

The Yangtze River: Lifeline of China

Topic: The Yangtze River and Three Gorges Dam

Purpose: To help students gain a knowledge of the importance and impact of the mighty Yangtze river on the country of China, its people, culture, and economy.

- Objectives:
1. Students will be able to locate the Yangtze river on a map, and label major cities and landmarks.
 2. Students will gain an understanding of the diversity of peoples living along the Yangtze.
 3. Students will be able to explain the pros and cons of the Three Gorges Dam project.

Target Age: Late elementary and middle school

Unit length: One week (five 45 minute classes)

- Materials:
1. Poster of the Three Gorges region
 2. Individual blank maps of China for students
 3. Colored pencils
 4. Visual Presenter (also called Document Camera)
 5. Book: The Yangtze, by Michael Pollard
 6. National Geographic, September 1997 (article on Three Gorges Dam)
 7. Article from CNN's website: "China's Three Gorges Dam"

Day-By-Day Plans

Day 1

1. Show poster of Three Gorges area. Ask students to describe the picture. Give brief introduction to Yangtze (Chang Jiang) River.
2. Give students blank maps. Directions:
 - Draw the Yangtze River on their maps.
 - Label the surrounding countries.
 - Label major bodies of water.
 - Label the plateau of Tibet.

Day 2

Review lesson from day 1.

Begin class discussion. Use Visual Presenter to show pictures from books and from National Geographic as they correspond with content material. Students will label cities and landmarks on their maps as they discuss each new region. The basis for class discussion will be the book The Yangtze, by Michael Pollard. The book will be on the Visual Presenter so that students may read together with teacher.

1. Read and discuss three folk tales: Princess Yao Ji , The Tiger General, The Greedy Monk (pages 14-15).
2. Discuss the history of the river (pages 12-13).
3. Read and discuss the source of the river in the Qinghai Plateau. Emphasize what life is like in this region (pages 16-17).
4. Read and discuss the Sichuan Basin (pages 18-19), where 10% of China's people live.

Day 3

Using classroom map, review the areas along the Yangtze River that have been discussed thus far.

Topics to read and discuss from The Yangtze, by Michael Pollard:

1. The city of Chongqing, China's largest city (pages 20-21)
2. The Three Gorges (pages 22-23)
3. The floodplain from Yichang to Jiujiang (pages 26-27)
4. The final 497 miles of the Yangtze across China's most fertile farmland (pages 28-29)
5. The delta and Shanghai (pages 30-33)

Day 4

Using classroom map, review the areas along the Yangtze River that have been discussed thus far.

Discuss the Three Gorges Dam project:

1. Begin asking students why anyone would want to build a dam. How could it help people? Could it also cause problems? What kind of problems could occur?
2. Read pages 24-25 in Yangtze (Pollard). Using the Visual Presenter, show pictures of the project from the National Geographic article (11/97 pages 1-33). Discuss content of pages.
3. Divide the class in half. Give each student a copy of the article from the CNN website. Tell half the class that they are to be Chinese people who think the dam is a great idea. The students in the other half of the class are to be Chinese who oppose the project.
4. Students are to read the article silently, taking notes as they read about points that would support their view.

Day 5

1. On day 4 the students were divided into two groups. Today they will get together with the other members of their group and discuss the points they found in the article that supports their position.
2. Together again, the class will debate the issue of the Three Gorges Dam. After the debate, the teacher will ask for a show of hands as to how many people really feel strongly about each position. Students will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the argument.
3. Using the large classroom map of China, review the course of the Yangtze River, and its importance to the people of China.

Bibliography

Pollard, Michael, The Yangtze, Benchmark Books, Tarrytown, New York, 1998.

"China's Three Gorges", National Geographic Magazine, Vol. 192, September, 1997.

"China's Three Gorges", www.CNN.com.