

## Shang ArchaeoBox TN v1

The Shang was the first major Chinese dynasty, and lived in the area around the Yellow River from c1750BC to 1050BC. They were famous for their bronze casting and jade carving. Fu Hao, for example, perhaps the most well-known of all the Shang, was buried along with 750 jade items and over 460 bronze ones - half were weapons and the other half were objects like those in this collection of artefacts. This pack contains a timeline and four replica artefacts. For obvious reasons we are **not** going to tell you what they are to begin with!

**[1] What can you find out about the Shang by looking at a single artefact? You can use just one or all of artefacts to do this.**

*Typical questions you might ask an artefact:*

1. *Look closely at the object.* If possible handle it. Draw it and label it - what are the key parts?
2. *How is it made?* What is it made of? Where was it made? Who made it? Is it big/small? Is it heavy/light? How can you tell?
3. *How old do you think it is?* New/Old/older/very old? How can you tell?
4. *What do you think it is/was used for?* How can you tell?
5. *Who would have used it?* Were they rich or poor? Where was it used? How did it change people's lives [significance]? How can you tell?

I'm sure you and your children will be able to think of many more questions. It is important to keep a list of those questions you **can't** answer and use those questions as the basis for further research into the Shang.

**[2] Taking the collection as a whole; what can we discover about the Shang?**

1. Why is each item decorated so much? What does that tell us about the Shang? Do

you think they were clever craftsmen? Why do you think so many items like these ended up in museums in Europe?

2. How **similar**, and how **different**, are each item? Do you think they are used for the same things?

3. What might the two items with three legs be used for? What might they be raised from the ground/a table?

4. Taking all four items together, what can we tell about the Shang? What was important to them? What did they do? What did they like? What might they be afraid of?

**Finally, pulling it all together.....**

Again, you might pull this activity together by making three lists :

[a] what we can definitely tell about the Shang from the artefacts

[b] what we can probably tell about the Shang from the artefacts

[c] what we still need to find out about the Shang despite examining the artefacts

You want the children to begin to draw some conclusions about life from what they have discovered - even if their main conclusion is that I need to find out more about life at the time before I can reach any strong conclusions. Artefacts can only tell us so much - we need other sources of information to answer some of the questions we have. They should be able to make a list of unanswered questions they want to find the answers to!

**And some answers..... [only to be shared with the children after these activities!]**

The artefacts are, from left to right,



Zun - used to hold wine

Ding - used to hold food and/or wine

Jue - used to warm wine

Archaeologists are unsure what this was called and what it was used for!

They are special ritual items, used by the Emperor and his friends, for religious occasions. BUT they are copies of pots, made from clay, used every day.

The artefacts are greenish, because those in collections today are like this. They have been buried underground and so taken on this colour. Originally, they would have been the same colour as a new penny - because of the copper in them.

They were made in sections and then assembled from the different pieces. Modern-day bronze workers find it nearly impossible to make items like this today.

*A Wilkinson August 2018, version 1.*