

If your last name begins with the letter A-M, do readings 1 + 2; N-Z do readings 3 + 4. Answer related questions.

The Law of Shi Huangdi, First Emperor of China

Like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, Shi Huangdi conquered vast areas and unified diverse peoples under one rule. After becoming the first emperor of what is now China, he attempted to suppress the traditional Confucian way of governing by imposing a harsh legal system.

In 1974, near the city of Xian, Chinese archeologists unearthed almost 8,000 full-sized clay statues of warriors, horses, and chariots. Each clay warrior bore unique facial features along with a distinct hairstyle and armor showing his military rank. The archaeologists found the clay army buried on the approach to the still-unopened tomb of China's first emperor, Shi Huangdi, who died more than 2,000 years ago. Before his death, the emperor had ordered 700,000 workers to labor on his tomb. His ability to command many people to work on such projects flowed from his success as a military mastermind. But he also established a severe legal code that conflicted with traditional Chinese ideals.

Reading 1 - The Unification of China

For more than 250 years before the first emperor, war raged throughout China. Starting in 481 B.C., the seven major kingdoms making up what is now most of China constantly fought one another. This is known in Chinese history as the Period of Warring States. Gradually, the Kingdom of Qin, in the north, took advantage of its superior cavalry to form a fearsome war machine. Led by a series of gifted leaders, Qin won 15 major wars from 374-234 B.C.

Near the end of this violent time, an ambitious rich merchant, Lu Buwei, sought the favor of Zizhu, the crown prince of Qin. In 259 B.C., Lu Buwei presented one of his mistresses to the prince. Later, this woman gave birth to a child, named Cheng, who eventually would become the first emperor of China. Tradition has it that the merchant Lu Buwei, not Crown Prince Zizhu, actually fathered the child. In any case, when Cheng was 10-years-old, Zizhu became king of Qin and made Lu Buwei his chief adviser.

Zizhu died after only three years on the throne. Cheng succeeded him. But since Cheng was only 13 years old, his mother and Lu Buwei governed in his name until he reached adulthood. When Cheng turned 21 in 238 B.C., he assumed full powers as king. But his mother and her lover conspired (possibly with Lu Buwei) to overthrow his rule. King Cheng acted quickly to crush the conspiracy. He temporarily banished his mother from the Qin capital, decapitated her lover, and removed Lu Buwei from his high office.

He also ordered all foreigners expelled from Qin. But a brilliant government official, Li Si, persuaded him to cancel the order. Li Si, himself a foreigner, convinced Cheng that many valuable people would end up serving the enemies of Qin if forced to leave. Li Si so impressed Cheng that the king promoted him minister of justice in place of Lu Buwei.

King Cheng decided to undertake something never before accomplished by any ruler in the land: the conquest of all the other kingdoms and unification of them under one rule. He followed Li Si's plan to use spies and bribery to prevent a grand alliance of the other six kingdoms against him. At the same time, he created an unstoppable army that included up to 600,000 fighting men, most of them conscripted (drafted) peasants.

Cheng did not actually lead his troops into battle, but was a master military strategist. He also appointed his generals based on ability rather than family name. The young king used his mobile cavalry and lightly armored foot soldiers to outmaneuver the enemy's bulky war chariots. Cheng's warriors used the most advanced weapons including bronze swords, spears, and dagger-axes along with longbows and crossbows.

Beginning in 230 B.C., Cheng embarked on his campaign of conquest. In less than a decade, he had conquered and annexed all six enemy kingdoms. In 221 B.C., he proclaimed himself "Qin Shi Huangdi," which means the first great emperor of China.

The Law of Shi Huangdi, First Emperor of China

Like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, Shi Huangdi conquered vast areas and unified diverse peoples under one rule. After becoming the first emperor of what is now China, he attempted to suppress the traditional Confucian way of governing by imposing a harsh legal system.

In 1974, near the city of Xian, Chinese archeologists unearthed almost 8,000 full-sized clay statues of warriors, horses, and chariots. Each clay warrior bore unique facial features along with a distinct hairstyle and armor showing his military rank. The archaeologists found the clay army buried on the approach to the still-unopened tomb of China's first emperor, Shi Huangdi, who died more than 2,000 years ago. Before his death, the emperor had ordered 700,000 workers to labor on his tomb. His ability to command many people to work on such projects flowed from his success as a military mastermind. But he also established a severe legal code that conflicted with traditional Chinese ideals.

Reading 2 - "All under Heaven"

An ancient chronicle of Chinese history records that after the last of the six kingdoms fell, "Qin now possessed All under Heaven." For the first time, China was unified under one ruler. Shi Huangdi himself declared that his dynasty would endure "for generations without end."

Unlike most leaders before him in China, Shi Huangdi favored the new and innovative while rejecting many past traditions. Li Si, appointed as the first emperor's grand counselor, shared this view.

