



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2003 Volume I: Geography through Film and Literature

From Beijing to St. Petersburg: Riding the Rails through Asia via Film and Literature

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Introduction

Middle and high school language arts teachers are increasingly being taught to educate students in interdisciplinary units that not only reinforce the conventional knowledge covered in the “three R’s,” but in ways that stimulate different students in different ways and touch on the various learning styles that have become so important in the forming of the modern American curriculum. The conventional textbook based classroom that so many of today’s teachers were brought up on simply doesn’t work in a society where computer programs, the internet, video games and push button satellite TV fills a child’s day. We are increasingly called upon to spice up our lesson plans, get away from strict text-based learning and invite students on a journey of learning that will include not only language arts, but also other disciplines. We are encouraged to use a variety of mediums, including the arts, music and film. As the world gets smaller, faster and more technologically advanced, having a student study literature with nothing more than the text in front of him or her is becoming decreasingly effective. For modern education to really work for young people, it has to be able to compete with a world that becomes more and more fascinating as technological advances carry us to new heights. Learning must be an adventure for children. We need to lead them on a journey, an adventure that will stimulate them and stay with them long after they have left the classroom. When the Yale New Haven Teacher’s Institute offered the seminar “Geography Through Film and Literature” I knew that this would be the seminar that would help me lead my students on the adventure of a lifetime without ever leaving the classroom.

It has always been a dream of mine to travel the Trans-Siberian Railroad from Beijing, China to Moscow, Russia. There were several times while living in Asia that I came close to taking the trip, but as of this date have not made it. This seminar and unit will allow me to invite my students on the trip of my dreams. Through literature, film and geography this unit will allow us to explore cultures and worlds that most students will find very different from what they are used to. I hope to present both literature and film to the students as a place for them to creatively explore both other cultures and their own lives. I hope to introduce the students not only to different cultures, but also to a method of creative journal writing that will help make them more observant and critical thinkers. Through a series of lessons that will carry students from Beijing to St. Petersburg via railroad, students will be working with maps, exploring literature and film, and exploring the cultures of the various “stops” that our journey will be making. Students will be asked to keep a travelogue

where they will comment on their experiences and explore the wonders of travel as they read the literature and examine worlds that many of them might never otherwise visit. Students will plot the journey on their own maps and will learn of the areas through writers such as Li Bai, Amy Tan, Lao Tze, Anton Checkov, Doestoevsky, Pushkin, Akhmatova and others. The films the students view will put them inside the areas being explored. Clothing, language and music will all be touched on as the students make this wonderful trip across Asia.

My rationale for doing the project is twofold. First of all, students in language arts classes are increasingly being asked to write personal responses to literature as part of the middle and high school curriculum. In the CT CAPT test high school students are asked to write about literature in ways that shows them using deeper thinking and deeper understanding. I am simply adding a component to this task by asking students not only to respond to literature in their travelogues, but to respond to film as well. Secondly, I am also basically creating a social studies unit here. Students will be working closely with maps, traveling through several countries and examining the culture of those countries through the films they will view. I want students to be able to recognize and label Asian countries and cities on their maps as well. In an arts magnet school the use of the arts in all of the subject areas is a central part of the school curriculum. The use of film is a wonderful tool in teaching that more widely captures the focus and interests of all the students. This form of visual arts will give students a new way of experiencing narrative. Film can be explored almost exactly as literature is. Setting, conflict, resolution, character all play an important role in film. I often tell my students to visualize when they read. Film is simply a ready-made visualization.

This unit should be a fun learning experience for children. Seventh and eighth graders in CT as well as all over the nation are increasingly being asked to write very structured and formulated essays. The five paragraph persuasive essay has turned many students away from writing. The students are being taught to be very noncreative in this type of writing. Students will enjoy keeping a travelogue as they travel the rail through Asia. At the same time they will be responding to the literature and film and growing to appreciate other cultures while also finding a new, powerful and fun outlet through their writing. The maps, which will be as individual as the creators themselves, will be excellent learning tools that students will be able to utilize along the long journey they will be undertaking. I hope teachers find the journey as fulfilling as I am certain the students will. All aboard!!

