

See inside the... Shang Dynasty Resource Pack



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A full unit of work for upper KS2, covering the Shang Dynasty from the earliest settlements to the fall of the dynasty.

Detailed plans for each lesson

Session 2
Settling Down
What was it like in settlements around the Yellow River Plain?

Session objectives

- To consider the benefits and challenges of settling near a large river.
- To understand how Shang cities were structured and organised.
- To explain how social hierarchy affected whether Shang residents lived inside or outside of the city walls.

Introduction
Find the Yellow River (sometimes called Huang He) on Google Maps or in atlases. Explain that early settlements of the Shang Dynasty developed in the valleys around the Yellow River. Ask pupils to brainstorm good reasons for people settling near a big river. Then ask them to think about some of the disadvantages or dangers of settling next to a river. Using **Resource 2a** either as a whole class or in small groups, ask pupils to match up some of the problems posed to early settlers by the Yellow River with some of the solutions that they might have created.

Resources

- Atlases or web access
- Resource 2a (enlarged or one per small group)
- Resource 2b (one per pupil)
- Modelling materials (optional)

Main session
Explain that along the Yellow River Plains there were numerous Shang settlements. Some were small farming villages and others were thriving cities. Cities had temples and palaces at their centres and everything else, like the fancy wood and clay houses of priests and warriors, was built around them. There were enormous guarded earthen walls around the city that would act both as defences against the unpredictable river and as a way of keeping enemies out. Poorer people like craftsmen and farmers had to live in mud huts outside the city walls as their work was often dirty, noisy or smelly. Farmers and craftsmen would come along dirt roads to deliver their goods to the city through special gates in the city walls.

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Individual Task
Pupils will design a plan of a Shang City near the Yellow River. Use the checklist on **Resource 2b** to make sure that they have the correct features inside and outside the walls. They will need to label their city and make sure that it includes a large earthen wall with towers and gates. It will also need dirt roads that lead from the city gates to the craftspeople and the farming villages.

When the plans are finished, you might decide to extend the project by turning the plans into model cities using card, paper maché or junk modelling materials.

Extension Activity
Challenge pupils to find out about one of the archaeological sites in modern China where Shang city ruins have been discovered. Historians have learned a great deal about the Shang Dynasty from these excavations. Good sites to research include Yin Xu and Zhengzhou.

Spot Check
Ensure that the pupils understand that not all people lived in cities and that in fact most 'normal' people lived in farming villages or communities of craftspeople outside the city walls.

Plenary
Ask pupils to imagine that...

...designed. They will have to decide what kind of person they are going to be and whether they live inside or outside the walls. Then they should explain to their partner what their city is like. Choose one or two pupils to...

...resident of their city.

Did you know?
The walls around Shang cities are thought to have been very thick. They would typically have been 10 metres high and 20 metres thick. Some archaeologists believe that with simple tools, each wall could have taken 10 000 workers up to 18 years to build!

Assessment opportunities

Cross-curricular ideas

Extension tasks

Teacher background notes

20 pupil activity sheets

Unit overview and teacher guide