

Ancient China Unit
7th Grade Social Studies

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December 28, 2001

Table of Contents

Unit Background and Summary.....	Page 1
KWL.....	Page 2
Exposing Cultural Biases	Page 3
Geography Map Hunt	Page 7
Geography Relief Map of China	Page 14
Legendary Emperors	Page 30
Timeline of Chinese Dynasties.....	Page 44
Shang Dynasty Tomb Artifacts.....	Page 46
Philosophies Experiential Exercises	Page 66
Philosophies Advice Column	Page 82
Life and Times of Emperor Qin	Page 85
(Qin) Censorship Socratic Seminar.....	Page 102
Video/ Writing – Qin Villain or Hero?.....	Page 109
Social Class/Daily Life (Han Dynasty).....	Page 111
Trade Along the Silk Road.....	Page 121
Postcards from Modern Day China.....	Page 136
Culminating Project - Accordion Book.....	Page 146
Cultural Universals.....	Page 153
Bibliography	Page 154

Unit Background and Summary

This unit is designed for a seventh grade ancient civilizations course but may be adapted for 6th or 8th grade, as needed. The unit is approximately 4-6 weeks in length, if taught daily in 50-minute blocks.

The overall goal of the unit is to provide students with a basic background knowledge of ancient China from the Xia Dynasty (1900 BCE) through the Han Dynasty (220 CE). In doing so, student learning will focus on understanding ways in which the ancient Chinese were both isolated and unified as a people. As a culminating project students will create an accordion booklet in which they answer the following question: *What factors promoted and discouraged unity in ancient China?*

To reach these objectives, the unit will include lessons on the physical geography of China, political and ideological philosophies, cultural practices, achievements and famous rulers. Attempts have been made to make these lessons intriguing and relevant to modern day students, while fulfilling the Massachusetts Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks and providing the knowledge that students will need to succeed on the social studies MCAS exams.

With such limited time in the 7th grade curriculum to cover all the ancient civilizations, this unit is certainly not all-inclusive. In fact, it is light on literature and the fine arts. There are many opportunities to incorporate multiple disciplines into the teaching of this unit. The art department is the most obvious, but mathematics, health, science and certainly language arts should not be overlooked.

It is highly recommended that teachers seek out guest speakers and community members to augment the basic curriculum and provide some authenticity to many of these lessons. Acupuncture specialist, herbalists, Chinese calligraphers, poets, painters, Buddhist monks, and followers of Daoism will make the classroom come alive and are not that difficult to find in the community with minimal effort. If you can organize it, take a trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and explore their extensive collection of Chinese artifacts. Visit Boston's Chinatown with a local who knows the area and have a Dim Sum luncheon with your students! Make paper from scratch in the classroom. Enjoy!

Geography Map Hunt

Overview/Background Information:

China is situated in the eastern part of Asia, on the west coast of the Pacific Ocean. It is the third largest country in the world (after Canada and Russia). China has a total land area of 9.6 million squares kilometers. The distance from east to west measures over 5,200 kilometers, and from north to south, over 5,500 kilometers. When the sun shines brightly over the Wusuli River in the east, the Pamire Plateau in the west is in the very early morning. When blizzards wrap the north along the Helongjiang River in the winter, spring sowing is under way on Hainan Island in the south.

China has a land border of 22,143.34 kilometers long and is bordered by twelve countries: Korea in the east; Russian in the northeast and the northwest; Mongolia in the north; India, Pakistan, Bhutan and Nepal in part of the west and southwest; Burma, Laos and Vietnam in the south.

Besides a vast land area, there are also extensive neighboring seas and numerous islands. The coastline extends more than 14,500 kilometers. Across the East China Sea to the east, and South China Sea to the southeast, are Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. More than 5,000 islands are scattered over China's vast territorial seas, the largest being Taiwan and the second largest, Hainan. One territorial sea and three neighboring seas altogether constitute 4.73 million square kilometers.

China is a mountainous country, with two-thirds of its total land area covered by mountains, hills and plateaus. Out of the world's twelve high peaks of more than 8,000 meters, seven are located in China. The highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest (approx. 29,028 ft.) stands on the border between China and Nepal.

There are five major mountain systems in China. These mountain systems, together with numerous plateaus, basins, and plains are interwoven into three macro-landform complexes in China. Therefore, the topography of China from the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau eastward, is broadly arranged into four great steps descending step- by-step from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to the coastal area in the east.

- 1) The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the top of the staircase, covers 2.2 million square kilometers and averages 4,000 meters above sea level. It is the highest and largest plateau on earth and is popularly called "roof of the world".
- 2) From the eastern margin of Qinghai-Xizang Plateau eastward up to the Da Hinggan-Taihang-Wushan mountains line, composed mainly of plateau and basins with elevation from 2,000 to 1,000 kilometers.
- 3) From the above-mentioned line eastward up to the coast are the largest plains of China. The plains are also interspersed with hills generally below 500 kilometers in elevation.
- 4) The continental shelf, with an elevation that is generally less than 200 kilometers.