Purpose

My aim in this unit is to create a multi-cultural, interdisciplinary unit that allows students to be creative and have fun while they are going through it. I believe that art is a very important aspect of education that allows different students to tap into parts of themselves that they may have previously overlooked. In this unit students will be asked to create maps that can become real pieces of art. They will study film art to various degrees and lastly they will become creative writers as their journey logs will prompt them to be as creative as they wish.

I also want teachers to have a valuable resource in this unit. As I will say repeatedly throughout this unit, I believe that this project can be adapted for students from the 1st grade to a high school senior honor class. A teacher teaching at any grade level can modify the maps, the film, the reading and the writing, even the geography itself. This unit does not have to be a train ride across Asia. It could just as easily become a bicycle

ride around New England, a car ride across America, a boat ride through the South Pacific or a stroll through old Farmer Jones' garden in *Peter Rabbit* .

Teachers are wonderful at borrowing and adjusting. I encourage all teachers to do just that with this unit.

Objectives

I really want my students to be able to feel comfortable viewing and talking about film and literature in the classroom. I want my students to feel confident in their interpretations that they put in their travelogues and to be able to share them freely. I also want my students to make connections between the visual (film), the cultures and the written word. By utilizing film, literature and discussion I hope to spur interest in my students that will lead to new understanding and acceptance of other cultures. I want my students to feel comfortable about using film and literature to better understand themselves and others.

In the creation of maps that initiates the trip, I hope that students will be able to:

- gain knowledge about locations of countries, provinces, cities and major geographical sites of Russia and China.
- better understand the structure of maps, including keys and symbols regularly used on maps
- have a better understanding and comfort level in regards to the use of maps of different scale

After viewing the film and reading the literature connected to each stop, students will be able to:

- have a better appreciation of film and literature
- express their interpretations of the work both orally and written
- Use details from a film or piece of literature to create their own creative story to match the work
- present their interpretations to their peers

Upon completion of the unit students will;

- display an appreciation and understanding for Eastern cultures and people
- understand how to view film as a tool for seeing and understanding experiences rather than simply a recreational vehicle

Standards

The objectives mentioned above are also geared towards both state and city standards for the language arts and art. The state of Connecticut's standards are listed on the Education Department web site. Some of the standards that apply are listed below.

Connecticut's Common Core of Learning Program Goals

Having completed this unit students will have achieved the following Connecticut's Common Core of Learning program goals for language arts:

create works using the language arts in visual, oral and written texts;

read, write, speak, listen and view to construct meaning of written, visual and oral texts;

choose and apply strategies that enhance the fluent and proficient use of the language arts; (brainstorming, use of graphic organizers)

read with understanding and respond thoughtfully to a variety of texts

When done with this unit, students will have achieved the following Connecticut's Common Core of Learning program goals for the arts;

create (imagine, experiment, plan, make, evaluate, refine and present/exhibit) art works that express concepts, ideas and feelings in each art form; (maps)

respond (select, experience, describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate) with understanding to diverse art works and performances in each art form; (film)

understand the connections among the arts, other disciplines and daily life.

New Haven Public Schools Academic Performance Standards

Students will also achieve the following goals from the New Haven Public Schools Academic Performance standards for eighth grade Language Arts;

Students will demonstrate strategic reading skills before, during and after reading

Students will demonstrate strategic writing behaviors

Students will participate in a wide variety of writing experiences

The Journey

The journey that students will take in this unit spans nearly ten thousand miles and visits three countries. It is a huge mass of land that really allows teachers unlimited resources and choices as the journey unfolds. Literally hundreds of languages, cultures and lifestyles are traversed on this journey. The Trans-Siberian railroad will be the focus of much of this journey. There are actually three routes that make up the Trans-Siberian. The first is the Trans-Siberian, which stretches from Moscow to Vladivostok; the second route is the Trans-Manchurian and the third route, which I will be taking my students on in this unit, is called the Trans-Mongolian route. This route takes riders up from Beijing through Mongolia, into the Lake Baikal region of Russia and then across to Moscow.

