

THE QIN DYNASTY



At the height of the Warring States period, China was divided into hundreds of different kingdoms. Over time, some kingdoms grew larger and more powerful than others allowing them to conquer more and more territory. By 250 BC, seven large kingdoms had emerged with the most powerful being that of the Qin (Chin). By 221 BC the Qin ruler, Ying Zheng, had conquered all of his rivals and created a kingdom far larger than any previous dynasty. Zheng then took a new title, naming himself Shi Huangdi, or “first emperor”.

As emperor, Shi Huangdi wanted total power for himself. The lands belonging to China’s different nobles were taken away from them and they were forced to move to the new capital of Xianyang where he could keep an eye on them. He then divided up China into districts and appointed governors to rule them who would be loyal to him. The legal system of the new empire was based around the ideas of Legalism with strict punishments for even minor crimes. Shi Huangdi ordered that all books which did not agree with Legalist ideas be burned. Anyone found keeping or hiding banned books would be punished by being burned to death themselves. The emperor then ordered that scholars, many of whom had memorized these texts, be executed so that their knowledge would be lost.



During the Warring States period, every kingdom had different styles of writing, money, and transportation systems. Shi Huangdi first ordered that all writing throughout China would be done in the style of the Qin. He then created a system of gold and copper coins to replace the many different kinds of money used before. To make trade easier, he also created official weights and measurements so people would know exactly how much of a product they were buying. The emperor even created a law which said that the axle width of carts (the space between the wheels) had to be the same.

Hypothesize – On road made from earth, why would it be important to make the axle width of carts the same?

Shi Huangdi was able to use his power to force hundreds or thousands of ordinary Chinese people to work on huge public building projects. A system of wide roads was created linking together different parts of the empire. Canals were also dug which connected different rivers and made the transportation of heavy goods easier. The emperor also began linking up the different walls which had been built in the north of China to protect against attack from the north. By 210 BC, the Great Wall stretched for 3,100 miles at the cost of thousands of deaths. Shi Huangdi also had a huge tomb built for himself with thousands of statues of warriors built out of terracotta to guard him. The inside of his tomb was said to be a model of his empire made from precious metals and stones.





Towards the end of his life, Shi Huangdi became obsessed with his quest for immortality. Different “doctors” and magicians offered him various potions and pills which they claimed would help him but many of these contained dangerous chemicals – especially mercury – which ended up driving him mad. In 210 BC the emperor died on a tour of Eastern China, probably from the effects of the medicines he was taking. Shi Huangdi’s advisors were so scared of the people finding out about his death that they tried to keep it a secret for several months as they travelled back to the capital. They even had carts full of rotting fish pulled in front and behind of the emperor’s wagon to mask the smell of his rotting body. The emperor was buried in his tomb along with several of his wives who were strangled to death so they could be with him in the afterlife. The workmen who built the tomb were also locked inside so they would not reveal its secrets.

Shi Huangdi’s successor, Qin Er Shi, proved to be even less popular than his father. He and his chief advisor executed or imprisoned anyone suspected of being a threat often by charging them with false crimes. Rebellions against Qin rule broke out throughout China however the emperor’s advisors were so scared of telling him about defeats that they kept them a secret. In 207 BC, Qin Er Shi was overthrown and committed suicide. China again entered into a period of warfare as different rivals fought for the throne.

The text below was written by Li Si, an important official in the government of the Qin Dynasty.

“ Through military victories, the state of Qin has, in the time of the last six kings, brought the feudal lords into submission. Now, with the might of Qin and the virtues of Your Highness, at one stroke, like sweeping off the dust from a kitchen stove, the feudal lords can be annihilated, imperial rule can be established, and unification of the world can be brought about. This is the one moment in ten thousand ages. If Your Highness allows it to slip away and does not press the advantage in haste, the feudal lords will revive their strength and organize themselves into an anti-Qin alliance. Then no one, even though he possess the virtues of the Yellow Emperor, would be able to annex their territories. “

Virtues – Strengths

Annihilated – Destroyed

Haste – Quickness

Revive – Rebuild

Annex – Take or conquer.

1. Why does Li say the lords need to be overthrown?

2. What does Li say is the risk of inaction or delay?

Use the information on the previous pages to create an organizer showing the territory and cities of the Qin Dynasty and the ways in which Shi Huangdi attempted to create an organized and efficient empire.

