

The Great Wall of China

The Great Wall of China is one of the most massive building achievements in history. Winding 6,000 kilometers through undulating mountains, it is said to be visible from space. Yet the true history of this engineering marvel is as mysterious as the mists of the nearby Yellow River Valley. Who called for the Great Wall's construction and how was it accomplished? And was the Great Wall truly, as legend has it, a wellspring of bloodshed, madness and death? The Great Wall of China would be useful for classes on Chinese History, Chinese Culture and Foreign Relations. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

- Taoism
- autocracy
- cache
- concentric
- concubine
- conscripted
- covetous
- despotic
- dubious
- eccentric
- elixir
- entombed
- ephemeral
- foibles
- grandeur
- homogenous
- ideology
- legalism
- magnitude
- megalomaniac
- noxious
- paradox
- pivotal
- precipitous
- prodigious
- protocol
- unscrupulous
- validate

Discussion Questions

1. Although the Great Wall today is a symbol of the greatness of Chinese civilization, the Chinese people did not always consider it to be so. What was the traditional view of the Chinese people of the Great Wall?
2. There are many myths and legends surrounding the Great Wall. Why are there so many stories about the wall? What are some of these myths and legends?
3. Wall building is a part of Chinese history and culture. Why did the Chinese adopt wall building?
4. How is the Great Wall woven with Chinese history?

5. Taoism is one of the great philosophies of the East. What is Taoism and what are some of its tenets?
6. The Ch'in Dynasty conquered and unified much of China, but this was not the dynasty's only achievement. What were some of the other achievements of the Ch'in Dynasty?
7. The Great Wall is winding and snake-like. Why doesn't the wall have any straight lines?
8. Discuss how China's terrain and different types of soil are incorporated into the wall's structure.
9. Why is the wall called the

Extended Activities

1. Using the medium of your choice, construct a model of the Great Wall of China.
2. On a map of China trace the path of the Great Wall and use this path to illustrate the history of the wall.