This adventurous journey in reality would take nearly a week without any stop-offs. The train does make regular stops but they are brief and passengers are only given a chance to get out and stretch their legs on the platforms. That's why planning ahead and penciling in some stops is key to a successful journey. I will spend some time discussing the journey with my students, looking over some guidebooks and getting their input on my proposed stops as I finalize our itinerary.

The Itinerary

Key to the success of any trip is a good itinerary. In this project the itinerary becomes a sort of syllabus for the unit. Teachers need to make up an itinerary before introducing the unit to the students, or at least have a draft of an itinerary if you want the students to have some say on where they will be stopping. But due to the gathering of film and literature that goes along with this unit, you will really need to steer them in a direction that will be manageable for you. On my itinerary (see appendix) I have put the city to be visited, the film to be viewed and the literature to be sampled. I also put a journal theme associated with each stop. These are fairly general, and will aid the students in the writing/reflection process at each stop. The itinerary gives both the student and the teacher a better idea of where we are headed in this unit. Take a day discussing the itinerary before beginning the journey. Ask students how long they think a trip like this might take, what will they need to take with them? At least one class period should be spent on imagining what the trip will be like before embarking on it.

The Map

One of the tools that is key to the success of this unit is the map. Each of the students will keep his/her map attached inside the travel journal. As stated before, how large and complex that map will be depends on the teacher. First and second graders making a map will create something quite different from high school seniors. I expect my eighth graders to create a map that is both accurate and creative. The map will need to cover almost all of Asia since the journey begins in Beijing and continues all the way to St. Petersburg, Russia. Most of China, Mongolia and practically all of Russia will have to be on the map. The map section of the project

is what makes it very “inter-disciplinary.” Social studies teachers could spend a month on this section. Math teachers could help with scales, miles and kilometers, distances between cities; science teachers could discuss weather patterns, plant and animal life. The map gives this the potential to become a huge and fascinating project.

Do the maps have to be perfect? No, not at all. I will spend about one week on the maps with my students and I will be focusing more on creativity than the exact scale of mileage/km on the map. I will encourage students to be artistic on these maps. Once again, a social studies teacher might choose to spend more time on this section of the project. Students will need to use sources such as globes, wall maps, geography books, the Internet and atlases at this point of the project. The teacher should spend some time making his/her own map first, so that students know that it can be done and what the teacher expects from them. Point out that your map is an individual effort and that every map will be different. Students should use 8 1/2X11 or 8 1/2X14 size paper for the project. Remember the maps will be folded and inserted inside their travel journals.

The labeling of the map is again something that will vary from project to project. I will ask student to label major cities and of course the cities that we will be stopping in on our journey. The itinerary will help students know what should be on the map. I will ask students to label the following cities: in China; Taipei, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing; in Mongolia; Ulan Bator; in Russia; Irkutsk, Omsk, Moscow and St. Petersburg. Borders between China, Mongolia and Russia will be needed. Major water areas will have to be labeled; the South China Sea, Taiwan Straits, East China Sea, Yellow Sea, Lake Baikal in Russia, the Gulf of Finland. A more detailed map might include longitudinal and latitudinal lines, mountain ranges and rivers, provincial borders and smaller cities. Students can learn about different type sizes for different sized cities, landforms and bodies of water. Don't put on the railroad at this point. Students can do it as they travel their journey. Once the map has been completed in pencil and checked by the teacher, students should be encouraged to add color and creativity to the maps.

The Journal

The second tool students will need on this trip is the travel journal. The students' journals will be a key part to the success of the journey. The reflections on literature, film and geography will all take place inside the pages of these journals. I will ask students to hand write in the journals, but the use of computers is an option. Along with the map, the journals will be the only tangible thing that students will have to show for their journey when they get off in St. Petersburg. Basically any notebook will do, but I will ask students to pick up the smaller black and white comprehension notebooks that are available for just a couple of dollars in a lot of stores. Students will cover/decorate their journal before they begin the trip so that, once again, the students' journals are as individualized as the students and the maps. The maps should be folded so that they can fit inside the front cover of the journals. The itinerary should also be attached inside the back cover. Using the themes at the various stops students will be encouraged to reflect on the literature, film, geography and discussion that takes place along the journey. Students should be writing in the journals daily, not just on “prompt days.” Ask students to write on anything that they encounter on the journey; reactions to pictures, film clips, other maps, literature, passing thoughts or anything else. Doodling and illustrations on the inside of the journal should be encouraged.

