The Shang Dynasty ruled the Huang He River Valley from 1700-1027 B.C.E. Much of the history of the Shang Dynasty has been gathered from oracle bones; they presented a kingdom at war. Prisoners of war were used as slaves or sometimes slaughtered for sacrifice. Unlike the ancient Egyptians, the Shang and Zhou were buried with living people. In their tombs, archaeologists have found entire chariots, objects of art, and the remains of guards and dogs who accompanied kings to their graves.

The final Shang king, Di Xin, was considered cruel and torturous. The Zhou army, lead by King Wu, marched to the capitol city. Di Xin had armed slaves, but the slaves fled to the Zhou army. Di Xin committed suicide and set his palace on fire. Zhou rulers claimed the right to rule or the **Mandate of Heaven**. The Mandate of Heaven was the Chinese belief that the gods picked the emperor to rule, however the gods could also remove a bad emperor from power. The ruler kept the Mandate of Heaven for as long as he ruled effectively. By claiming the mandate of heaven, Zhou rulers ended the Shang Dynasty and started a new dynastic cycle in China. The Zhou ruled China for 800 years.

**Directions:** Answer the questions below based on the reading.

1. Why did the Shang Dynasty Collapse?
2. The Zhou claimed the Mandate of Heaven. Define the Mandate of Heaven:
3. How did the Mandate of Heaven impact China’s government?
## Classical Chinese Dynasties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zhou Dynasty</strong></td>
<td>1046 B.C.E. to 221 B.C.E.</td>
<td>The Zhou Dynasty extended the territory of China by taking over the Yangzi River Valley. This new land helped promote agriculture in China, particularly growing rice and wheat. The Zhou had a central government that tried to promote cultural unity throughout China. They standardized Mandarin as a spoken language and banned earlier religious practices like human sacrifice. Chinese religion placed a heavy emphasis on ancestor worship. With a growing territory, Zhou rulers used feudalism to govern and appointed regional rulers. Over time, these regional rulers became very powerful and the emperor acted as a figure head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warring States Period</strong></td>
<td>475 to 221 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Dissatisfied with Zhou rulers, regional rulers formed their own armies to rule their own territory. This was known as the Warring States period which was a time when China was divided between seven major states who were fighting one another for power. (Historians still consider this time period to be during the Zhang Dynasty.) Due to the chaos of the time period, three Chinese philosophies were published on how to effectively govern since the government had lost all control and warfare was common: Confucianism, Legalism, and Daoism were the three major philosophies. All have different governing approaches. The Warring States period ended when the Qin Dynasty conquered all of the warring states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qin Dynasty</strong></td>
<td>221 to 206 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Shi Huangdi and his forces unified the people of China under the Qin Dynasty. Shi Huangdi ruled as its first and only emperor. During his reign, Shi Huangdi followed a philosophy called Legalism which believes in strict laws with harsh punishments. Shi Huangdi created a bureaucracy and appointed bureaucrats based on their ability (merit), standardized written script, promoted silk manufacturing, and built the Great Wall of China to protect against nomadic invasions. After his death, the harsh dynasty was overthrown by the Han Dynasty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Han Dynasty</strong></td>
<td>206 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.</td>
<td>The Han kept certain aspects of Qin society like the bureaucracy and meritocracy. All Han government officials earned their jobs based on how they scored on the civil service exam. Only males (regardless of social class) could take the exam, however, most officials came from wealthy backgrounds since education was costly. Confucianism was the official government philosophy, but had Daoism as well. The Han Dynasty is considered the Golden Age of China because it brought peace and prosperity. Several achievements were made such as ceramics, figure painting, and paper) and wealth came from trade (particularly silk) on the Silk Road which was a series of trade routes connecting Europe, Africa, and Asia. The Han Eventually declined as a result of famine, plague, rebellion, nomadic invasions, and weak rulers. After the collapse of the Han, China would not be united for another 400 years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Directions:** Based off of the summary of the classical Chinese dynasties, complete the questions below.

1. **What continuities/similarities** existed throughout the Chinese dynasties?

2. **What changes/differences** existed throughout the Chinese dynasties?

3. Identify a **cause and effect** relationship throughout the Chinese dynasties.
Document Analysis of Classical China

**Directions**: Answer the questions based off of the documents below. Make sure to read each document carefully, annotate, and analyze the information presented.

**Document 1**

**Source**: The Classic of Odes, Zhou Dynasty. The poem entitled “King Wen” (600 B.C.E.) celebrates the founding king of the Zhou dynasty and the Zhou’s conquest of the Shang dynasty.

*August was King Wen,*
*continuously bright and reverent.*
*Great, indeed, was the Mandate of Heaven.*
*There were Shang’s grandsons and sons,*
*Shang’s grandsons and sons.*
*Was their number not a hundred thousand?*
*But the High God gave his Mandate,*
*and they bowed down to Zhou.*

1. Describe the **historical context** of the document.

2. What **values and limitations** are present in this document for someone studying the Zhou Dynasty.

**Document 2**

**Source**: An ancient Chinese poet (name unknown) described how Shi Huangdi crushed his rivals (221 B.C.E.)

*“Cracking his long whip, he drove the universe before him, swallowing up the eastern and western Zhou and overthrowing the feudal lords. He ascended to the highest position...and his might shook the four seas.”*

3. Describe the **historical context** of the document.

4. What **values and limitations** are present in this document for someone studying the Qin Dynasty.
Document 3

Source: Big History: From the Big Bang to the Present by Cynthia Stokes Brown, 2007.

“The silk that constituted China’s chief export remained a mystery fabric to Greeks and Romans for many years. They heard many possible explanations, such as that it was made from bark on trees. Not until the mid-sixth century did the Byzantine emperor learn from two monks that the cloth was a product of silkworms feeding on mulberry leaves.

... Christian priests used purple silk embroidered with gold silk thread for their vestments... By the time of the Roman Emperor Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE), trade between China and the west was firmly established and silk was the most sought after commodity in Egypt, Greece, and, especially, in Rome. Romans valued silk at its weight in gold. Politicians tried to ban the sale of silk because Romans were spending all of their money on it instead of buying Roman goods and products of more use.”

5. Describe the historical context of the document.

6. What values and limitations are present in this document for someone studying the Han Dynasty.

Document 4

Source: Aramco World, May/June, 1999 (adapted)

In China, during the Han Dynasty, papermaking and the invention of printing led to the duplication of important religious texts, government documents, instructional texts, and literature that helped fueled an increase in literacy, learning, and the sharing of knowledge. Papermaking was kept a secret, but eventually spread west.

7. What values and limitations are present in this document for someone studying the Han Dynasty.