



March 12-14, 1998

Medieval China: How to Put Some "Tang" in Your Medieval Dynasties

Grade Level: Fourth

Presented by: Michael Kestner and Betty Uebel

Length of Unit: 15 Lessons (1 hour)

I. ABSTRACT

The presentation begins with a review of Ancient China (2nd grade Core). It reviews the Great Wall, and early inventions. Experience an innovative way to explain a dynasty (using your own students). You will learn about the Tang and Sung Dynasties. We will give instructions on how to use an abacus, to construct a water compass, wood block printing demonstration, and moveable type. We will also include a list of current web sites.

II. OVERVIEW

- A. Geography of China
- B. Dynasties and timeline of China
- C. Important Ancient Chinese inventions and The Great Wall of China
- D. The arts and literature of China
- E. The Tang Dynasty
- F. How families lived in Tang times
- G. Tang Dynasty block printing and character writing
- H. Sung Dynasty and its inventions
 - I. The Three Way (The Religions of China)
 - J. The Silk Road
 - K. The Mongols
 - L. Marco Polo
- M. Review of Marco Polo video and completion of study guide
- N. Jeopardy Game on Medieval China
- O. Test

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- A. Knowledge of the continents of the world
- B. Knowledge of the second grade Ancient China Core topic
- C. Knowledge of a timeline

IV. RESOURCES

- Asia -Geography Mini-Unit, by: Evan-Moor (ISBN 1-55799-244-4)
- China Activity Book, by: Edupress (ISBN unknown)
- Ancient China, by: Eyewitness Books (ISBN 0-679-86167-X)
- Book, by: Eyewitness Books (ISBN 0-679-84-012-5)
- The Magic Tapestry, by: Demi (ISBN 0-8050-2810-2)
- Film-Travels of Marco Polo (MGM/UA Home Video) 48 minutes
- What Your Fourth Grader Needs To Know, by: E.D. Hirsch (ISBN 0-385-41118-9)
- The Silk Route, by: John S. Major (ISBN 0-06-022924-1)

V. LESSONS

A. Lesson One: Geography of Asia

1. Objective/Goal: On a map, the students will label the countries that border China and the physical features of Asia.

- a. Use a political map for the physical map because it is easier for students.
- b. The map can be modified for students with special needs.

2. Materials

- a. One double sided copy of good (with The Commonwealth of Independent States) map of Asia with a numbered key.
- b. One copy of appendix #1 ("Directions for Labeling Your Map")
- c. Overhead projector
- d. Modern maps of Asia and an older one to help students to understand why the date on the map is important (pay close attention to The Commonwealth of Independent States and if it is a really old map, South East Asia).

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. The students should know a small amount about China from the 2nd grade

unit.

4. Key Vocabulary

- a. See appendix #1

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Review the 7 continents and stop at Asia. Distribute the map of Asia and find China; now have the students color in China with a light color to help them to focus on it.
- b. Discuss the idea of neighboring countries and allow the students to label the map using the key (I have found that if you use a key with the corresponding numbers written in on the countries it is easier for the student to label the map.)
- c. Discuss the physical features of Asia and have students label them on the other map (stress the Ural Mountain and their importance as the border between Europe and Asia, and the Himalayan Mountains as a border).
- d. This geographical information allows students to understand where the Mongols came from, natural border, etc.
- e. If time allows, quiz the students on the countries that border China to the north, south, east and west so they may practice their cardinal directions.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The assessment for this lesson will be the completed maps.

B. Lesson Two: Time Line and Dynasties

1. **Objective/Goal:** Given the timeline of China, the students will understand the progression of Chinese history and how it is broken into dynasties. I have found that students understand history better if they can see when things happen, so I use sentence strips to construct a timeline of each medieval Core topic and place them beside each other on the timeline on the wall.

2. Materials

- a. A timeline on the wall (mine starts at 3,500 BC and continues to present).
- b. One sentence strip per student (triple hole punched to go in their binder)
- c. One copy of page 5 of the China Activity Book by Edupress

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. They should have had a small amount of experience of family line of rule from former Core units of study.
- b. They should be familiar with a timeline and how time is displayed on it.

