



China Curriculum Unit

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

August 1, 2008

AUTHORED BY:

Tese Wintz Neighbor,
Senior Director of Professional Development,
World Affairs Council

GRAPHIC DESIGNER:

Austin Stockwell

INTRODUCTION TO CHINA

LEVEL: Middle School

*This curriculum includes a CBA Bridging Document for
“Why History? Historical Research on Current Events.”*

Funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Institute of Peace

**CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS
MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS	3
STEP ONE: GETTING STARTED	4
STEP TWO: CHINA AS A COMPLEX GEOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL MOSAIC	4
STEP THREE: REFLECTING ON OUR REACTIONS	11
STEP FOUR: ONE PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS?	12
STEP FIVE: NOT TO KNOW CHINA IS NO LONGER AN OPTION	12
BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS/CONCLUDING REMARKS	13
WHY HISTORY? BRIDGING DOCUMENT	14
RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS	16
ARTICLE: “TOP TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT CHINA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ”	18
CD: “CHINA AS A COMPLEX GEOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL MOSAIC” POWERPOINT	

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

“One’s approach to China’s diversity is first of all visual,” wrote the late China historian John King Fairbank. Even if you have never been to China you know from postcards, magazines, movies, and coffee table books that China conveys many diverse geographic images. You can picture the highest mountains in the world and some of the most desolate deserts. You can imagine a landscape of rice paddies carved into sides of mountains in southern China and the Great Wall snaking through the hills of northern China. You can visualize sky-scraping buildings of Shanghai and the stilt huts of Xishuangbanna.

China is all that and more.

In addition to China’s varied climates and urban and rural landscapes, China supports the largest and one of the most diverse populations in the world. While the majority is Han Chinese (quite diverse among themselves), China’s minority population of more than 100 million is divided into 55 officially designated “national minorities” (*shaoshu minzu*) or ethnic groups. Many of these groups live in the remote and mountainous areas of southwestern China or in the deserts and steppes of northwestern and northern China. These include (to name only a few) the Mongol, Yao, Tibetan, Yi, Miao, Uygurs, Hui, Bai, Korean, and Dai. A number of them still have their own unique language, food, music, religious practices, and marriage customs.

With the economy growing so quickly, Chinese society is vastly different from what it was 20 years ago. “Little emperors and empresses” are growing into big ones. Individualism is on the rise, as young adults make their own decisions with regard to education, work, spouses, fashion, and leisure activities. A generation gap is apparent as youth today (especially in the urban areas) follow a lifestyle far different from that of their parents who grew up during the Cultural Revolution. Gaps between the rich and the poor continue to widen.

In this curriculum unit, students will learn about China’s diversity and how to discern between the homogeneous, monolithic entity often portrayed in Western media and the complex reality that contours the country. Just as portraying the United States as an image from one Norman Rockwell painting would undermine a meaningful understanding of the United States, so too does a simplified and shallow image of China.

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to:

- Understand that there is not one China – that China is a complex geographic, economic, and social mosaic.
- Identify the challenges in understanding this vast country.
- Articulate why it is important for young people today to learn about China (growing economic, diplomatic, military, and social ties between the U.S. and China).
- Explore ways to bring the world of China into their lives.

TIME: One week

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

STEP ONE: GETTING STARTED

Find out what your students know about China's landscape and geography by asking them to visualize China in their minds. How do they picture the landscape of China? Now ask them to draw a picture. Remind them that they will not be graded on their artistic abilities or lack thereof.

This is just an exercise for students to begin thinking about how they "picture" China. Students should save their drawings to be discussed after the slide show.

Ask them to consider: "How many Chinas are there?" Explain that you will be sharing with them a PowerPoint of 100 visuals of China that are divided up in the following categories:

- Varied landscapes
- Monuments reflecting old and new
- Rural versus urban
- Diverse population
- Not to know China is no longer an option/Ten ways to begin to know China

Teachers may want to 1) write these categories on the board and ask students to brainstorm again the many aspects of China that would fit in these groups or 2) have students make their own list of categories and ideas.

