

WORLD HISTORY READERS

Level 6 - 6

China's First Empire

The Qin Dynasty

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Seed
Learning



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The First Qin Emperor



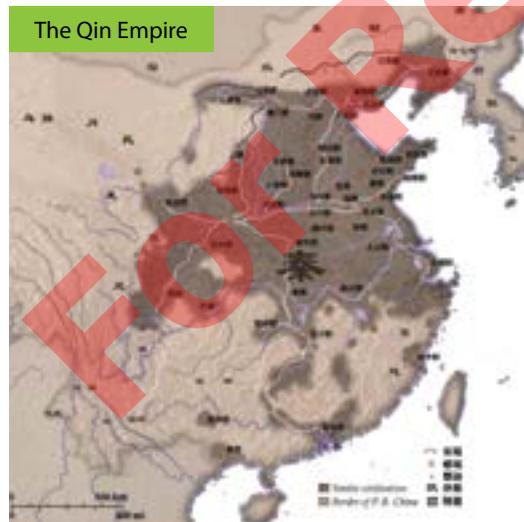
Who was good and who was bad?

When we read history, we often want to learn about who was good and who was bad. Sometimes it is easy to say that someone in history is good or bad, but history is about real people. Real people sometimes do both good things and bad things.

Qin Shi Huang was the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty, China's first empire. He

built some of the greatest symbols of ancient China and its culture. But by doing this, he destroyed the lives of many of his people. Yet, he and his family, his dynasty, ruled China for only a short time.

This is his story.



The Qin Empire

Powerful and Rich

Thousands of years ago, different parts of China were ruled by different kings. These kings were always at war. Each king wanted to rule all the other kings and their lands.

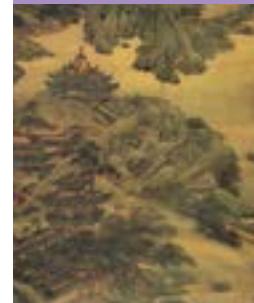
In the year 221 BC, King Ying Zheng won the last war to control these other lands. He became Emperor Qin Shi Huang. He helped his people by building water systems for farming and many roads.

The emperor and his government were very powerful and rich. They had many palaces—they may have had over 270 palaces!



Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China

Epang Palace, one of Qin's many palaces



Even when the emperor was not at a palace, many servants and ministers were still busy there. Every palace always looked like the emperor was there, so most people never knew where he was. That way, the emperor was safe from attack.

A Wall for Soldiers

Qin Shi Huang was powerful, but he knew that he had enemies. He was afraid his enemies would attack him. The emperor needed to send many soldiers farther west up the Yellow River to watch for foreign invaders. The soldiers needed high towers from which they could watch



The Great Wall was made of earth pressed between pieces of wood like this house.



Qin Shi Huang built the Great Wall to connect watchtowers.



Workers added to the Great Wall for hundreds of years. In the 1600s, the Ming Dynasty made it into the stone wall that we see today.

for attacks. The emperor decided to build a long wall with many watchtowers which became the Great Wall.

Today, people from all over the world like to visit the Great Wall for sightseeing, but building it was grim. Emperor Qin made people who lived near the wall build it for no pay. The emperor also sent prisoners from other parts of the

empire to build the Great Wall. It was very hard work, and many people died. Some historians think that one million people died in the first nine years of building the Great Wall.

Burning Books

Emperor Qin was a man who liked to control his world. One day, one of Emperor Qin's ministers named Han Fei told the emperor and another minister Li Si that people



A Chinese book written on bamboo strips

were criticizing the emperor. Han Fei said that people got ideas from books and were saying bad things about the emperor.

Li Si wrote a law that within 30 days, everyone would have to give their books to the government except books about fortune-telling,

farming, medicine, and the history of the emperor's family. In addition, anyone talking about certain banned books would be put to death.



Li Si wrote very strict laws for Qin Shi Huang's government.





The Great Wall of China



The burning of books and burying of scholars

The collected books were burned, and only one or two copies of each book was kept. These copies went into the imperial libraries in Xianyang. People who did not agree to give up their books were severely punished. Some were killed and others were sent to build the Great Wall for no pay. Many scholars died building the wall.

There is also a story about 460 scholars who kept their books. The emperor was so angry at them that instead of sending them to the Great Wall, he had them buried alive.

The problem with this story is that it was written by an official of the Han dynasty. The Han dynasty followed the Qin dynasty, and it can be expected that the author would write about the Qin dynasty in a negative way. There is no direct evidence of scholars being buried alive.

Scholars working on Chinese texts



A Fabulous Tomb

The emperor built a fabulous tomb for himself. It is a giant underground room that is guarded by no less than 8,000 terracotta warriors.

Historians of the time wrote that 700,000 men had worked on the emperor's tomb. They wrote that the tomb has a model of the empire with its famous buildings and mountains. In addition, it has models of China's rivers made of a flowing metal called mercury.



The Records of the Grand Historian tell us of the first Emperor's fabulous tomb.



Mercury is a shiny metal, but it flows like water.

The ceiling shows the moon, stars, and planets, made of gold and jewels. However, the tomb remains sealed. No one knows what is inside yet.

Comprehension Questions

- Most people never knew where Qin Shi Huang was because...
 - he was watching workers build the Great Wall.
 - he had many palaces, and each palace was always busy.
 - historians wrote lies about him.
 - He was hiding in a cart full of dried fish.
- Qin Shi Huang wanted ... to become emperor after he died.
 - Li Si
 - Huhai
 - Fusu
 - Zhao Gao
- Who built the Great Wall?
 - Prisoners
 - Unpaid workers who lived near the wall
 - Scholars under punishment
 - All of the above
- Who wrote the law about banned books?
 - Li Si
 - Zhao Gao
 - Fusu
 - Qin Shi Huang
- How did Qin Shi Huang die?
 - He became ill.
 - Ziying killed him.
 - Zhao Gao killed him.
 - He went into the emperor's tomb without food or water.
- Huhai later became...
 - Qin Er Shi.
 - Qin Shi Huang.
 - Zhao Gao.
 - Fusu.
- What did Zhao Gao do with a cart full of dried fish?
 - He gave it to Huhai.
 - He hid the emperor in it.
 - He gave it to the workers in the emperor's tomb.
 - He hid the smell of the emperor's dead body.
- Who found the terracotta warriors?
 - Scientists
 - Farmers
 - Li Si
 - Scholars
- Who destroyed Xianyang?
 - Han Fei
 - Xiang Yu
 - Li Si
 - Zhao Gao
- Who was emperor for the shortest time?
 - Fusu
 - Qin Shi Huang
 - Qin Er Shi
 - Ziying

Glossary

- **ban** to forbid; to refuse to allow
- **dynasty** a series of rulers or leaders who are all from the same family, or a period when a country is ruled by them
- **evidence** one or more reasons for believing that something is or is not true
- **fabulous** amazing and incredible
- **fake** not real, but made to look or seem real
- **grim** horrible; very unpleasant
- **invader** someone who attacks a country to take its land
- **mercury** a poisonous silver liquid metal
- **rebellion** an uprising or revolt against a leader
- **scholar** a learned person; a teacher
- **statue** an object made from a hard material, such as stone or metal, to look like a person or animal
- **tomb** a place or building to keep a dead person
- **wagon** a cart pulled by horses used for carrying heavy loads
- **watchtower** a tall building made to watch for people trying to invade

Key 1. (d) 2. (c) 3. (d) 4. (a) 5. (a) 6. (a) 7. (d) 8. (b) 9. (b) 10. (d)