

Ancient China

Mr. Donn and Maxie's Always Something You Can Use Series

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Ancient China Setting up the Room

With this unit, there is little need to set up much of the room in advance. Travel poster or maps will brighten the room until student work is posted. Throughout the unit, the students will be creating several things to post on the classroom walls or bulletin boards including Dragon Timelines, Great Wall Graffiti, Poetry Kites and a Chinese Calendar.

We would encourage you to set up a word wall and something special above the door leading into your classroom.

Word Wall

Design: This is consistent for all units, but each has its own look. We suggest the outside shape of a Chinese lantern or a section of the Great Wall. Place new words as you discover them in the unit on your word wall.

Once a week, have the kids pick a word, any word, define it, and use it in a sentence. Use the word wall to fill in short periods of time throughout the unit. Direct the kids to select any five words from the word wall, and create a news article. Or select any six words to form a group and be able to define the group. (Examples: buildings, words that begin with *a*.)

Door Into the Classroom: On the hallway side of the door into your classroom, use construction paper to frame your doorway, creating an entrance to ancient China. We suggest the use of a Chinese roof design posted on the wall over your doorway. This design is uniquely Chinese. Chinese roofs have an "A" design with the bottom of the "A" flipped up. The ancient Chinese believed that if they constructed their roofs with the base flipped up that no evil spirits could land on their roof.

Section One:
Introduction, Map

Introduction—Mulan
China's Natural Barriers
Map

Time frame: 2 class periods (55 minutes each)

Preparation:

- Daily Question. Use overhead projector or write question on the board.
- (This is a student writing activity. Students are to write answers to daily questions in their notebooks upon arrival.)
- Disney movie *Mulan*
- DVD player
- Reproducibles:
Story of Mulan
China's Natural Barriers
Map of China

Daily Question: What is a natural barrier?

Open Class: "Welcome honorable students to ancient China!" (Bow a few times.) "Today we begin our study of Ancient China."

Background Activity: Mulan

- Introduce China with the story of the real Mulan.
- **Say:** "Mulan is the story of a girl's love for her father, a girl willing to risk her life and to meet life's challenges with courage and humor."
- Read the story aloud to your class: *Story of Mulan*
- Then show clips of *Mulan* by Disney.
- Include:
 - Ancestor Worship
 - Dragons
 - Emperors
 - Great Wall
 - Bureaucracy

Activity: China's Natural Barriers

- **Say:** "Many people, besides the Huns from the north, tried to conquer China. The ancient Chinese built the Great Wall to protect themselves. We will learn more about the Great Wall as we continue our study of ancient China. Certainly, the Great Wall helped to keep out invaders. But what truly helped to keep China isolated from the rest of the early world was their geography."

- **Ask:** "What is a natural barrier? Does anyone remember? (Get an answer.) China had lots of natural barriers."
- **Group Activity:** Give each group one of China's natural barriers to research using materials you provide and/or their textbook. We have also included a sheet of information in this unit, if you choose to use it. Have each group report to the class on their assigned barrier. The barriers that ring China include: Himalayan Mountains, Mount Everest, Gobi Desert, Taklamakan Desert (Sea of Death), plus whatever other geographic features you would like to include under China's natural barriers.

Class Activity: Map of Ancient China

Hand out map of ancient China. Put a copy on the overhead projector. Add major map labels together. Check to make sure everyone is adding these on his or her map. If time permits, allow the students to color their maps, to finish your class time period.

Close Class: "Honorable students, thank you for coming." (Bow several times.)

Name:
Date:
Class:
Period:

China's Natural Barriers

Ancient China was isolated from much of the ancient world because of its geography. It wasn't until around 200 BCE that China was aware of any of the other civilizations around the Mediterranean, like the ancient Roman and the ancient Greeks. 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 to protect the ancient Chinese people from invasion.

Dangerous Deserts:

- **Gobi Desert:** The Gobi Desert is one of the driest deserts in the world. Compared to the horrors of the Taklamakan Desert, however, the Gobi is a paradise. In the Gobi, there is at least the hope of water, although water (an oasis) is very rare.
- **Taklamakan Desert:** This desert is called the Sea of Death from which no one escapes. The Taklamakan is the second largest desert in the world. It offers poisonous snakes, frequent sandstorms, boiling days, freezing nights, and intense water shortage. A very brave explorer did cross this desert on foot relatively recently. In 1998, Carla Perrotti, a 51-year-old Italian woman, crossed this desert. She walked over 200 miles in 24 days, alone.

Numerous Mountains: China has some of the highest mountain ranges in the world.

- **Himalayas:** The Himalayas are one of the mountain ranges in China. These rugged mountains are home to the ten highest mountain peaks in the world.
- **Mount Everest** is the highest mountain in the world. It is actually in Nepal, not in China, and is located close to the border between these two countries.

Vast Seas:

- China Sea
- Yellow Sea
- Pacific Ocean