

Discovering Ancient China

Grade 4-6

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DISCOVERING ANCIENT CHINA



Ch'in Reading Card One

An Introduction to China

When you think of China, do you see Chinese food, tea, silk fans and the Great Wall? All these things and many more have become linked with the oriental country of China.

Though many people enjoy Chinese food picked up at the corner restaurant, we also eat, drink, wear and use other items that **originated** in China. Did you know that paper was invented in China?

Before we look further into China and its history, we should first find out where this most interesting country is located and learn a few **geological** facts about the land.

China is located on the continent we know as **Asia**. It lies between 20° N latitude and 50° N latitude, and 75° E longitude and 145° E longitude. On its eastern and southeastern coasts lie the ocean, specifically the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. These seas are all part of the world's largest ocean, the Pacific.

China's neighbor to the north is Russia, to the west is India, and to the south is Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, and Laos. North and South Korea are her nearest neighbors to the east, and across the Sea of Japan lies the country of Japan.

The name *China* is not what the Chinese gave themselves, but rather a name adopted by people from Europe who first visited China approximately 2 400 years ago. China at that time was ruled by a **dynasty** called the Ch'in. So the European explorers referred to that country as China. The Chinese preferred to call their country **The Middle Kingdom** because they thought that they were the center of their world long before they had contact with other countries. Today, China's formal name when translated into English, is the **Middle Flowery People's Republic**.



DISCOVERING ANCIENT CHINA



Despite the fact that China had excellent boats, called **junks**, which they used for fishing and trading along their own coast, the Chinese never seemed to want to explore beyond their own land or travel across the sea. Many of their inventions remained within their country for many centuries until discovered by the visiting European explorers and traders.

With the oceans on the east, impassable tropical jungles to the south, and very treacherous mountains to the west, China was almost isolated from the rest of the world. Many travelers found that the easiest route into China was from the north. Even this northern route was a tricky one because it crossed the Gobi Desert!

Records from ancient artifacts tell us that probably the first visitors to China were the Arabs, after that the Japanese, and then finally explorers from Europe.

When the European explorer, Marco Polo, visited China in the Thirteenth Century he was very surprised at the differences between the landscapes of northern and southern China. The north to him seemed brown and dusty while the south was lush and green. He even named the areas differently, calling the north Cathay and the south, Manji. Even with this "division", the Chinese history and culture is the longest, unbroken one in the world, and today the population of China is the world's largest.





DISCOVERING ANCIENT CHINA



Name: _____

Ch'in Reading Activity One

An Introduction to China

Read Card One, "An Introduction to China" and then answer each question below. Think about what is being asked. Answer carefully with full sentences.

1. Make a list of five to ten items that either **originated** in China and we use today, or items that are **exported** from China.

2. On the map of the world:

- a) locate China. Color it red.
b) outline in green, the continent of Asia.

- c) Look at China. How big is this country compared to the continent of Asia? _____

3. On the same map, print the name of your country and color it orange. With the help of an atlas and your teacher, **estimate** how far it is from your country to China.