4. Key Vocabulary

timeline, dynasty, emperor, empress, B.C. (before Christ), A.D. (Anno Domini: in the year of the lord)

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Have the students read the objective for the day and then ask the students if they can tell how rulers get their power and who takes over when a ruler dies.
- b. Distribute a copy of the "Chinese Timeline" (page 5 of China Activity Book by Edupress) and a sentence strip that has been 3-hole punched. The students should cut the paper apart to make a timeline (leave room for the definition of dynasty on the top of page 5).
- c. I use the students and their families as rulers as I construct several dynasties that rise and fall on the chalkboard. I give several reasons for a decline of a dynasty and how others rise. The students enjoy this activity because they will become each others husbands, wives, children, etc.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The students will construct a Chinese dynasty using children in their class or their own family members.

C. Lesson Three: Important Ancient Chinese Inventions and The Great Wall

1. Objective/Goal: The students will discuss how important inventions and The Great Wall influenced China and the world.

- a. The production of silk will be the main focus of the inventions, other focus will be basic exposure.
- b. The Great Wall and its purpose will be discussed.

2. Materials

- a. Several copies of the Eyewitness book Ancient China
- b. One copy of "How Silk is Made" (appendix #2) and a copy of the sequence chart (appendix #3) per student
- c. A piece of wool and a piece of silk
- d. The Great Wall of China worksheet (appendix #4)

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. The student will have the knowledge of inventions and The Great Wall of China from second grade unit.
- b. A general knowledge of what silk and wool feel like

4. Key Vocabulary

stern post rudder, seismograph, wheelbarrow, blast furnace, junk (Chinese ship), bronze

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Open the lesson by reading the objective. The student should brainstorm to see

if they can recall any of the Chinese inventions that they learned about in second grade.

- b. Distribute the Eyewitness book, Ancient China and review examine the ancient Chinese inventions: sternpost rudder (p.23), seismograph (p.22), wheelbarrow (p.23), blast furnace (p.22), bronze (p.6).
- c. Distribute one copy of "How to Make Silk" and a copy of the sequence chain.
- d. Read the short history of silk and then talk about why it was so important. I like to let the student feel silk and wool at the same time and then ask them if they would rather have silk or wool next to their skin.
- e. Read the paragraph entitled "How Silk is Made" as a group and then explain to the students that they should cut out the pictures and place them in the proper order by rereading "How Silk is Made." Have them paste pictures on the sequence chart (only after you have check their order) and write a brief description below each picture.
- f. Have the students flip over their sequence chain and read the passage about The Great Wall of China. Give the students time to answer the questions and then review the answers.
- g. Tell the students to study their silk sequence because they will have a quiz on it tomorrow.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The completed sequence chart will be your final assessment for this lesson.

D. Lesson Four: The Arts and Literature of China

1. **Objective/Goal:** The student will listen to The Magic Tapestry and then discuss how it relates to silk production and Chinese art. This a connection between yesterday's lesson and Chinese art and literature.

2. Materials

- a. One copy of a silk making quiz (what you want them to know)
- b. One copy of the picture book, The Magic Tapestry.
- c. Several copies of the Eyewitness book, Ancient China

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. The knowledge of the process of making silk.

4. Key Vocabulary

ivory, jade, bronze, tapestry, scrolls, porcelain

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Begin the lesson by giving the students a quiz on the silk making process.
- b. Read The Magic Tapestry as a read aloud.
- c. Discuss the parts of the silk making process found in The Magic Tapestry.

- d. Look at the pictures of examples of art found in the Eyewitness book, Ancient China.
- e. Have the students write a short paragraph about their favorite kind of Chinese art.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The short paragraph will be the assessment.

E. Lesson Five: The Tang Dynasty

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will read a passage about the Tang Dynasty and write a fictional story based on the factual knowledge found in the passage. (The story will be homework, if it is not completed in class.)

2. Materials

- a. One copy per student of " Tang Dynasty" (appendix #5 and #6)

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. Geography of Asia presented in lesson #1

4. Key Vocabulary

- a. Tang Tai-cong, Chang-an, concubine, Wu Chao, Xuan-cang, Yang Kui-fei

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Before you begin reading the passage about the Tang Dynasty, tell the students that they will have to pick a factual part of the passage and write a fictional story using that fact.
- b. Have a student read paragraph one and find the Tang Dynasty on the classroom timeline; pronounce Tang Tai-cong's name together.
- c. Have a student read paragraph two and discuss the spread of Chinese culture.
- d. Read paragraph three and discuss the development of a strong government.
- e. Read paragraph four and discuss Wo Chao and what a concubine is.
- f. Read paragraph five and discuss life under Xuan-cang's rule.
- g. Read the last three paragraphs and discuss the end of the Tang Dynasty.
- h. Model the students with the fictional essay.
- i. Have the students write their fictional essay and assign it as homework if not finished.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The discussion will be the informal assessment and the fictional essay will be the formal assessment.