STEP TWO: CHINA AS A COMPLEX GEOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL MOSAIC

You will need a computer and PowerPoint projector. Run through the PowerPoint and think about whether you will show all of the slides at once or stop between each section. Note that you could easily pace yourself to do this in 2-3 class periods or you could go through it in a quick 45-minute period. Slides are identified with names and locations (including the provinces).

Acquaint yourself with the following detailed PowerPoint script. The numbers correspond with each PowerPoint slide.

- 1) You have "visited" China through history books, TV reports, newspapers, movies, and discussions. Today, I want to take you to China visually. One's approach to China's diversity is first of all visual," wrote the late Chinese historian John King Fairbank (*China A New History*, p. 4). China's geographic environment is complex. Its vast terrain and varied climate make it the sixth most biologically diverse country on the planet. If you traveled all around China you would see glaciers and deserts, wetlands and high-altitude grasslands, tropical rainforests and rice paddies carved into sides of mountains. You could explore the world's largest and highest plateau or sail along its long eastern coast. It has some of the highest mountains in the world and two of the world's longest rivers. How do you picture China? What images come to mind?
- 2) Do you think of pagodas on forested hillsides?
- 3) Do you – like many people – think of China as a land of rice paddies, where generations of peasants have chiseled mountains into verdant rice paddies?

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

- 4) Do you think that huge swaths of China's geography are desert dunes?
- 5) Where horns are outlawed because they might scare the camels?
- 6) Do you think of the vast and high deserts of the Tibetan plateau where the average altitude is approximately 14,000 feet? The valley here, at 14,000 feet, is higher than most countries highest mountains.
- 7) Explore this map of China. Note that China is similar in size to the U.S. with four times the population. Consider that one out of five people on the planet live in China and that much of China is uninhabitable. In fact, less than 14% of China's land is arable (land that can be cultivated for agricultural purposes).
- 8) If we head south, we find the subtropical misty karst (limestone) mountains along the Li River that have inspired poets and artists for millennia.
- 9) Not too far away are the magical and holy Huangshan or Yellow Mountains. This vast, famous area of plunging waterfalls, jagged peaks, thick bamboo forests, and contorted pine trees has been a tourist spot since Tang Emperor Tianbiao named them in 747 AD. In 1990, UNESCO designated them a world natural and cultural heritage site.
- 10) This is one of China's most sacred peaks (Meiliexue) and one holy to the Tibetans (Mount Kagebo). Located in the Khawakarpo Mountain Range, it is the highest mountain in Yunnan Province (22,113 feet), located near the Tibet and Sichuan border.
- 11) If we fly from east to west across Tibet, we are awed by some of the greatest mountains in the world. What is the highest mountain in the world and how high is it? Mt. Everest (Zhumulangma) looms more than 29,000 high and straddles the borders of Tibet and Nepal.
- 12) Now let's head north. What is the name of this infamous desert? It is the Taklamakan Desert. Silk Road travelers feared this desert. Taklamakan translated means "once you go in you never come out."
- 13) If monks and merchants survived the deserts along the Silk Road they were often rewarded by oasis towns and heavenly lakes. This is Heavenly Lake, located beneath the Heavenly Mountains in Xinjiang Province.
- 14) As social studies students no doubt you know the importance of water for the cradle (beginnings) of civilization. The headwaters of the great rivers of Asia start from here, the "Roof of the World" (Tibet). These include the Yangzi, Yellow, Mekong, Salween, Irrawady, Indus, Brahmaputra, and Ganges. They supply 2/3 of the world's population. Today these rivers are being dammed, drained, and polluted by mass population and economic expansion. China's second longest river, the Yellow River, often peters out before it reaches the sea. Given the fundamental importance of water for our lives and livelihood, it is really important to contemplate the impact of severe water shortages on China and the world.
- 15) The Yangzi River is the longest river in China and the third longest river in the world. In order to bring water up to the dry northwest, water from the Yangzi is being diverted to northern China.

