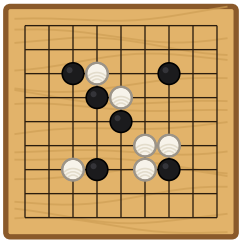
Go (Weiqi)

Name _____

Read about one of the oldest board games still played today.



A game in progress on the 9 x 9 board.

Go is a game of black and white stones placed on a grid of lines. In China it is called weiqi, which means "the surrounding game." Players take turns placing stones, trying to surround more of the board than the other player. The rules take minutes to learn, but people spend their lives getting better.

Go is one of the oldest board games still played today. Its first known mention in writing is in an old Chinese history book, the Zuo Zhuan, which describes something that happened in 548 BC. A Chinese legend says it is even older: an emperor named Yao invented it to teach his son patience and careful thinking.

The earliest boards had 17 lines each way. By the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) the board had grown to the 19 lines used today. Go became one of the four arts an educated Chinese scholar was expected to learn, along with calligraphy, painting and playing a stringed instrument called the guqin.

Between about 400 and 700 AD the game spread to Korea, where it is called baduk, and then to Japan. English speakers use its Japanese name, go. Today millions of people play around the world. In 2016 a computer program called AlphaGo beat Lee Sedol, one of the best players on Earth, which amazed experts.

Questions

1. What does the Chinese name weiqi mean?

2. What is the oldest known book that mentions Go, and what year does it describe?

3. Name two of the other arts an educated Chinese scholar was expected to learn.

4. What is Go called in Korea, and which country gave the game its English name?