



Shang Dynasty Knowledge Organiser

When and where was the Shang Dynasty?



The Shang dynasty ruled a large area of China between c.1500-1050 BCE. The Shang Dynasty was based in Eastern China, in the valley of the Yellow River. The river flooded regularly making the land in the area great for farming. Although the flooding meant that there were lots of crops and plenty of food to eat, it also meant that the villages and farms had to be protected with big mud barriers to stop people's homes from ending up under water.

Oracle Bones

Oracle bones were made of the shoulder blades of large animals, such as oxen, or turtle shells. They were used by kings and diviners to answer questions and tell the future.



Jade and Bronze

In the Shang dynasty and particularly at Anyang, the craft of jade carving made a notable advance. Ceremonial weapons and fittings for bronze weapons were carved from jade. The era of the Shang and the Zhou dynasties is generally known as the Bronze Age of China, because bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, used to fashion weapons, parts of chariots, and ritual vessels, played an important role in the material culture of the time.



Key vocabulary

Archaeologist	Someone who finds and studies buried objects to find out about the past.
Artefacts	An object created by a human, usually found much later after it was made.
Bronze	The first metal widely used by humans, made by melting and mixing copper and tin.
Cowrie shells	Small sea shells which were used by the Shang when trading as a kind of money.
Dynasty	A family that rule a country or state for many generations.
Emperor	A king or ruler of an empire or country.
General	The leader of an army.
Oracle bones	Animal bones or turtle shells with Chinese writing, used to try and predict the future.
Civilisation	The stage of human social and cultural development and organization that is considered most advanced.
Circa (c.)	This means 'around' not an exact date
BCE	Before Common Era

Fu Hao's Tomb

In 1976, archaeologists discovered the tomb of Fu Hao at the site of the ancient Shang capital, Yinxu. Because the tomb and its contents were intact, the discovery had a significant impact on our knowledge of the Shang dynasty and some of its people. The tomb consisted of a large pit with a wooden chamber inside containing the coffin. Evidence was found above ground of a building where memorial ceremonies and rituals were probably held in honour of Fu Hao.

Thousands of items were found in Fu Hao's tomb, demonstrating how wealthy and powerful she was. Many artefacts were from an earlier period in history, suggesting Fu Hao collected antiques.

