

The Great Wall of China

The Great Wall of China is one of the true architectural wonders of the world. The Wall was built over a period of hundreds of years to keep Mongolian tribes from invading China. Construction of the Wall began in the fifth century BC, with the majority of the work done between 221 and 204 BC. The Wall was completed during the Sui dynasty, between AD 581 and 618.

When the Wall was finally completed, much of it was falling down because so much time had passed since construction began. Major repairs were done to the Wall during the Ming dynasty, which lasted from AD 1368 until 1644. Repairs continue to the present day.

Archeologists have found tombs built into the Great Wall. The tombs are said to be those of workers who died while building the Wall. Chinese legend has it that Emperor Shih Huang Ti did not want to stop work on the Wall to bury workers, so he ordered other workers to entomb the fallen ones in the Wall.

The Wall, on average, stands 25 feet high. Its base measures 15 to 30 feet thick. There are roadways at the top of the Wall, wide enough for 10 soldiers to walk side by side. The stone wall has watchtowers, as well as peepholes and places for archers to stand at the top.

The Great Wall is a historical monument in China and draws many tourists each year. Souvenir shops now stand where workers toiled, and tourists buy T-shirts where enormous clay bricks and stones were hoisted to the top of the Wall.

Unit 6

- What steps do you think have been necessary to preserve the Wall?

- The Wall was built when the Chinese worried about invasion. Today, the Chinese seek to join the world community. Why do you think this change has occurred?

- Could the Wall have been built if the Chinese emperors were more compassionate?