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

MONUMENTS REFLECTING OLD AND NEW

- 16) China is a great blend of the old and new. The Great Wall extends over 3000 miles.
- 17) This is part of the old wall near Jiayuguan, the western boundary of the Han Chinese Empire. True or false? The Great Wall is the only man-made object visible from the moon. False! This great myth apparently started in the 1890s way before space travel. If you were to view the Great Wall from only three miles up, it would be as visible as a strand of your hair.
- 18) Built 2000 years ago to keep people out, it now brings people in. Millions of people from all over China and the world hike up to the wall. Or if you want, you can even take a chairlift up, toboggan down, and buy a t-shirt that says: "I climbed the Great Wall."
- 19) This army of 6000 life size terracotta soldiers hasn't taken a day off in over 2000 years. They are still guarding the first Emperor of China's unopened mausoleum!
- 20) Ancient Buddhist carvings dot China's landscape. Buddhism was introduced to China from northeastern India around the first century AD. It developed here along with the homegrown philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism. All three continue to impact Chinese culture today.
- 21) Even Buddhas reflect diversity.
- 22) Tantric Buddhism from India found a home in Tibet where it merged with Bon, Tibet's traditional animistic religion, and formed Tibetan Buddhism. This is Tsong Khapa, the founder of the Gelukpa Sect (d. 1419), one of the four sects of Tibetan Buddhism. This statue is housed in Lhasa's Jokhang Temple, the most holy temple of Tibetan Buddhism.
- 23) Where are we? This is the Grand Canal, the world's longest and oldest man-made waterway. It was built between 605 and 609 AD connecting the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers.
- 24) This great transportation link was expanded by later emperors and eventually connected Hangzhou with Beijing (1200 miles). Today, approximately half remains navigable.
- 25) The Imperial Palace was the residence of Ming and Qing Emperors from 1420-1912. It is the largest complex of ancient buildings in the world. It is called the "Forbidden City" because only family and friends of the emperor could visit. It covers 250 acres. There are 800 buildings with 9000 rooms, all surrounded by a moat. Today it is a public museum.
- 26) From the Imperial Palace in Beijing to the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Considered one of the architectural wonders of the world, the Potala Palace, up until 1959, was the center of Tibetan government and the winter residence of the Dalai Lamas. It contains thousands of rooms, shrines, statues, and chapels housing the tombs of former Dalai Lamas. The 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet in March 1959 (after the Chinese army put down a large scale popular Tibetan uprising); he has been living in exile in Dharamsala, India.
- 27) Who is this? Is this an ancient or modern monument? Most Chinese under 30 have no memory of Mao Zedong, who died in 1976...so some may say this is an old monument. Mao was the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from 1935-1976. After defeating the Nationalists in 1949, Mao became the preeminent leader of the People's

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

Republic of China until his death.

- 28) This monumental three-story high KFC was the first foreign fast food restaurant to open in China. When it opened in 1987 (within a stone's throw of Mao's Mausoleum in Tiananmen Square) it was the world's largest KFC.
- 29) This sign in Shanghai designates the 1921 location where a handful of young Chinese met to establish the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).
- 30) Just around the corner from this historic CCP meeting place is Xintiandi, Shanghai's toney restaurant and nightclub complex. Also located here is one of China's 300 Starbucks. Another 80 are projected to open this year in China.
- 31) Perhaps the largest coke bottle in the world looms five stories above "China's number one shopping street," Shanghai's Nanjing Road.
- 32) Modern monuments seem to spring up every day in China. China today represents rapid change. In 1990 this area in Shanghai was marshy land. Within your lifetime it has gone from rice paddies to some of the tallest buildings in the world. Pictured here is the Oriental Pearl TV Tower (third tallest TV and radio tower in the world).
- 33) How high is this building that was designed to be the tallest building in the world? This is the Shanghai World Financial Center – the tallest building in China – with 101 stories (492 meters); it is now being surpassed by Taipei 101 (because of its spire that rises 16 meters higher).

