Section 1
The Geography of China’s River Valleys
Chapter 5
Ancient China
Objectives

- Examine the geography of ancient China.
- Find out about early civilization in China.
- Learn about the importance of family ties in early Chinese society.
Key Terms

- loess
- dike
- extended family
■ Dragons brought good luck.

■ Dragon gods were believed to be responsible for the rains.
Chinese civilization grew up in the river valleys of the Huang River (a.k.a. the Yellow River) and the Yangzi River.
Contrasting Climate and Landforms

- North China Plain is made of soil deposits from the Huang River.
- They have a brief, intense, summer monsoon.
- During other times the climate is dry.
Effects on Civilization

- The mountains, deserts, jungles, and other geographic features have isolated Chinese culture.

- Having little contact with others, the Chinese believed their culture was the center of the earth and called themselves the Middle Kingdom.
Yellow River or Huang River

- The Huang River is the second longest river in China.
- Huang means yellow in Chinese.
  - It is called this due to the yellow loess.
- The surrounding plains are covered with loess allowing for millet, a grain, to be grown.
China’s Sorrow

- Destructive floods would come without warning and drown thousands of people.

- There was so much force that sometimes the river would change course by hundreds of miles.
Flood Control

- To help control flooding they built dikes.

- This did not always work, causing more floods because the dikes would overflow.
What did the Chinese do to control flooding?

The Chinese built dikes or protective walls along the Huang’s banks to control flooding.
Nomads settled to farm around 5000 B.C.
Shang Dynasty

- About 1760 BC, the Shang gained control of northern China and built their first cities.
- Produced China’s writing system.
- Dynasty: A series of rulers from a family.
Zhou Dynasty

- The Zhou defeated the Shang in 1122 B.C.
- They ruled for almost 1000 years.
- At the end of the Zhou Dynasty small kingdoms fought for control.
  - This period was called the Warring States.
  - Finally, the Qin Dynasty emerged.
Mandate of Heaven

- Mandate is a law or an order.
- The Chinese believed that rulers came to power because it was their destiny or fate.
- The Mandate of Heaven also gave authority to the father over his family.
What was the Mandate of Heaven?

The Mandate of Heaven was the idea that people came to power because it was their destiny.
The family was more important than the individual or nation.
Traditional Families

- A household contained as many as 5 generations of an extended family.
- Rich families may have had one big home.
- Poor families may have lived in one room cottages with their extended family members in nearby cottages.
Family Authority

- Patriarchal family
- The oldest man had the most privileges and power.
- He decided marriages and dealt out punishments.
- Lands were given out to the sons and new households were established.
Women’s Roles

- Bound by three obediences:
  - Obey their fathers, husbands, and their sons.

- Four virtues:
  - Morality, modesty, proper speech, and domestic skills.

- Women were married off and were expected to obey their husband and mother-in-law.
Family Names

- In the 300’s B.C. Chinese families started to utilize family names along with personal names.
  - Passed down from father to son.
  - In Chinese society family name comes first.
What factors determined a person’s status within early Chinese families.

Families were very important in Chinese society and it was important to know an individual’s family of origin, age, and gender.
Section Assessment

1. (a) Identify Effects

How did the Huang River affect ancient Chinese civilization?
1. (b) Compare

What do you think ancient China had in common with the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and India?
2. (a) Recall

What was the first known civilization in China?
2. (b) Draw Conclusions

Describe the importance of China’s first civilization.

What effect do you think it had on later civilizations in ancient China?
3. (a) Recall

Describe the importance of family in early China.
3. (b) Apply Information

- In ancient China, members of an extended family often lived together in one home.

- How do you think the ancient Chinese benefited from their family structure?