

Lesson 1 Reunifying China

BEFORE YOU READ

In this lesson, you will learn how the belief systems changed in China after the fall of the Han Dynasty. You will also learn how the Sui and Tang Dynasties reunified China.

AS YOU READ

Use this chart to take notes about the effects of the fall of the Han Dynasty, the spread of Buddhism, and the Sui and Tang Dynasties. Answering the question at the end of each section will help you fill in the chart.

Causes	Effects
The Han Dynasty falls.	
Buddhism becomes widely practiced.	
The Sui and Tang dynasties reunify China.	

TERMS & NAMES

- **nomad** a person who moves from place to place instead of settling permanently
- **Confucianism** a belief system based on the ideas of the Chinese scholar Confucius
- **Buddhism** a religion that is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama
- **Daoism** a belief system that seeks harmony with nature and with inner feelings
- **reunify** to bring a group together after it has been divided

Fall of the Han Dynasty

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What happened after the Han Dynasty fell in A.D. 220?

Political struggles and social problems weakened the Han Dynasty. It fell in A.D. 220. China no longer had a single ruler.

Various kingdoms fought among themselves. Invaders from the north crossed into northern China. Floods, droughts, and food shortages also plagued the land.

Despite these troubles, Chinese culture survived. In the north, the invading **nomads**—people who move from place to place—eventually settled down. Gradually, they adopted Chinese customs. In the south, good harvests and growing trade helped people to prosper. Even so, most Chinese people led difficult lives.

1. What were the effects of the fall of the Han Dynasty on China?

Changes in Belief Systems

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What changes took place in China’s belief systems?

The hardships after the fall of the Han Dynasty led to major changes in China’s belief system. For centuries, the Chinese practiced **Confucianism**, a belief system based on the ideas of Confucius. He taught moral values—ideas of right and wrong. Confucius stressed using right relationships to produce social order. In addition, Confucius focused on education and acting in morally correct ways.

READING STUDY GUIDE CONTINUED

Confucianism affected many aspects of Chinese government. For example, his focus on education helped to produce well-trained government workers. His ideas also influenced society. He thought society should be organized around five basic relationships. A code of conduct governed these relationships. Some of these relationships were based on the family. Confucius wanted children to have respect for their parents and older generations.

Around A.D. 200, the Han Dynasty began to lose power. As this happened, Confucianism began to lose its influence. During this time, many Chinese turned to **Buddhism**, a religion that started in India. Buddhism teaches that people suffer because they are too attached to material things and selfish ideas. It also claims that people can escape suffering by living in a wise and moral way.

Over time, Buddhism spread to China and later to Japan and Korea. Buddhism helped people endure the suffering that followed the fall of the Han Dynasty.

Daoism began in China in the 500s B.C. Daoism is a belief system that seeks harmony with nature and inner feelings.

In the A.D. 600s, Confucianism enjoyed a rebirth. But Confucian thought began to change. Confucian thinkers blended aspects of Buddhism and Daoism into Confucianism. This new Confucianism was more concerned with human behavior.

2. How did China's belief systems change?

The Sui and Tang Dynasties Reunify China

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How did the Sui and tang dynasties reunify and strengthen China?

After the fall of the Han Dynasty, the Chinese suffered more than 350 years of conflict. Finally, the Sui Dynasty (581–618) reunified

China and brought order. **Reunify** means to bring a group together after it has been divided.

Yang Jian founded the Sui Dynasty. He was a general in the army of the Zhou. The Zhou were rulers of northern China. In 581, Yang Jian took power by killing the heir to the Zhou throne. By 589, he had conquered the south and reunified China. He became known as Wendi.

Wendi brought back old political traditions. These traditions reminded the Chinese of their glorious past. Wendi reduced conflict by allowing people to follow their own belief systems. In addition, he began public works projects. For example, he started the building of the Grand Canal. It linked northern and southern China.

Wendi and his successor, Yangdi, raised taxes to pay for all the projects. In time, the Chinese people grew tired of high taxes. They then revolted. As a result, the Sui Dynasty fell after only 37 years.

The Tang Dynasty was established in 618 by Gaozu and his son Taizong. It ruled for nearly 300 years. During this period, China expanded its borders on all sides. Tang emperors based the running of the government on Confucian principles. As a result, the Tang government became one of the most advanced in the world.

In 690, Wu Zhao became empress. She was the only woman to occupy the throne of China. She proved herself a capable leader. Wu Zhao conquered Korea.

Another great Tang emperor, Xuanzong, came to power in 712. He ruled for more than 40 years. During his reign, Chinese literature and art reached great heights.

3. What methods did the Sui and Tang dynasties use to reunify and strengthen China?
