

Name: _____ Date: _____



Read Information Sheet B then use what you have found out to decide which of these statements is true.

When did the Shang Dynasty begin?	Tick
Liu Xin lived closer to the time of the Shang Dynasty so he must be right.	
Modern archaeologists know lots more things than people in the past so they must be right.	
It's better to use all the evidence to make a decision, including scientific dates, so the modern archaeologists must be right.	

Who began the Shang Dynasty?	Tick
At least we have a name from the history books so we should go with that.	
The story in the history books is a myth and can't be trusted.	
Archaeologists could use DNA to find out what someone's name was.	

Where did the Shang rulers live?	Tick
If the history books say the Shang kings moved their capital five times they must be right.	
If the archaeologists haven't found the other four capitals they probably didn't exist.	
Just because the archaeologists haven't found the other capitals doesn't mean they don't exist. They could be found in the future.	

What were the royal palaces like?	Tick
The history books and the archaeology completely disagree.	
The history books and the archaeology completely agree.	
The archaeology tells you more about the royal palaces than the history books.	

Who were the Shang rulers?	Tick
We should use the names of the kings set out in the history books.	
We should use the names of the kings written on the bones dug up from Dàyì Shāng.	
We should use both of the lists of kings' names because the ones at Dàyì Shāng are only the last of the Shang kings.	

Which is a more reliable source of evidence, archaeology or history books? Why? Discuss this with a friend.



What do we know about the Shang Dynasty?

History books about the Shang Dynasty were not written until long after the Shang Dynasty had ended. It wasn't until much later still that archaeologists discovered evidence of the Shang Dynasty. The evidence they found didn't always support the writings in the history books. Read this table to find out what the history books and archaeologists say.

A historian called Liu Xin, 50 BC to AD 23, calculated that the Shang Dynasty started in 1766 BC and lasted until 1122 BC. In 1996, a group of 200 archaeologists and historians looked at all the evidence, including radiocarbon dates from archaeological digs, and decided that the Shang Dynasty lasted from about 1600 BC to 1046 BC.



The history books say that the founder of the Shang Dynasty, Qi, was miraculously born after his mother swallowed a dark egg from a black bird, a virgin birth. However, archaeologists have not found a tomb of the first ruler of the Shang Dynasty and usually don't know the names of the people they dig up.

The history books say that the Shang rulers moved capital five times and finally lived in the city of Yin, and sometimes the Shang people were called the Yin by the next dynasty, the Zhou. Writing on bones from the Bronze Age dug up at excavations near Anyang call the city Dàyì Shāng which means 'The Great Settlement Shang'. It was inhabited in the later Shang period, for the last 255 years of the dynasty and lasted under 12 kings.



Shang rulers had amazing palaces at Yin, according to the history books. Archaeologists digging at Anyang have found the remains of royal palaces made up of 53 wooden buildings based on rammed earth foundations, filled with bronze and jade objects. There were cellars and rooms for servants underneath.

The history books have a list of kings who ruled the Shang Dynasty. Writing on bones dug up in excavations near Anyang often have the name of the current king, his ancestors and a date on them. Archaeologists have been able to build up a list of rulers of the Shang Dynasty, which is very similar to the one in the history books.

