



## Contextualize

### What led to the Tang (618–906) and Song (960–1279) Dynasty Golden Ages?

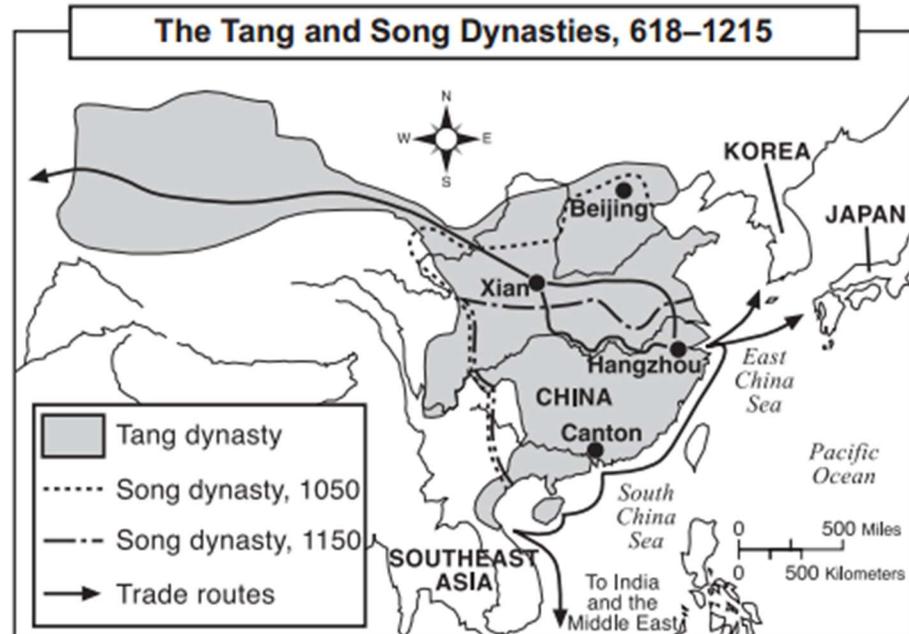
→ Directions: Examine the text and map below, then respond to the questions.

During the Tang (618–906) and Song (960–1279) Dynasties, China was one of the most technologically advanced civilizations in the world. Innovation in art, science, philosophy, and technology gave the people in these societies an understanding of the world around them that other civilizations and even later dynasties in China would not accomplish for hundreds of years.

Like other golden ages in history, the Tang and Song Dynasties unified the region, created a strong central government, and ruled over a time of peace that was reinforced by the government's actions. The Tang expanded China's territories and influence to include Korea and Vietnam, as well as portions of northeast, central, and southeast Asia.

The peace that the Tang and Song governments created encouraged trade throughout the empire and abroad through the Silk Roads. Chinese cities during the Tang and Song dynasties became prosperous cultural centers of an international age where religious, academic, and artistic life and cultural exchange flourished. Scholars and merchants from as far as Persia and India came to Tang China to participate in its golden age.

While the government was strong, it was not oppressive. Some became very rich, but the Tang rulers redistributed land to give the less fortunate an opportunity to grow in wealth. In addition this was a time when education and achievement were rewarded and women attained a higher status in the government and more freedom than they had in previous dynasties.



Source: Goldberg and DuPré, Brief Review in Global History and Geography, Prentice Hall (adapted) from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Exam, June 2005.

1. Based on the reading passage, why were Tang and Song cities considered “cultural centers of an international age?”

2. Based on the passage and your knowledge of golden ages, why was China during the Tang and Song dynasties a likely place for golden age to occur?



