China's first emperor, Zheng (pronounced JUNG), was born in 259 B.C.E. in northwest China in the state of Qin (pronounced CHIN). Most scholars believe his father was an ambitious merchant and his mother a concubine to the king of Qin. The king, though, believed Zhen was his biological son, and made him the heir to the throne. When Zheng turned 13 years old, he became king of Qin. At the age of 38, he conquered the warring states of Central East Asia and created China's first united empire. After his conquest, Zheng declared himself First Emperor and adopted the name Qin Shi Huang Di (pronounced CHIN-SHIH-HWONG-DEE): "Qin" to indicate his state of origin, and "Shi Huang Di," which means "First August (awe-inspiring) Emperor." By most accounts, Emperor Qin - sometimes referred to as the Tiger of Qin - was a strict and enormously powerful leader with a commanding presence. One advisor described the emperor as having "[all-seeing] eyes. His chest is like that of a bird of prey and his voice like that of a jackal. He is merciless, with the heart of a tiger or a wolf."

Emperor Qin had a profound influence on Chinese society. Despite the country's vast size and widespread regional differences, Qin Shi Huang Di managed to unify many aspects of Chinese culture, such as laws, currency, and the writing system. His numerous achievements include building a large network of roads and canals, and beginning construction of the Great Wall of China. In addition, the line of emperors started by Qin Shi Huang Di endured until the early part of the twentieth century. China eventually got its name from the Qin dynasty, which collapsed several years after Qin Shi Huang Di's death in 210 B.C.E.

The story of Emperor Qin's life has often been distorted by biased historical writings. The accounts written during Qin Shi Huang Di's lifetime were often uncritical odes to the emperor's greatness. Other, better-known accounts of his life were written by ancient Chinese scholars who violently disagreed with the emperor's strict, Legalist form of government. A famous essay entitled "The Sins of Qin" declared that the emperor "placed deceit and violence above kindness and justice, making tyranny the foundation of his empire." However, current scholarship has portrayed Qin Shi Huang Di in a more balanced way. In the words of one recent biographer, "Qin Shi Huang Di was a conqueror, a unifier, a centralizer, a standardizer, a builder, and a destroyer."

**Step 2:** Using the historical background from the Student Handout Events A-E and your answers to the following questions:
What steps did Qin Shi Huang Di take to unify China?
What aspects of Chinese culture did Qin Shi Huang Di standardize?
Why was there a conflict between Qin Shi Huang Di and Confucian scholars?
Why did Qin Shi Huang Di force his subjects to build an enormous wall in northern China?
What is unique about the death and burial of Qin Shi Huang Di? and

use the student handout "Notes About Qin Shi Huang Di," to develop at least 4 mind map strands detailing the main facts/accomplishments about Qin Shi Huang Di for each of the FIVE "Events":

A, The Unification of China
B, The Standardization of Chinese Culture
C, The Book Burnings
D, The Building of the Great Wall
E, The Emperor’s Death and Burial