



Curriculum Unit:

The Great Wall of China – Past and Present

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Class and grade level(s): This Curriculum Unit has been developed for students in middle school to high school studying Geography and History.

While the principal focus is on China and the historical ramifications on the building of The Great Wall, a secondary goal is that of enabling students to get a better understanding of how similar projects in other countries (i.e. the US / Mexico “Tortilla Wall”*)¹, may have been developed for many of the same reasons, but with much more public debate. The ultimate goal of this unit is to make this topic accessible for blind and visually impaired students. With adaptive materials and resources, this unit will come to life.

**(The “Tortilla Wall” as it is referred to in many parts of Mexico and the Southwest United States is corrugated metal wall which goes all around the edge of Tijuana; a second and more substantial layer of barriers built behind the first one is incomplete and does not stretch out into the Pacific.)*

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to:

Day 1

- Identify the similarities and differences contained in the two maps of the Great Wall attached below. Create a Venn diagram to demonstrate understanding of both maps.
- Write a composition demonstrating the learner’s understanding of why the Chinese built the Great Wall, and then offer an opinion on whether the Chinese were successful in their goals.
- Orally share both the Venn diagram and the written work within small and large group

¹ “Tortilla Wall” Expansion Draws American Protest by BRYAN PRESTON; May 16, 2005- *The Immigration Blog*

settings.

Day 2

- Understand the roles played by different dynasties in the construction of the Great Wall of China.
- Understand and recognize some of the events occurring in other parts of the world during the time of the early Chinese dynasties, and create a timeline of these events using standard paper and pencil, tactile, or electronic tools.
- Write a composition analyzing the impact of the Great Wall of China on the course of western civilization. How would the world be a different place if the Chinese had not constructed the Great Wall?

Day 3

- Using a map of the United States, identify where a similar type of infrastructure could be built.
- Discuss in small groups why this type of construction would be beneficial / detrimental to the United States or to the countries that sit on our borders.
- Since 2001, the United States has spent billions of dollars on homeland security. (*“Section 102 of the Secure Fence Act requires the Department of Homeland Security to construct – in the most expeditious manner possible – the infrastructure necessary to deter and prevent illegal entry on our Southwest Border, including pedestrian and vehicle fencing, roads, and technology.”*)

Write a composition discussing / challenging the following ideas: Is the construction of a border fence throughout the southwest to separate the United States and Mexico being discussed for reasons similar to why China built the Great Wall? If you were a lawmaker in the U.S., what would you do and why?

² Department of Homeland Security, “Fact Sheet: Secure Border Initiative,” November 2, 2005, available at www.dhs.gov.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

(Utilizing U.S. National Geography and History Standards)

GEOGRAPHY

Standard 1: How to Use Maps and Other Geographic Representations, Tools, and Technologies to Acquire, Process, and Report Information from a Spatial Perspective

Standard 6: How Culture and Experience Influence People's Perceptions of Places and Regions

Standard 17: How to Apply Geography to Interpret the Past

HISTORY

Standard 2: The student comprehends a variety of historical sources

Standard 3: The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation

Standard 4: The student conducts historical research

Standard 5: The student engages in historical issues analysis and decision-making

Time required: 3 days

Required materials: Standard, historical and political maps; access to on-line (web) and print resources in either a classroom and / or library setting

LESSON NOTES

This is a lesson that specifically teaches a skill that can be readily adapted for blind or visually impaired students.

My enthusiasm for the subject has been further enhanced by my participation in the summer 2009 Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Program in China. I will continually strive to utilize what I have learned and attempt to include it into my school's curriculum.

I thank the Fulbright-Hays organization and the National Committee on United States-China Relations for the opportunity to gain new perspective and a new understanding that will assist me in creating optimal learning environments for special education students.

This project is not what I had intended when I originally applied for the Fulbright-Hays award. My goal was to travel to China and observe the blind and visually impaired / special needs students in a different environment than I am accustomed. My plan was to introduce my students to those I met in China through my project. I wanted to develop a comparability study on blind education in China vs. U.S.A.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to meet or observe any blind individuals while I was in China. What I did get to see and hear repeatedly from scholars, students and average people was that the blind did exist, but they played no role whatsoever in the community, and did not have many educational options. The description of the average student in China is "normal"; the description of a blind individual is "one of them" – a sad and unfortunate situation.

