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## **Qin (also called Ch'in) Dynasty 221-207 BCE**

Many dynasties in Ancient China lasted for hundreds of years. But the Qin Dynasty lasted for only 15 years. Yet, First Emperor Qin accomplished an amazing amount of change.

**Qin was the first man to control all of China.** He did not want to be called a king, he called himself First Emperor Qin. He died of natural causes. But in the short time that he ruled China, he readied China to be pulled together as one country. But at what cost?

**First Emperor Qin was a legalist.** Legalists believe that people are basically bad. They believe that it is necessary to control and regulate every minute of people's lives so they have the discipline needed to work hard in the fields and in battle. Qin ran his dynasty with absolute control and swift harsh punishment. It was illegal to whine about Qin's government. If you simply suggested that things might be improved, you could be put to death without a trial.

**Bureaucracy:** To control his people, First Emperor Qin developed a system of bureaucracy. He divided his empire into 36 provinces. Each province was divided into districts. He put two government officials in charge of each province. It was their job to put strong people in charge of each district. Workers were well trained and paid. They reported to supervisors. People at each level supervised those below them.

**Spy System:** To make sure everyone did their job correctly, First Emperor Qin set up a spy system. People had to spy on each other - it was the law. People had to spy on each at work and at home in their neighborhood or village. If people turned in lawbreakers, they were rewarded. If they did not, they were executed. It was a simple system, and it worked very well.

This organization system gave Qin great power. That power allowed him to make huge changes. Qin knew that to unify China there had to be big changes. Most of his laws had something to do with protection.

### **Changes:**

**Land:** First Emperor Qin took land away from the nobles. He did not want the nobles rising up against him. Anyone who argued with Qin was either buried alive or put to work building the Great Wall.

**Standardization:** He introduced one system of weights, measures, money, written language, and laws. Nobody argued with him.

**Law Code:** He introduced a new law code that applied to everybody. He created a huge law enforcement group, whose job was to enforce the laws.

**Peasants:** Peasants were assigned a job. They were either assigned the job of farmer or of silk maker. If they tried to do anything else besides their assigned job, they were sent to work on the Great Wall. If people were lazy or slow at doing their assigned job, they were sent to work on the wall.

**Censorship:** Qin practiced total censorship. He persecuted scholars and destroyed books. He defined useless books as any book about anything except books about medicine, agriculture, or prophecy. Useless books were burned. Over 400 scholars who refused to turn in books were either buried alive or sent to work on the wall. Qin did not believe in any education for the common man. According to Qin, the more time

people spent studying, the less time they had to grow food. He especially disliked the teachings of Confucius. He had all Confucius' books burned.

**Qin did not think his rule was cruel.** He said, "A thousand may die so that a million may live." He built roads, canals, and bridges. His public works projects probably saved millions of lives that would have been lost to floods and famine. Although many people died building the Great Wall, it did provide an advantage in war.

No rebellion occurred during his rule. He died in 210 BCE. Once he was dead, his son took over. His son did not rule for long. People revolted against the Qin government all over the countryside.

The peasant who led that revolt became the new emperor. His dynasty was called the Han Dynasty. Life vastly improved during the Han Dynasty.

**Directions: Read the article and answer the following questions.**

1. How long did the Qin Dynasty last? During which years?
2. What is a legalist?
3. Was Qin's spy system effective? Why or why not?
4. Why did Qin take away land from the nobles?
5. What was standardization? What impact did it have on China?
6. Why was working on the Great Wall used as a punishment?
7. What is censorship?
8. Why did Qin censor books unless they were written about medicine, agriculture, or prophecy?
9. What did Qin mean by "A thousand may die so that a million may live?"
10. What dynasty preceded the Qin?
11. What dynasty succeeded the Qin?