

Name: _____ Date: _____



Fill in the blanks using the words below to describe a day in the life of an ordinary child of the Shang Dynasty.

I woke up this morning to the smell of mother cooking breakfast on the _____ in her _____ pot. She told me off for getting up so late and not helping her light the _____. I said sorry and quickly got my shoes on so I could do my daily chore of walking down to the _____ to get fresh water for cooking and washing with.

I walked through the city gate and picked my way through the _____ channels and ploughed earth to the clean water. The river was flowing more strongly than yesterday and some of the irrigation channels were filling up. I hoped that soon the _____ would consult the _____ bones and say we could plant our seed. Father was getting a little worried that the king would be late and our crops wouldn't grow well.

On my way back to the house I saw my uncle in his potting shop. He was making a pot on his _____. He was making a fine _____ pot for one of the king's _____. He didn't look up as I stopped to watch him finishing off the shape and then start carving out the beautiful _____ to decorate it. He paused for a second and I shouted hello. He jumped and nearly stuck his carving stick into the side of the pot! He scolded me and told me to get back home.

Everyone was telling me off! I trudged back home and took the water to my mother. She was very grumpy so after eating some _____ I said I was going out to help father with the _____. Instead I went towards the city square to see if the _____ was going to make an announcement about planting. There was a buzz of excitement as I got closer and I asked an old lady what was going on. "The king's consulting the oracle _____ again! Maybe this time they say we can plant!"

After waiting for at least an hour I was starting to get hungry again. I thought my mother and father would be looking for me. Just as I was going to leave, the High _____ and his apprentices came out onto the _____ wall and signalled for silence. The square went very quiet. The king came out, dressed in _____, and told us what the oracle bone had said. "The _____ have guided me and tell me that now is the time to plant our crops so they may be fruitful." There was a great cheer, but I was running down to the fields to see my _____ to tell him to plant!

father	palace	bread	king	bones
oracle	silk	ancestors	oxen	irrigation
hearth	grey	white	pattern	fire
river	king	wives	wheel	Priest

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Use these headings to write a diary for a day in the life of an ordinary person of the Shang Dynasty. Include as much detail about the time period as you can.

Waking up

What's your house like? What did you have for breakfast?

Working

Are you a farmer or a craftsperson? Where do you go to do your work? What do you do?

Lunch

What did you eat? Did you have pork, lamb, dog, bread, rice?

A problem

What kind of problems might you face? For example, if you are a farmer have you lost your sheep?

Problem resolution

How was your problem resolved?

Everyday life in the Shang Dynasty

Shang society was organised in a pyramid system with the king at the top, followed by nobles, merchants, craftsmen, farmers and slaves. Everyone had to obey the king. If you were disloyal or went against the king, you were executed. Most people in Shang society were peasants. They lived in one-room huts made from wood or mud with thatched roofs. Many houses were built inside city walls for greater protection but farmers lived in the countryside. Craftsmen usually lived just outside of the city walls. Nobles, merchants and soldiers usually lived within the protection of the city.

Farmers did not own the land they farmed. It was owned either by the king or by nobles. In return for working on the land, the farmer was allowed a proportion of the crops to feed his family. Many farmers also reared animals, such as pigs, sheep and dogs for food, as well as keeping oxen to pull ploughs or carts.



The Shang farmers used irrigation systems from the Yellow River to water their crops. Farmers had to wait for the king to tell them when to plant their crops. The king would consult the oracle bones to find out when the best time would be. Only when the king decreed it could the farmers begin to plant their seeds. Farmers grew crops like millet, wheat and barley which could be made into bread and other foods. Some farmers grew rice but this was more common further south. As well as crops, people ate domestic and wild animals and would often hunt and fish to find food.

The craftsmen of the Shang Dynasty were very skilled at working with a number of materials, such as pottery, bone, jade and, of course, bronze. They would make everyday objects, such as pots and weapons, as well as ceremonial objects and elaborate ornaments and jewellery for rich nobles and royalty.



Most children did not go to school. Instead, they would help their parents in the fields or with chores around the house, such as collecting water from the river or preparing food for meals. Only very rich children would have received any education. This would not have been at school but usually with a private tutor. Most children were trained to follow in their parents' footsteps and learn a trade that would help them earn a living.

An ordinary day in the Shang Dynasty...

I woke up this morning to the smell of mother cooking breakfast on the hearth in her grey pot. She told me off for getting up so late and not helping her light the fire. I said sorry and quickly got my shoes on so I could do my daily chore of walking down to the river to get fresh water for cooking and washing with.

I walked through the city gate and picked my way through the irrigation channels and ploughed earth to the clean water. The river was flowing more strongly than yesterday and some of the irrigation channels were filling up. I hoped that soon the king would consult the oracle bones and say we could plant our seed. Father was getting a little worried that the king would be late and our crops wouldn't grow well.



On my way back to the house I saw my uncle in his potting shop. He was making a pot on his wheel. He was making a fine white pot for one of the king's wives. He didn't look up as I stopped to watch him finishing off the shape and then start carving out the beautiful pattern to decorate it. He paused for a second and I shouted hello. He jumped and nearly stuck his carving stick into the side of the pot! He scolded me and told me to get back home.

Everyone was telling me off! I trudged back home and took the water to my mother. She was very grumpy so after eating some bread I said I was going out to help father with the oxen. Instead I went towards the city square to see if the king was going to make an announcement about planting. There was a buzz of excitement as I got closer and I asked an old lady what was going on. "The king's consulting the oracle bones again! Maybe this time they say we can plant!"

After waiting for at least an hour I was starting to get hungry again. I thought my mother and father would be looking for me. Just as I was going to leave, the High Priest and his apprentices came out onto the palace wall and signalled for silence. The square went very quiet. The king came out, dressed in silk and told us what the oracle bone had said. "The ancestors have guided me and tell me that now is the time to plant our crops so they may be fruitful." There was a great cheer, but I was running down to the fields to see my father to tell him to plant!

Write a playscript about ordinary life during the Shang Dynasty

You could write a story about a farmer or craftsmen, or his family members. You will need to include details to show what daily life was like but also have a problem or problems the characters need to overcome to make the play exciting.

Think about...

- Where the characters live
- What kind of work they do
- What they wear
- What they eat
- How other people in society act towards them
- What daily problems or challenges they might face

Good luck!



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