TIME

You Are There!

Ancient CHINA

305 BC



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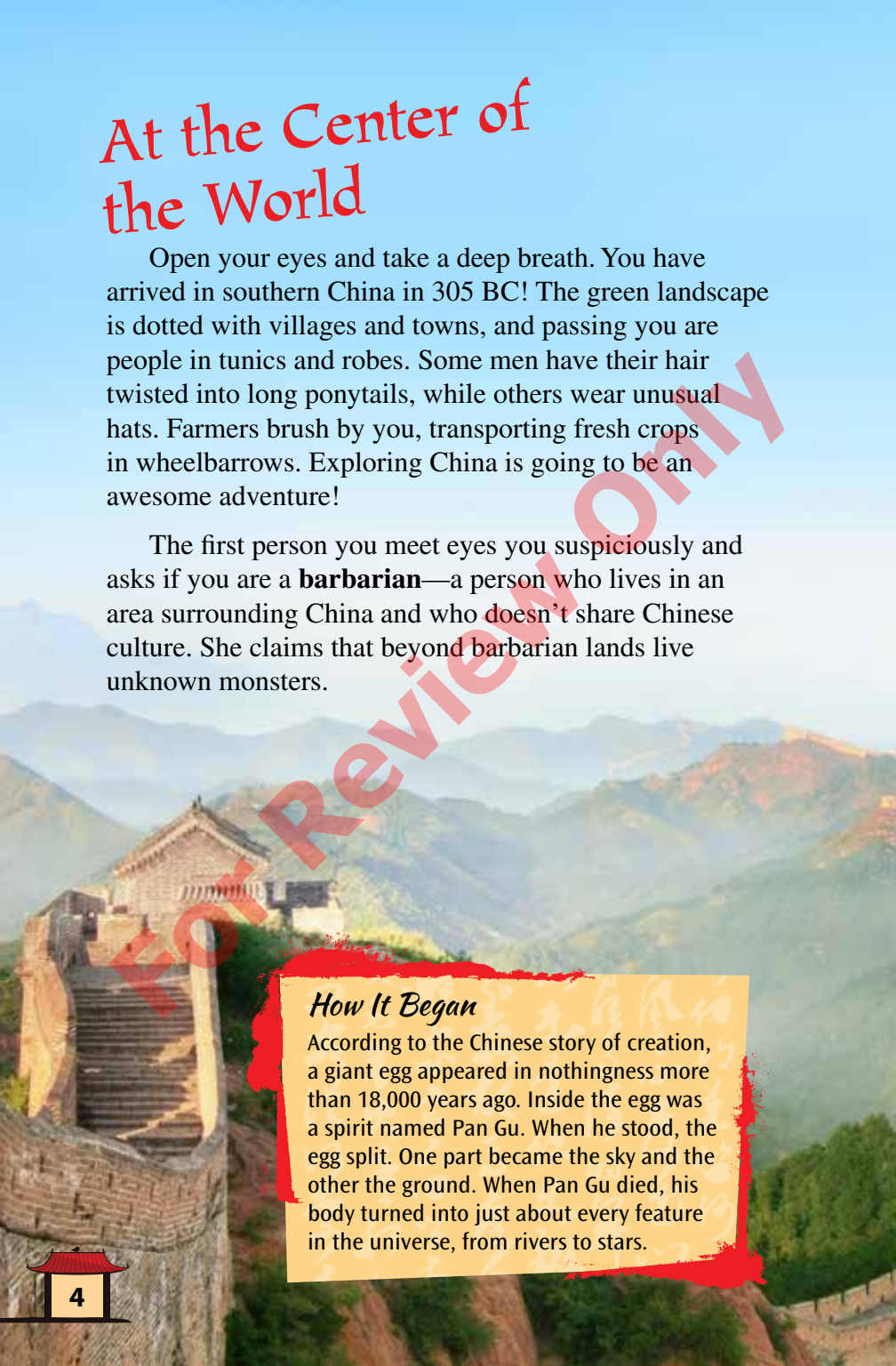
For Review Only

At the Center of the World

Open your eyes and take a deep breath. You have arrived in southern China in 305 BC! The green landscape is dotted with villages and towns, and passing you are people in tunics and robes. Some men have their hair twisted into long ponytails, while others wear unusual hats. Farmers brush by you, transporting fresh crops in wheelbarrows. Exploring China is going to be an awesome adventure!

The first person you meet eyes you suspiciously and asks if you are a **barbarian**—a person who lives in an area surrounding China and who doesn't share Chinese culture. She claims that beyond barbarian lands live unknown monsters.

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How It Began

According to the Chinese story of creation, a giant egg appeared in nothingness more than 18,000 years ago. Inside the egg was a spirit named Pan Gu. When he stood, the egg split. One part became the sky and the other the ground. When Pan Gu died, his body turned into just about every feature in the universe, from rivers to stars.

Checking Out China

You may be the only person in China who knows what the outside world is like. You studied a map of China before this trip. You know that to China's west are impassable mountain chains and the 10,000-foot (3.05-kilometer) high Plateau of Tibet. To the north are huge deserts, such as the Gobi Desert. In the south, jungles form a natural barrier. To the east, the Pacific Ocean is a seemingly endless expanse.

You better get a move on! It's time to check out this fantastic place. A farmer carrying a hoe points out a city in the distance. That's where you head.

Population Explosion

The population of ancient China was about 20 million in 305 BC. That was greater than all of Europe. Today, China's population is about 1.3 billion. That's the most of any country in the world! In fact, China has about 20 percent of the whole world's population.

