Project glossary

afterlife
The life that is believed to begin after death.
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ancestor
A family member who lived a long time ago.
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bi
Circular discs of jade with a hole in the middle frequently buried with the dead.
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bronze
A metal alloy of copper and tin.
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chariot
A two-wheeled cart pulled by a pair of horses.
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China
A large country in East Asia.
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civilisation
The most advanced form of society.
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dagger-axe
A sharp dagger with a bronze blade fixed to a wooden pole.
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deity
A god or goddess.
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ding
An ancient Chinese cauldron used for cooking, storage or ritual offerings to the gods or ancestors.
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divination
The act of finding out and saying what will happen in the future.
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dynasty
A succession of people from the same family who rule the country, and the period when the country is ruled by them.
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emperor
The male ruler of an empire.

hierarchy
A system in society where people are organised into different levels of importance from highest to lowest.
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inscription
Words cut into pottery, stone, bone or metal.
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jade
A hard, green-coloured stone found in riverbeds and excavated from mountains.
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oracle bones
Pieces of turtle shell or ox bone used to communicate with ancestors and gods.
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plastron
The flat underside of a turtle's shell.
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power
The ability to make people do as you want.
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sacrifice
The act of killing an animal or person and offering them to the gods.
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shaman
A priest who is believed to communicate with spirits.
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Shang Dynasty
The earliest ruling dynasty in the recorded history of China (c1600–c1046 BC).
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silk
A soft, delicate fabric made from thread produced by silkworms.
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taotie
A creature in Chinese mythology whose image appears on artefacts such as masks and ritual vessels.
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Xia Dynasty
Believed to be the first Chinese dynasty and the first organised government (c2070–c1600 BC).
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Yellow Emperor
The first emperor in Chinese history, Huangdi, who united many tribes near the Yellow River.
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Zhou Dynasty
Ruled China after the Shang Dynasty in a time of peace and unity (c1046–c256 BC).