The Qin Dynasty

Shi Huangdi was the emperor of the Qin Dynasty. He spent 20 years conquering the warring states. Rather than maintain the title of king, he ruled as the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty from 220 to 210 BC. During his reign, he supported the philosophy of Legalism. An ancient Chinese poet described how Shi Huangdi crushed his rivals:

“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.”

Shi Huangdi was the emperor of the Qin Dynasty. He abolished the old feudal states and divided China into 36 military districts, each ruled by appointed officials. Inspectors, who functioned more as spies, checked on local officials and tax collectors. Noble families were forced to live in the capital at Xianyang, where Shi Huangdi could keep an eye on them, and divided their land among peasants. Peasants had to pay high taxes to support the empire’s army and building projects. Legalist policies were enacted as Shi Huangdi harshly ruled his people.

Directions: Answer the questions below based on the quote and your knowledge of the Qin Dynasty.

1. Describe at least 2 values of the quote.

2. Describe at least 2 limitations of the quote.

Did Shi Huangdi Improve China?

**Directions:** You will be analyzing a series of documents regarding Shi Huangdi’s rule of Qin China. Through your analysis you will decide if Shi Huangdi improved China.

**The Terra Cotta Army**
1. What was the purpose of the Terra Cotta Army?

2. What elements of PERSIAN does the Terra Cotta Army represent? Explain.

3. What does the Terra Cotta Army tell us about Shi Huangdi?

**The Great Wall of China**
1. What was the purpose of the Great Wall of China?

2. What elements of PERSIAN does the Great Wall of China represent? Explain.

3. What does the Great Wall of China tell us about Shi Huangdi?
Weights, Measurements, and Infrastructure
1. What was the purpose of improving weights, measurements, and infrastructure?


3. What does improving and standardizing weights, measurements, and infrastructure tell us about Shi Huangdi?

Opponents of Shi Huangdi
1. Why did Shi Huangdi treat his opposition this way?


**Impacts of Shi Huangdi**

**Directions:** Using your notes, complete the following graphic organizer to help you decide if Shi Huangdi improved China. For each category, describe how his measures could be viewed as successful and unsuccessful. You will be using this to debate!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legalism and the Unification of China</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Terracotta Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Great Wall of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weights, Measurements, and Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the space below, describe your own opinion on whether or not Shi Huangdi improved China. Use evidence from your graphic organizer to support your answer.
The Terra Cotta Army

Workers digging a well outside the city of Xi'an, China, in 1974 struck upon one of the greatest archaeological discoveries in the world: the terracotta army. (Terra cotta is clay.) The terracotta army is part of an elaborate mausoleum created to accompany the first emperor of China, Shi Huangdi, into the afterlife. His mausoleum, or burial chamber is a 19-square-mile complex designed to mirror the plan of his capital, Xioanyan, and guarded by over 7,000 unique terracotta soldiers. Each clay-crafted figure weighs some 300 to 400 pounds and stands 6 feet high. The figures were buried in pits 15 to 20 feet deep and the largest of them stretched as far as two football fields laid end to end. According to the historian Sima Qian (c. 145-95 BCE), workers from every province of the Empire toiled unceasingly until the death of the Emperor in 210 in order to construct a subterranean [underground] city within a gigantic mound. It took 36 years, and hundreds of workers, to raise the terracotta warrior army. According to the National Geographic video clip, “China Terra-Cotta Warriors”, Shi Huangdi was so obsessed with nobody knowing the location of his tomb that his son had all the artisans and workers that constructed the tomb buried alive.
The Great Wall of China

Though the beginning of the Great Wall of China can be traced to the third century BCE, many of the fortifications included in the wall date from hundreds of years earlier, when China was divided into a number of individual kingdoms during the so-called Warring States Period. Around 220 BCE, Qin Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of a unified China, ordered that earlier fortifications between states be removed and a number of existing walls along the northern border be joined into a single system that would extend for more than 10,000 li (a li is about one-third of a mile) and protect China against attacks from the north. When Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi ordered construction of the Great Wall around 221 BCE, the labor force that built the wall was made up largely of soldiers and convicts. It is said that as many as 400,000 people died during the wall's construction; many of these workers were buried within the wall itself. Construction continued up to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), when the Great Wall became the world's largest military structure. Today, the Great Wall is generally recognized as one of the most impressive architectural feats in history.
Weights, Measurements, and Infrastructure

To promote unity, the First Emperor standardized weights and measures and replaced the diverse coins of the Zhou states with Qin coins. He had scholars create uniformity in Chinese writing. Workers repaired and extended roads and canals to strengthen the transportation system. A new law even required cart axles to be the same width so that wheels could run in the same runs on all Chinese roads.

Bronze banliang coin. China, Qin dynasty, Third century BCE. The Chinese inscription on this coin reads banliang, with ban to the right of the hole and liang to the left. It means “half-ounce” which was the weight of the coin.
Opponents of Shi Huangdi

Among the most infamous acts of the Emperor Shi Huangdi that were recorded in the The Records of the Grand Historian were the “burning of books,” ordered in 213 BCE, and the “execution of scholars,” ordered in 212. The following excerpt tells the story of the 213 book burning edict. In the excerpt, Li Si speaks in response to a scholar who has challenged Shi Huangdi. Li Si was a strong supporter of Legalism and served as the Grand Counselor to Emperor Shi Huangdi.

The prime minister Li Si said, “...Now Your Majesty [Shi Huangdi] has built up this great empire to endure [survive] for generations without end. [...] Today, however, the empire is at peace, all laws and order come from one single source, the common people support themselves by farming and handicrafts, while students study the laws and prohibitions.

“Now these scholars learn only from the old, not from the new, and use their learning to oppose our rule and confuse the [common people]... In former times when the world, torn by chaos and disorder, could not be united, different states arose and argued from the past to condemn the present, using empty rhetoric to cover up and confuse the real issues, and employing their learning to oppose what was established by authority. Now Your Majesty has conquered the whole world, distinguished between black and white, see unified standards. Yet these opinionated scholars get together to slander the laws and judge each new decree according to their own school of thought, opposing it secretly in their hearts while discussing it openly in the streets. They brag to the [ruler] to win fame, put forward strange arguments to gain distinction [importance], and incite the mob to spread rumors...”

“I humbly propose that all historical records but those of Qin be burned. If anyone who is not a court scholar dares to keep the ancient songs, historical records or writings of the hundred schools, these should be confiscated and burned by the provincial governor and army commander. Those who in conversation dare to quote the old songs and records should be publicly executed [Chinese tradition claims that 460 rebellious Confucian scholars were buried alive in a common grave and many others were stoned to death]; those who use old precedents to oppose the new order should have their families wiped out; and officers who know of such cases but fail to report them should be punished in the same way.”

“If thirty days after the issuing of this order the owners of these books have still not have them destroyed, they should have their face tattooed and be condemned to hard labor at the Great Wall. The only books which need not be destroyed are those dealing with medicine, divination, and agriculture. Those who want to study the law can learn it from the officers. The emperor sanctioned this proposal.”