F. Lesson Six: How Families Lived in Tang Times

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will read the worksheet entitled How Families Lived and answer the questions.
2. **Materials**
 - a. The worksheet "How Families Lived" (Appendices #7 and #8)
3. **Prior Knowledge for Students**
 - a. The students will have a general knowledge of what life was like during Tang times from the former lessons.
4. **Key Vocabulary**

temples, dishonor, and obedience
5. **Procedures/Activities**
 - a. Read the first three paragraphs and then discuss the difference between life in towns, villages, and cities.
 - b. Read each of the four paragraphs on the People of the Time and discuss the role of family and each of its members.
 - c. Give the students the rest of the time to answer questions 1-6 on Appendix #8.
6. **Evaluation/Assessment**
 - a. The evaluation will be the answers to questions 1-6.

G. Lesson Seven: Tang Dynasty Block Printing and Character Writing

1. **Objective/Goal:**
 - a. The students will discuss, perform and write a short essay on block printing.
 - b. The students will discuss and perform Chinese character writing.

(This would be a good day to have a parent on hand, especially if you do the potato block printing and not the rubber stamps.)
2. **Materials**
 - a. Wood Block Printing Worksheet (Should be an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of paper with Wood Block Printing across the top and then have 6 lines at the bottom for their paragraph.)
 - b. Potatoes (with words and designs cut into them backwards to resemble woodblock) or a collection of rubber stamps
 - c. Washable paint (in several colors) or if you are using the rubber stamp option

a stamp pad

- d. One paring knife and one potato (to demonstrate the way the figures and letters were cut out)
- e. PAPER TOWELS!
- f. "Chinese Character Writing" worksheet (Appendix #9)

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. a. The students should have the understanding of reverse images.

4. Key Vocabulary

- a. woodblock
- b. character
- c. pictograph
- d. ideograph
- e. compound

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Introduce the lesson by having the students read the objectives for the day. Now discuss how two objectives will be accomplished (see below). Then tell them that you will discuss block printing first and to listen carefully because they will have to write a short paragraph about the process.
- b. Discuss wood block printing as you demonstrate how it is done. Just watching me cut up a potato, seemed to keep their attention (make it a simple one or you will cut yourself).
- c. Show the students how the area that should not touch the paper has been cut away and only the backwards image is remaining. Also show how it is like the modern rubber stamps.
- d. Tell the students that they will be wood block printing in a few minutes but you would also like to talk about Chinese character writing first.
- e. Read through the Chinese Character Writing worksheet and discuss how it is done. Look at the collection of compound ideographs and demonstrate a few for the students on the board or chart paper.
- f. Tell the students that they should continue to write compound ideographs at their desks as the other groups do the wood block printing.
- g. Tell the first group to go to the wood block printing station and have the other students working on their compound ideographs in their seats.
- h. Tell the students that if they have not completed their paragraph on wood block printing, that it will be homework.
- i. Another neat assignment and one that the students do not mind doing is a worksheet on character writing (Instructional Fair, Inc., Social Studies Mini-Units, p.60-61)

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The assessment will be the compound ideographs that the students are writing and the block printing paragraph.

H. Lesson Eight: The Sung Dynasty and It's Inventions

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will learn about the Sung Dynasty and the important contributions that it made to Chinese civilization and world civilization.

2. Materials

- a. One copy per student of "The Sung Dynasty" worksheet (Appendix #10 and 11)
- b. A 2/5 abacus
- c. Instruction on reading an abacus (See <http://www.qi-journal.com/abacus.html>)
- d. overhead projector
- e. One hand stamp with moveable type (you can get them at Wal-Mart).
- f. One large magnetized pin or a small thin steel nail, small cork, quart of water, and a transparent plastic or glass container
- g. Paper money domestic and foreign

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. Student should know what a compass is and for what it is used.
- b. They should know what gunpowder is and how it works.

