

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

Study Guide

Chapter 6: The Growth of Asian Civilizations

Section 3: The Beginnings of Classical China

Political Turmoil. At the end of the Zhou dynasty, feudal lords began building their own power at the expense of the kings. When the Zhou dynasty crumbled in the face of nomadic invaders in 771 B.C., these lords began fighting each other for territorial control. This period, marked by brutal warfare among some 200 independent states, is known as the **Spring and Autumn period**, after a set of official records.

As they adapted increasingly destructive fighting techniques, Chinese leaders abandoned diplomacy, focusing instead on conquest. This era, the **Era of Warring States**, began in 403 B.C. and continued for several hundred years. Eventually the state of Qin (CHIN) triumphed over the others.

During the Era of Warring States, as the feudal states grew stronger, they developed centralized governments which would support large armies. The demand for soldiers also led to the development of tools that would boost agricultural productivity, to increased trade, and to larger cities.

Philosophical developments during this period have earned it another name, the **Era of a Hundred Schools**, as many Chinese thinkers tried to restore harmony with different philosophical approaches. Many of the philosophers' approaches were based on the idea that everything results from a balancing of complementary forces, called **yin and yang**. Yin is characterized by darkness, while yang is bright and active. Many Chinese people thought that harmony between yin and yang brought prosperity.

Confucianism. Kongzi, better known as Confucius, was one of the most influential Chinese philosophers. Unable to find work in government, he eventually became a teacher. His teachings attempted to describe a system of ethics and values that would restore social harmony and political stability. In time these teachings were recorded in *The Analects*, a work that formed the basis for Confucianism. Strongly conservative, Confucianism stressed the importance of family, respect for one's elders, and reverence for the past. These concepts, Confucius felt, would restore order to Chinese life. He believed that stability would return to China if his philosophy were applied to politics in two ways: first, people had to accept and carry out their given roles in life; second, people, especially rulers, had to act virtuously. Because Confucius emphasized ethics in government, few Chinese rulers were willing to support him. His message, however, came to have an enormous impact on Chinese life.

Daoism. Daoism, another important philosophy that developed during this era, was a reaction to the bitter power struggles of the time and the rigid teachings of Confucianism. Founded by Laozi, who lived sometime in the 500s B.C., it emphasized the independence of each individual, whose responsibility it was to fit into the pattern of nature. Laozi wrote the *Dao Da Jing*, the principal work of Daoism. It explained balancing opposites through the principle of “nonaction,” or *wuwei*. This means that people should do what comes naturally, and the universe will proceed appropriately. Daoists also believed that real knowledge and contentment come from self-contemplation. Daoism ultimately became a religion with temples and rituals; however, even as a philosophy, it appealed to many Chinese because it emphasized contemplation of nature and because it released people from the restrictiveness of Confucianism.

Legalism. Legalism was the third main philosophy in the Era of a Hundred Schools. The Legalists thought that because people were generally selfish and untrustworthy, strictly enforced laws would restore political unity and security. In their view, kings should put their interests first and vigorously enforce the laws to preserve order. This became the official philosophy during the Qin dynasty, during which China experienced its first truly centralized, imperial state.

Answer the questions below.

1. What events led to the Spring and Autumn period?

2. How did the Era of Warring States’s military requirements change society?

3. What factor resulted in the rise of the Era of a Hundred Schools?

4. What values did Confucius emphasize? Why?

5. Why were people attracted to Daoism?

6. What action did the Legalists believe would bring political unity and security to China? Why?