RURAL VERSUS URBAN

- 34) Although less than 14% of China's land is arable, 60% of China's population live in the countryside and attempt to make a living as farmers.
- 35) This is a traditional peasant raincoat that is still commonly worn in China. Again, even rural China cannot be characterized in one way. Today, you could find wealthy farmers wearing designer raincoats.
- 36) How do you picture rural China? Villages surrounded by rice paddies?
- 37) Or a parched northern China? As mentioned earlier, northern China faces a serious water shortage. Only 15% of China's water is found in the north, yet approximately half of China's huge population lives in the north.
- 38) All ages engage in hard manual labor in the rural areas. These women are headed out to till the fields by hand.
- 39) These young Dai girls – with their traditional carrying baskets – live near the Laos and Burma border, along the Mekong River.
- 40) Baskets can carry many things – including two grandchildren!
- 41) Mongolian nomads move with the seasons herding their animals. This ger (yurt) is made of animal hide supported by wooden rods that can easily be taken apart and transported.

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

- 42) There is a growing economic gap between the rural and urban population. Still in some scenic areas, more and more rural residents are taking advantage of a growing ecotourism business and turning their scenic homes into boutique hotels.
- 43) Others continue to live in poverty and struggle to make a living.
- 44) What does a Chinese home look like? In the tropical rainforest of southwest China it might look like this.
- 45) China is experiencing the largest urbanization process in history. Today more than 100 cities have a population of more than one million, twice the number in 1980. Every day another 1000 cars take to the roads in Beijing, the capital of China. Every time a Chinese jumps off his or her bike and hails a taxi, grabs a bus, or buys a car... oil consumption rises and smog descends.
- 46) Today, Shanghai's financial district is eight times the size of London's new financial district. Approximately 150 million have migrated from the countryside to Shanghai and many of the large cities and factory towns along the east coast.
- 47) Not all rural residents have migrated to the east coast. Some have headed to the far northwest. Today Urumqi, the most landlocked city in the world, boasts a population of more than two million. Migrating Han Chinese now make up the majority of Xinjiang's capital city.
- 48) This photograph of a souvenir stand at the Great Wall taken in early 1979 (less than three years after Mao's death) captures the first inklings of capitalism.
- 49) Almost three decades later, you can buy anything at any time on "China's Number One Shopping Street" (Shanghai's Nanjing Road).
- 50) More than 1000 miles up the Yangzi River from Shanghai is Chongqing. Considered the fastest growing urban center on the planet, Chongqing's population is 31 million and growing.
- 51) The Chinese company, Italina, is one of the largest jewelry manufacturers in the world. This billboard would have been banned just a decade or two ago. While in the past it was common to see large billboards with People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers saving flood victims or building dams, during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) jewelry, makeup, and bourgeois clothing – much less no clothing – was taboo. Everyone wore unisex Mao jackets and baggy blue pants.
- 52) Times have changed. Fashion shows at shopping malls like this one in Beijing are common occurrences.
- 53) Even Mao Zedong is for sale. This outdoor market in Xian's Muslim district (near the Great Mosque) sells Mao memorabilia.
- 54) Billboards along Wangfujing, Beijing's main shopping and pedestrian street.
- 55) Larger-than-life Yao Ming billboards are commonplace all over China.

