

Perspectives of Qin Shihuangdi Zachary Anderson

Grade Level: Sixth Grade Ancient World History

Essential Questions:

1. Was Qin Shihuangdi a good or bad ruler?
2. How does the view of Shihuangdi held in China differ from the perspective held within Western cultures?
3. What do statues and objects left behind say about the First Emperor of China?
4. How can you decide if a ruler is a hero or a villain for their people?

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to analyze different sources (written and visual) related to Shihuangdi.
2. Students will be able to discuss the behavior and attitude of Qin Shihuangdi.
3. Students will be able to explain their thought process and create a visual presentation of their opinion of Qin Shihuangdi.

Overview/Introduction:

Qin Shihuangdi was the first emperor of China, though this was a title he gave himself after being king for some time. Shihuangdi was born in 259 BCE, but was not born into royalty, his father was a hostage during the Warring States Period, a period during which different families in China were at each other's throats and there was no central power within China. At the young age of 13, in 246 BCE, the boy who would become the First emperor of China first became king of the Qin people. Since the boy was too young he did not take control right away, and in fact was helped by his mother and older advisors. Twenty-five years later, 221 BCE, the king, now 38 gave himself the title of emperor, taking on the new name Shihuangdi, which translates to first emperor. Shihuangdi only ruled as emperor for eleven years, as he died while traveling China in 210 BCE. During his rule he ordered tremendous works built, such as the Great Wall of China, his glorious palace, and his mausoleum, which included thousands of terracotta soldiers and other treasures from his empire.

In most Western cultures Shihuangdi is viewed as a tyrant and a dictator, who did not care about the well being of his people. As textbooks are written, and conversations are held about this historic figure, the most common view of him is purely negative. Most of the focus is set on examples of his strict rule such as sending thousands of people to work on his "great works," such as the Great Wall where many died, or on his treatment of Confucius scholars, who were tortured and persecuted and many killed to keep the ideals of Confucius from spreading. While these opinions are focused on in many Western cultures, the people of China have a much different viewpoint. When examining the life of Qin Shihuangdi, and what he left behind, the culture in China is instead to look at the positive works of the first emperor. When most people are focused on the thousands of terracotta soldiers those in Chinese culture instead prefer to

examine the terracotta artists and musicians left about within the pits surrounding the emperor's final resting place. Instead of focusing on the rigid and strict rules forced upon the people building the Great Wall of China, some Chinese scholars choose to focus on the immense stress the emperor placed on himself as he worked to make his dynasty strong, though he trusted those working below him.

This difference in opinions is such a fine line, as it is where one chooses to focus, on what details take on the forefront of one's study. The goal of this lesson is for students to create their own opinions of Qin Shihuangdi based on art left over from the Qin Dynasty, 221-206 BCE. All too often in our daily lives judgments are made about individuals and ideas based on initial perspectives and loose examination. Through this lesson students will have opportunities to reflect on how they judge people, and in the end produce a visual representation of Qin Shihuangdi based on how they judge him, as a hero or as a villain.

Content Standards:

1. California History Standard
 - a. 6.6. 5- List the policies and achievements of the emperor Shi Huangdi in unifying northern China under the Qin Dynasty.
2. Common Core Standards
 - . RH 6.9-Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.
 - a. WHST 6.1-Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content
 - i.b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
 - ii.c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
 - b. SL 6.1-Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
 - c. SL 6.2-Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

Sample Lesson

1 Class Period (80-minute Blocks)

Required Supplies:

Projector, copies of graphic organizer, PowerPoint of Qin Dynasty art, 8.5x11 White paper (enough for your class), Copies of rubric for posters

Pre-Lesson: *Things students should know before going into these lessons.*

1. Basic Geography of China-Students should be aware of the geographic layout of China. When my students are introduced into a new civilization we start with geography. Important geographical features of China for students to be aware of are the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts, and the Yangtze and Huang He Rivers. Students should be taught about the division of Inner and Outer China, as well as the facts that most people in Ancient China lived in Inner China because the land was fertile and easier to work.

