

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

The Great Wall runs 6,700 kilometres from eastern to western China. It winds up and down across deserts, grasslands and mountains through a history of over 2,000 years. In 1987, the Great Wall was enlisted as a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

Built as a defensive fortification by three states – Yan, Zhao, and Qin – the Great Wall went through constant extensions and repairs in later dynasties. Originally it consisted of independent wall sections and it did not become the Great Wall until the Qin dynasty (221-206 BC), after the unification of China by Emperor Qin Shihuang. He succeeded in having the walls joined together to defend the boundaries¹ from the tribes of Huns and Mongolians in the North. Soldiers were posted along the wall, and if enemies were found coming, hay or animals droppings² would be burnt as a signal.

The construction of the wall, which drew heavily on the local resources for building materials, such as bricks and granite held together by mortar, was carried out thanks to a great manpower³ which included soldiers, prisoners, and local people. The Wall as we see it today was mostly built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

The Great Wall is part of Chinese mythology and popular symbolism. One of the most beautiful legends is about the collapse⁴ of a section of the Great Wall caused my Meng Jangnu who cried bitterly over the death of her husband in the construction of the Wall.

Over the past few centuries, the Great Wall served as a source of building materials for local farms and villages. Aerial photos show that in sections the centre of the Wall was filled with sand and silt. The same conditions which made the Great Wall a triumph of engineering make restoration problematic and slow.



GLOSSARY

- 1 borders
- 2 dung
- 3 workforce
- 4 fall

READING COMPREHENSION

● Decide if the following statements are true or false. Correct the false ones.

- ① The Great Wall is 5,000 kilometres long.
- ② The wall was enlisted as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1987.
- ③ Its original function was defensive.
- ④ It was built by foreign, specialised workers.
- ⑤ It was mostly built during the 1st century AD.
- ⑥ It is part of Chinese mythology.

ACTIVITIES



- | | |
|---|---|
| T | F |
| T | F |
| T | F |
| T | F |
| T | F |
| T | F |

MATCHING

● Divide the text above into paragraphs and match the following headlines with each paragraph.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| ① Culture of the wall | ③ The wall today | ⑤ Construction of the wall |
| ② Introduction | ④ A bit of history | |

WRITING

● Fill in the chart below with information taken from the text above.

TOTAL LENGTH OF THE WALL	
MATERIALS USED TO BUILD THE WALL	
ORIGINAL FUNCTION	
STATES WHICH STARTED TO BUILD THE WALL	
WHEN ITS CONSTRUCTION WAS STARTED	

SPEAKING

● Introduce the Great Wall of China to the rest of the class.