Pre-Imperial Dynasties

1700 – 221 BCE
Shang - Qin
Shang Dynasty
1766-1050 BCE

• Important Because: First Chinese Dynasty historians have evidence of
• Called the Yellow River Civilization
• Bronze Civilization
• Development of writing
  – Pictograph to Ideograph
Object Identification: Shang

• Looking at the object to the left try to determine what is it? What is it made out of? How might it have been used?
Oracle Bones

- Earliest example of Chinese writing
- Would carve questions into bones than Diviners would interpret what cracks meant.
Object Identification: Shang

- Looking at the object to the left try to determine what is it? What is it made out of? How might it have been used?
Bronze Gu

- Wine vessel
- Decorated with animals like snakes, and dragons
Zhou Dynasty
1027-256 BCE

- Important Because: Development of feudalistic system in China
- Longest lasting Dynasty
- Well-field system developed
- Introduction of Iron
New Idea: Fengjian (Feudalism)

- King divided lands among people below him, who then divided their own lands
- Gave power to local authorities who ruled on behalf of the king
- Everybody paid taxes up
New Idea: Mandate of Heaven

- Based on four principals:
  - Right to rule is granted by heaven
  - There is only one heaven, therefore there can only be one ruler
  - Right to rule is based on virtue of ruler
  - The right to rule is not limited to one dynasty
Mandate of Heaven

Idea of the DYNASTIC CYCLE

Dynasty Founded (Receives Heaven’s Mandate)

Reaches peak of prosperity under vigorous early emperors

Enters a period of steady decline, ultimately resulting in loss of Heaven’s Mandate

One Cycle would be roughly 250 - 350 years
Three schools of Chinese Thought

- **Taoist**
  - Comparable to “the force”
  - Stresses the equality of the universe

- **Legalist**
  - Machiavellian thought
  - Laws should dictate *everyone* to ensure the good of society

- **Confucius**
  - Belief that if all relationships were approached with decorum and humanity the world would be better off
Central Question: Which of the three Chinese schools of thought would you most agree with? And Why
Pre-Imperial Dynasties

221 BCE – 220 CE

Qin
Qin Dynasty
226 – 221 BCE

Important Because: Unification of China

• Qin Shih Huang
• Known for enormous public works projects
• Heavily legalistic – Anti Confucius
• Set the precedent for Imperial China
• Unified weights and measure
Central Question

Why might a unified weights and measures system have been important?
Qin Shi Huang

- Great Wall
- Did away with feudal system
- Established cultural uniformity
  - Burning of Books Decree
- Established 36 provinces under central rule
New Invention: The Great Wall

- Built as line of defense against the Hsiung Nu or “Huns”
- Used system of signal fires
- Constructed using stones, masonry, packed earth and even bodies
Terra Cotta Warriors

- Built as guides to lead Qin Shi Huang into the afterlife
- Roughly 6000 in all
- All made in likeness of an actual Chinese soldier
Death of Qin Shi Huang

- Either died of sickness or murder
- Viewed as a tyrant
- China dissolves into warring states period