

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Use these heading to write a diary for a day in the life of an ordinary person of the Shang Dynasty. Include as much detail about the time period as you can.

### Waking up

*What's your house like? What did you have for breakfast?*

### Working

*Are you a farmer or a craftsperson? Where do you go to do your work? What do you do?*

### Lunch

*What did you eat? Did you have pork, lamb, dog, bread, rice?*

### A problem

*What kind of problems might you face? For example, if you are a farmer have you lost your sheep?*

### Problem resolution

*How was your problem resolved?*

## Everyday life in the Shang Dynasty

Shang society was organised in a pyramid system with the king at the top, followed by nobles, merchants, craftsmen, farmers and slaves. Everyone had to obey the king. If you were disloyal or went against the king, you were executed. Most people in Shang society were peasants. They lived in one-room huts made from wood or mud with thatched roofs. Many houses were built inside city walls for greater protection but farmers lived in the countryside. Craftsmen usually lived just outside of the city walls. Nobles, merchants and soldiers usually lived within the protection of the city.

Farmers did not own the land they farmed. It was owned either by the king or by nobles. In return for working on the land, the farmer was allowed a proportion of the crops to feed his family. Many farmers also reared animals, such as pigs, sheep and dogs for food, as well as keeping oxen to pull ploughs or carts.



The Shang farmers used irrigation systems from the Yellow River to water their crops. Farmers had to wait for the king to tell them when to plant their crops. The king would consult the oracle bones to find out when the best time would be. Only when the king decreed it could the farmers begin to plant their seeds. Farmers grew crops like millet, wheat and barley which could be made into bread and other foods. Some farmers grew rice but this was more common further south. As well as crops, people ate domestic and wild animals and would often hunt and fish to find food.

The craftsmen of the Shang Dynasty were very skilled at working with a number of materials, such as pottery, bone, jade and, of course, bronze. They would make everyday objects, such as pots and weapons, as well as ceremonial objects and elaborate ornaments and jewellery for rich nobles and royalty.



Most children did not go to school. Instead, they would help their parents in the fields or with chores around the house, such as collecting water from the river or preparing food for meals. Only very rich children would have received any education. This would not have been at school but usually with a private tutor. Most children were trained to follow in their parents' footsteps and learn a trade that would help them earn a living.