

Name: _____

An Army for the Dead

Many rulers have wanted to be remembered after their deaths. Egyptian pharaohs had pyramids built. These pyramids were tombs for their bodies and warehouses for their treasures. The first emperor of the Qin Dynasty in China chose a different kind of memorial for himself.

Workers began construction on the tomb of Qin Shi Huang in 246 B.C. Historians have concluded that this tomb was to be big enough for the emperor and a large store of the treasure he had collected. The inside of the tomb was to look like the universe. The ceiling was set with pearls and other jewels to represent the stars and planets. The bodies of water on the Earth were made of mercury. You may have seen this flowing, liquid silver element in a thermometer. The actual tomb has not yet been entered. Scientists have, however, discovered evidence of high levels of mercury in the soil. This has led them to believe that stories of the lavish tomb are true.



The Qin emperor chose a very unusual way to protect his tomb. He wanted his army to surround him, even in death. Craftsmen created life-sized soldiers, horses, and chariots that were buried around the tomb. These figures were made of terra cotta. Terra cotta means "baked earth." Red clay is formed into an object and then put into an oven, or kiln, to bake slowly. Once the object has been baked, a lacquer is applied to give it a shiny, hard finish. Perhaps you have seen a terra cotta flower pot or terra cotta tiles on the roof of a house. Terra cotta is fragile. It can chip easily when kept in the sun for too long.

An entire army of terra cotta soldiers was created for the tomb of the emperor. Farmers found the first of the soldiers while drilling for water in March of 1974. Archeologists were excited to find the first few statues in amazingly good shape. After all, they had been buried for over 2,000 years. What they were able to find in the next few years of excavation was more than scientists had ever dreamed. So far, 8,099 terra cotta soldiers have been unearthed.

The terra cotta soldiers were not mass produced. Each statue has a different face, a different hair length, a different type of uniform. There are infantry soldiers, cavalry soldiers, officers, and archers. Each statue carries a weapon. Some have spears, some swords, and some crossbows. The weapons are real. It is believed that they were used in actual battle. Most of them can be dated back to about 228 B.C. Chariots and horses were also created for this army.

Four separate pits were dug to house the statues. The figures were placed in the same position they would have held if they were a real army. There were 6,000 figures found in the largest pit. Here you would find the infantrymen, chariots, and horses. These figures represented the main part of the army. The second largest pit held statues of cavalry and infantry soldiers with chariots. It is believed that these 1,400 statues represented the emperor's personal guard. The third pit contained the officers. It also had a larger chariot drawn by four horses.

Name: _____

There were only 68 figures in this pit. The fourth pit was empty. It is believed that the emperor wished to be able to show what great power he had on earth when he entered his life after death.

Evidence has been uncovered that a fire was started in the tomb approximately five years after the death of the first emperor. History points to an army general as the one who ordered the fires. Although the fires kept burning for over three months, much of the terra cotta army survived. The same can't be said for the treasure the emperor had buried with him. It disappeared with the general and his army.

Nearly two million people a year now visit the site where the terra cotta army was unearthed. Excavations are still being conducted. Perhaps someday, the entire site will be open. Emperor Qin wanted to be remembered. His terra cotta army has been a standing memorial to him for over 2,000 years.

An Army for the Dead

Questions

_____ 1. Terra cotta is baked clay.

- A. true
- B. false

_____ 2. Where was the terra cotta army found?

- A. Egypt
- B. Japan
- C. China
- D. Mexico

_____ 3. Who was the tomb built for?

- A. an army
- B. an emperor
- C. a pharaoh
- D. a general

4. Why was the tomb set on fire?

5. How were the terra cotta soldiers made?

Name: _____

- _____ 6. How many soldiers have been found?
- A. under five thousand
 - B. over ten thousand
 - C. just a few
 - D. over eight thousand
- _____ 7. Who discovered the first terra cotta soldiers?
- A. children playing
 - B. soldiers looking for treasure
 - C. farmers digging a well
 - D. prospectors looking for gold
- _____ 8. What was each terra cotta soldier buried with?
- A. a chariot
 - B. a knapsack
 - C. a real weapon
 - D. a horse

Name: _____

How many of these can you write about? Think! Write! Check all the ones you answered.

- If you could build a memorial so people will remember you, what would it look like?
- How many soldiers do you think it would take to guard the tomb of a ruler?
