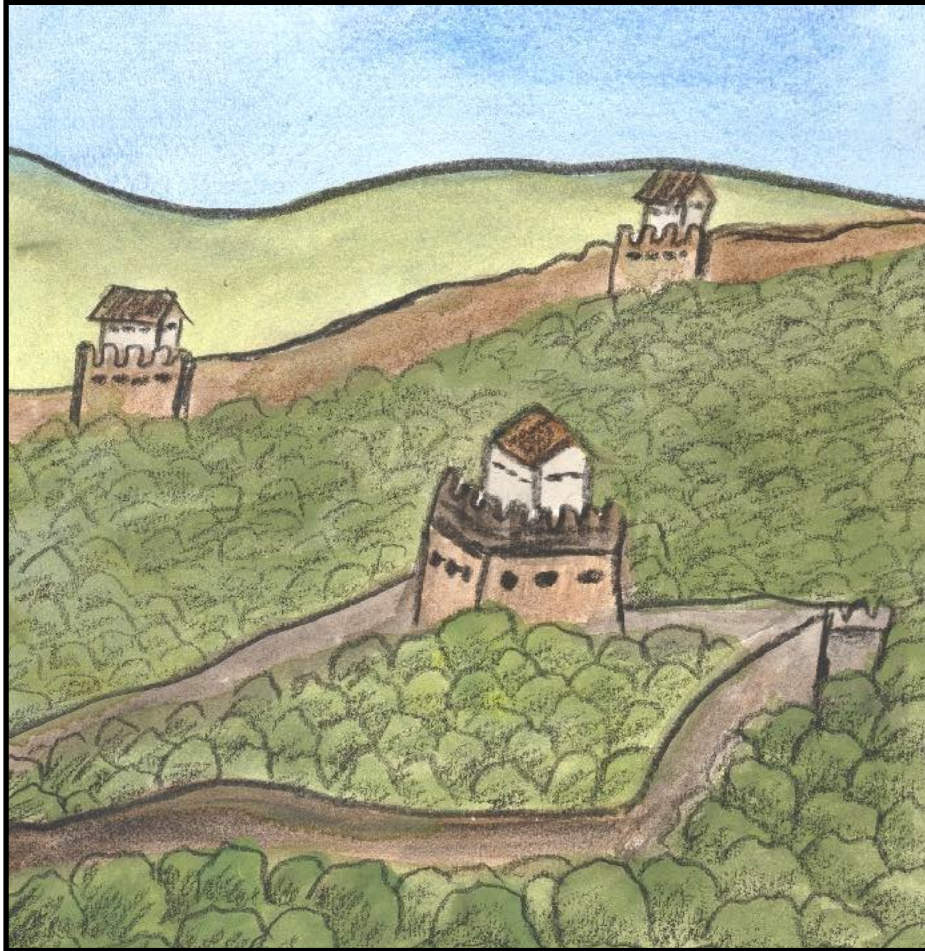


Storybook of China's History



By Rachel Bubb

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This book is meant to be an introduction to Chinese history for children in the primary grades. If you're looking for a book that has facts and information, this is not it. It's called Storybook of China's History because it's a book of stories that tells China's history. I was inspired by Our Island Story by H. E. Marshall. England has such a long history but H. E. Marshall wrote its history through stories in a very interesting way. I wanted to do something similar for Chinese history.

