Name: _____

Date: _____

ANCIENT CHINA
mrdowling.com

The Han: China's Enduring Dynasty

The Qin unified China, but the Han made it last. When Qin Shi Huang died in 210 BCE, the deep resentment created by his harsh rule exploded into widespread rebellions that quickly toppled the dynasty. After only fifteen years of unity, China seemed ready to return to the chaos of the Warring States period—until a charismatic outlaw rallied the opposition to the Qin.

The Outlaw

His name was Liu Bang, a former government official who was marked for death after prisoners escaped on his watch. Knowing the fate that awaited him under Qin law, Liu Bang freed his remaining prisoners, who hid with him in the swamps and became devoted followers. His small band eventually grew into a rebel army that seized the throne and established the Han Dynasty.

The Return of Confucius

After years of authoritarian rule, the Han needed honest and capable officials to govern a vast and ever-growing empire. They found the answer by turning back 300 years to Confucius. Although the Qin had banned his teachings and burned his books, the Han recognized that his philosophy of responsibility and good government offered the answers they needed for the challenges of their own time.

Confucius believed rulers should govern by example rather than fear. He taught that education, honesty, and responsibility were the foundations of good government. Inspired by these ideas, Han rulers used written tests to identify qualified candidates for government service.

Centures of Stability

During more than four centuries of Han rule, peace and stability at home allowed China to expand its borders, increase trade, and develop new technologies. To help govern such a large realm, the Chinese developed paper for record-keeping and communication. The Han traded with other cultures, and merchants heard stories of a land as rich and powerful as their own, far beyond the mountains and deserts and past the edge of the known world; people who called themselves Romans, but who many Han believed were little more than myth.

The Fall of the Han

For four centuries, the Han Dynasty brought stability and prosperity to China. By the third century CE, however, weak rulers, corruption, and rebellions had taken their toll. At the same time, pressure from warriors beyond China's northern frontier added to the chaos. By 220 CE, the Han Dynasty had collapsed, and China entered centuries of division and warfare. In 581 CE, the Sui Dynasty reunified China, setting the stage for what would become China's Golden Age.

Timeline of the China's Imperial Dynasties

Qin (221–206 BCE) – The First Emperor unified China after centuries of warfare, but his strict laws and harsh punishments made the Qin Dynasty deeply unpopular. Rebellions erupted soon after his death.

Han (206 BCE–220 CE) – Han armies expanded China's borders and opened trade routes that connected China to distant lands. During this period, Buddhism first entered China from India.

Age of Disunity (220–589 CE) – After the Han collapsed, rival kingdoms fought for control of China. Northern nomadic peoples established several kingdoms of their own.

Sui (581–618 CE) – The Sui reunited China after centuries of division. They also built the Grand Canal, linking northern and southern China and making trade easier.

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0", Space Before: 6 pt, After: 6 pt, Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style, Line spacing: Multiple 1.05 li

©Mike Dowling. All Rights Reserved.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Fill in the Blanks

The Han Dynasty ruled China for more than four c__n__u__ies and helped make China's *u__i__y last. After r__b__l__i__ns toppled the Q__n Dynasty, L__u B__ng established the Han Dynasty. Han rulers looked to C__n__u__i__s for guidance in governing their empire. Although the Q__n had b__n__ed Confucius' teachings and b__r__ed his books, the Han adopted his philosophy of r__s__o__s__b__l__ty and good g__v__r__m__nt. Confucius believed rulers should govern by e__a__p__e and taught that e__u__a__i__n, honesty, and r__s__o__s__b__l__ty were the f__u__d__t__o__s of good government. Han rulers used w__i__t__n tests to identify q__a__i__i__d candidates for government service. During the Han period, China expanded its b__r__e__s, increased t__a__e, and developed p__p__r for record-keeping and communication. Merchants heard stories of R__m__ns living beyond the m__u__t__i__s and deserts, past the e__ge of the k__o__n world. By the third c__n__u__y CE, weak rulers, c__r__u__t__on, rebellions, and pressure from w__r__i__rs beyond China's n__r__he__n frontier w__a__e__ed the empire. In 220 CE, the H__n Dynasty c__l__a__s__d, and China entered c__n__u__ies of d__v__s__on and w__r. The S__i Dynasty r__u__i__i__d China in 581 CE, setting the stage for China's G__l__en Age.

Answer in Complete Sentences

*1. Based on the story presented in the text, in your opinion, what was Liu Ban like? What personality characteristics do you think he possessed?

*2. Why was Confucius an unusual choice as a model for the Han government?

*3. Who were the people who lived "beyond the edge of the known world"? Why did many Han believe they were little more than myth?

4. What happened in China after the fall of the Han Dynasty?

*A higher order learning question. Any reasonable answer will be accepted.

©Mike Dowling. All Rights Reserved.