Acting on Li Si's advice, Shi Huangdi abolished the old feudal system, which had distributed most lands to powerful lords. Li Si organized China into 36 districts governed by officials appointed by the first emperor. To further his grasp of power and control, Shi Huangdi ordered all the royal families of the vanquished kingdoms to move to his capital city of Xianyang. There he could keep watch over them.

During the next few years, the first emperor and Li Si brought about many changes in China. They standardized writing, coins, and weights and measures. They created a network of tree-lined highways covering more miles than the Roman road system would a few hundred years later. They built palaces, canals, irrigation systems, and Shi Huangdi's own tomb complex. The first emperor also ordered the extension and new construction of earthen defensive walls in the north to keep out barbarian invaders. This Great Wall of China ran 2,600 miles across northern China to the sea. (Almost 1,500 years later, it was reconstructed with stone during the Ming dynasty.)

To support his massive projects, the first emperor created a tax system that burdened everyone, especially the common people. The emperor's land tax took up to 50 percent of a family's yearly grain production. Even more oppressive, however, was conscription. In addition to military conscription, all males from 15 to 60 years of age had to work for fixed periods on local public works, such as building roads and repairing dikes. Those convicted of crimes or who could not pay their taxes were often transported faraway to labor on the emperor's projects like the Great Wall. With many peasants away from the fields working on the emperor's projects, their crops frequently failed. According to one scholar at that time, the poor often "ate the food of dogs and swine."

A-M last name readers: go to the first set of questions below readings 3 + 4.

If your last name begins with the letter A-M, do readings 1 + 2; N-Z do readings 3 + 4.

The Law of Shi Huangdi, First Emperor of China

Like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, Shi Huangdi conquered vast areas and unified diverse peoples under one rule. After becoming the first emperor of what is now China, he attempted to suppress the traditional Confucian way of governing by imposing a harsh legal system.

In 1974, near the city of Xian, Chinese archeologists unearthed almost 8,000 full-sized clay statues of warriors, horses, and chariots. Each clay warrior bore unique facial features along with a distinct hairstyle and armor showing his military rank. The archaeologists found the clay army buried on the approach to the still-unopened tomb of China's first emperor, Shi Huangdi, who died more than 2,000 years ago. Before his death, the emperor had ordered 700,000 workers to labor on his tomb. His ability to command many people to work on such projects flowed from his success as a military mastermind. But he also established a severe legal code that conflicted with traditional Chinese ideals.

Reading 3 - The Law of Shi Huangdi

Before Shi Huangdi became emperor, Qin's rulers followed the teachings of the philosopher Confucius (551-479 B.C.). Confucius believed in a well-ordered society tied to tradition and the past. He also valued learning and scholarship. In his view, the state resembled a large family guided by the righteous behavior of the ruler. The ideal leader ruled by compassion, not force, and avoided war while easing the burdens of the poor. According to Confucius, a ruler who failed to set the example of goodness for his subjects would lose the "Mandate of Heaven," and his reign would end in disaster.

Shi Huangdi, however, preferred another school of thought called **Legalism**. The Legalists believed that people were basically motivated by self-interest and therefore had to be controlled by a strong ruler and stern punishments. Han Fei-tzu, a Legalist and the tutor of Shi Huangdi, wrote, "The ruler alone should possess the power, wielding it like lightning or like thunder."

Li Si, the first emperor's grand counselor, was also a Legalist. He created a law code to govern the newly unified China. Under the *Qin Law Code*, district officials, all appointed by the emperor, investigated crimes, arrested suspects, and acted as judges. When arrested, criminal suspects were often beaten to get a confession. Those arrested were presumed guilty until they could prove their innocence. Trials took place before a judge with no jury or lawyers.

The *Qin Law Code* set specified harsh punishments for particular crimes. Penalties for less serious violations included fines, beatings with a stick, hard labor on public works, and banishment to frontier regions. For more serious offenses, lawbreakers faced bodily mutilation by tattooing the face, flogging, cutting off the nose, amputating one or both feet, and castration. The death penalty was reserved for the worst criminals, especially those who threatened the emperor or the state. Execution was normally by beheading. But in some cases, the criminal could be cut in two at the waist, boiled in a cauldron, or torn apart by horse-drawn chariots.

Although the harsh punishments were supposed to deter lawbreaking, many people ran afoul of the law. The Qin Law Code covered so many offenses that common people frequently did not realize they had committed a crime until they had been arrested. Also, the code reflected the Legalist theory of group responsibility. All members of a family faced punishment when one member violated the law. Under Shi Huangdi's law, increasing numbers of people wore the red clothes of a convict.

The Law of Shi Huangdi, First Emperor of China

Like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, Shi Huangdi conquered vast areas and unified diverse peoples under one rule. After becoming the first emperor of what is now China, he attempted to suppress the traditional Confucian way of governing by imposing a harsh legal system.