## How did the Tang and Song Dynasties affect China, other regions, and later periods in history?

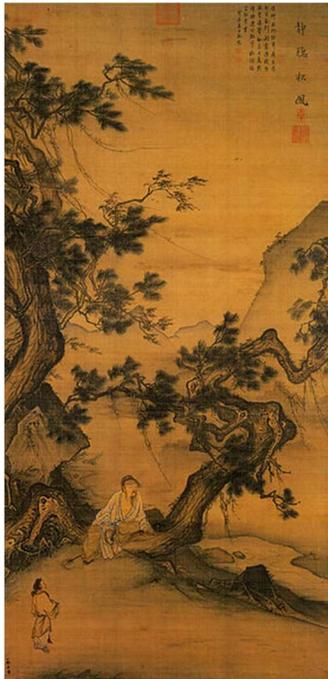
Connect  
Cause and  
Effect

Time	Excerpts from <i>Discovering China: The Song Dynasty</i>	Questions
1:17	...the Southern Song period was one of prosperity with flourishing art and culture as well as technological advancements. During the Song, the government started to grant farmers ownership of land which led to a huge increase in rice production. The economy started to change from a purely agricultural economy to a commercial one with peasants selling their surpluses to buy a wide range of goods such as tea, coal, oil, and wine. With the growth in the economy, so grew the population, hitting 100 million by the year 1100.	1. What evidence from this section suggests that the Song dynasty was prosperous?
1:50	Three of China's four great inventions originate from the Song Dynasty namely, printing, the magnetic compass, and gunpowder. The Song government used its printing techniques for currency production and in the 12th century, became the first government in the world to print paper money. The Song was also the first Chinese dynasty to establish a permanent standing navy to safeguard foreign trade and guard against invasions from the north. The ships used the newly invented compass to navigate and used gunpowder in their weaponry. Gunpowder was first employed in bombs delivered from ships via catapult. The Song used these tactics to successfully defend their territory against a Jurchen invasion on the Yangtze River in the year 1161 AD. A Song force of only three thousand men on 120 ships defeated a Jurchen force of seventy thousand on over six hundred ships.	2. Describe how each of the following innovations affected the Song Dynasty. 2a. Printing  2b. gunpowder  2c. the compass
3:25	Southern Song scholars gave a lot of attention to how Confucian principles could be applied to	3. What philosophy was important to Song society?

society rather than to politics. They proposed ways to build a better society focusing on families communities. The most famous of the Song Dynasty scholars was a man named Zhu Xi who would go on to leave a legacy lasting seven hundred years.

3:57 ...Song painters also mimicked the mood of the time their artworks. Northern Song painters like Fan Quan painted huge grand landscape scenes. Whereas after the loss of the North, paintings became more intimate, focusing on family or village scenes within the natural environment. Scenes would often be in one corner with a large empty expanse occupying much of the painting.

4. Based on this excerpt from the video, describe Song Dynasty painting.



Example of a Song Dynasty landscape painting by Ma Lin.

[Image](#) is courtesy of Wikimedia and is in the public domain.



*Bamboo and Rocks* a painting by Li Kan, late Song Dynasty artist.

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## Poetry in the Tang (618-906) and Song (960-1279) Dynasties

During the Tang (618-906) and Song (960-1279) Dynasties, literature, and especially poetry flourished. One of the reasons that literature from this period is celebrated is because it was one of the subjects emphasized in the **civil service exams**. Civil service exams were used to identify people who were qualified for government positions and were an important way for people to move up the social ladder and to positions of power in the government. For example, if a child from a low class or poor family did well on the civil service exam, they could get a job with good pay and prestige that would help their families move up socially and economically.

During the Tang Dynasty, poetry was viewed as one of the most sophisticated forms of expression and was important to success in government positions because a good poet showed strength in communication, philosophy, and reasoning. On the civil service exams during the Tang Dynasty, students had to compose poems, which meant that if he wanted a good job, he needed to study poetry and be able to write it. During the Song Dynasty the poetry section of the exam was replaced by essays which also required high level literacy skills.

As a result of the emphasis on literature on the civil service exams, students studied poetry and writing and worked to become accomplished writers themselves. In addition, the invention of printing technology during these golden ages made it easier for poetry and literature to be published, purchased, and circulated which made it easier for students to study and for poets and writers to make a living at their art.

Source: Asian Art Museum's Education and Public Programs, "The Flourishing of Poetry in the Tang (618-906) and Song (960-1279) Dynasties." <http://education.asianart.org/explore-resources/background-information/flourishing-poetry-tang-618-906-and-song-960-1279-dynasties>

1. Based on the passage above, what were "civil service exams?" What were they used for?

2. Based on the passage, what tasks did students need to complete on the civil service exams during the Tang and Song Dynasties?

3. Why was there a flourishing of literature during the Tang and Song Dynasties?