Genghis Khan (c. 1167-1227):

- Genghis Khan's father, the Mongol chief Yisugei, named his son Temujin. According to folklore, Temujin had a large blood clot in his right hand, which meant he was destined to become a great warrior.
- In 1206, 40 year old Temujin successfully took command of the Mongol forces in the Gobi. It is believed that he was inspired to rule because he grew up extremely poor, and his father was murdered by his enemies.
- Genghis Khan united all the nomadic Mongolian tribes, then set out to create a huge empire.

Mongol Empire c. 1227

Mongol Empire c. 1294

Mongol Expansion:

- By the 1200s, Chinese civilization had made many achievements in government, technology, and the arts. However, enemies to the north were preparing to invade China. The Mongols, the dominant nomadic group in central Asia, became the first non-Chinese people to rule all of China.
- The Mongols were nomadic people living to the north of China.
- Genghis Khan unified the Mongol people and used highly skilled and well-organized armies, as well as terror tactics, to conquer other civilizations.
- By the end of the 1200s, the Mongols had the largest land empire in history.
- Mongol culture meshed with other cultures in Asia as well as parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Mongol Invasion of Japan:

- The Mongol invasion of Japan did not go exactly as planned. In 1247, the first invading army was composed of 40,000 Mongols and Koreans. A typhoon, or hurricane, hit and destroyed more than 200 Mongol ships, forcing them to retreat. In response, Japan built coastal defenses and readied for another attack.
- In 1281, the Mongols formed two armies to attack from different directions at the same time. They broke through the defensive coastal wall, but soon another typhoon hit, completely destroying the Mongol army. It was said that of the 140,000 soldiers, barely 7000 survived. Japan would not come as close to invasion for over another 650 years.
- The storms that saved Japan from almost certain invasion were known as kamikaze, or “divine wind.” This term was also used to refer to Japanese pilots who crashed their planes on purpose into U.S. battleships during World War II.

Mongolian Literature:

- Before the 1200s, written Mongolian literature did not exist. The nomadic Mongols had an oral tradition, in which they passed stories and history from generation to generation by retelling them aloud. Around the time of Genghis Khan, this began to change.
- What we know about Genghis Khan mainly comes from texts written at the time.
- The only one written by a Mongol is entitled Secret History of the Mongols. The text was written by an unknown author for the Mongolian royal family after Khan's death.
Scholars consider this history, written about 1240, the most important pre-Buddhist Mongol text. In the book, the epic tale of Genghis Khan and his son, Ogodei, unfold. Rather than presenting a strictly factual report, the book contains songs, verses, myths, and proverbs.

In the late 1200s, the story was translated into Chinese, which is fortunate because the Mongolian original was lost.

The Secret History of the Mongols was completed during the reign of Ogodei Khan, third son of Genghis Khan.

In 1260, the grandson of Genghis Khan, Kublai, became the new Mongol ruler. Kublai Khan continued the conquest of China that his grandfather had begun. In 1264, Kublai established his capital at Khanbliq—the city of the khan—in northern China. Today, the modern city of Beijing is located on the site of the former Mongol capital.

Kublai Khan conquered the remainder of China and began the Yuan dynasty, expanding land and seagoing trade to reach great prosperity.

Kublai Khan assigned Mongol leaders to top jobs, but allowed scholar-officials to retain their jobs.

Though Mongols were Buddhist, they respected other religions, which won the people's support.

European explorer Marco Polo traveled from Venice to China and lived in Khanbaliq, documenting the magnificence of the capital city.

The Mongols came from an area north of China called Mongolia. They lived in movable tents called yurts and raised horses, sheep, and yaks, or long-haired oxen. Mongols were made up of clans, or groups of related families. They followed their herds as the animals grazed the large steppes of Mongolia. The steppes are wide, grassy plains stretching from the Black Sea to northern China.

Early in their history, the Mongols developed skills that were necessary for nomadic living. The Mongols were excellent horseback riders. Their children learned to ride a horse at age four or five, and then they spent much of their lives on horseback. The Mongols also developed their fighting skills. Riding on their horses toward an enemy, the Mongols attacked them with swords and spears.

