LOC TPS WH/APWH Exploring Early Chinese Writings through the Tang dynasty
Grades 9-12
Periods 1 and 2

Paige Solomon, Norfolk Collegiate
This activity is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

Two class periods of 45 – 60 minutes
Description of activity: Examine early works of Chinese writing and evaluate their significance.

Activity Goals
Focus Question: How has writing been crucial in shaping Chinese politics and culture? How has uniformity in writing brought greater cultural cohesion? How have religions and philosophies been recorded and spread? How have they shaped Chinese culture?

Context: Best suited for inclusion in a study of the Tang dynasty so students have the needed background knowledge.

Objectives: Students will examine primary sources, put them into historical context, and analyze their political and cultural significance.

Virginia SOLs

WHI.1 The student will improve skills in historical research and geographical analysis by
a) identifying, analyzing, and interpreting primary and secondary sources to make
generalizations about events and life in world history to 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
b) using maps, globes, artifacts, and pictures to analyze the physical and cultural
landscapes of the world and interpret the past to 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
d) identifying and comparing political boundaries with the locations of civilizations,
empires, and kingdoms from 4000 B.C. (B.C.E.) to 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
e) analyzing trends in human migration and cultural interaction from prehistory to
1500 A.D. (C.E.);

WHI.3 The student will demonstrate knowledge of ancient river valley civilizations, including
those of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus River Valley, and China and the civilizations of
the Hebrews, Phoenicians, and Nubians, by
b) describing the development of social, political, and economic patterns, including
slavery;
c) explaining the development of religious traditions;
e) explaining the development of language and writing.

WHI.10 The student will demonstrate knowledge of civilizations and empires of the Eastern
Hemisphere and their interactions through regional trade patterns by
b) identifying technological advances and transfers, networks of economic
interdependence, and cultural interactions;
Improving Historical Thinking Skills through Source-Based Instruction
Paige K Solomon, Norfolk Collegiate

AP World History
Key Concepts 1.3.III; 2.1.II; 2.1.III; 2.2.II; 2.3.III
Historical Thinking Skills author’s purpose, contextualization

Assessment: Students will answer analysis questions and complete a short essay to a prompt as a summative assessment task. A short answer question designed for AP World History is provided as an optional summative assessment.

Activity Details
Primary Sources: see below
Procedure: Students working alone or in pairs should examine each source and its accompanying information carefully and then answer the analysis questions provided. The teacher may wish to assign certain students to lead the discussion of individual documents. After the class debriefing session, students should complete the summative assessment individually.

What you will need before implementing: This lesson would be most effective with computer access for all students. The documents, directions, and chart should shared digitally with all students (in Google Doc.s. or another format). This activity could be accomplished with paper copy of the materials for each student.
Oracle bone - Winds of the Four Directions
1200 BC
https://www.wdl.org/en/item/290/view/1/1/

Read the item detail.
Who created this oracle bone?
What seems to have been the purpose of this?
How does that differ from most of the oracle bones?
Note the time frame/dynastic period. What was going on politically and socially in China during this period?
What significance did this item have?
Who used oracle bones and how were they used?
What does this tell about religion and power in ancient China?
The Xiping Stone Classics

Cai Yong
175-183
https://www.wdl.org/en/item/3045/view/1/1/

What was the purpose for the creation of this?
Place this item in its proper historical context.
What can this tell us about the dominant philosophy of the Han dynasty?
Can you explain reasons behind the motivation of the scholar-gentry to establish and maintain uniformity in the Confucian texts?

Discuss the connection between philosophy and government in the Han.
Inscription of a Eulogy on the Burial of a Crane
1573-1644, original rock carving 514
https://www.wdl.org/en/item/17883/view/1/1/

Why were these engraved stones held in such high regard?
What time and historical periods do the rubbings represent?
What time and historical periods do the stones themselves represent?
What is the connection between the engraved stones and the rubbings? Why were the rubbings produced?
What insight can we glean about early Chinese culture?
Doc. D

Diamond Prajna Paramita Sutra
676
https://www.wdl.org/en/item/3051/view/1/1/

Where did this writing originate?
When and why was it introduced into China?
What was the message within the document?
Context - What was significant about this time in China’s history?
What was the purpose behind the spreading of this text?
How would it prove to be create an important foundation in Chinese culture?

Identify and explain reasons that the Chinese embraced Buddhism in the 8th century.
Summative assessment - write a short essay in response to the following prompt:
Writing and calligraphy have played especially important roles in Chinese society. Discuss the political and cultural significance of these writings in the early history of China (Shang through Tang dynasties). Provide historical context by drawing a comparison to another culture.

Alternate short answer question for AP World History students:
A. Writing and calligraphy have played especially important roles in Chinese society. Discuss the political and cultural significance of these writings in the early history of China (Shang through Tang dynasties).
B. Identify and explain early Chinese beliefs that are evident in these written sources.
C. Provide historical context by drawing a comparison to another culture.