The Films

The third piece to this most incredible journey will be film. There is a list of films that can be used for the project in the bibliography in the back of this unit. These are films that I found fairly easily, and you may want to use others. Each of the films was chosen with the itinerary in mind. The films will give students a visual glimpse of each of the areas where we stop, becoming worlds in which students will study another culture and reflect on where we are going and where we have been. For our stop in Beijing, for example, I have chosen the film, *The Last Emperor*. This film gives a spectacular view of the Forbidden City at the time of the emperor, Pu Yi. I will not show the entire film to my eighth graders, but will show parts of it to them, especially the scene when the young boy emperor is greeted by thousands of subjects. Again it is up to you how you use the film. In some cases you may just give students a glimpse of the movie, while in others the entire film may be shown. Since we are trying to focus on geography in this seminar, I am trying to show films that will give students a glimpse of what the landscape or the city we are studying looks like.

The Literature

Another vital piece to this project is literature. As the students map their way across Asia, sampling the films and studying the geography, they will also be asked to sample the literature. Again look at my itinerary and the bibliography in the back of this unit to decide which of the writings I have chosen fits your needs. At each stop students will be given a chance to read and discuss the literature of the area before moving on. There is lots of literature available from Russia and China. Literature from Mongolia is less easy to find. I will ask students to use their social studies textbooks during our section on Mongolia. Studying Genghis Khan serves as a good contrast to the images I will be sharing with the students.

I have given students in this unit some of my favorite authors to study; Pushkin, Akhmatova, Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn, Li Bai, Tu Fu and Amy Tan. There are scores of other poets, novelists, philosophers and short story writers that could be included in the project. These were chosen mostly out of personal taste.

The Stops

As mentioned before, the stops on this journey are mapped out on the itinerary to be found in the back of this unit. This section of the unit will just give a little background on each of the stops, the materials I have chosen for each stop and anything else that I thought might prove useful to the teacher.

First Stop-Beijing

Since the rail route that we are taking through Asia begins (or ends) with Beijing, it only makes sense that we begin our journey here in the capital of the People's Republic of China.

My approach to this part of the unit is to take the students back in time. We use the film *The Last Emperor* and

read poetry by the classic Chinese poets Li Bai and Fu Tu. In a way I am romanticizing the city. However this entire unit is a sort of fantasy that will probably be much easier to get through with students in a classroom than it would with them on a train!

Second Stop-Ulan Baatar

The second stop on the route is the capital of Mongolia, Ulan Baatar. On this stop I will be focusing also on the past, but bringing it up as a reminder of where this country has been and is today. A social studies or history teacher will love to spend a week or so on this section of the journey. Tales of the mighty Mongol warriors, Genghis Khan the ruthless leader of Mongolia who gobbled up Asia from the Yellow Sea almost to the Caspian during the thirteenth century will fill the classroom. Today this country couldn't be more opposite from what it once was. Spend some time reading the history of Mongolia and exploring the soldiers and empire of that time. Then lead the students into Mongolia with clips from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* where the wild kidnapping of the princess leads viewers on a trek through the desert. Give students a glimpse of Disney's rendition of the mighty Han warriors in *Mulan*. Finally lead the students to modern day Mongolia with the film *Close to Eden*. Another great film on this area is *A Mongolian Story*. National Geographic again has fine images of the country in its December 1996 issue. There are also maps and a lot of background on Genghis Khan in this issue. Have students write about the three renditions of the Mongols in the three movies. How do the movies portray the Mongolians? How accurate are the depictions? Use this piece of the unit to focus more on film than literature; allow students to comment on the films in their travel journals.