One of our hosts (Mr. Fu) told me quite emphatically that if I really wanted to change this view of the blind, I needed to "come back to China and put my words into action." So that is my new plan, my new intention, my new goal. I want to return to China and try to make a difference in blind education there.

And all is not lost, as far as my project is concerned. My trip may not have produced the exact experiences I was hoping for, but it was nonetheless inspiring.

My trip to The Great Wall – walking it, climbing it, and running it – was one of the highlights of my Fulbright-Hays adventure. I stood upon it, envisioning those who had come before me – the many who had walked across its stone – in love and in honor and in battle – throughout its long life ... and I stood in awe. I understood how meaningful it is to the Chinese and I understood why. I could not wait to return to the U.S. to share my experiences – to sit with my blind / visually impaired students and talk about what I had seen, what it had inspired in me, to be their eyes, to take them on their own adventure. That is the ultimate goal of my project.

LESSON BACKGROUND

CHINA

The Great Wall of China was built over 2,000 years ago, by Qin Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of China during the Qin (Ch'in) Dynasty (221 B.C - 206 B.C.). In Chinese the wall is called "Wan-Li Chang-Cheng" which means 10,000-Li Long Wall (10,000 Li = about 5,000 km). The Great Wall is one of the largest building construction projects ever completed. It covers 50,000 miles and remains the largest man-made structure in the world, stretching across the mountains of northern China, winding north and northwest of Beijing. Over 5,000 km (=10,000 Li long, its thickness ranges from about 4.5 to 9 meters (15 to 30 feet) and up to 7.5 meters (25 feet) tall.³

The Great Wall of China was built to protect the agricultural lands from outside invaders, and to keep the Chinese people in. Originally built out of stone, wood, grass and earth, the Great Wall was originally designed solely for defensive military needs. The army utilized the many watchtowers along the wall in developing a warning system, using fire and smoke signals (be it night or day), and enabling reliable communication to be relayed from one tower to the other.

More sections were added to the wall as the many different kingdoms flourished. It was later, during the Qin dynasty (221-206 BC), that a unified China declared the wall a whole entity. From there, the wall was further built, repaired and renovated to link the old sections to the new.

- Have students watch various video clips outlining the various events that have occurred throughout the history of the Great Wall.

UNITED STATES

Since the early 1960's, the United States and Mexico have been dealing with two major issues: illegal immigration and the illegal drug trade. Throughout the 1970's and 80's, the U.S. developed polices to enforce entry laws and utilize "strategic blocking" (i.e., infrastructure erected to prevent the crossing of people and goods between the borders). And in the late 1990's, under President Clinton, the U.S. began to develop even more aggressive policies.⁴

³ *China Highlights – How long is the Great Wall?*, Retrieved December 26, 2009, from China Highlights website: <http://www.chinahighlights.com/greatwall/fact/great-wall-length.htm>

⁴ *A History of the US/Mexico Border Fence Barricading the Border* by JOSEPH NEVINS and TIMOTHY DUNN; November 14/16, 2008 - Counterpunch Weekend Edition

Since the events of September 11th, border security has been a hot topic – in the media, on Capital Hill and in the local communities it affects. A series of bills were passed during both Bush administrations intended to further strengthen border security. Besides the political issues that have come up other issues regarding geographical and structural problems has plagued this project.

- Have students watch various video clips outlining the various events that have occurred throughout the history of the United States and Mexico from 1960 to 2009.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was / is the purpose of the Great Wall of China? Why did the Chinese build it? What does it say about the Great Wall of China, and the intention of its designers, that it has survived for so long – through wars, internal political conflict and Mother Nature's wrath – yet it still remains standing today?
- In the past twenty years, the Great Wall has become an ever more potent symbol of Chinese nationalism and a determination to resist foreign domination. But how successful was the Wall in reality, and what was its real purpose?
- How has the development of a border fence in the southwest United States been received outside of the United States by our allies? Do they agree or disagree about its construction? Where do you stand on this topic? Why?

