

## The Invention of Block Printing Student Worksheet

Introduction:

“One of the most important events that took place during the Tang (618–906) dynasty was the invention of printing. It began as blocks cut from wood used to print textiles and then used to reproduce short Buddhist religious texts. The first mention of printing was in an imperial decree of 593 in which Sui emperor Wen-ti ordered the printing of Buddhist images and scriptures. The text was first written on a piece of thin paper, then glued face down onto a wooden plate. The characters were carved out to make a wood-block printing plate, which was used to print the text. Wood-block printing took significant amounts of time as a new block was carved for every page in a book. Inexpensive printed books, however, became widely available in China during the Sung dynasty (960–1279). The printed books included Confucian classics, Buddhist scriptures, dictionaries, mathematics and others.”<sup>4</sup>

All Web links for this lesson can be found at:

<http://www.socialstudies.com/worldlinks.html>

Directions:

Your goal is to interpret, analyze, and draw conclusions about the invention of block printing in medieval Chinese society by viewing the earliest printed book, the Diamond Sutra (c.868).

### The Diamond Sutra

Go to <http://www.bl.uk/collections/treasures/diamond.html>

1. What is the Diamond Sutra?
2. According to the paragraph below the image, who made/reproduced the Diamond Sutra?
3. Describe the Diamond Sutra. What color is it? How are the words arranged? Are there pictures in the page shown?  
<sup>4</sup> <http://www.silk-road.com/artl/printing.shtml>
4. Click on the first “*Click for a close up.*” Describe the image you see. Who is in the center of the image? What is happening in this picture?
5. What can we learn about the Diamond Sutra from the picture?

### The Diamond Sutra

Go to <http://community.palouse.net/lotus/diamond1-5.htm>

Here you are viewing part of an English translation of the Diamond Sutra.

6. Who is the main character in the Diamond Sutra?
7. According to the Diamond Sutra, what will Buddha do? What is his purpose?
8. What type of text is the Diamond Sutra?
9. Why is the Diamond Sutra historically significant? What does the Diamond Sutra represent?