Third Stop-Siberia (Irkutsk/Omsk)

As we move from Mongolia into Central Siberia, I think this is a good time to introduce students to travel guides in more depth. Anyone doing extensive travel in Asia or in any other part of the world will find these books especially useful. During my seven years in Asia, at least 70% of the expat travelers that I met had a travel guide tucked away in a backpack somewhere. There are several publishers of the guides; Lonely Planet, Frommes, Insight Guides and others. Take your class to the public library to explore the guides, then lead them into Siberia through one of your choosing. The Insight Guide on Russia has an excellent introduction to Siberia in it. Most of my students have little idea what Siberia is and the guide gives good background with maps and pictures. It also highlights some of the cities in Siberia.

The city of Irkutsk is a good one to stop at on the route to Moscow. It is a jumping off point for visits to "The Pearl of Siberia," Lake Baikal. This section of the unit will be an awesome one for science and geography teachers. The 25 million year old Lake Baikal is the deepest freshwater lake in the world. Surrounded by some forty towns the lake supports almost as many lifestyles. It is also home to some fifty-four species of fish and 250 species of shrimp as well as birds and seals.¹ Students should definitely have both Lake Baikal and Irkutsk labeled on their maps.

Another stop in Siberia is Omsk. West of Irkutsk, Siberia's second largest city has a population of 1.2 million.² Founded as a fortress, the city became a frequent place of exile during Russia's often-brutal history. Both Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky were temporarily housed in the city during their exiles.³

During their visit to Siberia students will be invited to view parts of the film *Siberiade*. This 1979 Soviet movie is truly an epic film. The entire film is over three hours long and covers nearly a century of Russian history through the lives of two families. I wouldn't expect my eighth graders to sit through the entire film. They simply wouldn't be able to. But the first hour or so of the film gives a masterful depiction of the Siberian wilderness that I think will be valuable in helping students imagine what Siberia looks like. Take a look at the

film and choose some segments where students can study the characters and setting of this very different part of the world.

Solzhenitsyn is a wonderful author to study at this point in the journey. Short stories, poems or novels of the author often deal with the brutality of life in exile. I will ask students to read or listen to *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. This is an excellent short work by the author that will fit nicely with this section of the unit.

Ask students to write about how they think the geography of an area affects or shapes the lives of the inhabitants of the region. Ask them to draw from both the film and literature and share some observations of the worlds that they have been immersed in.

Fourth Stop-Moscow

The fourth stop on this incredible journey is the capital of Russia, Moscow. How you choose to approach introductions to this great city may vary. I always start from a historical standpoint. Moscow is a city rich in history dating all the way back to the 12th Century. The Kremlin, a collection of palaces, cathedrals and buildings in the center of the city serves as a sort of time line for Moscow with buildings being added to the area by the various Russian rulers for hundreds of years. Red Square surrounds the Kremlin walls and beyond that is the city itself.

Another epic film about Russia that students can enjoy is *Dr. Zhivago*. Based on the novel by Boris Pasternak, the film tells the story of Zhivago in a vibrant manner, which won it several Oscars. Another film students might enjoy at this point is *Taxi Blues*. *Taxi Blues* is a modern look at Moscow through the eyes of a taxi driver. This film really shows the rough underbelly of the city and should be previewed by teachers before showing any part of it to students. Some scenes are inappropriate for the classroom and language can also be an issue. Find some scenes in the movie that you can use in the classroom. Know where to fast forward.

I'm going to have students read "The Bet" by Anton Chekov during their Moscow visit. It is a short story that is in *The Language of Literature* that is used by New Haven eighth graders.

Have students write a journal entry from the point of view of the lawyer from the story during his imprisonment. Ask students to write in the first person and to make a connection with the film they have seen in the journal entry. Perhaps they will reminisce of their childhood friendship with Dr. Zhivago, or the time they took a taxi ride through Moscow with the lead character from *Taxi Blues*.

Fifth Stop- St. Petersburg

Finally the last stop for the students is St. Petersburg. Again this is a city with a massive history. One good source for teachers on the city is Robert Massie's biography of *Peter the Great*. The city was envisioned and built by the great Russian ruler in his quest to reach out to the west while also protecting the vast country that lay behind the doors to the great city.

A film was made for television based on the Massie book. Like so many of the films in this unit, *Peter the Great* is another rather long one that may be used in sections rather than viewed in its entirety.