In 1206, a meeting of Mongol leaders took place in the Gobi. This vast desert covers parts of Mongolia and China. At that meeting, a warrior named Temujin was elected Genghis Khan, or “strong ruler.”

Genghis Khan set out to unify, the Mongol clans. He created a new legal code and formed a group of clan chiefs to help him plan military campaigns. From this time until his death, Genghis Khan fought to conquer lands beyond Mongolia.

Genghis Khan created an army of more than 100,000 trained warriors. The soldiers were placed in groups called units. The units were then placed under the command of skilled officers. These officers were chosen for their abilities rather than their social position. These changes made the Mongols the most skilled fighting force in the world at that time.

Under Genghis Khan, Mongol forces conquered other people of the steppes. These victories brought tribute money to the Mongol treasure. The victories also attracted new recruits to the army. Soon the Mongols were powerful enough to attack major civilizations. In 1211, thousands of Mongols invaded China. Within three years, they controlled all of northern China. They then invaded western kingdoms that controlled parts of the Silk Road.

Genghis Khan and his Mongol warriors became known for their cruel fighting and use of terror. Terror refers to violent acts that are meant to cause fear. Mongol soldiers attacked, looted, and burned cities. Within a short time, many people began surrendering to the Mongols without even fighting them.

After Genghis Khan died in 1227, his vast territory was divided into four territories called khanates. The northwestern khanate was known as the Golden Horde. Led by Genghis Khan’s grandson, Batu, its warriors swept into parts of eastern and central Europe. The southwestern khanate, known as the Il-Khanate, led by his grandson Hulagu, advanced into the Muslim kingdoms of the Middle East, overran Persia, captured Baghdad in 1258, then moved into Syria and Palestine on their way to Egypt. The Muslim leaders of Egypt, known as the Mamluks,
stopped the Il-Khanate's advance in 1260. Meanwhile, in the east, another grandson, Kublai Khan, focused on conquering all of China.

- These areas formed the vast Mongol Empire. Mongol rule stretched from the Pacific Ocean in the east to Eastern Europe in the west and from Siberia in the north to the Himalaya in the south. The Mongols created the largest land empire in history.
- The Mongols caused a great amount of damage to the lands they conquered, but they also brought stability. This stability encouraged trade and closer contact between Asia and Europe. Many of the great trade routes between Asia and Europe crossed Mongol lands. The Mongols grew wealthy because they taxed the products that were traded along these roads.
- The Mongols admired the cultures they conquered. They generally tolerated all religions, and sometimes they adopted their beliefs and customs. For example, the Mongols in Southwest Asia accepted Islam and adopted Arab, Persian and Turkish ways.
- The Mongols also learned from the Chinese. As they fought Chinese troops, the Mongols learned about gunpowder and its use as an explosive. They saw the Chinese use the fire lance, a weapon that the Chinese later developed into the gun and cannon. Adopting gunpowder and the fire lance from the Chinese, the Mongols became even more frightening to their opponents.

**Mongols and Chinese**

- In 1271, Kublai decided he would control all of China. By 1279, Kublai Khan finished conquering southern China. He brought an end to the Song dynasty and declared himself emperor. Kublai Khan started the Yuan dynasty. The term *Yuan* means “beginning.” The Yuan dynasty would last only about 100 years. Kublai Khan would rule for 30 of those years, until his death in 1294. To keep tight control of these new lands, Kublai appointed Mongol leaders to top jobs in China. He also kept some Chinese official in positions of power.
- The Mongol culture was quite different from the Chinese culture. The Mongols had their own language, laws, and customs. These characteristics separated them from the Chinese people they ruled. Mongols lived apart from the Chinese and did not mix with them socially. These cultural differences allowed the Chinese to continue the Song dynasty belief that China and its traditions were superior to “barbarian” peoples.