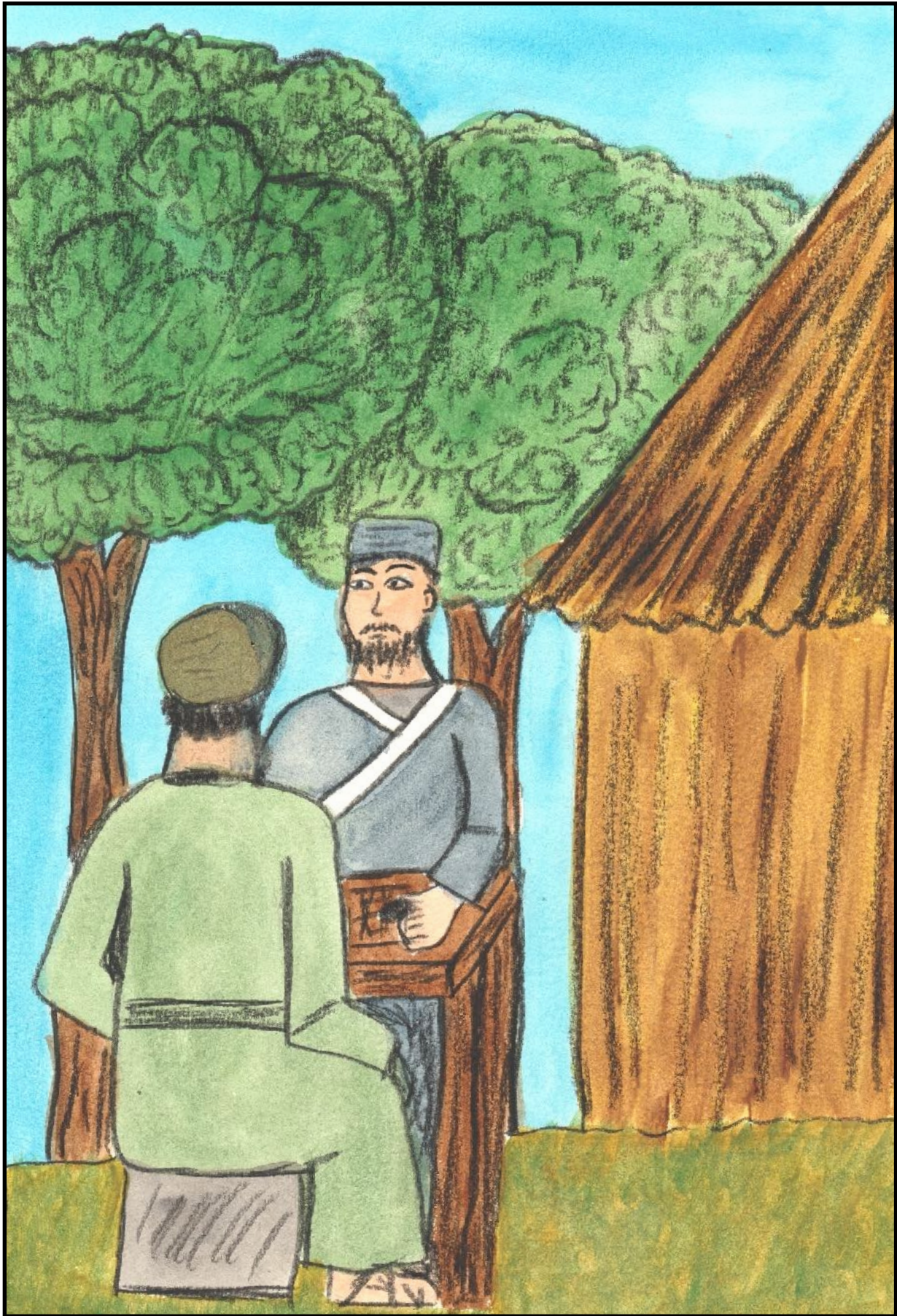
The design of the book is that each lesson would be one chapter. After you read each lesson aloud (or have the older children read it on their own), it's great if you can ask them to tell you back what they remember from the story. It's surprising how much children can remember this way, and remember long term. It's also a great idea to read a biography that takes place during the time period or dynasty you are reading.

-Rachel

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Chapter 1: A Famous Game

We'll start our story today with one of the great and earliest emperors of China. An emperor is another name for a king, just like a Pharaoh is another name for the king of Egypt. Today we'll talk about Emperor Yao. Sadly, even though he was a great leader of the country, his son was not. Everyone knew that his son often wasted his time and was lazy. He always did whatever he wanted and didn't care much for the country. Emperor Yao didn't know what to do.

Finally, one night he had a rather strange dream. In this dream, he was playing a two player game that he had never played before. He woke up and said, "This is it! This game will help my son!" That very day (or perhaps the next day) he taught the game to his son, who loved it. They used little dark stones for black and little white stones for white. His son soon started playing the game with his friends and before long the whole country was playing the game.

Sadly, even though his son could now play the new game, it didn't change his life or his attitude. Instead, it just gave him something else to do so that he wouldn't have to take care of the country. The king didn't know what to do and was getting old. He wanted to retire, but he couldn't unless he knew a good ruler would come after him. Finally, someone suggested a man named Shun. Shun was a distant relative of the emperor, who was a farmer and knew what hard work was. The emperor had Shun rule a small part of the country to see how he would do, and he did great. Shortly after this, Shun was made the next emperor.

The game that Emperor Yao taught his son is still played today in China and in a few other countries. Some people call it "Go!" In Chinese it's called "Wei Qi." If you ever have the chance to play, try it out. You'll be playing one of the oldest games in history!