4. Key Vocabulary

- a. abacus
- b. moveable type
- c. compass
- d. magnetic
- e. sulfur, saltpeter, charcoal (gunpowder)
- f. precious

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Introduce the lesson by reading the objective.
- b. Read the first paragraph and discuss beginning of the dynasty, its contribution, and the end of the dynasty.
- c. Read the second paragraph and to set the stage for the introduction of the inventions.
- d. Read the paragraph about the abacus and then show an abacus to the students. Then place it on the overhead projector and work out several problems using the abacus. Give a student a calculator to check your work.
- e. Read the paragraph about moveable type and then discuss its importance to the world. Make sure to highlight why it was more useful to the Europeans than the Chinese. Show them a hand stamp with moveable type and then ask them,

"How long do you think it would take me to write _____ on all of your papers?" (the blank represents what you have put in your stamp). Then ask the students to time you as you stamp it on all of their papers. Calculate the time saved and then talk about if it were a whole page of a book: how much of a time savings would it be? Why was this such a valuable invention?

- f. Read the paragraph about the magnetic compass with the students. Discuss the importance of the compass in the exploration of the world. Then tell the students that you will make a compass just like the one that the Chinese first invented. Take the large pin or small nail (steel) and shove it through the cork; make sure it is centered or the heavier end will sink. Place the container of water on the overhead and place the magnetized pin and cork in the water. Focus the overhead. You may run into a focus problem if you have too much water in the container; just pour a little out. Then spin the cork and it will (we hope) settle back, pointing to the same direction every time.
- g. Read the paragraph about gunpowder and discuss the importance of its development and uses. This is one that they can't experiment with! Ha ha!!
- h. Read about paper money, what it means, and how it works. Hand a student a dollar and then ask them to trade you for a piece of plain paper; discuss why s/he will not take that trade. Why is money valuable?
- i. Close by talking about how much of an impact the Chinese civilization has had on the world.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. There will be informal assessment during the question and answer part of the lesson. This is a high interest lesson and you will have no trouble with people not paying attention.

I. Lesson Nine: The Three Ways- The Religions of China

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will discuss the three religions of Medieval China.

The understanding of these religions will help the students to understand the Chinese people.

2. Materials

- a. One copy per student of The Three Ways worksheet (Appendix #12 and #13)
- b. Something with the Yin and Yang symbol
- c. A Buddha sculpture if you can find one

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. The students should recognize the popular symbols of Yin and Yang and Buddha.

4. Key Vocabulary

- a. Confucianism

- b. morality
- c. ancestor
- d. virtue
- e. Daoism/Taoism
- f. Yin and Yang
- g. Buddhism
- h. Buddha
- i. karma and nirvana

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Read paragraph one and discuss how religions based on peace and harmony would effect the lives of the people who practice that religion.
- b. Read about Confucianism and discuss what life would be like if everybody practiced this religion 100%.
- c. Read about Taoism and Daoism and discuss the two spellings and the symbol of Yin and Yang.
- d. Read about Buddhism and Buddhist's belief in rebirth, karma, and nirvana.
- e. Have the students react to the religion and to vote on the one that they thought was most interesting.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The assessment will be informal now but will be tested on the final test.

J. Lesson Ten: The Silk Road

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will discuss and list the items traded and the animals used as beasts of burden. Trace to silk road on a classroom map and maps of Asia in student's notebooks.
2. **Materials**
 - a. *The Silk Route*, by John S. Major (read aloud)
 - b. Map of Asia
3. **Prior Knowledge for Students**
 - a. The geography of Asia
4. **Key Vocabulary**
 - a. Silk Road
 - b. beast of burden
 - c. trade
 - d. jade

e. porcelain

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Briefly discuss the Silk Road and give the students a list of things to listen for: goods traded, beasts of burden, the way the Silk Road was traveled.
- b. Read the book aloud showing the pictures.
- c. After the reading is complete, brainstorm for answers to the following questions:
 - What items were traded on the silk road? (Record in their notebooks)
 - What beasts of burden were used? (Record in their notebooks)
 - What route did the Silk Road travel? (Draw on their map of Asia)

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The listing of the items traded, beasts of burden, and the route of the Silk Road.

K. Lesson Eleven: The Mongols (Genghis and Kublai Khan)

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will read a paragraph on both Genghis and Kublai Khan and write a summary paragraph on both men. This lesson can be adapted to children with a lower reading level by letting the able students work alone while the teacher works in a small group with the children unable to read the text.