THE QIN DYNASTY



Gobi Desert

Manchurian Plain

Yellow Sea

Huang He

Xianyang

Luoyang

Wu

East China Sea

Yangtze

Guangzhou

South China Sea

PACIFIC OCEAN



Territory of the Qin Dynasty



Shi Huangdi



Qin Warriors



Reconstruction of Shi Huangdi's Palace



Qin Governor



Execution of Confucian & Daoist Scholars



Burning Books



Qin Coin



Qin Official Writing on Bamboo



Qin Dynasty Weight



Cart and Oxen



Qin Road



Forced Labor on the Great Wall



Illustration of the Great Wall



Mound of the Tomb of Shi Huangdi



Terracotta Army Soldiers in Formation



Terracotta Warriors – Individual Figures

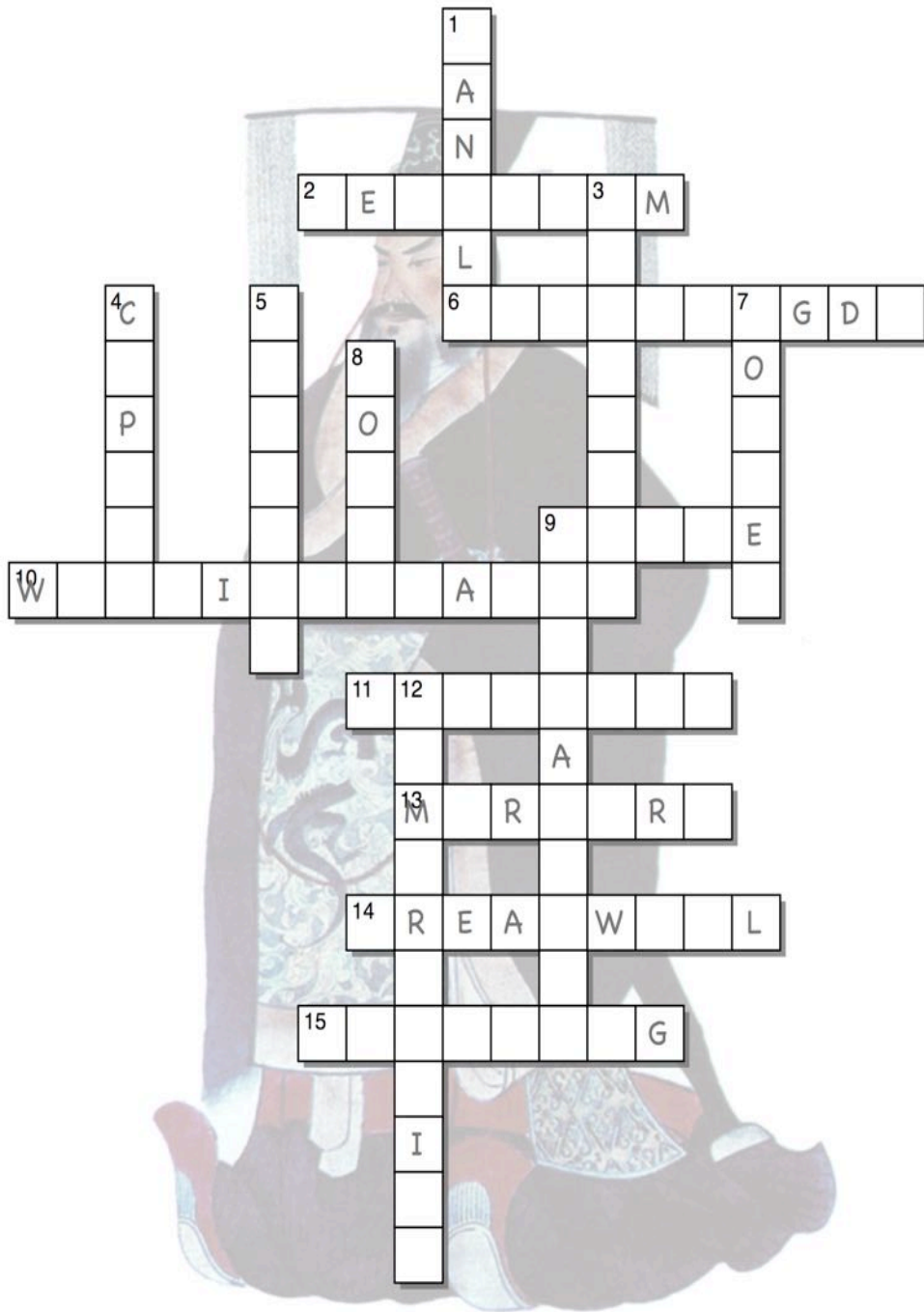


Royal Wagon found in Shi Huangdi's Tomb



Terracotta Horses





Across

2. Official government philosophy of the Qin Dynasty.
6. First ruler of the Qin Dynasty.
9. Official weights and measures made this easier.
10. Period before the rise of the Qin Dynasty.
11. The last Qin ruler.
13. This drove Shi Huangdi mad.
14. This was enlarged and extended under Qin rule.
15. Capital of the Qin Dynasty.

Down

1. Heavy goods could be transported along these.
3. Many of these people were executed by the Qin.
4. Metal used to make Qin coins.
5. This was standardized across China during the Qin Dynasty.
7. Qin rulers took power away from these people.
8. A network of these was constructed by the Qin.
9. Material used to make statues for Shi Huangdi's tomb.
12. Shi Huangdi became obsessed with this at the end of his life.