Chinese Dynasties

Xia to Yuan

E.Q. How did China’s imperialistic dynasties transform its government and change its society?
Xia
2200 – 1750 BCE (approximate)

• Founded by Yu the Great
• First Chinese Dynasty
• No written records
• Only information comes from artifacts of bronze and pottery

**Not sure of their existence**
Shang (1750 - 1045 BCE)

- Developed writing system
- Ancestor Worship

www.cultural-china.com
en.wikipedia.org
Zhou (1027 - 250 BCE)

- Developed the Mandate of Heaven
- City-states within empire run by warlords – warlords fought one another for power and authority
- This weakened the power of the Zhou rulers
- Became known as the Warring States Period
- Confucianism and Daoism introduced
The Dynastic Cycle

**New Dynasty**
- Brings peace
- (Re)builds infrastructure
- Gives land to peasants
- Protects people

**Old Dynasty**
- Taxes people too much
- Stops protecting people
- Lets infrastructure decay
- Treats people unfairly

**Generations go by, New Dynasty becomes...**

**New Dynasty claims Mandate of Heaven**

**Old Dynasty loses Mandate of Heaven**

**Problems**
- Floods, earthquakes, etc.
- Peasant revolt
- Invaders attack, empire
- Bandits raid countryside
Imperial: having supreme authority over an empire

Imperialism: a nation’s economic and political influence over other nations
Qin (221 - 207 BCE)

• Through series of wars unified all of China
• Qin Shihuangdi became China’s first emperor
Transformation of Government

- Adopted **Legalism**:
  - *centralized* government
  - *divided* China into *regions*
  - *appointed* government officials oversaw the regions -- enforced the rules of the *emperor* -- ensured that *workers* did their jobs
  - *took power away from* *nobles* (hereditary power)
  - *burned books*
  - *executed* people who spoke against government
Qin Accomplishments

• Great Wall
  *built to protect the northern frontier
  *connected smaller walls that were already in place
  *peasants forced to work
  *people taxed to help pay for it

• Standardized (made the same throughout China)
  – Weights and measures
  – Currency (coins)
  – Writing System
Qin Accomplishments

• Built a system of roads and irrigation canals to help the army travel more quickly and to help the spread of trade

• Terra Cotta Soldiers
  – In his obsession with his death and afterlife, he had thousands of clay figures made and put in his burial chamber
Han (202 BCE - 221 CE)

• Dynasty began by a peasant revolt against the Qin. The leader of the revolt, Han Gaozu, became the first Han Emperor.

• For 300 of the 400 years that the Han Dynasty ruled, China was peaceful and prosperous.
• **Qin Influence:**
  * China remained divided into regions
  * Continued the use of government **officials** to oversee the regions.

• **Han Changes:**
  * Developed a **civil service exam** to find the best qualified people to help with the business of the government.
  * Set up a **school** to train people for government work.
  * **Confucianism** replaced Legalism
    • 5 Relationships supported **peace and order** and strengthened the position of the **Emperor**
  * Under Han rule, the population of China **tripled** and the empire was extended **north, south, and west**
Han Advancements

• Buddhism introduced
• Paper invented
• Great Wall extended
• Silk Road begun
  **end of isolation**
221 - 581 (CE)

- Warlords control china - no centralized gov’t
- Non-Chinese nomads control much of China
- Buddhism becomes popular - Confucianism failed
Sui (581 - 618 CE)

- Completed Grand Canal
- High taxes, forced labor
- Military failures (couldn’t conquer Korea)
- Assassination ends dynasty
Tang (618 - 907 CE)

• High point of Chinese culture
• Rebuilt bureaucracy
  – Examination system
  – Confucian education
  – Limited social mobility
• Buddhism supported, then oppressed
• Invention of movable print, porcelain, gun powder
Tang (618 - 907 CE)

- Wu Zetian - Only Empress in Chinese history

Decline
- Weak emperors, nomadic incursions, economic difficulties
- Warlords take control
Song (969 - 1279 CE)

• Large centralized bureaucracy (Neo-Confucian)
• Mercantile class grows, increased trade
• Magnetic compass, growing sea power
• Weak military
Yuan (1279 - 1368 CE)

- Mongol Khubilai Khan conquers China
- Economic stability and prosperity
- China more open to trade and travel (Marco Polo)
- Ignored Chinese traditions, replaced bureaucrats with non-Chinese
- Unsuccessful attacks on Japan, corruption weakens dynasty
- Peasant rebellion ends Yuan