EXTENSION

- ◆ http://edsitement.neh.gov/GreatWall_flash_page.asp: Using this interactive format, students can test their knowledge of The Great Wall as well as walk across the wall from city to city.
- ◆ <http://brainpop.com/socialstudies/worldhistory/greatwallofchina/>: This interactive site offers videos, lessons and games related to China and the Great Wall.
- ◆ <http://www.csmonitor.com/slideshows/2008/border-map/>: This slideshow presents images of the border fence being erected throughout the southwest United States. Students can click on the various cities and see how the border fence is being erected.

ASSESSMENT / EVALUATION

See attached MSB Composition Rubric.

BOOKMARKS TO USEFUL SITES

<http://www.ebscohost.com/>: Includes more than 300 full text and secondary databases, as well as a complete research portal

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>: For text, photos, maps etc. on both China and Mexico

<http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/index.htm>: A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization

www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept/d10/asb/china/great_wall.html: Secrets of The Great Wall Video

<http://www.chinavista.com/travel/greatwall/greatwall.html>: Pictures, maps and aerial views of different sections of the Great Wall

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wall_of_China: History, maps, pictures and facts

<http://www.chinahighlights.com/greatwall/>: Maps, videos and pictures

http://wiki.idebate.org/index.php/Debate:700_mile_US_Mexico_border_fence: History, maps, pictures and facts

http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/mexico704/history/border_map.html: History, maps, pictures and facts

<http://michellemalkin.com/immigration/> : Postings from the official website of journalist Michelle Malkin.

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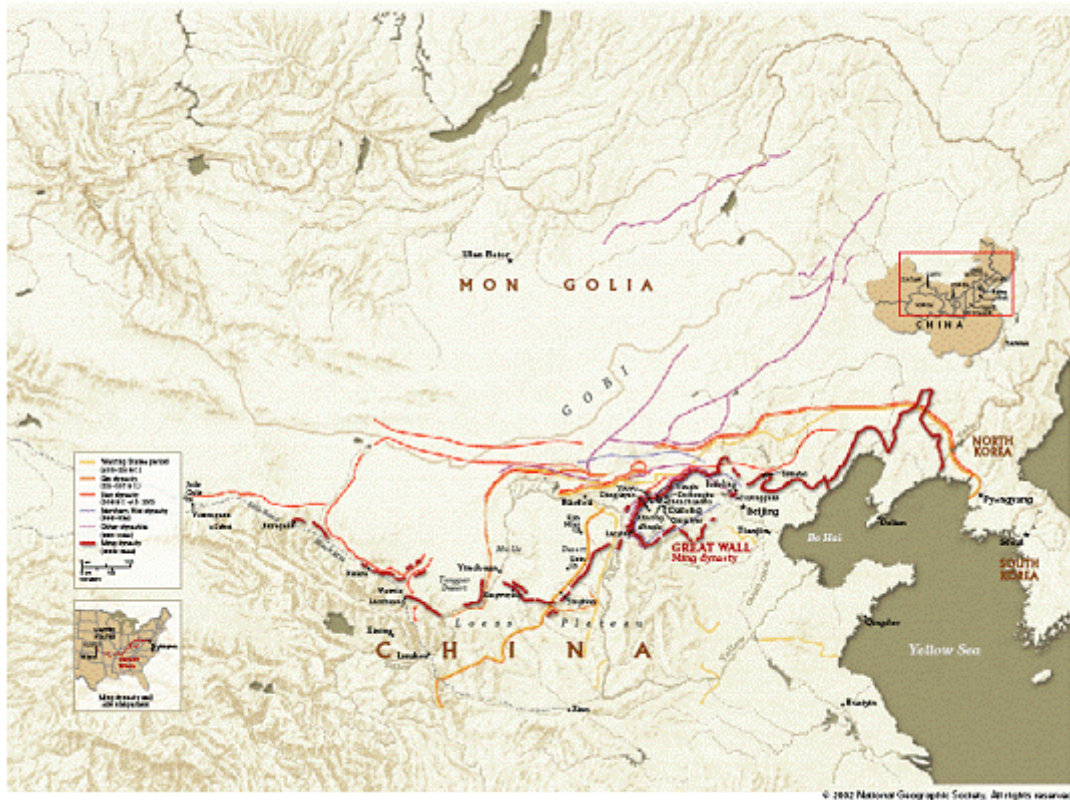
The Great Wall (Odyssey Publications, 1999), by William Lindsey