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

DIVERSE POPULATION

- 56) The Chinese government recognizes 56 nationalities with approximately 91% of the population being ethnic Han. Still, the other 55 “national minorities” add up to more than 100 million citizen (approximately the population of Mexico). Some of the minorities such as the Zhuang and the Hui are very similar to the Han. Others are very different, like the Tibetan and the Turkic peoples of the northwest such as the Uygurs or Kazakhs or the Tajiks.
- 57) When people visit China for the first or the hundredth time, they are struck by the great masses of humanity. As mentioned earlier, one out of five people on this planet are Chinese.
- 58) The 21st century experiences of this young girl will be very different (economically, socially, culturally, and globally) than...
- 59) ... This man who has lived through the war with Japan, China’s civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, Mao’s Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping’s “get rich quick” policies, and the current Hu-Wen period. (Hu Jintao is the president of China and Wen Jiabao is the premier.)
- 60) What will the future bring?
- 61) Just like people all over the world, the Chinese enjoy diverse recreational activities: whether it is playing basketball...
- 62) Practicing taiqiquan ...
- 63) Listening to music...
- 64) Playing cards...
- 65) Sharing time with your family and friends...
- 66) Singing after school...
- 67) Fan dancing in the early morning...
- 68) Pictured here are nine women from different ethnic groups in Yunnan province celebrating their diverse cultural heritage. Twenty-four of China’s 56 ethnic groups live in this southwest province that borders Vietnam, Laos, and Burma.
- 69) Let’s head north to China’s sparsely populated border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Kashgar’s population swells each Sunday by 50,000 people; the same diverse population that plodded along the Silk Road for thousands of years still comes here to barter and bargain at one of Asia’s greatest markets.
- 70) Here you will find Uyghurs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks, as well as Han and Pakistani and an occasional Slav.
- 71) Horseshoes made and fitted while you wait.

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

- 72) You can buy a live goat.
- 73) Or a dead one! Treat yourself to local flat bread and bagels.
- 74) If you leave this bustling Muslim market town and head southeast across several mountain ranges and the vast Tibetan plateau, you land in the old market area (barkhor) surrounding the most holy Temple of Tibetan Buddhism (Jokhang). In Tibet it is difficult to separate the culture from the religion. Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims walk through the old market following the sacred circuit around the Jokhang Temple.
- 75) Here pilgrims are making offerings of juniper branches and tsampa (roasted barley flour) in the early morning outside of the Jokhang.
- 76) Tibetans are one of the 55 “national minority” groups.
- 77) Six million Tibetans are scattered across the vast Tibetan plateau, engaged in different activities, and speaking different dialects.
- 78) Some follow the same livelihood as their ancestors – as nomads, traders, farmers, scholars, and monks.
- 79) Tibetan monks debate at Sera Monastery near Lhasa.
- 80) Tibetans and Mongolians share a common religion: the powerful Khans imported Tibetan Buddhism to Mongolia.
- 81) A Mongolian grandfather and grandson.
- 82) And finally we are back in the capital city of Beijing with a doting father and his one child, “a little emperor.”
- 83) “A picture tells a thousand stories.” What does that mean? We have just skimmed the surface of China with these 80 pictures. Don’t let your eyes deceive you. Here is a pop quiz in visual literacy. What do you see here? A woman in curlers? What else?
- 84) Try googling “the most dangerous woman in China.” Hu Shuli is not known for her hairstyle, but for her work as an investigative journalist for *Caijing* (Finance and Business), a Beijing-based magazine that she founded. As managing editor, she has led the way in scrutinizing corporate governance, agriculture, environment, and health – she set the pace for the coverage of SARS in 2003 and the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008.

NOT TO KNOW CHINA IS NO LONGER AN OPTION

- 85) The trend of globalization in the 20th century has catapulted the U.S. and China together in the 21st century.
- 86) Roughly the physical size of the U.S. with four times the population (1.3 billion compared to 300 million).
 - Complex geographic and social mosaic
 - Fastest growing major economy in world history*
 - World’s largest consumer and polluter*

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

- Emerging regional and world power
- The Party's not over – CCP interested in staying in power and doing business
- Growing sense of national pride
- Vibrant culture and active citizenry

87) Ten ways to begin to know China

88) Study history

89) Learn the language

90) Surf the web for news from China

91) Watch a film made in China

92) Adopt a Chinese grandmother

93) Start a sister school

94) Journey across China

95) Curl up with Chinese fiction or non-fiction

96) Study in China

97) Make new friends

98) Images from 1979-2008

99) Zaijian (Goodbye)

*For extensive curriculum units on these topics, see *China's Industrial Revolution* (Technology through the Ages) and *China's Environmental Challenge* (Humans and the Environment). These can be downloaded for free at <http://www.world-affairs.org/globalclassroom/CBA.htm>.

