

China

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,178

LEVELED BOOK • U

China

Discussion Questions

Compare and Contrast:

How is Chinese writing different from English writing?

Analyze:

Why does the food in China differ so much from region to region?

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Front and back cover: The Great Wall of China, built over hundreds of years, is considered to be one of the most amazing structures on Earth.

Title page: Chinese New Year is celebrated with a wide variety of colorful paper artwork.

Page 3: Tourists shop in a popular ancient town in China that is known for its traditional style of buildings and local food.

China
Countries Around the World
Level U Leveled Book
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Correlation

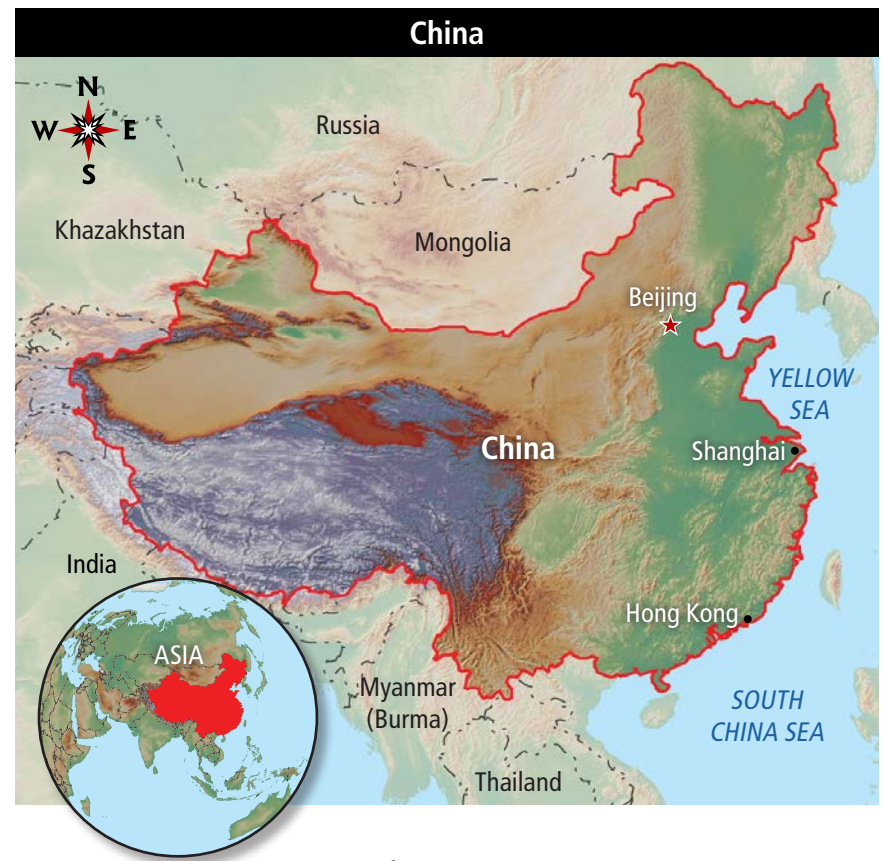
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Where Is It?

The People's Republic of China is one of the largest countries in the world, along with Russia, Canada, and the United States. Russia and China cover a large part of the continent of Asia. In fact, China is almost as large as the entire continent of Europe. Many countries border China, including India, Mongolia, Russia, and North Korea.

To the east of China are the Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea. China has about 14,500 kilometers (9,000 mi.) of coastline.



The Forbidden City in Beijing was built in the early 1400s, and first housed the emperor's family in 1420.

China has several large cities, including Shanghai, Beijing, and Hong Kong. Beijing, the capital, is located in northeast China. Its name has changed many times, yet Beijing is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is over three thousand years old. More than fifteen million people live there today.

Beijing is a mixture of both ancient and modern buildings. Skyscrapers reach for the sky beside buildings that have stood for hundreds of years. At the center of Beijing is the **Forbidden City**. This palace, built in the fifteenth century, was the home of China's **emperors** for more than five hundred years. It is called the Forbidden City because only the emperor of China could enter every area in it. Today, the palace is a museum.

People

More than 1.3 billion people live in China, which is more than in any other country. The United States has about 316 million people. That's about one quarter the size of China's population.



