

## Media Resources Focusing on China

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## China: Documentaries

### **Big Bird in China** (1991)

Grades: K-4

In this 75-minute video produced by the Children's Television Workshop, Big Bird and Barkley the dog travel to China where they visit with schoolchildren, learn some Chinese words and songs, watch a tai chi demonstration, and meet the mischievous Monkey King.

### **The Booming Maritime Edge** (1996)

Grades 7-12+

This 30-minute video is a program in the series, The Power of Place: World Regional Geography, one of the three programs in Unit 11: China and Its Sphere. The video contains two case studies. "Industrialization: the Nike experience in Guandong" and "Hsinchu Science Park in Taiwan." The other videos in Unit 11 are Life in China's Frontier Cities and China's Metropolitan Heartland.

### **China News Stories** (1997)

Grades: 4-8

This video consists of eight separate segments, each on a different aspect of Chinese life and lasting from two to three minutes each. The video was made during a trip to China by a group of American middle school students who were involved in developing the stories and doing on-camera narration. The topics of the segments include clothes, spare time, food, the Forbidden City, school, transportation, shopping, and jobs.

### **China's Metropolitan Heartland** (1996)

Grades: 7-12+

This 20-minute video is a program in the series, The Power of Place: World Regional Geography, one of the three programs in Unit 11: China and Its Sphere. The video contains two case studies, "Physical location and government policy bolster development in Shanghai" and "Recent industrialization near Nanjing." The other videos in Unit 11 are Life in China's Frontier Cities and The Booming Maritime Edge.

### **China: A Century of Revolution** (Series; 1989-1997)

Grades: 10-12

This series includes:

1. China in Revolution 1911-1949 (1989) This 2-hour video describes the rivalry between the Chinese Communist Party and the Nationalist Party and highlights the two figures who came to shape events, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong.
2. The Mao Years 1949-1976 (1994) tells the story of how Mao Zedong and his colleagues tried to build a "new China." Includes images of the Great Leap Forward and ensuing famine, the Cultural Revolution, and the historic visit of President Nixon.
3. Born Under the Red Flag 1976-1996 (1997) examines China's transformation to a

world economic and military power and its pursuit of two seemingly contradictory goals – economic strength and prosperity and absolute Communist Party control – as it approaches the 21st century.

### **China: Unleashing the Dragon (1995)**

Grades: 9-12+

This series probes the impact of economic reforms taking place in China from 1992-94. This series is divided into four 60-minute episodes that focus on broad themes and include interviews with expert observers, top officials, and ordinary Chinese from many walks of life. The first episode, *Deng's Legacy*, focuses on Deng Xiaoping's role in transforming China since the late Chairman Mao's death in 1976. The second episode, *A Fragile Rice Bowl* centers on the sociological dimensions of the economic changes, including disparities between those working in the public and private sectors, rich and poor, and old and young. The third episode, *Hong Kong and the Boom Towns* examines the economic, cultural, and political issues surrounding the period of transition from British to Chinese rule.

### **Chinese New Year (1994)**

Grades: K-4

This video is part of the series *Holidays for Children*, aimed at teaching young children about different American traditions. The 25-minute segment exposes children to the festivities surrounding the Chinese New Year, including lion dancers and firecrackers to ward off evil spirits. It also explains the Chinese zodiac.

### **The Chinese (Series; 1992)**

Grades: 9-12+

This series is a remake by National Video Communications, Inc. and Great Plains National, of the original PBS series, *Heart of the Dragon* (see below). The first program, *Reform in Crisis* provides background, and the last one, *Facing the Future*, offers perspective on future developments in China that could affect international relations. The other programs in this introductory series focus on a basic human activity – caring, marrying, eating, working, understanding, etc. – and depict how these are approached in China in two 30-minute parts. A textbook, *The Chinese: Adapting the Past, Facing the Future*, and a study guide accompany the series. Program titles include:

1. *Reform in Crisis: The Aftermath of Tiananmen*
2. *Remembering: Overview of Chinese History and The Legacy of Mao Zedong*
3. *Eating: Food and Feasting in China and Man and Nature in China*
4. *Believing: Introduction to Traditional Beliefs and Communist Ideology after Mao*
5. *Correcting: Social Control in Chinese Society and China's Legal System*
6. *Marrying: Marriage and the Chinese Family and The Status of Women in China*
7. *Caring: Social Organization in China and Welfare and Health Care in China*
8. *Mediating: Sources of Social Conflict in Chinese Society and Conflict Resolution in Contemporary Chinese Society*
9. *Living: Peasant Life in China and Economic Reform in Rural China*
10. *Working: Industrial Life in China and Industrial Reform in Contemporary China*
11. *Trading: Foreign Trade and Economic Development and The Open Door Policy*
12. *Creating: Introduction to Chinese Arts and Literature and Intellectuals and the State*
13. *Understanding: Traditional Chinese Science and Technological Advances in Contemporary China*
14. *Facing the Future: China Faces the 21st Century*

### **The Confucian Tradition (1997)**

Grades: 11-12+

This set of three videos (each 34-46 minutes) and print guide is intended for use in the professional development of educators. Produced by Columbia University's Project on

Asia in the Core Curriculum of Schools and Colleges, it focuses on the key elements in Confucian thought in China and its impact on literature, particularly lyric poetry. The series includes readings from the Confucian Analects and the Book of Songs and presents the lives and works of many renowned poets. Program titles include:

1. The Confucian Tradition
2. The Confucian Tradition in Literature: Chinese Poetry: Origins of a Literary Tradition
3. The Confucian Tradition in Literature: Poetry of the Tang and Later Dynasties

**Confucius: Words of Wisdom (1996)**

Grades: 9-12+

Produced by A&E Biography, Confucius: Words of Wisdom discusses the childhood, development, philosophy, and influence of this great man, featuring reenactments of scenes from his life and historical artwork of his image.

**Emerging Powers: China (1996)**

Grades: 9-12+

One of the best documentaries in the under \$30 range, Emerging Powers-China concentrates on the effect economic changes are having on Chinese people, both urban and rural. Focusing on the san lao jie, or three old classes, the generation that graduated from high school during the Cultural Revolution and was sent to the countryside to work, it discusses how Chinese values have changed from socialist idealism to a desire to get rich quickly. The video interviews people whose lives have been both improved and hurt by the economic reforms, but as a whole Emerging's tone is upbeat, insisting that China is waking up and can no longer be ignored.

**Families of the World: Families of China (2001)**

Grades: K-4

One good video aimed at the younger set is Families of China, part of the Families of the World series for ages 5-10. Families features two 15-minute programs narrated by children, one living in a rural village and the another in a moderately sized city. Each program details the families' daily routines, carefully avoiding making any judgements about their lifestyle, and subtly emphasizing the similarities between Chinese and American children.

**First Moon (1987)**

Grades: 7-12+

This 37-minute video depicts the colorful and joyous celebration of the New Year in a Chinese village, providing insights into Chinese customs and values. It was directed by Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon and co-produced by Katherine Kline. First Moon and One Village in China series (see below) are distributed by the Long Bow Group, Inc.

**The Gate of Heavenly Peace (1995)**

Grades: 10-12+

This 3-hour documentary revisits the tumultuous events during the spring of 1989 and explores the complex political process that led to the student protests. To produce this film, Richard Gordon and Carma Hinton collected a huge amount of film footage from many sources, interviewed participant-survivors, and, with their advisors, debated differing interpretations of the Tiananmen affair. There is a [website](#) accompanying this documentary.