Unresolved Issues (Prentice Hall, 1995), by Suzanne Odgen

Governing China (Norton, 1995), by Kenneth Lieberthal,

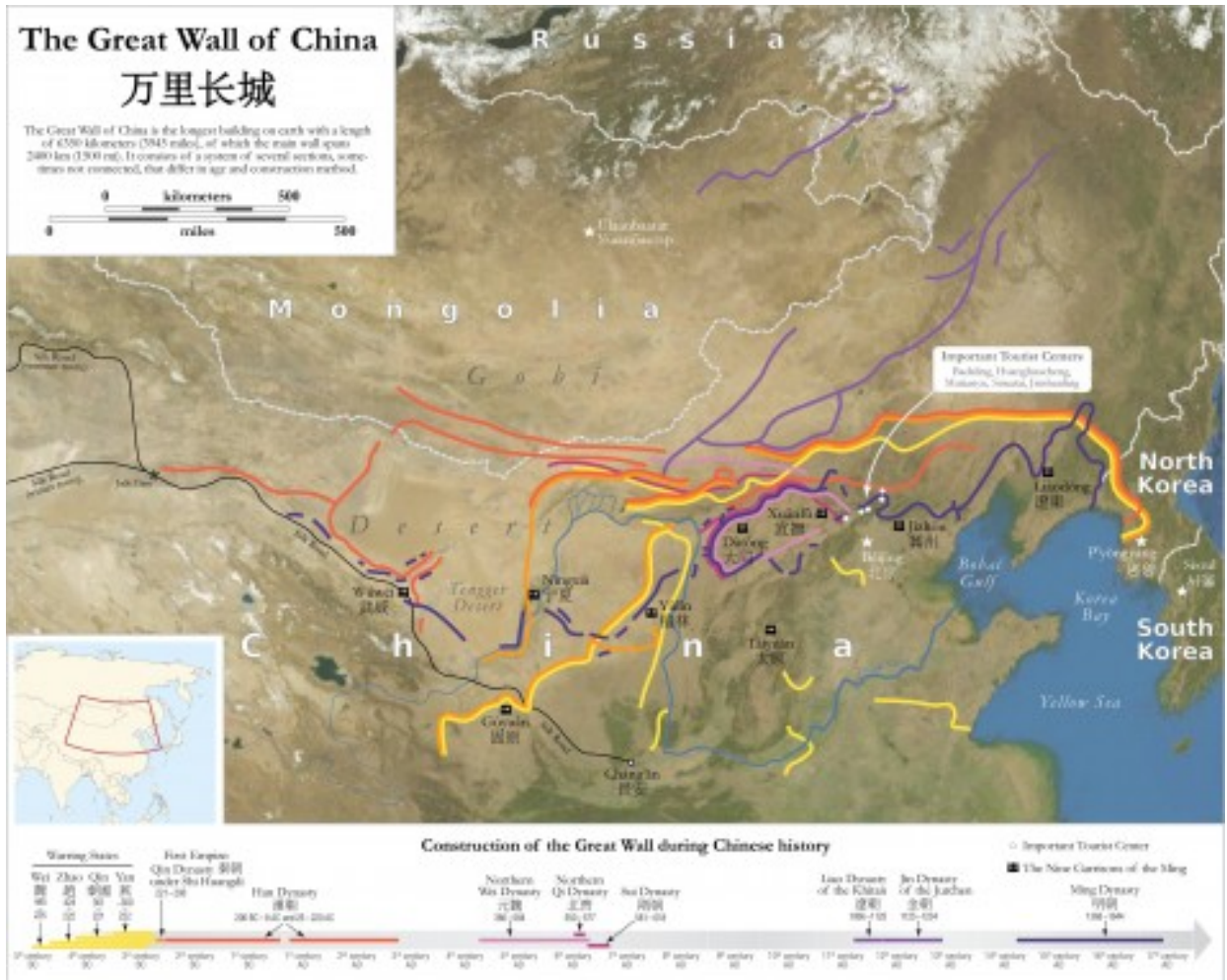
The Archaeology of Ancient China (Yale UP, 1963; 4th ed., 1986) by Kwang-chih Chang

MAP # 1



Source: www.nationalgeographic.com

MAP #2



Source: www.nationalgeographic.com

MAP #3



Source: <http://www.epa.gov/border2012/features/improvements/index.html>