More than half of the people in China live in towns, villages, or the countryside. People who live in rural regions often grow crops and raise livestock for food, while people who live in towns and villages may manufacture goods as well as perform other jobs. Many people also live in large cities, which are centers for trade and business.

Many different **ethnic groups** live in China. The Han is the largest group. Other groups include the Hui (HWAY), Zhuang (JWAHNG), Dai (DY), Yao (YOW), Miao (MEOW), Tibetans (teh-BET-uhns), Manchus (MAN-chooz), and Mongolians (mahn-GOH-lee-uhns).

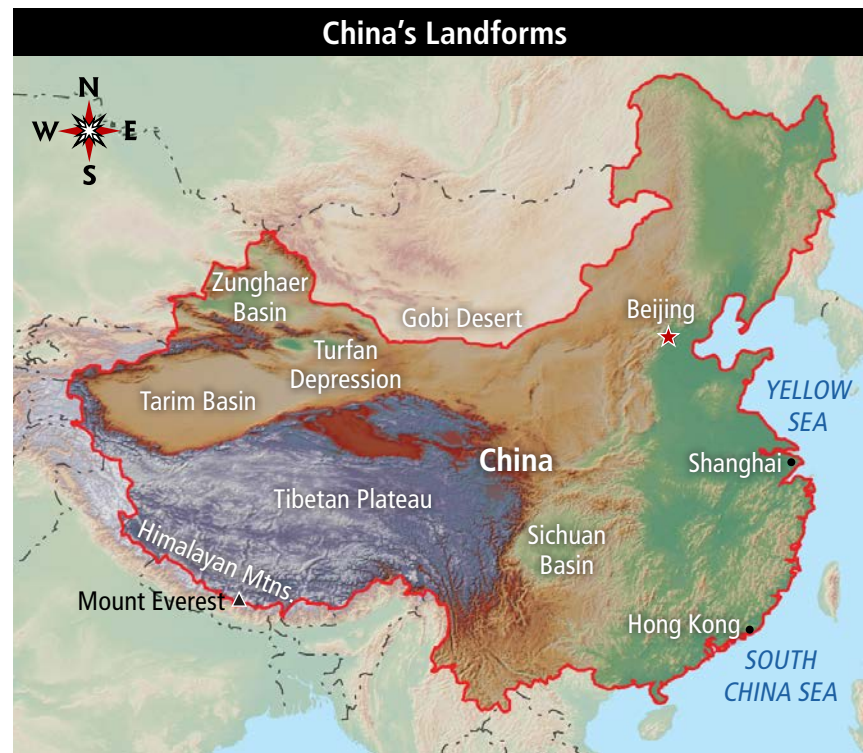
Most Chinese people speak Mandarin, which means "common language." People in China also speak many other languages, including Cantonese and English.



It can take years to master the art of calligraphy. Every line or dot must be perfectly spaced, showing balance and beauty.

Chinese writing does not use the letters of the English alphabet. Instead, it uses thousands of characters that stand for words or parts of words. Some of these characters look like what they mean. For example, the character for the word *forest* looks like three trees in a forest.

Chinese artists have been creating amazing works for thousands of years. One of the more interesting art forms is **calligraphy**, which is a combination of art and writing. Calligraphers use ink to create beautiful Chinese characters. The characters combine to create stunning images as well as powerful poetry.



Land

Because China is so large, it has many different landforms. In the northwest, deserts, mountains, and canyons stretch across the region. This area also includes one of the lowest places on Earth—a salt lake located in the Turfan Depression. The lake is 154 meters (505 ft.) below sea level.

In the southwest, several mountain ranges reach up into the sky. The most famous range is the Himalayas, which includes the highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest. The southwest also includes high **plateaus**.



Tian Shan (tsee-EN SHAHN)
Mountains



Bamboo forest



Yellow River

In the east, the land includes flat plains, **wetlands**, and forests. This flat land is the only land suited to farming. Part of the Yangtze (yank-SEE) River flows through this region, as well as part of the Yellow River. These rivers help provide water for the fields. Farmers grow rice, wheat, potatoes, and peanuts. Other crops include tea, barley, and cotton. In addition, many people across China raise animals, such as chickens, goats, pigs, sheep, and cattle.

History

Experts estimate that Chinese civilization began over five thousand years ago! In fact, some of the oldest **artifacts** in the world have been found in China. Ancient Chinese people kept good records, which have helped experts learn about the country's history.