In St. Petersburg we will examine some poetry. Alexander Pushkin is a massive hero in Russia. He called St. Petersburg his home. Find some Pushkin to share with the students. His poems can be fun and lighthearted or serious and deep. Another great poet forever connected with St. Petersburg is Anna Akmatova. This twentieth Century poet will forever be associated with St. Petersburg. Be sure to read the poem that Akhmatova wrote

to Pushkin.

As students finish up the unit here in St. Petersburg have them reflect on their journey. Who were some of the people they met on the route. What were some of the images that stayed with them? Have them make connections with characters from the film and literature. Who are they reminded of? What did they learn?

Conclusion

By the end of the journey students should have much to show for the trip they've taken. Their journals should be full of interesting reflections and illustrations from their trip. The maps should be completed with all the stops above mentioned clearly marked. The students will have been exposed to films that they might not have otherwise looked at. They will have practiced and prepared extensively for the types of questions that they will see on the English section of the standardized tests they will be taking in tenth grade and they will have a better grasp on interpreting literature and film. Lastly and most importantly, the students will have been exposed to many cultures and worlds that are so unlike their own in many ways and so like their own in others. Hopefully this is where both the teachers and the students will have made their most growth as they step off the train, regain their footing and move on to other great journeys.

Sample Lesson Plans

The following lesson plans will give the teacher an idea on how I plan to run the various "stops" along the route. The lessons that I plan for are forty-two minutes so it may seem too short if your school uses block scheduling. This section of the unit is focused on Beijing, China.

Sample Lesson Plan One-Arriving in Beijing

Objectives

- Students will locate Beijing on the map
- Students will map out train route from departure to Beijing on their own maps
- Students will discuss what they think a "Forbidden City" looks like
- Students will make predictions of who they will see/what they will find inside the Forbidden City
- Students will locate the "Forbidden City" on a map of Beijing

Materials needed

- Wall map, atlas, globe
- Student travelogues
- Magazines, pictures of Beijing and whatever else you have that will help students begin to see the city of Beijing.

Initiation

Finding Beijing-This section of the lessons will go best with a large wall map or globe. If you don't have one of either use an atlas. Ask students who can find Beijing on the map that you are using in front of the class. Tell them they only have twenty seconds to find it. Call them up one at a time to try until someone gets it. Now ask them to find where Beijing would go on their maps. Ask the students to put their fingers on the maps in the spot where they think Beijing will be located. Check on where they have located Beijing.

Procedure

Once students have located and marked where they think Beijing will be located, review where other places are in relation to Beijing. Ask students to map a flight route from Hong Kong or Taiwan or wherever they decide they are flying in from. When everyone is done announce to the class "We have arrived in Beijing." Have a brief discussion with students to see what they know about the City. (For example it is the capital of China, it has a population of 8 million, scene of the 1989 massacre at Tianamen Square.) Ask students if they know anything about the Forbidden City. Once the students have discussed what they think, ask them to write in their travelogues. Set up the scenario for them. They have just arrived. It is nighttime and they are tired. They go to the hotel, and like the awesome travelers they are, take the time to jot down their thoughts about where they are and where they are going. Remind them that tomorrow they will visit the Forbidden City. Let the students begin writing in class and finish for homework.

Closure

Allow students to share what they have written so far (including maps).

Sample Lesson Two-The Forbidden City

Objectives

- Students will share journal entries/predictions on Forbidden City
- Students will view parts of The Last Emperor
- Students will comment on film in their journals through words and illustrations

Initiation

Quick write-Ask students to write down as many adjectives as they can to describe how they feel as they get ready to enter Beijing's Forbidden City. Share the adjectives quickly and ask if anyone is interested in sharing what they wrote in their travelogues last night for homework.

Procedure

Before starting the film set the scene for the students. They are in the city now after a good night's sleep in a hotel. They are getting ready to see the city and their first stop will be The Forbidden City. Give the students background on the city. National Geographic has a great issue in which the city is mapped out in relationship to the rest of Beijing. Remind students that the parts of the Forbidden City are now just one part of a much bigger metropolis, Beijing. Roll the film and enter the city with the children. What you really want to watch with the students is the magical part in the beginning of the film where the child emperor is greeted by thousands. It is a wonderful scene that students will enjoy. Other parts of the film reveal the beauty and magnificence of the city. Make sure you view and cue up the parts of the movie you want. There are some scenes that are inappropriate for younger audiences. After viewing ask students if it was what they expected. Get feedback from the students before once again setting the stage for their next journal entry. They spent the day in the "Forbidden City, they saw and heard many fascinating new things. Now is time for reflection what did they see, who did they meet? Have students illustrate their entries.