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Looking Back

You enter a crowded city near the Yangtze River, China's longest river. The town is full of new sights, smells, and sounds. You feel bewildered. An old man introduces himself as a **scholar** and offers to give you a quick history lesson. He claims that the first true rulers of China were the Three **Sovereigns** and Five Emperors. They were half god and half human. They discovered fire, agriculture, medicine, and writing.

The First Dynasties

China measures its history in dynasties instead of centuries. Every dynasty has its own separate history and culture. The chart shows China's history up to the Qin dynasty. The Qin is considered the first empire because it united all of China.

The scholar says the Xia was China's first **dynasty**. Although he has little evidence, the scholar tells you that it was supposedly the first dynasty to pass the kingship down to family members. The Xia dynasty lasted for nearly 500 years. Over that time, it included the reigns of 17 rulers.

The Shang dynasty followed, and the scholar shows you an ancient **bronze** jar and an animal bone with writings that mention it. The Shang ruled in northern China, where most of the country's population still lives. The Shang kings performed rituals so the spirits of their ancestors would bring them good fortune. This is called *ancestor worship*. But the Shang was conquered by another kingdom called the Zhou.

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Years	Period	Major Accomplishments
10,000–2000 BC	Prehistoric	first settlements, beginning of agriculture, decorated pottery, silk production
2100–1600 BC	Xia Dynasty	flood control, cast bronze objects, crafted jade, ruled by heredity
1600–1046 BC	Shang Dynasty	writing, produced bronze weapons and vessels, invented accurate calendar, centralized government
1046–256 BC	Zhou Dynasty	government bureaucracy, iron used in warfare and farm tools, agricultural production, large new cities, metal coins, horseback riding, music and poetry
1046–771 BC	Western Zhou	absorbed barbarians into Chinese culture, increased government efficiency
771–256 BC	Eastern Zhou	intellectual and technical innovations from architecture to warfare to philosophy
770–475 BC	Spring and Autumn	large-scale public works (including city walls, canals, reservoirs, and roads)
475–221 BC	Warring States	innovations in warfare, great thinkers and teachers
221–206 BC	Qin Dynasty	united all of China

Preview only

STOP! THINK...

Use the chart to answer these questions:

- Which period seems the most warlike? How can you tell?
- Why do you think agriculture increased during the Zhou dynasty?
- Why is China's history described through dynasties rather than centuries?



ancient Chinese water jug

Zhou in Charge

You're in a city ruled by the Zhou. The Zhou kings have been in charge for 741 years. The scholar proudly describes their great accomplishments. They've built many towns and cities, like this one. And, he brags, the central government has brought order to the land—until recently. You've arrived during a pretty troubled time. People are calling it the Warring States period. The states, ruled by king-appointed nobles, are constantly in conflict. As you stroll around town, you notice signs of war.



The Great Wall of China

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Wall to Wall

The Great Wall of China started out as many not-so-great walls. Several kingdoms built walls of pounded earth and stones at their borders to protect against invaders. The walls were later strengthened and connected to create the Great Wall.

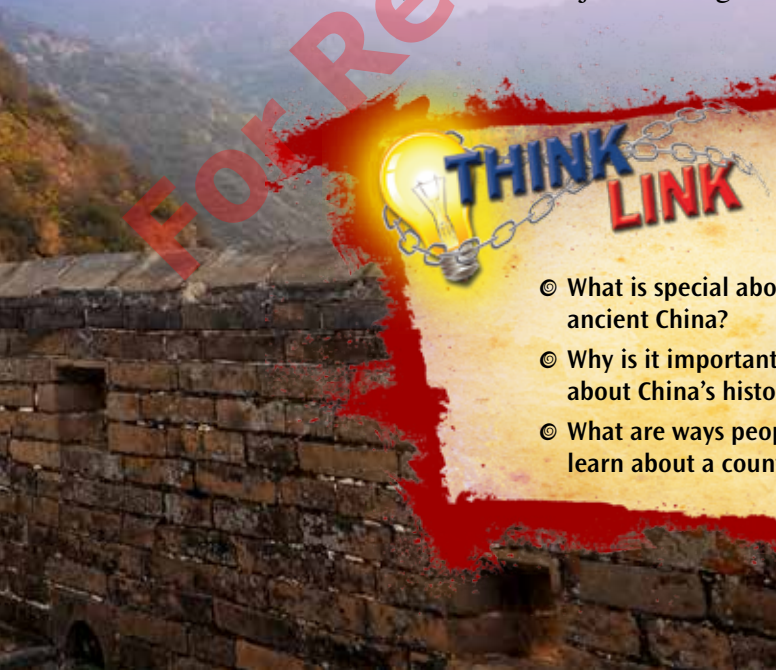
Battle Stations

You can tell the city is on constant alert. Surrounding it are walls with watchtowers manned by soldiers. Other soldiers patrol the countryside on horseback. Just as you pass within the city walls, you're knocked down by a horse-drawn chariot with three riders.

The driver tells you that the nobles raise massive armies made up of as many as 100,000 soldiers, who are all peasants. Men in chariots often lead the armies into battle. One soldier drives, another holds a long spear, and a third shoots a bow.

The driver of the chariot explains, that over the years, Chinese innovations have made war more deadly. Armies have started using **cavalry**. The Zhou people produced the first iron weapons, such as the iron-tipped, eight-foot (2.44-meter) spear that is handed to you. It's so heavy you almost can't lift it. The invention of the **crossbow** has made it easier to shoot arrows. But the chariot's bowman prefers his old-fashioned bow, which looks just as dangerous.

For Review Only



- What is special about ancient China?
- Why is it important to know about China's history?
- What are ways people can learn about a country's past?