STEP THREE

Ask students to think about how they pictured China in the first activity. After showing the slides, ask them to discuss the following:

- What picture did you initially draw for a Chinese landscape? Would you draw something different now? If so, what?
- What landscape photo stands out in your mind now?
- What photo surprised you the most?
- What confused you?
- What would you want to learn more about?
- What are three things that you think Americans should know about China?

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

NOTE TO TEACHERS

There are many ways to work with these slides. You may want to show them all at once or divide them into categories. For example, if your students enjoyed the landscape drawing exercise, you may want to pause the PowerPoint before each of the other categories (**Monuments reflecting old and new; Rural versus urban; Diverse population**) and have them draw what comes to their minds.

STEP FOUR: ONE PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS?

Photographs are excellent sources for bringing the world into our lives. One powerful image can often change our perspective and make us look at the world differently. At the same time one photo conveys a limited amount of information. How would anyone have guessed that the Chinese woman in curlers is one of China's top investigative reporters and is consequently considered by the *Economist* and the *New York Times* to be the "most dangerous woman in China?"

Ask students to find a photograph of China that speaks to them. Ask them to write down the message that it conveys at first glance. And then ask them to research the topic and write a one-page essay that digs deeper into the meaning of the image. If they do not have access to photographs (web sources, Chinese magazines, calendars, *National Geographic*, etc.), you could download some of these PowerPoint photos and students could choose one of these images.

If time permits, ask students to find a current events article related to China in a U.S. newspaper or website. Does the portrayal of China seem "monolithic?" Finally, ask students to read the article "Top Ten Things to Know About China in the Twenty-first Century," which can be found at the end of this unit under **Resources**. They might want to put together their own top ten things to know about China.

STEP FIVE: NOT TO KNOW CHINA IS NO LONGER AN OPTION

To wrap up this introduction to the diversity of China, discuss the following questions:

- Do you think it is important for Americans to study China?
- Do you agree with the statement: "Not to know China is no longer an option?"
- In what ways do you feel connected to China? On personal, state, and national levels?
- Discuss: the relationship between the U.S. and China is the most crucial relationship in the world today.
- The following were listed to highlight the importance of China in our ever-connecting worlds. What else should we/do we know about China?
 - Roughly the size of the U.S. with four times the population
 - Complex geographic & social mosaic
 - Fastest growing major economy in world history
 - World's largest consumer & polluter
 - Emerging regional & world power
 - The Party's not over – CCP interested in staying in power & doing business
 - Growing sense of national pride
 - Vibrant culture and active citizenry
- Can you think of other ways (besides the ten listed at the end of the PowerPoint) to study China?

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS/CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some would say that the relationship between the U.S. and China is the most crucial relationship in the world today. Whether you agree or disagree with this, “misunderstanding China” or not wanting to know more about China carries risks that cannot be endured if we wish to live in a peaceful world. Despite some ups and downs, our two governments continue to foster a relationship based on economic, military and social ties, as well as shared concerns over terrorism, drug trafficking, a nuclear North Korea, and security throughout northeast Asia. Due to globalization and China’s massive economic take-off, over half of the clothes we wear and many of the products we use are made in China. For more than a century, U.S. entrepreneurs have dreamed of tapping into the huge China market. Today, companies are following their dreams, selling everything from coffee to hamburgers to computer technology.

Learning about China today is no simple task, but gaining access to information is certainly easier than it was a few decades ago. Through the information highway, we now have access to PRC newspapers, foreign ministry web sites, and list-servs on Chinese topics. We can use this access to form opinions and ties. Searching beyond the U.S. headlines is important. For example, students who are only familiar with articles highlighting the difficulties in Chinese lives (“Earthquake kills 70,000” or “Sixteen out of the twenty most polluted cities are in China” or “Huge gap grows between the rich and poor”) are missing a crucial element of life in 21st century China. Millions of Chinese wake up in the morning to a standard of living that was unimaginable just a short decade ago. Life is not all angst for many in China today. They have more freedom to choose where they live and where they work and whom they marry. Chinese parents spoil their “little emperors and empresses” with ice cream and construct small family shrines for their ancestors. They ballroom dance at sunrise in their local park and take boat rides at dusk. They argue about politics and cards and joke with friends and relatives.