In 1974, near the city of Xian, Chinese archeologists unearthed almost 8,000 full-sized clay statues of warriors, horses, and chariots. Each clay warrior bore unique facial features along with a distinct hairstyle and armor showing his military rank. The archaeologists found the clay army buried on the approach to the still-unopened tomb of China's first emperor, Shi Huangdi, who died more than 2,000 years ago. Before his death, the emperor had ordered 700,000 workers to labor on his tomb. His ability to command many people to work on such projects flowed from his success as a military mastermind. But he also established a severe legal code that conflicted with traditional Chinese ideals.

4 - The Fall of the Qin Dynasty

In 213 B.C., eight years after becoming emperor, Shi Huangdi held an assembly of scholars to debate the future of the empire. During this debate, one scholar brazenly called for a return to traditional Confucian teachings and a restoration of the feudal system. This so enraged Li Si, the emperor's chief adviser, that he made this radical proposal to Shi Huangdi:

"These scholars learn only from the old, not from the new, and employ their learning to oppose our rule and confuse the . . . people. . . . This lowers the prestige of the [emperor] and leads to the formation of factions below. It must be stopped. . . . Let all historical records but those of Qin be destroyed."

Sensing that he was losing control of the empire, Shi Huangdi agreed with Li Si. He ordered the burning of history books, the classics of Confucius, and the writings of other schools of thought. These "books" were actually writings on silk scrolls and rolls of wood and bamboo strips, since paper had not yet been invented. According to some accounts, after the book burning, Shi Huangdi ordered several hundred scholars executed or banished to work on the Great Wall.

During the next few years, Shi Huangdi grew increasingly isolated. He became obsessed with finding an elixir for immortality. He sent magicians to distant lands to find the elusive potion and toured the empire himself in search of it. On his last tour, he seemed to descend into madness on his quest for everlasting life. He apparently took concoctions containing mercury and other poisonous substances, which ironically probably shortened his life. In 210 B.C. at age 49, he died while still touring the empire.

The Qin dynasty did not last long after Shi Huangdi was buried in his elaborate tomb guarded by thousands of clay soldiers. Peasant revolts erupted followed by rebellions led by lords from the six kingdoms Shi Huangdi had conquered. In 206 B.C. the last ruler of Qin surrendered to a rebel army and was beheaded. The rebels then burned Xianyang, the Qin capital.

Although the Qin dynasty lasted only a short time, China remained unified under one emperor until the 20th century. Later dynasties merged the first emperor's severe Legalist law code with Confucian thinking to provide a more humane system of justice for China. Shi Huangdi may never have found the elixir for immortality, but his ideas and accomplishments influenced Chinese civilization for many hundreds of years.

Today's leaders of China still borrow from both Confucianism and Legalism. Sometimes they do it to maintain their own power, but many do believe that one system or a combination of the two brings harmony and peace and are therefore good policies for government.

N-Z last name readers: go to the second set of questions below; i.e., skip the first set of questions.

If your last name begins with the letter A-M, do readings and questions 1 + 2;

N-Z do readings and question 3 + 4.

The Law of Shi Huangdi, First Emperor of China

Note: The first emperor went by various names and titles, one of which was Qin (pronounced chin, from whence China got its name). You will be assigned either reading 1 + 2 or 3 + 4, then answer the questions below that pertain to your reading. We are trying to determine if Qin was a good leader or not.

But first, do you believe that humans are naturally good or bad?

Readings 1 + 2

1) What was the major achievement of Qin that allowed him to do other things for China?

2) Was Qin a good leader? List specific examples of his qualities (provide at least two) and achievements or failures (provide at least three) to support your answer.

Qualities:

a)

b)

Achievements/Failures:

a)

b)

c)

d)

3) Overall, do you have a favorable opinion of Qin as a leader?

If you have finished, you can and should read the other two readings, but don't answer the other questions or change your answers.

If your last name begins with the letter A-M, do readings and questions 1 + 2;

N-Z do readings and question 3 + 4.

The Law of Shi Huangdi, First Emperor of China

Note: The first emperor went by various names and titles, one of which was Qin (pronounced chin, from whence China got its name). You will be assigned either reading 1 + 2 or 3 + 4, then answer the questions below that pertain to your reading. We are trying to determine if Qin was a good leader or not.

But first, do you believe that humans are naturally good or bad?

Readings 3 + 4

- 1)** What was the major achievement of Qin that allowed him to do other things for China? Note: The answer is provided here as it is not in readings 3 + 4.

Answer: Qin united the various warring kingdoms of China to create the modern boundaries. In doing so, he ended 250 years of bloody and destructive Civil War.

- 2)** Was Qin a good leader? List specific examples of his qualities (provide at least two) and achievements or failures (provide at least three) to support your answer.

Qualities:

a)

b)

Achievements/Failures:

a)

b)

c)

d)

- 3)** Overall, do you have a favorable opinion of Qin as a leader?

If you have finished, you can and should read the other two readings, but don't answer the other questions or change your answers.