2. Materials

- a. Overhead transparencies of pages 157 and 158 of What Your Fourth Grader Needs To Know
- b. paragraph graphic organizers
- c. composition paper

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. The components of a good paragraph.
- b. The geography of Asia

4. Key Vocabulary

- a. Mongol
- b. Golden Horde
- c. Genghis Khan
- d. Kublai Khan
- e. Subjects

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Read as a group the two passages entitled "The Wrath of Genghis Khan" and "Kublai Khan" and then give the students their assignment.
- b. The students will read, "The Wrath of Genghis Khan" and "Kublai Khan" and write a summary paragraph of each.
- c. The students will hand in their completed paragraphs to the teacher.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. The paragraphs will be the assessment.
They will be evaluated on their structure and content (limited writing)

L. Lesson Twelve: The Travels of Marco Polo

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will watch a video called "Travels of Marco Polo."
 - a. The video is 48 minutes long and only allows for a short discussion before and after.

2. Materials

- a. "Travels of Marco Polo" (video tape)

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. The geography of Asia
- b. Knowledge of the Mongols and Kublai Khan
- c. The location of Italy

4. Key Vocabulary

- a. governor

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. Introduce the film with a brief explanation of who Marco Polo was and his accomplishments.
- b. View the tape (running time: 48 minutes)
- c. Brief discussion of video and tell them that they will have a full discussion tomorrow.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. Due to the length of the film, there will be a whole group discussion of the video and the life of Marco Polo tomorrow. A paragraph will be written about him on the study guide.

M. Lesson Thirteen: Marco Polo and Study Guide Day

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will complete a study guide which will include a paragraph about Marco Polo that will be written from a class generated graphic organizer (on the blackboard).
2. **Materials**
 - a. One copy of the study guide per student
3. **Prior Knowledge for Students**
 - a. the whole unit
4. **Key Vocabulary**
 - a. All previous vocabulary
5. **Procedures/Activities**
 - a. Discuss the Marco Polo video and have the entire class participate in making a graphic organizer for a paragraph on Marco Polo. Have each student write his/her own paragraph on the study guide.
 - b. Complete the study guide with the student (this allows the students to focus on a smaller body of information to help them achieve success on the test).
 - c. Remind the students to study and of the Medieval China Jeopardy tomorrow.
6. **Evaluation/Assessment**
 - a. Informally assess their progress and assist those in need. The formal assessment will be on test day.

N. Lesson Fourteen: Medieval China Jeopardy

1. **Objective/Goal:** The student will work as teams to win at Medieval China Jeopardy.

The questions should be developed from the study guide material.

2. **Materials**
 - a. A Jeopardy board on the chalkboard
 - b. A list of questions at different levels of difficulty
3. **Prior Knowledge for Students**
 - a. The whole unit and all study guide information
4. **Key Vocabulary**
 - a. All unit vocabulary
5. **Procedures/Activities**
 - a. All I can tell you is to watch Jeopardy on television and figure it out for

yourself.

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. Each team's final score will be their assessment.

O. Lesson Fifteen: Test on Medieval China

1. **Objective/Goal:** The students will complete a test on Medieval China, to the best of their ability. The test should be read to or tape recorded for those students with disabilities.

2. Materials

- a. One copy of the test per student

3. Prior Knowledge for Students

- a. a. The whole unit

4. Key Vocabulary

- a. a. All vocabulary outlined in the unit

5. Procedures/Activities

- a. a. Administer the test

6. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. It is its own assessment.

VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY

The Jeopardy Game in lesson fourteen is the culminating activity.

VII. HANDOUTS/STUDENT WORKSHEETS

- A. Appendix #1 Directions For Labeling Your Map
- B. Appendix #2 How Silk Is Made
- C. Appendix #3 How Silk Is Made Sequence Chart
- D. Appendix #4 The Great Wall of China
- E. Appendixes #5&6 Tang Dynasty
- F. Appendixes #7&8 How Families Lived
- G. Appendix #9 Chinese Character Writing

H. Appendixes #10&11 Sung Dynasty

I. Appendixes #12&13 The Three Ways (The Religions of Medieval China)

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY (see Resources)

[Home](#) | [About Core Knowledge](#) | [Schools](#) | [Bookstore](#) | Lesson Plans | [Conference](#)

[Contact us](#) © 1997 Core Knowledge Foundation.