

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Defeat of the Shang

Wu thinks King Di Xin's reign needs to end.	Wu gathers soldiers into an army.	Wu marches his army to the Yellow River.
Wu's army crosses the Yellow River.	King Di Xin gathers his army together. He has lots of slaves.	One of Di Xin's generals wants to swap sides.
The Battle of Muye - both armies have chariots with horses as well as foot soldiers.		
Di Xin is defeated. He retreats to Dàyí Shāng.	Wu hears of the death of Di Xin. He appoints his son Wu Geng as new ruler at Dàyí Shāng.	Wu Geng appoints himself new King of the Zhou Dynasty.

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Wu is upset	Wu gathers an army	Wu marches his army
Wu's army crosses the Yellow River	King Di Xin gathers his army	Di Xin's generals wants to swap sides
The Battle of Muye		
Di Xin is defeated	Wu appoints a new ruler	Di Xin appoints himself as king

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The Defeat of the Shang

The End of the Shang Dynasty

The legend from the history books says that the Zhou Duke Wen's son, Wu, and his ally Jiang Ziya, led an army of 45,000 men and 300 chariots across the Yellow River and defeated King Di Xin of Shang at the Battle of Muye. The Zhou conquerors claimed to overthrow the Shang Dynasty for moral reasons. They said that the Shang king was evil and that heaven no longer wanted him to reign. They blamed the Shang's downfall on its king's excessive drinking, indulgent lifestyle and immoral behaviour. Many of Di Xin's soldiers and slaves swapped sides and joined the Zhou armies. Di Xin was defeated and is rumoured to have committed suicide.



The story of the defeat of the Shang Dynasty is recorded in the Shijing, the oldest known collection of Chinese poetry:

When king Wen would wive,
There was the lady in a large State...
The lady-successor was from Xin,
Its eldest daughter, who came to marry him.
She was blessed to give birth to king Wu,
Who was preserved, and helped, and received also
the appointment,
And in accordance with it smote the great Shang.

The troops of Yin-Shang,
Were collected like a forest,
And marshalled in the wilderness of Mu.
We rose [to the crisis];—
'God is with you,' [said Shang-Fu to the king],
'Have no doubts in your heart.'

The wilderness of Mu spread out extensive;
Bright shone the chariots of sandal;
The teams of bays, black-maned and white-bellied,
galloped along;
The grand-master Shang-Fu,
Was like an eagle on the wing,
Assisting king Wu,
Who at one onset smote the great Shang.
That morning's encounter was followed by a clear
bright [day].

The descendants of the sovereigns of Shang,
Were in number more than hundreds of thousands;
But when God gave the command,
They became subject to Zhou.
They became subject to Zhou.
The appointment of Heaven is not constant.
The officers of Yin, admirable and alert,
Assist at the libations in [our] capital...

Before Yin lost the multitudes,
[Its kings] were the assessors for God.
Look to Yin as a beacon;
The great appointment is not easily [preserved].
The appointment is not easily [preserved],
Do not cause your own extinction.
Display and make bright your righteousness and name,
And look at [the fate of] Yin in the light of Heaven.

King Wen of the Zhou married a princess from Xin and they had a son called Wu who was destined to defeat the Shang.

The Zhou called the Shang Yin. There were lots of Shang soldiers, most of whom were slaves, at the Battle of Muye. Shang-Fu was King Wu's priest.

The Zhou army had chariots pulled by horses. Shang-Fu helped Wu lead the troops to defeat the Shang.

There were many descendants of the Shang kings but God decided he wanted the Zhou to rule instead of the Shang. Libations are religious ceremonies.

The poem ends by warning others to remember the fate of the Shang (Yin) and not to cross the Zhou.



Pangs of Conscience...

Imagine you are a general in the last Shang ruler's army. You are considering going over to the Zhou, who you believe will be the winners. Write a diary entry as if you are debating with yourself whether to betray your king or not. Here are some prompts:

Starting your diary entry:

- Tomorrow I have to...
- Today I will fight...
- I don't know what to do....
- King Di Xin is....

Continuing your diary entry:

- I have two choices...
- I do not want to betray my king but...
- I have doubts about...

Finishing your diary entry:

- I have decided to...
- Wu will/will not give me....
- King Di Xin can/cannot continue...
- I know what I must do...



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