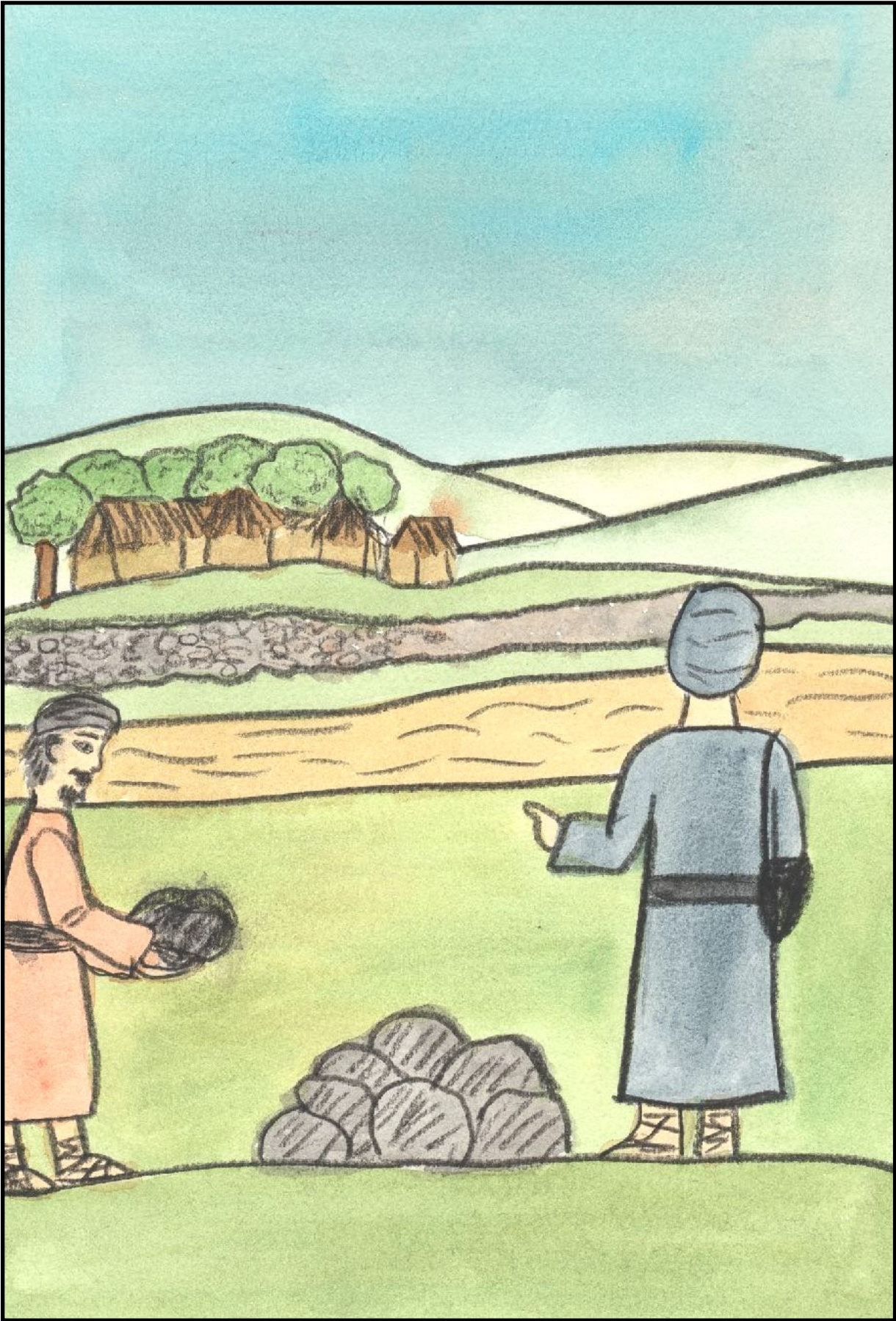


Chapter 2: Provinces

When Shun took over the country and became the emperor, there was a big problem: floods. At this time most of the people of China lived around the Yellow River, which is still one of the two major rivers of China today. It's called "yellow" because it has a brownish yellow color that comes from the mud and minerals in the water. The big problem was that this river often flooded. When Shun was emperor, it flooded off and on for nine years! That's a long time and a lot of people had to move once or even a few times because of it.

One problem Emperor Shun had was trying to find a good way to bring food and supplies to the people who needed help from the floods. A solution came to his mind: provinces. He divided the country into smaller parts of land (or provinces) and put a leader in charge of each part to make sure that everyone who needed help got it. There was another man who was working with both Emperor Yao and Emperor Shun to find a long term solution to stop the flooding. However, he died before it was finished. We'll talk about him more in the next chapter.

Emperor Shun had the same problem that Emperor Yao had: they both had sons that weren't good leaders. Emperor Shun started looking for someone to take over the country after him. He finally chose someone (Yu, whom we'll talk about in the next chapter) and was able to retire.



Chapter 3: The Flooding Problem

Earlier we talked about the floods and how much of a problem they were. One man was in charge of finding a way to stop the floods, but he died before he could finish it. His son, Yu, took over. Yu worked with people throughout the country to build canals and waterways close to their homes, villages, and fields. He also helped people work together instead of arguing with each other.

When Yu started this big project, he had a son who was just born. Working on all of these canals and waterways meant that he had to travel a lot to get the work done. However, he was so determined to finish it that he only stopped by his home three times in thirteen years to see his wife and son. It must've been so hard for his son. Yu's water system worked and he was able to spend a lot more time with his family after this.

When Emperor Shun was looking for someone to replace him, he decided to make Yu the next emperor. Emperor Yu was a great ruler who saved the country from floods and traveled a lot to make sure that everything was working right in the country. Like the rulers before him, he, too, didn't want his son to be the next emperor. However, this time it wasn't because his son was lazy or not a good leader. Emperor Yu knew how hard it was to be the emperor and didn't want that kind of pressure on his son. He chose someone else, but the people really wanted Emperor Yu's son to be the next emperor. They remembered how for thirteen years his son only saw his father three times while he finished the water canals. To them, this showed that he really understood the importance of running the country well. Finally, Emperor Yu agreed and said that his own son could rule after him. This was the start of China's first dynasty: the Xia Dynasty. A dynasty is when one family rules the country for a long time.