

CHINA'S FIRST EMPEROR

The incredible legacy of China's first emperor remains evident thousands of years after his death. *China's First Emperor* traces the story of Qin Shi Huangdi, a trailblazing figure whose contribution to world history is explored in this sweeping and richly textured documentary. From remarkable cultural symbols such as the Great Wall and the vast mausoleum guarded by life-sized Terracotta soldiers, to the standardization of measurements, writings and the legal system, Qin Shi Huangdi's accomplishments during his reign have ensured his rank in history among powerful world leaders such as Napoleon, Caesar and Alexander the Great.

Qin Shi Huangdi's vision was ambitious. His most extraordinary achievement was undoubtedly the conquest of the six warring states to create China's first empire in 221 BC – setting a precedent for unification that would endure for over two millennia.

With commentary from leading experts on the Qin Dynasty, *China's First Emperor* explores the incredible technological and societal advances made during the reign of Qin Shi Huangdi through vivid re-creation and careful explanation. It also offers rare insight into the mind and motivation of one of history's most significant leaders. This program gives educators a visual companion to their lesson plans on the Qin Dynasty and the growth of the Chinese empire. Teachers may want to use clips from this documentary to compare and contrast the Qin Dynasty to other key world empires from the same time period.

Curriculum links

China's First Emperor fulfills the following standards as outlined by the National Council for History Education: (1) Civilization, cultural diffusion, and innovation; (2) Conflict and cooperation; (3) Human interaction with the environment; and (4) Patterns of social and political interaction. This program is relevant to classes in Global History, Social Studies, Political Science or Asian Studies. Due to depictions of violence and graphic content, this program is suitable for mature high school and college students. Teachers should screen this program in its entirety before showing it to students. *China's First Emperor* runs for three hours.



Vocabulary

Using the dictionary at www.merriamwebster.com, an Internet resource such as www.History.com, or an encyclopedia, students should define or explain the significance of the following terms:

alchemist	envisage	nomadic	precarious
cataclysmic	epic	onslaught	relic
confidante	immortality	paranoia	remonstrate
discontent	infantry	portent	resolute
emissary	microcosm		

Discussion questions

1. How was Qin Wang betrayed at the young age of 21? How did this experience profoundly affect him for the future?
2. What did farmers discover in western China in 1974? What details did this prolific archaeological find reveal about the Qin dynasty? Why was this considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of all time?

3. In what ways was the Qin army centuries ahead of its rivals in terms of technology? What was significant about the moving metal object that archaeologists found at the digging site?
4. How does the size of the armies fighting during the wars of unification compare to those in other significant global battles? How did Qin Wang assemble such vast numbers of warriors? What did the scrolls found in the ancient coffin reveal about life in the Qin army?
5. How long did it take for Qin Wang to conquer all of China? How many men were killed during the wars of unification? How did Qin Wang change his title to reflect his new conquests?
6. How did Qin Shi Huangdi deal with the ruling families that he had conquered? What was his rationale for this drastic course of action? What other steps did Qin Shi Huangdi take to unify and control the empire?
7. What did the Emperor do to defend his borders against outside attacks? How many people worked to build the Great Wall? How many died during its construction? How did the years of violent wars and dangerous construction of the Great Wall affect the sentiments of the empire's population?
8. What factors led Qin Shi Huangdi to develop psychotic paranoia? What did the Emperor decide about the fate of scholars' ancient texts? What "portents" or omens fueled the Emperor's irrational fears?
9. What great lengths did Qin Shi Huangdi go to in his quest for eternal life? What was ironic about the connection between the Emperor's search for mortality and his supposed cause of death? What unparalleled preparations did Qin Shi Huangdi make for his own death?
10. What revolutionary changes did the First Emperor implement that are still integral parts of modern Chinese society? What cultural artifacts did he leave behind? How would you describe his legacy today?

Extended activities

1. The Qin Dynasty is marked by a long and complex history. Using the information you learned in *China's First Emperor*, as well as research from the library or Internet, put together an illustrated timeline of this period of Chinese history. Beginning with Qin Wang's ascension to power and ending with his death, be sure to include all of the significant dates related to military battles, cultural achievements (i.e. Great Wall, Terracotta soldiers), and the personal life of China's First Emperor. Illustrate your work on a posterboard with photographs and drawings.
2. The Qin Dynasty was marked by cultural sophistication and innovation. Surviving writings and

archaeological digs have given us clues into life in the Qin Empire. Divide into groups of 2-3 students and research one of the following topics: (a) Military technology; (b) Literature; (c) Art and Music; (d) Government; or another relevant topic of your choice. In the library or on the Internet, research the aspect of Qin culture that you have selected. Prepare a poster, PowerPoint presentation or 2-3 page illustrated essay describing what you have learned. Assemble all of the projects into an "exhibit" on Qin Dynasty culture and display it in your classroom.

3. The First Emperor left behind two awe-inspiring cultural artifacts that have survived through today. In the library or on the Internet, research either the Great Wall or the Terracotta soldiers. Write and design a travel brochure with historical information, timelines and photographs for visitors who want to learn more about these magnificent sights. Include relevant facts on the Qin Dynasty that you have learned by watching *China's First Emperor*.

4. Thousands of years after the death of Qin Shi Huangdi, glimpses of his reign are still evident in modern Chinese society. Research another important historical figure such as Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Caesar, etc., and write a 3-5 page biography on his or her life and legacy. Compare and contrast your famous figure's accomplishments and leadership traits with those of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi.

Websites & books

WEBSITES

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's maps, timelines and essays on the Qin Dynasty: www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/qind/hd.qind.htm

History of the Great Wall of China: www.greatwall-of-china.com/51/great-wall-history-1.html

Time Magazine's article on the discovery of the Terracotta soldiers: www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,924021,00.html

Smithsonian's timelines on Chinese history: www.asia.si.edu/exhibitions/online/chinaTimeline/main.swf

Library of Congress' profile of China: <http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/cntoc.html>

BOOKS

Lewis, Mark Edward. *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han* (Belknap Press, 2007).

Man, John. *The Great Wall: The Extraordinary Story of China's Wonder of the World* (Da Capo Press, 2008).

Portal, Jane. *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Warriors* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

Wood, Frances. *China's First Emperor and His Terracotta Warriors* (St. Martin's Press, 2008).

