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## **Ancient China**

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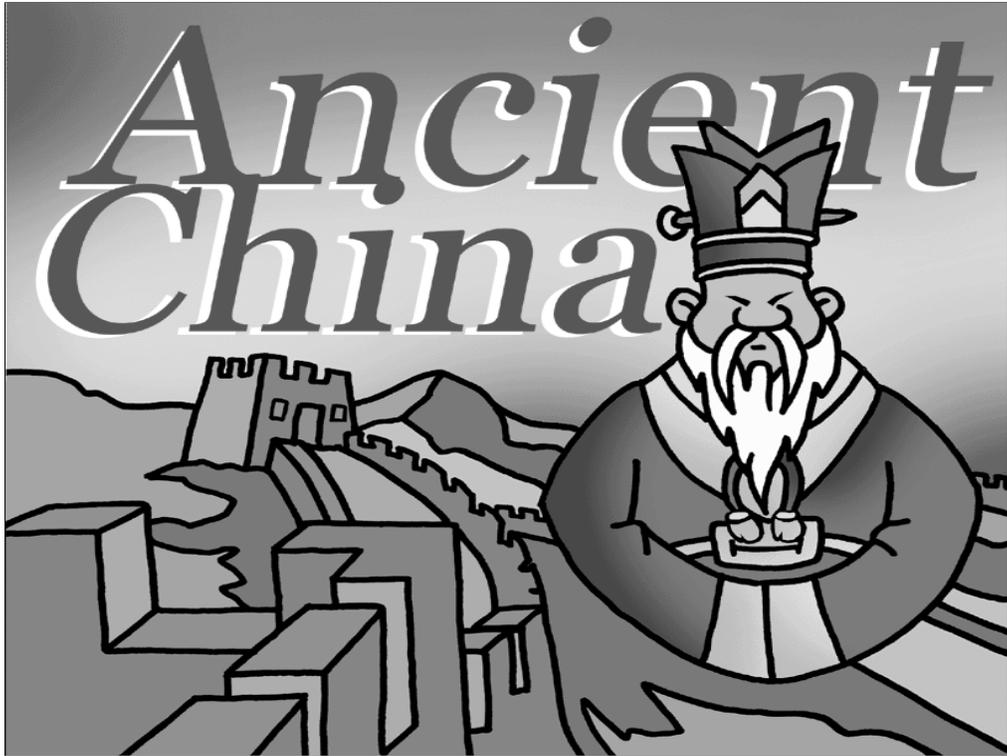
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# Introduction

Ancient China was a fascinating mix of ***extreme extravagance*** and ***extreme poverty***. The

ancient Chinese invented paper, gunpowder, matches, umbrellas, and the compass. They created incredible art, wrote marvelous literature, and held splendid festivals.



# Natural Barriers

For thousands of years, the ancient Chinese thought they were pretty much alone on the planet, except for the barbarians to the north, the Mongols.

China's natural barriers to the west, south, and east helped protect these early people from invasion.



Teacher's notes: In geography, as you know, a natural barrier is any landform or body of water that barricades or blocks easy access to an area. You will probably need to check to make sure your students understand the definition of a natural barrier. If they cannot define it, have someone look it up in a dictionary or your textbook and read the definition to the class.

# Deserts

China's natural barriers include deserts.

**The Gobi** is one of the driest deserts in the world. In the Gobi, there is at least the hope of water, although an oasis is rare.

**The Taklamakan** is called the "Sea of Death." It is the second-largest desert in the world. It offers poisonous snakes, sandstorms, boiling days, freezing nights, and intense water shortages.



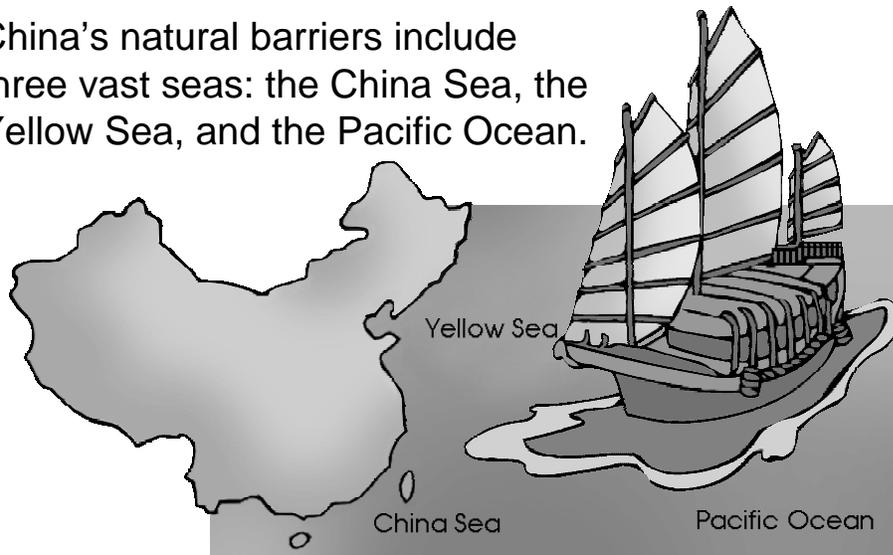
# Mountains

China's natural barriers include huge mountains. The Himalayas are very rugged, with ten of the tallest peaks in the world. Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.



# Seas

China's natural barriers include three vast seas: the China Sea, the Yellow Sea, and the Pacific Ocean.



# Rivers

Not all of China's geography acted as barriers. Some of its geographic features provided fertile soil and safe drinking water.

China has **two** major river systems: the Yellow River (Huang He) and the Yangtze River.

