



LESSON 2.1.4 | WATCH | Crash Course World History #7 2000 Years of Chinese History

PREVIEW

In which John introduces you to quite a lot of Chinese history by discussing the complicated relationship between the Confucian scholars who wrote Chinese history and the emperors (and empress) who made it. Included is a brief introduction to all the dynasties in Chinese history and an introduction to Confucius and the Confucian emphasis on filial piety, the role the mandate of heaven played in organizing China, and how China became the first modern state.

PURPOSE

In Crash Course World History #7, students examine the long, vibrant history of China, what has allowed this culture to thrive for over 2000 years, and how this area became the first modern state.

Crash Course videos should be used as an introduction to new ideas and concepts, an instruction to core ideas of the unit, and should serve as a reinforcement of previously learned events.

PROCESS

As with all of the videos in the course, assign students to watch the video before class. The first time through, have students just try to capture the gist of the video. The next time, have them try to determine important facts and information. Remind students of John's fast-talking and play the video with captions. Pause and rewind when necessary. As students watch the video, have them consider who writes history and why it's important to know the sources for the history we know.

LINK

- [Crash Course World History #7 – 2000 Years of Chinese History](#)

Video questions for students to answer during their viewing.



LESSON 2.1.4 | WATCH | Key Ideas – Factual

Use these questions and prompts at the appropriate stopping points to check in with students and ensure they are getting the key concepts covered in the video.

1. (0:54) Why does John Green refer to China as the first modern state?

SAMPLE ANSWER: China had a centralized government and a large team of bureaucrats, who executed the wishes of the rulers of that government.

2. (1:44) What is a dynasty?

SAMPLE ANSWER: A dynasty is a system of government in which the right to rule is passed down through the family line. In the case of China, this meant that the emperors ruled over the area and as long as the family produced heirs then that family usually retained the power.

3. (1:59) How can a dynasty end?

SAMPLE ANSWER: A dynasty can end if there are no heirs but as John Green tells us, this was pretty well assured in China where the emperor had numerous concubines. Most Chinese dynasties were overthrown after a rebellion or war.

4. (3:07) What was the first real dynasty of China? When did the dynastic period end and why?

SAMPLE ANSWER: The first Chinese dynasty was the Shang as the Xia dynasty was more fiction than fact. After numerous dynasties rose to power, ruled, and then fell, there was a rebellion in 1911 that put an end to the entire Chinese dynastic system.

5. (4:58) What was the Mandate of Heaven?

SAMPLE ANSWER: The Mandate of Heaven was a political and philosophical concept that dates from the Zhou dynasty. Many historians think this idea was created by the Zhou to get rid of the Shang because before the Zhou, China didn't even have a concept of Heaven. If the emperor behaved in a proper, upright manner and protected his (or her) people then he (or she) had the right to rule but if they didn't live up to this then they could be overthrown by a new ruler who was acting on divine intervention.



6. (6:03) What did the Qin dynasty accomplish?

SAMPLE ANSWER: This dynasty gave China its name. China was reunified under a single emperor and this dynasty ended the Warring States period. The Qin also had a reputation for brutality, which the next dynasty – the Han – used to explain why the Qin had to be defeated.

7. (6:32) How did Chinese historians portray the Han emperor Wen?

SAMPLE ANSWER: As a benevolent ruler who followed Confucian principles and therefore, retained the right to rule under the Mandate of Heaven. Harsh punishments and executions declined and the government encouraged learning (stopped burning books).

8. (8:18) What is Confucianism?

SAMPLE ANSWER: A political philosophy created by Confucius, who was a minor official during the Warring States period. While his views were largely ignored during this period, later emperors followed his conservative theory that the ruler should be wise and of upright, moral behavior. Confucianism rests on the idea that everyone has a place in society (the social hierarchy) and in relationship to other people. Five key relationships are part of this philosophy but the most important was that between father and son (the concept of filial piety). The goal of this relationship was that both father and son would be “superior men” or junzi. It was especially important for the emperor to behave in this way because he was seen as the father to the entire country.

9. (10:47) Why did Confucius emphasize the study of history?

SAMPLE ANSWER: One must study the history of sage emperors and learn from them and a good junzi had to understand and appreciate beauty in history, poetry, and painting. Emperors, as well as all Chinese, had to have proper behavior (ren) and venerate their ancestors (li). By studying the past, present and future emperors could learn from the behavior of those in the past because if emperors failed their people due to poor behavior then that could also cause natural disasters and rebellions, which could be seen throughout the history of China according to Confucian historians.