**Government and Religion**

- In government affairs, the Yuan regime did not use civil service examinations as was previously done in China. Government jobs were open to non-Chinese people, including Mongols and Turks. Although the Yuan rulers respected Confucian writings, they replaced Chinese scholar-officials to ensure control over the government.
- Like many Chinese the Mongols in China practiced Buddhism, but they were respectful of other religions. For example, Kublai Khan encouraged Christians, Muslims and Hindus from outside China to practice their faiths.
- Under Mongol rule, China reached the height of its wealth and power. Foreigners were drawn to its capital city. Although they were foreigners, the Mongols gradually won the support of many Chinese people. Some Chinese appreciated the order and prosperity that the Mongols brought to the country. Foreign visitors were attracted to China and reached it by trading along the Silk Road.

**Marco Polo**

- One of the most famous European travelers to reach China was Marco Polo. He came from the city of Venice in Italy. Polo lived in the capital of Khanbaliq during the reign of Kublai Khan. He wrote his impressions of the magnificent appearance of this city:

> “The streets are so straight and wide that you can see right along them from end to end and from one gate to the other. And up and down the city there are beautiful palaces, and many great and fine hostelries, and fine houses in great numbers. All the plots of ground on which the houses of the city are built are foursquare, and laid out with straight lines; all the plots being occupied by great and spacious palaces, with courts and gardens of proportionate size. All these plots were assigned to different heads of families. Each square plot is encompassed by handsome streets for traffic; and thus the whole city is arranged in squares just like a chess-board, and disposed in a manner so perfect and masterly that it is impossible to give a description that should do it justice.”

~ Marco Polo
Trade and Empire:

• The Mongol empire stretched from China to Eastern Europe. As a result, Mongol China prospered from increased overland trade with many parts of the world. The Yuan dynasty also built ships and expanded seagoing trade. China traded tea, silk, and porcelain in exchange for goods such as silver, carpets, cotton, and spices. Muslims and Europeans also took Chinese discoveries back to their homelands.

• Mongol armies advanced into Vietnam and northern Korea. The rulers of Korea, called the Koryo remained in power because they agreed to Mongol control. The Mongols forced thousands of Koreans to build warships. The Mongols used these ships in two attempts to invade Japan. Both voyages ended in failure when huge storms destroyed much of the fleet.

Site of Encounter: Quanzhou

• One of the major trade cities during the Mongol’s Yuan Dynasty was Quanzhou, located on a large natural harbor in southeast China. The Tang Dynasty founded the city in the 700s. Emperors of the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties selected Quanzhou as one of a few cities that could trade directly with foreign merchants. Chinese maps often identified the city as the starting point for sea-based trade with the West. As trade expanded, Mongol emperors grew wealthy from taxes that were added to foreign goods coming into China.

• Quanzhou’s status as an official trade city brought merchants from Arabia, Persia, India, and Europe who often lived in business centers within the city. Quanzhou officials allowed foreign residents to practice their own religions. The city housed Muslim mosques, Hindu temples, Buddhist shrines, and Christian churches, in addition to sites where traditional religions were practiced.

• Mongol emperors promoted the exchange of ideas among the Chinese Mongols, and Foreign merchants. Later emperors banned sea trade at times in the 140s and 1500s, leading to the decline of Quanzhou as a major trade city.

Lesson 5.2 Summary

• During the Tang dynasty, Chinese farmers improved their irrigation systems and developed new kinds of rice, which led to greater crop yields and population growth.

• New roads and waterways built during the Tang dynasty also improved conditions for travel and trade. The Silk Road reopened and trade thrived.

• During the Tang and Song dynasties, the use of coal to make steel improved the quality of life for many Chinese. They used steel products to build, farm, and defend China’s borders.

• The Chinese developed a way to manufacture paper and to print books using wooden blocks and ink. Later, Chinese printers developed movable type, which allowed them to print books more efficiently.

• Gunpowder provided the Chinese with effective weapons, and improvements in shipbuilding and navigation tools allowed the Chinese to travel and trade far from home.

• The Tang and Song dynasties were a golden age for Chinese culture. Poets celebrated nature and the shortness of life in their writings.

• Landscape paintings portrayed nature as a great unknowable force. Painters often wrote poems in calligraphy on their artworks.

• During the Tang dynasty, Chinese artisans became skilled at making porcelain, a light, fine pottery that became prized around the world.