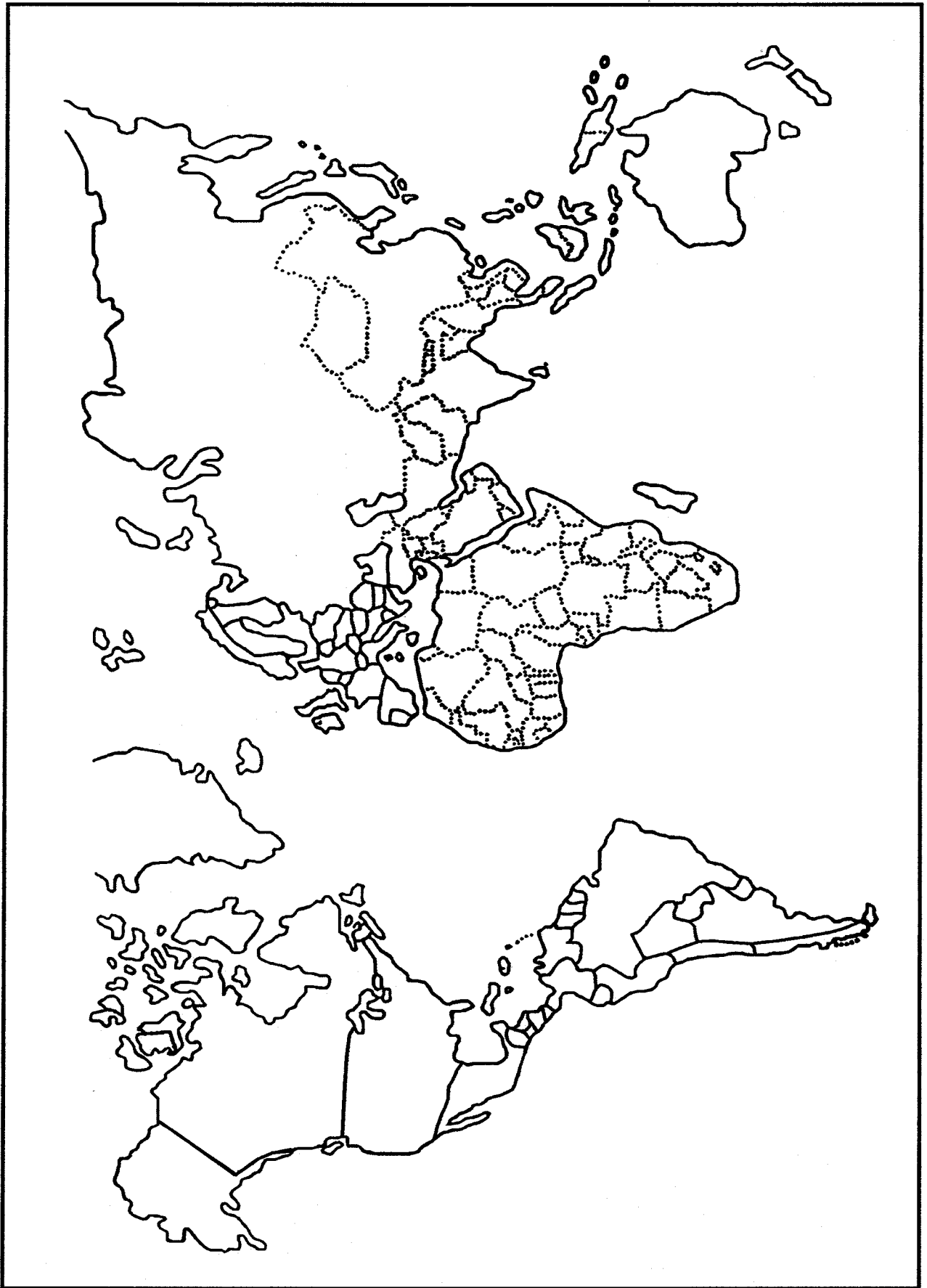
4. a) How did China get its name? _____

- b) What is the correct name for China? _____

5. Give four reasons why China remained **isolated** from the rest of the world for so long. _____

6. Who was Marco Polo? _____

Map of the World





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Ch'in Reading Card Two

The Great Wall

China's first invaders came by way of the northern route across the Gobi Desert. These raiders were desert dwellers who were unafraid of the harsh climate of the desert because they had lived there all their lives. Again and again they attacked the ancient Chinese governments over the centuries until finally the rulers of China decided something more permanent than just an army was needed to defend their country.

The **Great Wall of China**, called the **Ten-Thousand-Mile-Long Wall** by the Chinese, is actually just over 3 000 kilometers (1 800 miles) long. It is not even one continuous wall. Parts of the wall are hard to see because they are little more than mounded sections of earth, yet other segments are over fifteen meters (sixteen yards) high!

There is one very interesting fact about the Great Wall of China that will actually amaze you. It is the only man-made construction that would be visible to a Martian astronomer! In other words, the Great Wall could be seen from Mars through the eyepiece of an ordinary astronomer's telescope. Amazing!!

The Wall was not built all at once but rather in sections over a long period of time. The reason that there are several "mini" walls is because independent Chinese princes in the northern provinces often built their own wall to defend their particular section of land.

About 2 000 years ago, one ruler of China decided that it would be a good idea to connect many of the pieces of the Wall and make one continuous barrier. This ruler, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti (a member of the Ch'in dynasty from which China got its name) decided that **garrisons** of soldiers would be established along the wall at set locations so that they might patrol the border and keep out the "enemies of the north".