As mentioned in the introduction, Chinese society – with the economy growing so quickly – is vastly different from what it was 20 years ago. “Little emperors and empresses” are growing into big ones. Individualism is on the rise, as young adults make their own decisions with regard to education, work, spouses, fashion, and leisure activities. A generation gap is apparent, as youth today (especially in the urban areas) follow a lifestyle far different from that of their parents, who grew up during the Cultural Revolution.

China’s diversity in all these regards is important to help us discern between the homogeneous, monolithic entity often portrayed in Western media, and the complex reality that contours the country. Just as portraying the United States as an image from one Norman Rockwell painting would undermine a meaningful understanding of the United States, so too does a simplified and shallow image of China.

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

“Why History? Historical Research on Current Events Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) Bridging Document for middle school teachers using the following curriculum unit entitled: “China: Varied Lands, Diverse Peoples”

STEP ONE

Complete the activities in the curriculum unit on China. These lessons provide a basic foundation for the successful completion of “Why History?” middle school CBA. Several social studies strands are emphasized in this unit including: 1) geography, 2) history, 3) economics.

STEP TWO

Review with students the most important elements of the “Why History?” CBA: the persuasive paper or presentation expectations, the rubric, and the scoring matrix. Answer any questions of clarification students have and check for understanding by asking students to explain the expectations in their own words.

STEP THREE

Help students identify a current issue. Assist them in choosing a topic to research and write about as spelled out in the CBA: *Studying history can be useful in understanding current issues. You will develop a position on how the knowledge of history helps you understand a current issue by analyzing historical events related to that issue.* Possible current issues include:

- Growing gap between China’s rich and poor
- Urbanization
- Little Emperor/Empress syndrome
- Water shortages
- Damming of Asia’s great rivers
- China’s industrial revolution
- Consumerism
- Market-Leninism
- Han Chinese migration to Tibet or Xinjiang
- Issues facing Chinese youth
- U.S.-China trade relations
- Beijing Olympics
- China-Tibet relations
- China-Japan relations
- China-Taiwan relations
- China’s investment in Africa

Note: students may need help on narrowing the focus of their topics.

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

STEP FOUR

Help students begin researching their topics. Numerous up-to-date resources can be found in the teacher resource packet entitled: *Fueling the Future: China's Industrial Revolution* (<http://www.world-affairs.org/globalclassroom/resourcepackets.htm#ftfchina>) and *China's Environmental Challenge* (<http://www.world-affairs.org/globalclassroom/resourcepackets.htm#China>) Assist students in identifying helpful primary and secondary resources.

STEP FIVE

If students are working on the same topics, you may want to break them up into groups. Ask them to discuss three historical events that relate to the understanding of the current issue that they have chosen. They will need to come up with well-supported reasons. Model how to organize information using outlines, graphic organizers, mind maps, note cards, etc. Instruct students to fill out the “Why History?” graphic organizer/scoring matrix (<http://www.k12.wa.us/Assessment/WASL/SocialStudies/MiddleSchool.aspx>). Individually or in these small groups, have students present their position/thesis statement. They must present a position or thesis that is clear; that outlines the relevant historical events to be explained; and that includes a generalization about how history helps us understand current events. Now they are ready to begin their persuasive papers.

