7.20 Describe the reunification of China under the Tang Dynasty and reasons for the cultural diffusion of Buddhism.
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The Tang Dynasty ruled Ancient China from 618 to 907. During the Tang rule China experienced a time of peace and prosperity that made it one of the most powerful nations in the world. This time period is sometimes referred to as the Golden Age of Ancient China.

**Establishment of the Dynasty.**

When the Sui Dynasty began to collapse in 618, an aristocrat named Li Yuan who lived in the north marshaled an army and marched on the capital city of Chang'an. He helped to put a new child emperor on the throne, but Li Yuan really ruled the country as Prime Minister. When the old Emperor Yang was assassinated, Li Yuan then declared himself as emperor and established the Tang Dynasty.

**Technology and Inventions.**

Many advancements in the areas of engineering and technology were made during the Tang Dynasty. Perhaps the most important was the invention of woodblock printing. Woodblock printing allowed books to be printed in mass production. This helped to increase literacy and to pass on knowledge throughout the empire. The first full-length book to be printed was the Diamond Sutra in 868.

*Another major invention of the time was gunpowder. Although it would continue to be perfected over hundreds of years, gunpowder was mostly used for fireworks during the Tang Dynasty. The people believed that fireworks could help to scare off evil spirits.*

*Other inventions included a ceramic called porcelain, advances in mapmaking, gas cylinders for natural gas, advances in medicine, and advancements in clock making.*

**Culture.**

The arts flourished during the Tang Dynasty. It was during this time that poetry became an integral part of the Chinese culture. Poetry was a required study for those who wished to pass the civil service exams. Talented poets were well-respected and often recited their poetry as entertainment at parties. Some of the great poets in Chinese history lived during this time such as Li Bai, Du Fu, Li Po, and Wang Wei.

While the Tang Dynasty is most famous for its poetry, other arts also became popular during this time. Many forms of literature were written including short stories, encyclopedias, and histories. Also painting was very popular and the era produced famous painters such as Wu Daozi, Wang Wei (also a famous poet), and Zhou Fang.

**Government.**

The Tang Dynasty ruled over a vast area that stretched from Korea to Northern Vietnam. It even reached west as far as Afghanistan. It took a very organized government to control all of this territory. The Tang established a detailed code of laws and administrative functions. They taxed the people based on their land and also required that farmers serve in the army for a period of time.
The capital city of the Tang Empire and center of the government was the city of Chang’an. This is the modern day city of Xi’an. It was here that the emperor lived and ruled over his vast empire. Government officials were assigned based on their scores on the civil service examinations. In an effort to get the best talent into the government, examinations were more open to men of the non-noble classes than with previous dynasties. There were even government run schools to help educate more people.

Religion
At the start of the Tang Dynasty the emperors were tolerant of many religions. Buddhism became a very popular religion throughout China. However, near the end of the dynasty, the rulers made Confucianism the national religion and banned all other religions. Many Buddhist monasteries and temples were shut down.

Decline and Fall
Over time, the Tang Dynasty began to weaken due to government corruption and high taxes. A rebellion by the over-taxed people occurred in 874 where much of the city of Chang’an was destroyed. The Tang managed to halt the rebellion, but the government never fully recovered. In 907 the dynasty came to an end when a general named Zhu Wen removed the last Tang emperor and took power.

Interesting Facts about the Tang Dynasty

- The Tang Dynasty benefited from the hard work of the earlier Sui Dynasty which finished the Grand Canal and rebuilt much of the Great Wall.

- It was during the Tang Dynasty that drinking tea became a leisure activity and the author Lu Yu wrote a description on the art of drinking tea called the Classic of Tea.

- Toilet paper was invented during this time.

- A census taken by the government in 609 showed that there were around 50 million people living in China.

- The capital city of Chang’an was the largest city in the world at the time. It is estimated that the total population of the city and the countryside around it totaled nearly 2 million people.
1) What Chinese dynasty preceded the Tang Dynasty?
   A  Ming
   B  Qin
   C  Zhou
   D  Song
   E  Su

2) Which statement below is sometimes used by historians to refer to the time period of the Tang Dynasty?
   A  Spring and Autumn Period
   B  The 10 Kingdoms
   C  Golden Age of China
   D  The Religious Awakening
   E  Warring States Period

3) Who was the first emperor of the Tang?
   A  Qin Shi Huang
   B  Li Yuan
   C  Yellow Emperor
   D  Kublai Khan
   E  Zheng He

4) Which of the following was an important Chinese invention during this time period?
   A  Woodblock printing
   B  Bronze
   C  Iron casting
   D  Kites
   E  Silk

5) What did the Chinese believe would help to scare off evil spirits?
   A  Mechanical clocks
   B  Porcelain
   C  Poetry
   D  Fireworks
   E  Paintings

6) Why did government officials need to learn poetry?
   A  Because most of the laws were written in poetry
   B  Because they used poetry for secret military codes
   C  Because it was part of the civil service test
   D  They did not learn poetry because it was banned
   E  Because leaders were often called upon to rhyme for the peasants

7) The arts were not important during the Tang Dynasty and few people were interested in arts such as poetry and painting.
   A  TRUE
   B  FALSE

8) Which of the following was a part of the Tang government system?
   A  Taxes
   B  Farmers had to serve in the army
   C  A code of laws
   D  All of the above
   E  None of the above

9) Around what period of time did the Tang rule China?
   A  200 BC to 110 BC
   B  22 BC to 210 AD
   C  340 AD to 540 AD
   D  618 AD to 907 AD
   E  1400 AD to 1790 AD

10) What was the capital city of the Tang Dynasty?
    A  Chang' an
    B  Beijing
    C  Shanghai
    D  Xanadu
    E  Wuhan
7.20 Describe the reunification of China under the Tang Dynasty and reasons for the cultural diffusion of Buddhism.

While China was experiencing changes in its government, another major change was taking place in Chinese culture. A new religion was spreading quickly throughout the vast land.

Buddhism is one of the world’s major religions, originating in India around 500 BC. Buddhism first came to China during the Han dynasty. But for some time, there were few Buddhists in China. Buddhism’s status changed during the Period of Disunion. During this troubled time, many people turned to Buddhism. They took comfort in the Buddhist teaching that people can escape suffering and achieve a state of peace. By the end of the Period of Disunion, Buddhism was well established in China. As a result, wealthy people donated land and money to Buddhist temples, which arose across the land. Some temples were architectural wonders and housed huge statues of the Buddha.

Buddhism continued to influence life in China after the country was reunified. In fact, during the Sui and Tang dynasties, Buddhism continued to grow and spread. Chinese missionaries, people who travel to spread their religion, introduced Buddhism to Japan, Korea, and other Asian lands. Buddhism influenced many aspects of Chinese culture, including art, literature, and architecture. In fact, so important was Buddhism in China that the period from about 400 to about 845 can be called the Age of Buddhism.

This golden age of Buddhism came to an end when a Tang emperor launched a campaign against the religion. He burned many Buddhist texts, took lands from Buddhist temples, destroyed many temples, and turned others into schools. The emperor’s actions weakened the influence of Buddhism in China, but they did not destroy it completely. Buddhism continued to play a key role in Chinese society for centuries. As it had during the early Tang period, it continued to shape Chinese art and literature. But even as it influenced life in China, Buddhism changed. People began to blend elements of Buddhism with elements of other philosophies, especially Confucianism and Daoism, to create a new way of thinking.

Based on what you have read, explain why Buddhism was easily diffused into the Chinese culture.
(Used a separate sheet of paper. Make sure you follow the three steps.)