

Teaching Guide for *The New Face of China*

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Warm-up Activity

What do you know about China? What connections to China in your community can you think of?

Point out to students China's long history, using a timeline like the ones below if desired, and briefly discuss China's influence in the world then and now. Ask students to come up with questions they have about China today and post them for reference.

Web sites with China timelines:

A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization by Patricia Buckley Ebrey:

<http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/timeline.htm>.

Timeline for Early Chinese History and China after 1700:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~e232/Time1.html>.

China's Growing Economy

1) Ask students to read the article, "The New Face of China." After students read, discuss with them what the author means by "the new face of China." As a class, scan the article for possible positive and negative consequences of economic development in China, writing a plus sign next to the positive ones and a minus sign next to negative ones. Do students agree on positives and negatives? Why or why not?

Read the article on the Three Gorges Dam and ask students to follow the same process as above. The article says there were many debates about whether or not the dam should be built. Ask students what values those in favor of the dam might have? What values might those against the dam have? Can students think of development projects in their own community that were debated? How were arguments similar or different?

2) The 2008 Beijing Olympics is mentioned in this issue of *Faces*, and it is extremely important to China. For many people in China, the Olympics symbolizes that China has regained a prominent position in the world after almost 150 years of wars, political upheaval, and periods of relative isolation. The Olympics has spurred a campaign to clean up environmental problems, renovate monuments to Chinese history and culture, and teach millions of people to speak English. China expects to receive about a half a million visitors for the Olympics, a benefit to its economy.

Ask students to take a look at the Web site for the Beijing Olympics for homework, investigating the mascots and symbols China will use to represent the Olympics. Based on these symbols, what does China want to show the world about its culture and society? See <http://en.beijing2008.cn/62/67/column211716762.shtml>.

Preserving China's Cultural Heritage

1) In reading about the Olympics, students found out about China's pride in its cultural heritage. Chinese culture is over 4,000 years old and the influence of Chinese culture extends to many places around the world. In the warm-up session, students may have mentioned some of the topics on cultural heritage that appear in this issue of *Faces* such as Chinese language, *feng shui*, festivals, food, and even pandas.

Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the articles on traditional Chinese culture. Have students research the origins of one or more elements of traditional culture and investigate present-day changes to their area of cultural heritage. Invite small groups to report out.

2) As students learned in the article about the Three Gorges and the Great Wall, preserving history by caring for cultural monuments and relics is not an easy task: time, the environment, and development threaten these important pieces of the past. With four thousand years' worth of cultural relics, China has a particularly tough job. Find out what goes into keeping history alive by inviting a local museum curator or manager of a local archive to talk to the class about the challenges of preserving history for future generations to enjoy and learn about.

Looking toward the Future: China's Only Children

1) Have students read the articles about children in China. What clues do the articles give about what life is like for Chinese children? As a class, create a venn diagram that reflects similarities and differences between the lives of students in the school and the lives of the Chinese kids featured in *Faces*.

Discuss the similarities and differences, focusing in particular on the One Child Policy, which limits most urban families to one child. Ask students to investigate the social impacts of the One Child Policy by searching for news articles on the topic and have them write a short essay on the benefits and challenges of the policy for China and Chinese families. Unintended consequences of the policy often discussed in Chinese media include: the *xiao huangdi* or "little emperor" phenomenon of spoiled only children, increased pressure on only children to succeed in school and in life, families' concerns that an only child will not be sufficient to support and care for parents in old age, abandoned babies (especially girls), and more boys than girls in younger generations.

Discuss with students: Why do you think families from rural areas and minority groups are exempt from the one-child restriction?

2) In doing research on the One Child Policy, students probably came across articles that mentioned the importance of education in China as a means of upward mobility and financial stability. In order to meet the needs of the workplace in China today, Chinese officials are attempting to reform the education system, rooted in the Confucian tradition of rote learning, to incorporate more opportunities for creative and critical thinking. As

students may have discovered, some parents support the changes while others are afraid students won't know enough facts to pass the competitive national college entrance exams. Even though new ways of learning may better prepare children for life, many parents feel the old system best prepares children for success on the exam. Without a passing score on the exam, a child's prospects for higher education and a bright future in the job market diminish.

The Chinese government typically promotes official campaigns through propaganda posters such as the ones shown on the Web site below. Take a look at some of the propaganda posters with students and have them design one of their own that promotes education reform.

Samples of propaganda posters:

Stefan Landsberger's Chinese Propaganda Poster Pages:

<http://www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/>.

Create a display of the posters and debrief the activity with the class: What values do the posters reflect? How do you think reluctant parents would respond? Teachers? Students' future employers?