

THE SHANG DYNASTY

Here is some information about archaeology and the ancient Chinese civilisation known as the Shang Dynasty. Read the following paragraphs and **tick** the phrase that sums up each **main idea**.



The role of the archaeologist is to examine evidence of past civilisations. Whether they specialise in coins, weapons or pottery, they are essentially history detectives, gathering clues in order to build up a picture of how people once lived.

past civilisations

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history detectives

☐

how people lived

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It is very hard to date precisely the rise to power of the Shang Dynasty in northern China. It more or less coincided with what is referred to as the Bronze Age, when the Chinese discovered how to make bronze out of tin and copper. Many 4000-year-old bronze objects have been found.

date of Shang Dynasty

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Bronze Age

☐

many objects found

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Around this period, another remarkable development was taking place. Evidence of the invention of writing has been provided by the discovery of oracle bones. Similar to Egyptian hieroglyphics, their writing was based on pictures that represented ideas.

discovery of oracle

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Egyptian hieroglyphics

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invention of writing

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The king and his priests or advisers would have had important decisions to make. They would use oracle bones to predict the future or decide on a course of action. They would consult the bones on questions of military action, whether or not the king was likely to have an heir, or if it was likely to be sunny.

kings and priests

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oracle bones

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predicting the future

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A priest would carve the king's question on an oracle bone (often this would be a turtle bone). He then heated a bronze pin and held it against the bone, causing a series of cracks to appear on the surface of the bone. An oracle reader, usually a woman, would be called upon to interpret the pattern of cracks and provide the king with an answer.

the priest's task



the oracle reader



reading the bone



Much of what we know about the Shang Dynasty comes from the archaeological excavations of tombs. It is clear that there was a strong belief in the power of gods, but that the only way of communicating with them and seeking their favour was indirectly through the spirits of the dead. The graves of ancestors had, therefore, to be well tended with the provision of food in bronze vessels and regular ritual sacrifices.

excavation of tombs



power of gods



contacting the gods



ritual sacrifices



From the two pieces of text above, write down a **detail** that supports the following ideas:

1. The priest caused a series of cracks on the oracle bone.

2. The oracle reader provided the king with an answer to his question.

3. Archaeologists have discovered a lot about the Shang Dynasty.

4. The graves of ancestors had to be well tended.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Here are some sports commentaries from a school newsletter. **Underline a phrase or a clause** that captures the **main idea**.

The football team has had a successful season so far, which is, perhaps, the reason why Mr Chowdray feels able to make some changes, naming two new players in the line-up this afternoon. Whether this affects the shape of the team remains to be seen. But we all know how eager David and Bartek have been to win a place.

Our very own Harriet in Class 6B, the region's tennis number 3, now says she's in better shape than ever. Following last month's knee injury, her recovery has been swift. Everything will depend on her state of game fitness. There are some tough games ahead, but her trainer Mrs Jones has high hopes.

Last week, our rugby team did not impress. The younger members of the team had been given an opportunity to shine, but they unquestionably missed a great opportunity as well as several tries.

Carla says she was nervous seconds before the start of the 100m free style race for the county championship, but her butterflies soon disappeared. Once in the water, she took the lead immediately and held on to it right to the end. Somehow she can turn nerves into energy.

Netball captain, Janine, says that her gamble has paid off. Lagging behind for much of the season, her decision to spend time working on a faster, more attacking style has left opponents standing. The new approach was risky at times, but the team's higher position in the local league says it all.