2. Students should also know the basic Dynastic cycle, the rising of power in relation to the Mandate of Heaven and the fall from power as ruling families were having lost the Mandate of Heaven.
3. In preparation for this lesson students should have learned about the first dynasty of China, the Shang, and how they set the stage for future ruling families.
4. Teach a brief lesson of the Warring States Period-475-221 BCE
5. Previously taught vocabulary: Dynasty, and Mandate of Heaven
6. If you have not taught how to make Wanted Posters/Hero Reward Plaques create examples using other historical figures, such as Christopher Columbus, Genghis Khan, or George Washington

Lesson Structure

1. Students will start class by completing a Word of the Day and a Daily Quick Write-(10 Minutes)
 - a. Word of the Day- Emperor-a sovereign ruler of great power and rank, especially one ruling an empire
 - b. Daily Quick Write- What makes a person a hero? What makes a person a Villain? Give examples for each.
- i. Following the daily quick write the class will discuss answers. First students will share with their groups and then a randomly selected student from each group will be asked to share one definition and example for either villain or hero (as selected by the teacher)
 2. Hand out a copy of the Graphic Organizer to each student and start the Qin Dynasty Art PowerPoint-(30 minutes)
 - . Graphic organizer will have five columns
 - . What is the artifact? What was it used for?
 - i. What evidence from the image supports your ideas about the use of the object?
 - ii. What does the object say about the Emperor Qin Shihuangdi?
 - iii. What evidence from the image supports your claim about the Emperor?
 - iv. Having examined the object do you think the emperor was a hero or a villain? Why?
 - a. After three minutes per slide give the students one minute to talk to their groups. Choose two random students to answer the questions for each slide before moving on.
 - b. Keep a tally on the board of votes for whether Shihuangdi is a hero or a villain
 - c. Answer Key for Slides-See notes on slides
 3. On a separate piece of lined paper have students write a four sentence (AXES paragraph) answering the following question: (15 minutes)
 - . Was Qin Shihuangdi a hero to the people of China or a villain to those he ruled over? Cite evidence from observed artwork to support your assertion.
 - a. Paragraph will not be graded but must be checked over by teacher before students receive paper for their posters
 - b. After first student has finished their paragraph have that student pass out rubrics from the poster and quickly review expectations
 4. Based on their paragraph and their assumptions from the artifacts students will create either Wanted Posters (if they think Shihuangdi is a villain) or a Hero Reward Plaque (if they think Shihuangdi is a hero)- (25 minutes)
 - . If this activity has not been taught yet show examples to the class or previously completed works

- a. Posters must be turned in after thirty minutes with rubrics stapled to the back
 - b. Posters will be used for a Gallery Walk the following class period
- .Posters will be hung around the classroom
- i. Students will have 15 minutes to look at posters and using Post-It notes must leave a positive comment on at least three different posters
 - 1. Can comment on art or information but comments must be in complete sentences.

Extensions:

For students who are wanting to further their knowledge on different perspectives there are a few alternate/additional assignments.

- Students may read the Chinese myth of the Weeping Woman and write a short paragraph about what the story says about Qin Shihuangdi and if the story shows him as a hero or a villain.
- For higher grades, or students who want to test their analytical skills two other topics/people can be examined using artwork and sources.
 - Chinggis Khan-students can examine how most Western Cultures view him as a villain who killed and pillaged across the world, while the people of Mongolia see him a hero or an icon to their culture.
 - The Soviet Union-students can examine the view of the Soviet Union by the Mongolians and how it changed over time. The Soviets were once seen as the heroes of Mongolian, saving them from many different wars and enemies, but once Mongolia declared independence they began to see the Soviets as a deterrent and someone standing in their way. Though they are still praised for their assistance throughout the 1900s they are not seen as saviors by all anymore.
 - This activity can also be done looking at the perspectives of the Mongolians compared to the perspective held by the United States about the Soviet Union.