The ancient Chinese named their land *Zhongguo* (JOONG-gwah), which means “the Middle Kingdom.” They believed that it was the center of the civilized world.

In order to protect the land from invaders from Mongolia, the Chinese emperor began building a giant wall around 220 BC. Work would continue on the Great Wall for nearly 2,000 years. The Great Wall is actually a series of walls in northern China and southern Mongolia. One of the sections stretches for about 8,850 kilometers (5,500 mi.).

For more than three thousand years, parts of China were ruled by emperors. Sometimes one family would rule an area for hundreds of years. This was known as a *dynasty*. Under these dynasties, China became an advanced civilization.



Great Wall of China



Confucius

Kong Fuzi (KOHNG FOO-tsu), also known as Confucius (kuhn-FYOO-shuhs), was a Chinese philosopher and teacher. Confucius believed that people, including government leaders, should serve others. He also believed that all people had the right to an education. Confucius died in 479 BC, but his teachings are still followed today.

The ancient Chinese people discovered and invented many things we still use today. They were the first to create paper, nearly two thousand years ago. They also invented the magnetic compass, which helped sailors find their way. Gunpowder is another Chinese invention. They used it to blast rocks apart and make fireworks for celebrations.

The ancient Chinese were also the first to make fabric from **silk**. It became the country's most popular **export** for many years. People traveled from around the world on a trade route called the *Silk Road* to get it. The fibers used to make silk come from the cocoons of silkworms. The ancient Chinese discovered they could separate the fibers from the cocoon. Then, they spun the fibers together to make a strong thread. The thread was woven together to make beautiful cloth.



The Chinese New Year celebration lasts two weeks and includes dances such as this fire dragon dance.

Celebrations

One of the most widely celebrated holidays in China is the New Year. The Chinese New Year takes place in late January or early February, depending on the Chinese calendar. During the festival, dancers carry colorful dragons or lions through the streets. People light firecrackers and enjoy feasts. They decorate their doorways with poetry written on strips of red paper. These traditions are thought to bring good luck in the coming year.

The Lantern Festival is another popular celebration in China. Held soon after the Chinese New Year, it celebrates the first full moon of the year. People hang colorful paper lanterns outside with riddles attached. Others try to solve the riddles to receive a small gift. People also enjoy sweet dumplings made of rice flour.



Dumplings are popular in many areas of China. They are filled with meat or vegetables.

Food

Rice is the basis for many meals in China. Other common ingredients are noodles, potatoes, meat, fish, and tofu. The typical meals can be different depending on the region. In some parts of China, the food may be very spicy. In the southeast near the ocean, seafood is a main part of many dishes. In the north, many people use wheat instead of rice.

For dessert, many Chinese people have seasonal fruit. They may also enjoy candies, pancakes, or a dish made of shaved ice and fruit called *baobing* (BOU-beeng).



Every year, millions of people visit the Great Wall of China. It is considered by many Chinese people to be the country's national symbol.

Conclusion

China's history stretches back thousands of years. Its diverse people have created interesting and unique cultures. Stretching across much of Asia, its wonders include breathtaking mountains, the Great Wall, delicious food, and exciting celebrations. If you visited China, which wonder would you want to experience first?



Population: 1,355,692,576

Land: 9,569,901 sq km (3,694,959 sq. mi.)

Capital City: Beijing

Primary Language: Mandarin

Primary Religions: Daoism, Buddhism

Currency: Yuan (yoo-WAHN)



Source: Central Intelligence Agency (July 2014), World Bank

Glossary

artifacts (<i>n.</i>)	objects made or used by humans long ago (p. 10)
calligraphy (<i>n.</i>)	the art of creating beautiful or stylized writing using special brushes or pens (p. 7)
emperors (<i>n.</i>)	men who rule an empire (p. 5)
ethnic groups (<i>n.</i>)	groups of people who share common traits, such as race, religion, language, or culture (p. 6)
export (<i>n.</i>)	a product that is sent or sold to another country or state (p. 11)
forbidden (<i>adj.</i>)	not allowed (p. 5)
plateaus (<i>n.</i>)	large raised areas of flat land (p. 8)
silk (<i>n.</i>)	a type of fabric made from the threads of a silkworm (p. 11)
wetlands (<i>n.</i>)	areas of land that are marshy or swampy (p. 9)