navigators could use it to be sure they were traveling in the right direction. The compass did not reach Europe until the 1200s. It was one of the navigational devices that enabled Europeans to embark on their voyages of exploration in search of an all-water route to Asia.

Paper money came into use in China during the Song dynasty. The Chinese, as well as other peoples, had been using metal coins for centuries, but the Chinese were the first to use paper currency. Two other inventions converged to make the use of paper currency possible. First, the Chinese had invented the process of making paper in 105 CE, and then, during the Tang dynasty in the 700s CE, they had learned how to print from large blocks of type—the words for a page were carved into a single block of wood the size of the page, then inked, and paper applied. In the 1040s, the Chinese had invented the use of movable type for printing. The characters for individual words were carved into small pieces of wood and assembled to make a page, then inked, and paper applied. Europeans would not employ movable type until the time of Gutenberg, about 1450. Marco Polo, who traveled and lived in China for 20 years in the 1200s, noted in the journal of his travels that:

The coinage of this paper money is authenticated with as much form and ceremony as if it were actually of pure gold or silver. To each note a number of officers, specially appointed, not only subscribe their names, but affix their seals also . . . . All his [Khan's] subjects receive it [paper money] without hesitation, because, wherever their business may call them, they can dispose of it again in the purchase of merchandise.

Polo's readers received this news with surprise because paper currency was unknown in Europe.

The military use of gunpowder was another invention of the Song dynasty. Gunpowder was first used in the Tang dynasty to make fireworks. In order to fight off the Mongols from Central Asia in the 1100s, the Chinese developed rockets that were propelled by gunpowder.

**Mongol Invasions**

In about 1200, the Mongols, nomadic warriors of Central Asia, set out to conquer the world. By 1294, their four khanates, as their units of organization were called, extended across southern Russia from Korea and the Pacific Ocean to the Black Sea, reached into the Arabian Peninsula, and included almost all of China and some of Southeast Asia.

**Chinggis Khan and the “Golden Horde”**

Chinggis [CHIN-giz KHAN] (also spelled Ghengis) Khan—which means “ruler of the universe”—started the Mongols on their world conquest. His army of well-disciplined, well-trained horsemen was known as the “Golden Horde,” because the early khans—“khan” is a title similar to the European title of “king”—lived in gold-colored tents. Fierce nomadic fighters, the Golden Horde struck terror in the hearts of their opponents.

**Khubilai Khan and the Yuan Dynasty**

Khubilai [KOO-bil-eye] (also spelled Kublai) Khan was Chinggis Khan's grandson, and it was he who took the Mongol Empire to its greatest expanse.
While his grandfather had conquered northern China, Khubilai Khan conquered southern China and began the Yuan dynasty. The Mongol Empire and the Yuan dynasty did not endure much beyond Khubilai Khan’s death in 1294. Natural disasters and internal problems, but mainly an armed revolt, led to the downfall of the Mongols. In 1368, the Ming established their dynasty in China.

While the Mongol Empire lasted, it enforced peace, much like the Pax Romana of the Roman Empire, which students in Core Knowledge schools should have learned about in Grade 3. The arts flourished and the development of the Chinese novel and drama are dated to the Yuan dynasty. Because there was peace, the great Silk Road was safe and trade increased. In addition to silk and porcelains, the Chinese exported their ideas and inventions. It was during this time that papermaking and gunpowder reached Europe and the Middle East. In return, new crops and foods were sent along the trade routes to Asia. Khubilai Khan continued the sea trade with Southeast Asia. Perhaps his most permanent achievement was the building of a capital city, which he called Khanbalik and which is today known as Beijing.

**Marco Polo**

Marco Polo described Khanbalik [khan-BAH-leek] in great detail in his work *The Travels of Marco Polo, Venetian*. Polo was a merchant from the Italian city-state of Venice and an explorer who set out bound for China in 1271 with his father and uncle. They reached the court of Khubilai Khan in Khanbalik in 1275. For 17 years, Marco Polo served the khan as a governor of a province and as a diplomat in China, India, and Southeast Asia before returning to Venice in 1295. Along with the Crusades, Marco Polo’s account of his life in China and what he saw helped spur European interest in an all-water route to Asia. Christopher Columbus, for example, was fascinated by Polo’s book, and his desire to sail to the Indies described by Polo led to the European discovery of America.

**Ming Dynasty**

The Ming dynasty, meaning “bright” or “luminous,” was in place from 1368 to 1644. This dynasty marked the return of power to ethnic Chinese after a period of non-Chinese rule by the Mongol emperors. During this period, China experienced stable and efficient government, which allowed the country to prosper. The Ming had the Grand Canal rebuilt to encourage trade, and the Great Wall was extended to keep out invaders. The population of China increased to perhaps 160 million by the year 1600. Most people were farmers, but small industries like porcelain manufacture thrived in China’s cities. The arts—both visual and literary—were important. In addition to landscape painting, artists began to paint portraits.

It was also during the Ming dynasty that European traders began to come to China, and not long after, Christian missionaries arrived to attempt to convert the Chinese to Christianity.

**Forbidden City**

During the Ming dynasty, Khubilai Khan’s capital was renamed Beijing and was greatly enlarged. A new imperial palace was built as a walled city within a city and was named the Forbidden City. The palace was finished in 1420 and was greatly enlarged. A new imperial palace was built as a walled city within a city and was named the Forbidden City. The palace was finished in 1420 and was named the Forbidden City. The palace was finished in 1420 and was greatly enlarged. A new imperial palace was built as a walled city within a city and was named the Forbidden City. The palace was finished in 1420 and was greatl...