

Comprehension

Genre

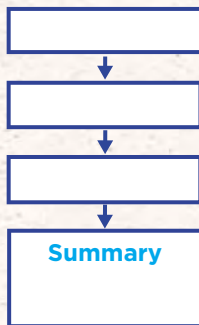
Informational Nonfiction is a detailed account of real situations and people using verifiable facts.



Monitor Comprehension

Summarize

As you read, use your Summary Chart.



Read to Find Out

How did the emperor view himself?

Award
Winning
Selection

THE EMPEROR'S SILENT ARMY

TERRACOTTA WARRIORS

of

ANCIENT CHINA



BY JANE O'CONNOR

A Strange Discovery

Lintong County, People's Republic of China, March 1974

It's just an ordinary day in early spring, or so three farmers think as they trudge across a field in northern China. They are looking for a good place to dig a well. There has been a drought, and they must find water or risk losing their crops later in the year.

The farmers choose a spot near a grove of persimmon trees. Down they dig, five feet, ten feet. Still no water. They decide to keep on digging a little deeper. All of a sudden, one of the farmers feels his shovel strike against something hard. Is it a rock? It's difficult to see at the bottom of the dark hole, so the farmer kneels down for a closer look. No, it isn't a rock. It seems to be clay, and not raw clay but clay that has been baked and made into something. But what?

The terracotta army was discovered when well-diggers found the head of a "pottery man" like this one. No photographs were taken that day.





A buried army of terracotta soldiers was found in the countryside of northern China.

Now, more carefully, the men dig around the something. Perhaps it is a pot or a vase. However, what slowly reveals itself is the pottery head of a man who stares back at them, open-eyed and amazingly real looking. The farmers have never seen anything like it before. But they do remember stories that some of the old people in their village have told, stories of a “pottery man” found many years ago not far from where they are now. The villagers had been scared that the pottery man would bring bad luck so they broke it to bits, which were then reburied and forgotten.

The three well-diggers are not so **superstitious**. They report their discovery to a local official. Soon a group of archeologists arrives to search the area more closely. Maybe they will find pieces of a clay body to go with the clay head.

In fact, they find much more.



These soldiers' hands are clenched as if still holding their bronze weapons.

During the weeks and months that follow, the archeologists dig out more pottery men, which now are called by a more dignified term—terracotta figurines. The figurines are soldiers. That much is clear. But they come from a time long ago, when Chinese warriors wore knee-length robes, armor made from small iron “fish scales,” and elaborate topknot hairdos. All of the soldiers are life-size or a little bigger and weigh as much as four hundred pounds. They stand at attention as if waiting for the command to charge into battle. The only thing missing is their weapons. And those are found too—hundreds of real bronze swords, daggers, and battle-axes as well as thousands of scattered arrowheads—all so perfectly made that, after cleaning, their ancient tips are still sharp enough to split a hair!



Summarize

If you had to summarize this paragraph, what three important details would you include?

Today, after years of work, terracotta soldiers are still being uncovered and restored. What the well-diggers stumbled upon, purely by accident, has turned out to be among the largest and most incredible archeological discoveries of modern times. Along with the Great Pyramids in Egypt, the buried army is now considered one of the true wonders of the ancient world. Spread out over several acres near the city of Xian, the soldiers number not in tens or hundreds but in the thousands! Probably 7,500 total. Until 1974, nobody knew that right below the people of northern China an enormous underground army has been standing guard, silently and watchfully, for more than 2,200 years. Who put them there?

One man.

Known as the fierce tiger of Qin, the divine Son of Heaven, he was the first emperor of China.



The Quest for Immortality

Before the time of Qin Shihuang (pronounced chin shir-hwong), who lived from 259 to 210 B.C., there was no China. Instead, there were seven separate kingdoms, each with its own language, currency, and ruler. For hundreds of years they had been fighting one another. The kingdom of Qin was the fiercest; soldiers received their pay only after they had presented their generals with the cut-off heads of enemy warriors. By 221 B.C. the ruler of the Qin kingdom had “eaten up his neighbors like a silkworm devouring a leaf,” according to an ancient historian. The name China comes from Qin.



The map shows the Qin kingdom in brown and the Qin empire in stripes. The dot indicates where the terracotta army was found.

The king of Qin now ruled over an immense empire—around one million square miles that stretched north and west to the Gobi desert, south to present-day Vietnam, and east to the Yellow Sea. To the people of the time, this was the entire **civilized** world. Not for another hundred years would the Chinese know that empires existed beyond their boundaries. To the ruler of Qin, being called king was no longer grand enough. He wanted a title that no one else had ever had before. What he chose was Qin Shihuang. This means “first emperor, God in Heaven, and Almighty of the Universe” all rolled into one.

But no title, however superhuman it sounded, could protect him from what he feared most—dying. More than anything, the emperor wanted to live forever. According to legend, a magic elixir had granted eternal life to the people of the mythical Eastern Islands. Over the years, the emperor sent expeditions out to sea in search of the islands and the magic potion. But each time they came back empty-handed.



This painting from the seventeenth century shows the first emperor carried on a covered litter called a palanquin.

If he couldn't live forever, then Qin Shihuang was determined to live as long as possible. He ate powdered jade and drank mercury in the belief that they would **prolong** his life. In fact, these “medicines” were poison and may have caused the emperor to fall sick and die while on a tour of the easternmost outposts of his empire. He was forty-nine years old.



Summarize

Why is the information about Qin Shihuang important to the selection so far? Explain your answer.



For thousands of years, the Chinese have made silk fabric. This detail of a silk robe shows an embroidered dragon, the symbol of Chinese emperors.