**Life in China's Frontier Cities (1996)**

Grades: 7-12

This 30-minute video is a program in the series, The Power of Place: World Regional Geography, one of the three programs in Unit 11: China and Its Sphere. The program includes two case studies: "The settlement of Lanzhou in northwestern China" and

"Struggling manufacturing industry in Shenyang." The other videos in Unit 11 are The Booming Maritime Edge and China's Metropolitan Heartland.

### **One Village in China Series (1984-1986)**

Grades: 9-12+

This is a series of three 58-minute videos about aspects of life in one north Chinese village, Long Bow. The series was directed by Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon and co-produced by Katherine Kline. Life in the village is described from the perspective of the people in the village and in their own words. According to one review, "One Village in China allows real people to speak directly to us. Their simple words do more to illuminate our similarities and differences than any recap of research ever could." First Moon (see above), produced in 1987, is also available from the Long Bow Group, Inc.

1. Small Happiness: Women of a Chinese Village (1984): Filmed under unprecedented circumstances, women of the Long Bow talk about marriage, birth control, work and daily life. The 1990 high school version of this program is also available.

2. All Under Heaven: Life in a Chinese Village (1985): Penetrating account of change and continuity in a north Chinese village.

3. To Taste a Hundred Herbs: Gods, Ancestors, and Medicine in a Chinese Village (1986): Portrait of a traditional Chinese doctor whose Catholic faith shapes his values and gives him a special role in his community.

### **The Silk Road Series (1990)**

Grades: 9-12+

This series of twelve 1-hour videos follows in Marco Polo's footsteps along the Silk Road linking Europe and China, exploring the art, culture and history of Asia. Produced by NHK/Japan. For thousands of years, the fabled Silk Road, as traveled by Marco Polo, was the major link between the people of Europe and the vast riches of mysterious China. Spanning the deserts, grasslands and seas between Rome, Istanbul and the major cities of China, the Silk Road witnessed an ongoing parade of traders and goods, carrying with them their art, religion and culture. The impact of the Silk Road is immeasurable--giants such as Alexander the Great and tyrants like Genghis Khan created our world's history while striding along its path. This first co-production of China Central TV and the outside world was ten years in the making, and produced at a cost exceeding \$50 million. Aired to critical acclaim in over 25 countries, it remains the highest rated series in Japan's television history. With a unique soundtrack by Kitaro.

### **Sprouts of Capitalism in China (1997)**

Grades: 9-12

This 20-minute documentary focuses on the effects of emerging capitalism in this Communist nation. Wen-jie Qin, the filmmaker, concentrates in her uncle's life, starting with the hardship he faced as a child of the persecuted class during the 1950s and chronicling his rise to prosperity. This film deals with important issues including the relationship between government and business, the one child policy, and the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

### **Trav's Travels: China (1998)**

Grades 3-6

In this 20-minute geography video, kids accompany the animated character Trav on a cultural tour of China where they visit the terra-cotta soldiers in Xi'an, the water cities of Suzhou, and the plateaus of Tibet, as well as major cities including Shanghai and Beijing. The video gives comprehensive information on most regions and cities, providing detailed animated maps. Trav's Travels comes with teacher's guide and public performance rights. This program exemplifies the five themes of geography as set by National Geography Standards.



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## China: Feature Films

### **Iron and Silk** (1990)

Grades: 8-12+

This 94-min. movie is based on a true account of Mark Salzman, a young American man who traveled to China in the early '80s to teach English. While there, he studied under a famous (and very harsh) martial arts instructor, Pan Qingfu. Both Salzman and Pan Qingfu play themselves, giving this feature film a documentary feel. This simple film can be used to show the lives of ordinary Chinese in the wake of the Reform Period or to teach about martial arts.

*(English and some Chinese with subtitles)*

### **King of Masks** (1996)

Grades: 4-12

One of Roger Ebert's favorite movies for children, this film explores the relationship between an elderly street performer in 1930s China and the young child he adopts. Good vehicle for teaching about Chinese arts, gender relationships, and the universality of love. Directed by Wu Tianming.

