Jobs: People were paid for their work. Jobs were given to educated people, as well as nobles.

Life in the Cities: Only about ten percent of the population (one out of ten people) lived in the cities. Cities were neatly laid out with main streets and alleyways. A strong wall, made of earth and stone, surrounded each city. As cities are today, the ancient Han cities were centers of government, education, and trade. Most marketplaces, throughout the city, had free entertainment. Musicians played bells, drums, and string instruments, and jugglers and acrobats performed.

The Poor: The poor lived in houses packed together. They had very little food, and little to no sanitation. Many of the young males joined street gangs. Gangs wore distinctive clothes and armor that identified their gang. Teen gangs roamed the cities, terrorizing people.

The Rich: The rich rushed to imitate the imperial palace. They built elaborate homes, decorated with drapery and cashmere carpets. They furnished family tombs with stone lions. On the lions, and on other sculptures, they added inscriptions mentioning how much each item had cost!

The rich lived in comfortable, large houses with many rooms and fireplaces. Each home was built around a central courtyard. They had elaborately carved furniture that showed Greek and Roman influence, and painted, stuccoed walls with floral designs. Other walls were left bare to display paintings or bronze mirrors. Dinner was elaborate. Kids were tutored in science, math, literature, art, religion, and music. Some studied in their homes. Some studied at the home of their tutor. The rich did not use the public schools. They wore belted robes with long sleeves lined with silk. When it was cold, they wore warm fur coats, made of squirrel and fox skins, and leather slippers.

Merchants & Craftsmen: As in Shang times, merchants were hardly recognized as men. Once the canals were built, some merchants and craftsmen became rich. A really successful merchant might ride in a cart with a coachman, buy a title from an emperor, and build a mansion surrounded by pools and gardens. This absolutely infuriated officials and peasants. (The merchants didn't till the soil. They weren't nobles. Many officials thought there ought to be a law to stop them from doing this, and for a while, there was a law, forbidding them from riding in carts and chariots.)