China has a great number of rivers. The inland river system accounts for 36 per cent of the total land area in China, more than 1,500 square kilometers of which have a catchment area exceeding 1,000 square kilometers. Among these, the Yangtze River, Yellow River, Heilongjiang River, Pearl River, and Huaihe River are the major ones.

The Yangtze River (Chang Jiang) is the longest river in China and the third longest in the world. It has a total length of 6,300 kilometer and a drainage area of more than 1,800,00 square kilometers. It is an arterial waterway connection such important cities as Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chongqing.

The Yellow River (Huang He) is the second longest river in China. It has a total length of 5,464 kilometers. On its banks lie Lanzhou, Baotou, Zhengzhou, Jinan and other important cities. The Yellow River Valley is considered the cradle of Chinese civilization.

China is also a country with numerous lakes, approximately 2,800 natural lakes with total area more than 80,000 square kilometers. Five major lake regions can be identified:

1. The Northern lake Region
2. The Northwester Lake Region
3. The Qinghai-Xizang lake Region
4. The Eastern Lake Region
5. The Southwest Lake Region

Guiding Questions:

What geographic features can be found in China?

How did the geography of China contribute to its success as a civilization?

Learning Goals:

Students will locate and place key geographic features on a map of China to get a sense of the diversity of China's landscape.

Materials:

Photocopies of Map of China

Map Hunt Questions

List of items to locate on Map of China

Classroom maps, atlases, textbooks etc.

Lesson:

- 1) Handout map outlines, and maps hunt questions to students.
- 2) Direct them to search in their textbooks, atlases, and to use the maps in the classroom to find the answers to the map hunt Q's.
- 3) Go over the questions with class when finished.
- 4) Give out the list of items and have students locate and place them on their map outlines.

Homework/Extension Ideas:

Select one of the areas/locations on your China map and research it on the Internet. Bring in a short 1-2 paragraph summary of your findings to share with the class.

Assessment Ideas:

Map quiz.

CHINA MAP HUNT

1. Locate China on a map. In which hemisphere is it?
2. The modern country north of China.
3. Name the ocean China shares with California.
4. The longest river in China has two names (depending on the source). It travels from west to east and empties into the East China Sea.
5. Name the large ancient and modern civilization to the southwest.
6. Northern desert bordering modern-day Mongolia.
7. The large river south of the Gobi Desert. Second major river in China and site of the first major civilization (sometimes referred to as the “Yellow River” because of the yellow-brown soil of its waters carry along).
8. Mountain range that separates China from India.
9. Name and give the height of the highest mountain in the world.
10. Desert in the northwest of China.
11. The sea to the south of China.
12. The sea between modern-day China and Japan.
13. The sea between China and the modern-day peninsula of North and South Korea.
14. Mountain range north of the Taklamakan Desert.
15. A broad area of flat, open land in the north eastern part of China – near the Yellow Sea.
16. A large elevated area of flat land above 10,000 feet, north of the Himalayas.
17. Mountain range on the northern edge of the Plateau of Tibet.
18. Mountain range on the western border between modern-day Mongolia and China.
19. Mountain range northwest of the North China Plain on the border between modern-day Mongolia and China.
20. What is the modern-day capital city of China?

Teacher's answer key for Map Hunt Questions

- 1) Northern Hemisphere.
- 2) Mongolia.
- 3) Pacific Ocean
- 4) Chang Jiang River (Yangzi).
- 5) India.
- 6) Gobi Desert.
- 7) Huang He River (Yellow).
- 8) Himalayan Mountains.
- 9) Mt. Everest. Approx. 29,028 ft.
- 10) Taklimaken Desert.
- 11) South China Sea.
- 12) Sea of Japan.
- 13) Yellow Sea.
- 14) Tian Shan Mountains.
- 15) North China Plain.
- 16) Plateau of Tibet.
- 17) Kunlun Shan Mountains.
- 18) Altai Mountains.
- 19) Da Xing'an Ling Mountains.
- 20) Beijing.

List of items to be place on Map of China (also used with map outline for Map Quiz)

Locate **twenty** of the following items on the map (5 pts. each). Spelling counts! Additional items on list will yield one bonus point each.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. India | 9. Russia | 18. Gobi Desert |
| 2. Kunlun Shan Mts. | 10. Da Xing'an Ling (Mts.) | 19. Yellow Sea |
| 3. Japan | 11. Mt. Everest | 20. South China Sea |
| 4. Taklimakan Desert | 12. Beijing | 21. Pacific Ocean |
| 5. Sea of Japan | 13. Mongolia | 22. Plateau of Tibet |
| 6. Yangzi River (Chiang Jiang) | 14. South Korea | 23. North Korea |
| 7. Tian Shan Mts. | 15. Himalayan Mts. | 24. Bay of Bengal |
| 8. Altai Mts. | 16. Huang He River | 25. Rain forest of |
| China | | |
| | 17. North China Plain | |