

## China's Natural Barriers

Ancient China was isolated from much of the ancient world because of its geography. It wasn't until around 200 BCE that China was aware of any of the other civilizations around the Mediterranean, like the ancient Roman and the ancient Greeks. For thousands of years, the ancient Chinese thought they were pretty much alone on the planet, except for barbarians to the north, the Mongols. China's natural barriers to the west, south and east helped protect the ancient Chinese people from invasion.

### Dangerous Deserts:

**Gobi Desert:** is one of the driest deserts in the world. Compared to the horrors of the Taklamakan Desert, however, the Gobi is a paradise. In the Gobi, there is at least hope of water, although water (an oasis) is very rare.

**Taklamakan Desert:** is called the Sea of Death from which no one escapes. The Taklamakan is the second largest desert in the world. It offers poisonous snakes, frequent sandstorms, boiling days, freezing nights, and intense water shortage. A very brave explorer did cross this desert on foot relatively recently. In 1998 Carla Perrotti, a 51-year-old Italian woman, crossed this desert. She walked over 200 miles in 24 days, alone



**Numerous Mountains:** China has some of the highest mountain ranges in the world

**Himalayas:** are one of the highest mountain ranges in China. These rugged mountains are home to the ten highest peaks in the world

Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world. It is actually in Tibet, not in China, and is located close to the border between these two countries.

**Vast Seas:** China Sea, Yellow Sea, Pacific Ocean

**Major Rivers:** They were called the Great Sorrow because during the flood season all the towns along the river would be destroyed. Each year, they rebuilt.

The Huang He (Yellow River) is about 4800km long, about the distance of Vancouver to Quebec City. The river ends at the Yellow Sea. Civilization in ancient China began along this river because the soil is fertile

Yangtze River: the third longest river in the world. It's nearly 6400 km long and ends at the Yellow Sea. At its lowest, the Yangtze is about 25 feet deep. When the snow melts it gets about 160 feet deep. The river flows through some of China's best farmland. People have always built their homes and towns high above the river because of annual flooding.



TURN OVER

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### Pros & Cons

Being isolated can be positive or negative for a civilization. Isolation can be positive for Ancient China because it prevented armies and barbarians from invading their lands. This provided the people with a sense of safety and security allowing China to expand without fear of invasion. China could then focus their energy into innovations and food instead of protection. Another positive of being isolated would be that they are only exposed to their own ideas and cultures. This was a benefit as they could concentrate on exploring their own technologies, beliefs, and ideas without influence from the outside world. This allows them to create complex beliefs and a social structure system that was unique from other civilizations.

Isolation can also be a negative thing for a civilization. It did not provide valuable connections with neighbouring civilizations for technologies, beliefs, languages, and innovations. Without these influences it limited China's world view and required them to create everything on their own rather than borrowing ideas from others. Trade routes were virtually non-existent so the opportunity to trade goods was not available. China had to make do with whatever resources they had around them and did not benefit from importing valuable goods and resources from outside of their borders. This put restrictions on what they were able to do and create which increased difficulty for making things.



#### **Your turn!**

Use the template at the station to create your pro & con flip chart to go on your geography page. You will need 2 cons and 2 pros. Your mark will directly relate to how much detail you provide for each.

Cut the template along the bold lines and fold along the dotted. Write 'Pro 1', 'Pro 2' on the fronts of one side of your flip book and 'Con 1' and 'Con 2' on the fronts of the other side.