If word of Qin Shihuang's death got out while he was away from the capital there might be a revolt. So his ministers kept the news a secret. With the emperor's body inside his chariot, the entire party traveled back to the capital city. Meals were brought into the emperor's chariot; daily reports on affairs of state were delivered as usual—all to keep up the appearance that the emperor was alive and well. However, it was summer, and a terrible smell began to come from the chariot. But the clever ministers found a way to account for the stench. A cart was loaded with smelly salted fish and made to **precede** the chariot, overpowering and masking any foul odors coming from the dead emperor. And so Qin Shihuang returned to the capital for burial.

The tomb of Qin Shihuang had been under construction for more than thirty years. It was begun when he was a young boy of thirteen and was still not finished when he died. Even incomplete, the emperor's tomb was enormous, larger than his largest palace. According to legend, it had a domed ceiling inlaid with clusters of pearls to represent the sun, moon, and stars. Below was a gigantic relief map of the world, made from bronze. Bronze hills and mountains rose up from the floor, with rivers of mercury flowing into a mercury sea. Along the banks of the rivers were models of the emperor's palaces and cities, all exact replicas of the real ones.

In ancient times, the Chinese believed that life after death was not so very different from life on earth. The soul of a dead person could continue to enjoy all the pleasures of everyday life. So people who were rich enough constructed elaborate underground tombs filled with silk robes, jewelry with precious stones, furniture, games, boats, chariots—everything the dead person could possibly need or want.

Qin Shihuang knew that grave robbers would try their best to loot the treasures in his tomb. So he had machines put inside the tomb that produced the rumble of thunder to scare off intruders, and mechanical crossbows at the entrance were set to fire arrows automatically should anyone dare trespass. The emperor also made certain that the workers who carried his coffin in to its final resting place never revealed its exact whereabouts. As the men worked their way back through the tunnels to the tomb's entrance, a stone door came crashing down, and they were left to die, sealed inside the tomb along with the body of the emperor.

Even all these measures, however, were not enough to satisfy the emperor. And so, less than a mile from the tomb, in underground **trenches**, the terracotta warriors were stationed. Just as flesh-and-blood troops had protected him during his lifetime, the terracotta troops were there to protect their ruler against any enemy for all eternity.



Beautiful silk robes, like this one from the nineteenth century, would be placed in the tomb of an important person to be worn in the afterlife.



Inside the Emperor's Tomb

What exactly is the terracotta army guarding so **steadfastly**? What, besides the body of the dead emperor, is inside the tomb? The answer is that nobody knows. And the government of China has no plans at present to **excavate** and find out.

In ancient China it was the custom to build a natural-looking hill on top of a person's tomb. The more important a person was, the bigger the hill. Thousands of years of harsh weather have worn down the emperor's mound; originally it was four hundred feet high, almost as high as the biggest of the three Great Pyramids in Egypt.

Like the ancient Egyptians, the ancient Chinese believed that the body of a dead person should be preserved as a "home" for the soul. However, the Chinese did not make a person's body into a mummy. They believed that jade had magic powers, among them the ability to keep a dead body from decaying. In Chinese tombs from the first century B.C., bodies of noblemen and princesses have been found wearing entire suits of jade. It is believed that Qin Shihuang is buried



The body of the emperor, which has never been uncovered, may wear a jade funeral suit like this one found in the tomb of a Chinese princess from the late second century.

in just such a suit, the thousands of small tiles all beautifully carved and sewn together with gold thread. And over this jade burial outfit, his body is supposedly covered in a blanket of pearls.

As for all the things placed with the emperor, certainly they must be grand beyond imagining—silk robes embroidered with dragons, gem-encrusted crowns and jewelry, musical instruments, hand-carved furniture, lamps, beautiful dishes, cooking pots, and golden **utensils**. Like the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, the first emperor would have made certain that he had everything he might possibly want in the afterlife. But unless his tomb is excavated, what these treasures look like will remain a mystery.

MEET THE AUTHOR



Jane O'Connor knows a lot about books. She's worked as an editor and a publisher, and has written more than thirty books. Sometimes she writes her books with her husband, her older son, or another author. Jane had lots of research to do for this book. She included many of the amazing details that she found in this story. She also had to help find just the right photographs to make the terracotta warriors come alive in our imaginations.

Author's Purpose

How can you tell Jane O'Connor probably admires archaeologists? How may that have affected her purpose for writing? How well did she achieve her purpose?



Find out more about Jane O'Connor at

www.macmillanmh.com

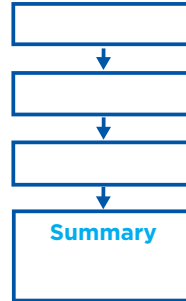


Comprehension Check



Summarize

Use your Summary Chart to summarize *The Emperor's Silent Army*. What purpose did the silent army serve?



Think and Compare

1. What details in the selection tell us about the person responsible for the building of the terracotta army? Use specific examples from the text. **Monitor Comprehension: Summarize**
2. Compare and contrast Qin Shihuang's tomb with what you know about the pyramids in Egypt. **Analyze**
3. The tomb of the emperor has not been fully explored. What would you say to the Chinese government to try to convince them to let archaeologists **excavate** the tomb further? **Synthesize**
4. The author tells us that the terracotta army is one of the most incredible archaeological discoveries of modern times. Why do you think this is true? **Evaluate**
5. Read "Bringing the Past to the Present" on pages 316-317. Think about what you have read in *The Emperor's Silent Army*. If the Chinese government were to approve further excavation of the emperor's tomb, what might they find? How might they find it? Use evidence from both texts to support your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**

