

Time to Worship

What were the religious beliefs of the Shang Dynasty?

Religion in the Shang Dynasty was based on two important beliefs: **animism** (the belief that all objects in the natural world have souls or spirits) and **veneration of ancestors** (the belief that the spirits of deceased relatives continued to be present in the family and had influence over the living world). Take a look at www.ancientchina.co.uk/tombs/story/sto_set.html and read through the story to discover some of the ways that Shang people tried to please and worship their ancestors, asking them to intervene in situations for them.

Task 1

Match the situations with the way that Shang people might have responded by worshipping their gods.

It is nearly spring time and Shang farmers are hoping their crops will grow well this year.

We will offer sacrifices of food and wine to our ancestors so that they will stop the floodwaters.

There has been a flood and a Shang craftsman is worried that the water might destroy his workshop.

We will hold a special festival to honour the gods. We will use special bronze vessels and have food and music in their honour. Then they will give us good luck this year.

A powerful Shang warrior has become ill. The king needs him to be well again before it is time to go into battle.

We will make human sacrifices and ask our ancestors to plea to Shangdi on our behalf to ask for good luck in times of war.

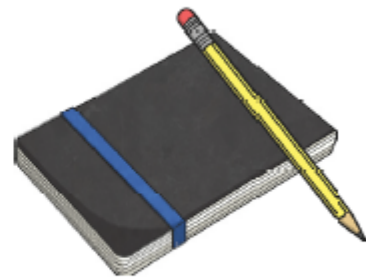
In addition to ancestors, Shang people also worshipped different gods. There was the supreme god, called Shangdi, who was believed to have ultimate control over human destiny and forces of nature. There were also a number of other gods, usually nature gods, such as the gods of the moon or sun, and mythical creature gods like dragons who ruled rivers or lakes.

Task 2

Your challenge is to research and put together a presentation all about **gods**.

Your presentation could contain one, some or all of the following:

- A poster
- A leaflet/booklet
- A news report or newspaper article
- Role play or drama
- Drawings and paintings
- PowerPoint or Flipchart presentation
- A model



These are just suggestions. You may have more exciting ideas about how best to present your work.

Have fun putting together your presentation! Below is some information about gods to help you get started.

Shang Gods

The Shang supreme god was called Shang Di.

The Shang people also believed in and worshipped lots of other spirits or lesser gods. Many of these were connected to the natural world and the Shang people believed the spirits were all around controlling different elements of nature.

Some of the nature gods included a sun god, a moon god and a rain god.

