

China's Ancient Buried Army

The World's Largest Statue Army

Vocabulary

terra cotta	brownish red earthen ware; clay pottery
artifact	something made by hand
archaeologist	a scientist who studies ancient ruins

In 1974, some Chinese farmers were digging a well for their commune outside the city of Xian. As they dug, large pieces of terra cotta, a hard-baked earthenware, began to appear. Archaeologists were eventually called to investigate the artifacts.

Before long, a trench 50 feet by 200 feet had exposed over 500 life-sized statues of human figures and horses. As the digging continued, the trench expanded to 700 feet by 200 feet, exposing an army of 6,000 life size warriors, archers, charioteers, cavalry troops, and infantrymen.

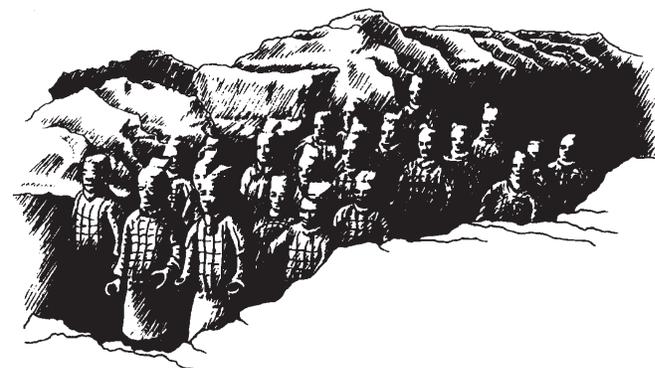
In 1976, archaeologists discovered a second and third trench full of figures. These held many horsed chariots, cavalymen with their horses, and foot soldiers. This terra cotta army covered an area of five acres. All the figures stood in rows, guarding the tomb of the Emperor of China, who lived 2,200 years ago. The Emperor's tomb lies nearby in a 250-foot-high mound of earth that rises from the ground. The person responsible for the buried army was Qin Shi Huang, China's first Emperor. He unified a warring China and was also responsible for starting the Great Wall of China. He died at the age of 49 after an 11-year reign. In his quest for immortality and eternal glory, he wanted a terra cotta army to protect him in the afterlife.

Archaeologists think that the Emperor forced as many as 700,000 laborers to work on his tomb. Building the monument required mountains of raw materials. It took 36 years of toil to build the monument.

The quality of the work is as amazing as the quantity of the work. Parts of the figures were formed in molds and are hollow. Other parts were molded by hand and are solid. There are at least 24 styles of facial hair with different combinations of mustaches and chin whiskers. Most experts feel that each soldier's face is distinct because real soldiers served as models. When they were finished, the terra cotta army was painted in beautiful and bright colors. Ravaged by floods, fire, and time the original paint was erased from the statues. After many centuries the figures are now a shadowy gray.

Archaeologists continue the time consuming task of brushing away dirt and piecing together the broken statues. Archaeologists do not expect to complete the excavation until into the next century.

Two million visitors arrive yearly from all over the world to see this artistic ancient army of statues that guard the tomb of a Chinese Emperor.



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Comprehension Questions

Identifying the main idea

1. What is the main idea of the story?
 - a. Archaeologists work carefully for a long time.
 - b. The buried army is an amazing find.
 - c. Each statue has a distinctive face.

Recalling a fact

2. Why did the emperor want a terra cotta army?
 - a. to build the Great Wall of China
 - b. to unify a warring China
 - c. to protect him in the afterlife

Getting meaning from the context

3. What does **figures** mean in this story?
 - a. numbers
 - b. statues
 - c. terra cotta

Making connections within the text

4. What caused the artifacts to be damaged?
 - a. They were not made well.
 - b. Time and weather damaged them.
 - c. Archaeologists did not dig carefully.

Connecting the author's and the reader's ideas

5. Why did it take so long to build the army of statues?

Finding supporting details

9. Find three facts from the story that support this statement: The ancient army is an amazing archeological find.

Developing vocabulary

6. An antonym is a word that has the opposite meaning of another word. Write the number of the word from column 1 in front of its antonym in column 2.

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. warring | a. ___ servant |
| 2. original | b. ___ peaceful |
| 3. emperor | c. ___ started |
| 4. real | d. ___ copy |
| 5. finished | e. ___ fake |

Attending to Details

7. Use information from the story to answer the following questions.

- a. How many laborers worked on the Emperor's tomb?

- b. Where in China is the buried army?

- c. How big are the figures of the army?

Processing information

8. What has caused this archeological project to take so long to complete?

Enrichment Activity

As the oldest living civilization, China has made many contributions to the world. Read about China and list three things the Chinese developed that we use today.