IV. The Yuan and Ming Dynasties

The Big Idea

- The Chinese were ruled by foreigners during the Yuan dynasty, but they threw off Mongol rule and prospered during the Ming dynasty.
A. The Mongol Empire included China, and the Mongols ruled China as the Yuan dynasty.

1. Genghis Khan organized the Mongols into a powerful army and led them on bloody expeditions of conquest, including China.

2. By the time of his death, all of northern China was under his control.

3. Kublai Khan became ruler of the Mongol Empire and completed the conquest of China.

4. He declared himself emperor of China in 1279, which began the Yuan dynasty.
B. Yuan Dynasty

1. The Chinese resented being ruled by foreigners who spoke a different language, worshipped different gods, and had different customs.

2. Although Khan made sure to keep control of the Chinese, he did not force them to accept Mongol ways of life.


4. Tax money went for public-works projects that required the labor of many Chinese.

5. Trade routes were kept safe by Mongol soldiers.

6. The Yuan dynasty ended when a rebel army defeated the Mongols in 1368.
C. The Ming dynasty was a time of stability and prosperity.

1. Zhu Yuanzhang defeated the Mongols and started the Ming dynasty.

2. During this dynasty, the Chinese improved their ship and sailing skills thanks to the greatest sailor of the time, Zheng He.

3. Zheng He boasted about his country during his travels and brought back gifts.

4. The Ming were known for their grand building projects.

5. The Forbidden City in Beijing is one example of their skill. Within some buildings were 9,000 rooms.
D. Great Building Projects

1. The Ming were also known for their grand building projects, such as the Forbidden City.
2. It was a symbol of China’s glory, and the common people were not allowed to enter.
3. Ming rulers also directed the restoration of the Great Wall of China.
4. This kept the Chinese people safer against northern invasions.
E. China under in Ming saw great changes in its government and relations with other countries.

1. The Ming emperors were powerful and abolished the offices of some powerful officials.

2. The Ming appointed censors. They were officials who would judge the behavior of local leaders and inspect the schools and other institutions.

3. The Ming emperors tried to eliminate all foreign influences.

4. China entered a period of isolationism, a policy of avoiding contact with other countries.

5. Due to a lack of progress during this period, China grew weak. The Western world had made huge technological progress and was then able to gain influence in Chinese affairs by the late 1800s.