ➔ Play a recording (or a videotape) of Chinese music to the class. Have the students try to identify the different instruments being played. Invite a musician or someone who is very familiar with Chinese music to visit the classroom and help students with the identification.

### **Follow These Footsteps**

Sima Qian  
Li Ling  
Liu Bang  
Wu Di  
Empress Lu  
Zhang Qian  
Confucius