

#### 4. Lesson Plan Number One *China: Culture and Young Adult literature*

##### Purpose:

Introduce Chinese language and culture to a class of eighth graders in order to make Asian reading selections in literature circles more meaningful.

##### Rationale:

Exposure of suburban, middle class students to Asian cultures and literature is a way of fostering acceptance and understanding of Asian peoples and traditions.

##### Materials/Resources:

- Brushes, ink, writing paper and blank note cards
- Handout on pin yin pronunciation, [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pinyin/](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pinyin/)
- “Writing Chinese Characters,” *History Alive*
- [www.chinesepod.com](http://www.chinesepod.com) (free 7-day trial subscription)
- *The Chinese Language for Beginners* by Lee Cooper
- 4 to 6 copies of a variety of Chinese young adult novels, historical fiction, and non-fiction. My current list includes: Selections from *Diary of a Madman* by Lu Xun, *The Red Scarf Girl* Ji-li Jiang, *The Examination* by Malcolm Bosse, *Monkey* by Ch’Eng-En Wu, *Iron & Silk* and *The Laughing Sutra* by Mark Salzman, *Colors of the Mountain*, *China’s Son: Growing Up in the Cultural Revolution*, *Sounds of the River*, and *Wandering Warrior* all by Da Chen, *Dragonwings*, *Child of Owl*, and *Thief of Hearts* by Laurence Yep, *An Ocean Apart*, *A World Away* by Lensey Namioka, *Split Image* by Mel Glenn, *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* by Elizabeth Foreman Lewis, *Homesick* by Jean Fritz, *China’s Bravest Girl-The Legend of Hua Mu Lan* by Charlie Chin

\* Additional selections will be added as I find and read selections and determine their value and appropriateness for my classes.

##### Activities:

**Preview unit** by having students check their clothing for “made in” labels. Follow-up homework assignment, students will list a dozen “made in” items found in students’ homes. Following day discuss countries of origin and absence of “made in America” labels as a discussion topic for “Why should we be interested in Asian countries and cultures?” Answers may include because many Asian countries are supplying us with necessary goods.

**Week one** will concentrate on writing Chinese Characters. Preview by having students respond to the prompt: *Use three lines to create a symbol that represents the words “mountain”, “person,” and “sun”* Share responses. Show actual Chinese symbols for these words on the overhead or Smart Board. Use as a springboard to help them understand the basis of the Chinese written language. Pair students in mixed ability levels and give brushes and ink and blank paper. Teacher will introduce Chinese Characters and stroke order and students will be given the opportunity to copy 12

different characters. Allow at least two 45- minute classes to practice characters and understand meanings. Use *Writing Chinese Characters* as resource for overhead transparencies, and activities for practicing. Ask students to compare the two languages and note similarities and differences in a chart on the board. For additional practice, ask students to create a message, a note to pass in class, using only Chinese characters. Have students try to decipher the messages. Depending on class interaction this may take two to five periods.

**Week two** will work on oral language. Students will be instructed in basic personal communication: *Good Morning, How are you, I am fine, I am so-so, Excuse me, I don't understand, thank you, you're welcome, No, Yes, Goodbye.* Use [www.Chinesepod.com](http://www.Chinesepod.com) for audio files on basic oral language and *The Chinese Language for Beginners* for written interpretations. Starting with the introduction, students will be instructed to greet teacher using Chinese language instead of English when possible.

**Week three** will be the start of the literature circles. Teacher groups students according to reading ability levels and interest. Teacher assigns appropriate Asian books (or student groups can choose after teacher introduces books). Teacher allows ample time for reading in class and at home if appropriate. Readings will take two to four weeks. Literature circles of three to five students meet daily to discuss issues on content, problems, vocabulary, story lines, and to check on members' understanding and progress. A daily group progress form is submitted indicating how far students have read and their goals for the next session. Teacher becomes a roving facilitator. Individual weekly literature logs are submitted which will demonstrate how well students connect their reading to themselves, other readings, and their world. Teacher responds and returns logs.

**Culminating activity** to celebrate the completion of the books, students will take a field trip to an Asian market (we will go to Jungle Jim's in Fairfield, OH) and purchase Chinese foods for a celebration that may include inviting parents for a grand finale, if possible planned around the Chinese New Year late January or early February.

**Assessment:**

Points can be assigned to students who respond in Chinese for basic personal communication.

The daily group progress forms can be assessed.

Individual weekly literature logs are an excellent way to assess understanding and progress.

A follow up reflective writing activity will explore students experience in reading and learning about Chinese culture and language and how the unit has changed their perceptions of Asian peoples and culture. Students should be given a rubric ahead of time outlining how the paper will be assessed. (See Appendix A.)

**Grade Adaptations:**

The target grades for this activity are fifth through ninth grades. With the younger students more time will be needed with the Chinese Characters and perhaps fewer characters used. Also, teacher may adjust the spoken Chinese to suit the grade and ability

level of the students. The literature selections will also change depending on the age of the students. Adding picture books to the list of literature selections will likely interest the younger students.

**A. Rubric for Chinese Language and Culture Reflections**

**5 and 6** These papers examine the writers' experiences of learning and speaking Chinese and reading a book by an Asian author with a Chinese theme. With good details, students will explain what it was like for them to concentrate on a culture very different from their own. They may discuss lessons they have learned that they can apply to their own lives. They will also explore what values they have in common with Asian children. The comments will be honest and sincere and reflect the true feelings of the writer. Language will be clear and understandable and MUGS will be good. The writers' voice will be strong.

**3 and 4** These papers will address the assignment but without the richness of detail or the sincerity of response. They may lack the depth of the higher responses. There may be little evidence of an emotional attachment to the assignment or of any cross-cultural connections. These papers may be well written but lacking in substance. MUGS should be adequate and not detract from the meaning. There should be an emergent voice.

**1 and 2** These papers are underdeveloped and have few details with little evidence of any real understanding of the assignment. These papers make no attempt to reflect on the learning experience, or they present no learning experiences. They may ramble or be unclear and may have significant MUGS problems that interfere with the message of the paper. Papers have little or no evidence of voice.