

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF CHINA

(A WebQuest for High School Freshmen)

Designed by Janice Van Etten

Introduction to the WebQuest

When most people speak of China today, they are most likely speaking of the country's economic boom. They may also be reflecting on how China is moving from a tightly regimented communist government to one that embraces a free market economy. However, China is much more than her gross national product. While most individuals have some historical understanding of China's fifty-eight years as a communist country, her history is far older than that. In order to understand China today, it is imperative that one has an understanding her history in its entirety, from ancient to modern times.

In order to better understand modern day China students will be challenged to look to her past. Their task will be that of historical geographers. Students will look into six major periods of Chinese history and create a PowerPoint of each of those historical periods by focusing on the Five Themes of Geography. As historians, they will focus on the major events, interactions with other peoples, and significant individuals of each period. As geographers they will focus on how the land has influenced the history of the time period.

By blending history and geography into a PowerPoint presentation, students will demonstrate an understanding of the significant role that geography has played in the history of China. Additionally, as students share their PowerPoint presentations with one another, a deeper understanding of China's historical roots will become apparent. Through these various "historical roots" students will come to understand modern China as never before.

Content Area and Grade Level

This WebQuest is designed for high school freshmen studying world history. While the primary focus is on the historical development of China, a secondary goal is that of enabling students to understand the many geographic dimensions of the country. The WebQuest is designed to be completed in three days with group presentations lasting six days. However, this may be modified based upon time constraints. Prior to the assignment being given, students would have already read the associated chapters on Chinese history in their textbooks.

Curriculum Standards

The WebQuest is in alignment with the National Council for the Social Studies themes that serve as the organizational framework for a comprehensive social studies curriculum. The seven NCSS themes that may be explored through the WebQuest assignment are as follows:

1. Culture
2. Time, Continuity, & Change
3. People, Places, & Environments
4. Power, Authority, & Governance
5. Production, Distribution, & Consumption
6. Science, Technology, & Society
7. Global Connections

In addition to NCSS themes, the WebQuest assignment readily aligns with state curriculum standards.

Objectives

By the conclusion of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. describe the major contributions of six periods of Chinese history, which include the following historical periods:
 - Ancient China Qin – Han Dynasties
 - Imperial China Sui – Tang – Song Dynasties
 - Early Modern China Ming Dynasty
 - Modern China Qing Dynasty
 - Communist China PRC 1949 - 1997
 - China Today 1997 – Present
2. locate the geographic settings for each of the six time periods of Chinese history on a map of China and surrounding regions.
3. detail the various ways in which movement affected Chinese history through the movement of peoples, goods, and ideas in and out of China.
4. discuss human and environmental interactions that occurred with regard to the various historical time periods, with regard to the land, resources, and economic needs of the peoples.
5. tie the six historical time periods of Chinese history to larger world geographic regions.
6. write a process paper that details the way in which each group of students undertook the task and what they learned from their research about their assigned topic.

The Process

Teacher Introduction to the Assignment: Students will be introduced to the topic by the teacher's PowerPoint presentation on the *Five Themes of Geography* as applied to China. The teacher presentation will serve to elicit interest in the topic as well as to define the five themes by giving concrete examples of each as applied to China. The PowerPoint presentation will also introduce

students to the major geographical characteristics of China whereby giving students additional information and insight into the country. Students will be able to access the PowerPoint at a later date for reference.

Student PowerPoint Assignment: To accomplish the task students will assume the role of historical geographers. In groups of five, they will study the history of China through their assigned historical time period. Additionally, in each group, all students will be assigned one of the *Five Themes of Geography* to focus their attention on. Together, student groups will create a PowerPoint presentation on their topic that they will share with the entire class. The presentation will primarily serve to briefly summarize the historical time period. Students will also incorporate the *Five Themes of Geography* into their presentations. Additionally, students will write a process paper that will chronicle the way in which student groups undertook their task. The process paper will also give a brief overview of what students learned about their historical time periods.

WebQuest: Students will undertake a WebQuest in order to complete their task. Students will be provided with a variety of websites to explore as they research their topics. They will additionally utilize various additional resources as time and task necessitate. It is further suggested that a Media Center specialist create a listing of appropriate books and websites that are readily available to students for research into their topics.

Process Paper: The process paper is a description as to how the students conducted their research and what was learned from the project. It should briefly explain the topic assigned and the focus of the topic. It should also serve to explain how the research proceeded and which sources proved to be the most valuable. The concluding part of the process paper summarizes the major developments of the assigned historical time period. Lastly, a bibliography should be attached. The process paper should be no more than 1500 words. The 3 – 4 page process paper is due, to the teacher, on the day that the student group makes their presentation to the entire class.

Time Frame: The time frame for the lesson plan is ten days. Day one will be spent introducing the project. Students will then have three days to research their assigned topics and to create their PowerPoint presentations. During this time they will also chronicle the steps they undertook in their research in order to create a process paper. Each of the six PowerPoint presentations will be presented to the entire class during a 40 minute class period over a six day period.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated as a group utilizing a rubric that has been developed for that purpose. Student groups may earn up 100 points for their research, PowerPoint presentation, oral presentation to the class, and their written process paper. The rubric is as follows:

**GRADING RUBRIC
HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF CHINA
THE FIVE THEMES OF GEOGRAPHY**

Use the following rubric to score the student presentation. Please make comments in the boxes as appropriate.

	Excellent 20 - 17	Good 16 - 13	Fair 12 - 9	Weak 8 - 5	Poor 4 - 1	Total Points
<p>PowerPoint 10 Slides No more than 15 words per slide Was the PowerPoint visually stimulating? Accurate?</p>						
<p>Content Historical Component Was enough content presented to give the audience an overview of the historical time period? Were student presenters comfortable with the material? Was it obvious that student presenters understood the material they were presenting?</p>						
<p>Content Five Themes Of Geography Did the students apply the Five Themes of Geography to the historical presentation?</p>						
<p>Oral Presentation Did the students present their topic in a logical manner? Did the students speak clearly and loudly enough for the class to hear?</p>						
<p>Process Paper Did the students stay within the guidelines for the Process Paper? Was their "process" clearly evident in the paper? Sources included?</p>						
					Total Points	/100

Conclusion

By the conclusion of the unit on Chinese history, students will have gained an understanding of historical China. This historical understanding of Chinese history will allow them to understand modern day China in a new light. They will also link China's history to geography by utilizing the *Five Themes of Geography* in their presentations. They will be able to analyze how the past has created a living foundation for the present in terms of China today and where China's future may lie.