*(Chinese language with English subtitles)*

### **Not One Less** (1999)

Grades: 8-12+

Not One Less is one of Zhang Yimou's (To Live) most recent films and it does not disappoint. This true story about one rural fourteen-year-old substitute teacher's efforts to locate a student who had run away to the city, is reenacted by most of the actual people involved in the situation. The film is Zhang's attempt to reveal the increasing gap between the quality of life of urban and rural people in China, while at the same time sharing a moving and uplifting tale that is meaningful to all ages.

*(Chinese language with English subtitles)*

### **To Live** (1994)

Grades: 11-12+

Directed by the highly esteemed director, Zhang Yimou, this drama follows a Chinese family through the Communist Revolution, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. The essential theme of this movie is that the will to survival, not ideology, dominates people's lives. Some parts might need to be edited for inappropriate content.

*(Chinese language with English subtitles)*

### **Yellow Earth** (1984)


Grades: 9-12+

Directed by Chen Kaige (Farewell My Concubine), Yellow Earth is a powerful story about a soldier who goes to a remote village to collect folk songs and ends up inspiring a poor fourteen year old girl to join the Communist army. This film is arguably propaganda for the Communist Party, but the problems faced by the girl and her family were very real in the 1930s and so were the emotions that drove young people to risk their lives

fighting the Socialist cause. This film should be viewed critically, but not disregarded.  
(Chinese language with English subtitles)

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 EMAIL



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## China: Slide Units and Curriculum Units

### **Along the Silk Road** (1993)

Grades: 6-12

This curriculum unit, which includes a video and text, teaches the history and geography of the Silk Road. It uses interactive teaching activities and draws on many primary sources to explore the historical route through the lives of people such as Marco Polo and Xuan Zang who lived and traveled its pathways.

### **Ancient Chinese Bronze Vessels** (1991)

Grades: 8-12

This curriculum unit of 5 slides and a teacher's guide explores how bronze vessels, made between 1700 B.C. and A.D. 200 for the rulers and great nobility of the early Chinese dynasties, teach current scholars about the past.

### **The Arts of Asia: China, Korea, Japan**

Grades: 8-12

An extensive resource based on The Art Institute of Chicago's permanent installation of the arts of China, Korea, and Japan, this manual includes more than 100 pages of informative text, classroom teaching suggestion, a bibliography for teachers and young audiences, a glossary of terms written in English and Asian characters, and numerous illustrations and maps. Sixteen slides of objects on view in the galleries accompany the text. Designed to be used by teachers of all levels and as a supplement to any classroom discipline.

### **Introduction to Sovereignty: A Case Study of Taiwan** (2004)

Grades: 9-12, college

An Introduction to Sovereignty: A Case Study of Taiwan examines the key issue of sovereignty and provides an in-depth look at the unique status of Taiwan among nations of the world. Video and workbook.

### **Porcelain Stories** (2000)

Grades: 4-12+

Interactive unit from the Seattle Art Museum. Available for download.

### **Rabbit in the Moon: Folktales from China and Japan** (Revised 1995)

Grades: K-6

Rabbit in the Moon introduces students to China and Japan through a cross-cultural investigation of eight Chinese and Japanese folktales. Fifty-one slides illustrating two of the Japanese folktales accompany the unit. The text is eighty-nine pages.

### **Traditional Chinese Celebrations: Continuity and Change in Taiwan** (1985)


Grades: 1-8

This 16-slide unit introduces four important Chinese celebrations: the Lantern, Tomb Sweeping, Dragon Boat, and Moon festivals. Recognizing commonalities and differences between U.S. and Chinese cultural traditions is encouraged.

## **When Cultures Collide: China and the U.S. in the 21st Century (1998)**

Grades: 5-12

When Cultures Collide is a 20-minute video exploring the relationship between China and the United States, both historically and today. Video comes with a 12-page teacher's guide, including activities, and 11" x 17" poster detailing important events and places.

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