

## Section Reading Support AW 44

### Ancient China, Section 1

# China's River Valleys

## Geography

- North China Plain built up by soil deposits of the Huang River; dry climate
- Monsoons in southern China make the area warm and wet
- Mountains and seas separate China from other civilizations; called themselves the Middle Kingdom
- Civilization in China grew up along the Huang and Chang rivers
- The rivers provide good soil for farming, but also bring floods
- Early peoples built dikes to hold back the flood waters

## Civilization

- People of North China Plain were probably nomads who hunted and gathered food
- First farming settlements in the Huang Valley probably began around 5000 B.C.
- Shang dynasty first known civilization in China; arose some time after 1760 B.C.
- Shang people built first cities, did fine bronze work, and developed first Chinese writing, which could be used for different languages
- Around 1160 B.C., the Zhou dynasty conquered the Shang

## Families

- Family was center of early Chinese society; a person's first responsibility was to family
- Households might contain five generations of extended family
- In farming communities, extended families might live in separate cottages within walking distance
- Status of a person in a family was based on age and sex, with oldest male being the center of authority
- Women's lives were governed by men: first by their father, then by husband, and then by sons
- Chinese were first people known to use two names—one for the family and one for the individual