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHINA (1979-2008)

- All of the visuals included in this unit were photos taken by Tese Wintz Neighbor between 1979 and 2008. These slides can be reproduced for educational purposes only (and credited to the photographer).
Some of her Silk Road slides can be downloaded here.
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/cities/china/tn/tn.html>

CHINESE MIDDLE SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES

- **National Geographic “Inside the Dragon.”**
For the first time since 1912, *National Geographic* has devoted a full issue to China. See *National Geographic*, May 2008 (<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/05/table-of-contents>). For a look at middle school life in prosperous Shanghai see the article entitled: “Gilded Age, Gilded Cage” (<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/05/china/middle-class/leslie-chang-text>).
Note: The Chinese have published a Chinese language version of this *National Geographic* issue entitled “Focus on China: Instant and Eternal (*Ningshi zhongguo: shunjian yu yongheng*).” It is nearly double the length of its English counterpart, complementing photos and translations from the English edition with its own features. “Add to that a dab of censorship on politically sensitive topics, and the Chinese version is as remarkable for what it contributes as for what it leaves out.” See the following interesting article that compares both versions.
http://www.danwei.org/magazines/in_search_of_a_voice_national.php
- **The Diary of Ma Yan: The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl**
For a middle school perspective of life in a poor, rural, drought-stricken area in north China see *The Diary of Ma Yan: The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl* (Harper Collins, 2005).
- **“This I Believe” Essay**
Students may also be interested in the following perspective from a 13-year old Chinese immigrant to the U.S. Ying Ying Yu’s “This I Believe” essay can be found here.
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5552257>
- **Children of China Documentary Series**
This series includes three 30-minute documentaries that explore what life is like in China today.
<http://www.pearlriver.tv/documentaries.htm>
- **“Young and Restless in China” Frontline Documentary**
For an “older youth” perspective, students may be interested in a two-hour *Frontline* documentary entitled: “Young and Restless in China.” Producer Sue Williams takes an intimate journey into the lives of nine Chinese young people in their twenties and thirties as they navigate their way through a society that is changing at breakneck speed. In the 21st century, China's economic and political development will have a huge impact on all lives. Where will its great experiment combining capitalistic economics with a Communist government lead the world's most populous nation? One clue to that future lies in the hopes and dilemmas of China's next generation.
<http://www.pbs.org/frontline/>

CHINA MATTERS: EXPLORING THIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE

Watch three excerpts from “Young and Restless in China” (<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/06/young-and-restless-in-china/>).

COLLABORATIVE NEWS WEBSITE

- **China Digital Times**

CDT is a collaborative news website covering China’s social and political transition, as well as its emerging role in the world. Its goal is to aggregate the most up-to-the-minute news and analysis about China from around the Web, while providing independent reporting, translations from Chinese cyberspace, and perspectives from across the geographical, political, and social spectrum.

<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/>

CHINESE PRESS

- **China Today**

China Today is an online information database that provides users with a broad range of resources on China. This is a good place to begin learning about politics, economics, geography, history, and civil society in China from the Chinese government’s perspective. Extensive links to national and international media sources, as well as private sector companies/organizations are provided.

<http://www.chinatoday.com/>

- **China Youth Daily**

China Youth Daily is a popular official daily newspaper and the first independently operated central government news media portal in the People’s Republic of China. It has been operated by the Communist Youth League since 1951.

<http://www.cyol.net/english/intro/daily.htm>

- **China Daily**

The *China Daily* is an English-language daily newspaper. This state-run publication was established in 1981 and has the widest print circulation of any English-language newspaper in the country.

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/>

- **China Now**

This is the inaugural issue of *China Now*. It is the reincarnation of *Beijing Scene*. *Beijing Scene* was launched ten years ago as China’s first non-state-owned newspaper. It appeared weekly for more than six years – and three hundred issues – before being closed down in the summer of 2000.

<http://www.chinanowmag.com/chinanow.htm>

- **Caijing**

Caijing is an independent, Beijing-based magazine devoted to information on companies in China. The publication’s title means “business and financial review.” *Caijing*’s driving mission is to have an “independent standpoint, exclusive coverage, and unique perspective.” Hu Shuli (considered to be “the most dangerous woman in China”) is the founder and managing editor of *Caijing*.

<http://www.caijing.com.cn/English/>