Closure

Ask students to look at their maps, mark the Forbidden City on their maps and look at how far they have come. Ask them what they would like to do tomorrow. Try to spark some interest in meeting some people in Beijing.

Sample Lesson Plan Three- Meeting the Poet

Objectives

- Students will view a portrait of Li Pai
- Students will read several poems written by Li Pai
- Students will discuss their impressions of Li Pai
- Students will make connections by writing poems similar to the style of Li Pai

Materials

- Pictures of Beijing/people of Beijing and Li Pai
- Li Pai Poetry
- Student Travelogues

- Clips from other films (include Beijing Bicycle/ Not One Less)

Initiation

At this point in the journey I like to show students more pictures of the people of Beijing and let them know that these are the people that they are meeting as they make their way through the streets of the city. Use clips of movies here to help place the students in the city. The last picture I will show them is that of the famous Chinese poet Li Pai. Since this journey is a fantasy I see nothing wrong with bringing the poet into the picture although he lived in the 8th Century (AD). Either Li Pai or his fellow poet, contemporary and friend, Wu Fu can be used in this section of the trip. They are both classic poets who traveled extensively throughout China in their day. Both had connections with the ruling courts of the day and both spent time in exile due to fighting and civil war. Ask the students what sort of man this Li Pai might have been.

Procedure

Once students' interests in the poet have peaked, pass around some of Li Pai's poems to be read in class. Rewi Alley's book Li Pai has over two hundred poems in it. If that book is unavailable, any anthology of classical Chinese literature will surely have a section on the poet.

Many of Li Pai's poems are short, easy to read commentaries on his travels and meeting with the people of his times. Use the poem "To My Distant Folk" in which the author misses a loved one "in thinking /of her, I become like a dropping/autumn leaf, my tears like white/dew falling on the moss beneath"⁴ to remind students that they too are far from home and may feel homesick. There are many poems written by Li Pai that lament on loved ones left behind. Among them are; "Farewell at Chingmen," "Farewelling a Friend to Szechuan," "Farewelling My Wife" and others. Have students read some of the poems in class and think about how Li Pai must have felt. Ask them to imagine how they might feel and have them write a poem to a loved one in their journal.

Closure

In this section of the lesson I will share my own poetry with students in hopes of helping them to feel comfortable writing their feelings in simple blank verse like the poems we read by Li Pai.

Sample Lesson Four-Saying Goodbye to Beijing

Objectives

- Students will share ideas/new insights gained from stop in Beijing
- Students will jot down unanswered questions to be revisited at end of journey

Materials

- Journal entries
- Maps
- Illustrations and portraits
- Chinese music (background)

Initiation

Quick Write-Ask students to jot down the one thing that made the most impression on them at this stop. Share ideas with class.

Procedure

This part of the unit, at the end of each stop, is meant to review and share what we have learned along the way. Students will sit in a circle on this day. Chinese folk music will play softly in the background and we will spend the period sharing. Students will be asked to share their feelings about what we have seen and heard in Beijing. Maps will be shown and discussed. Poetry, pictures, journal entries and observations will be shared. It is basically an open-ended discussion in which I hope that students will be able to display some new ideas, some shattering of stereotypes and some of their personal feelings.

Closure

At the end of the discussion I will ask students to jot down unanswered questions or feelings that they have as we pack up to head back on the train. One final farewell to Beijing as we continue on our wonderful journey.

APPENDIX A

Travel Itinerary

(chart available in print form)

Annotated Teacher Bibliography

- Belt, Don. "The World's Great Lake", *National Geographic* , June 1992. This is an excellent article on Lake Baikal. The article is packed full of interesting facts, fascinating photos and useful maps.
- Buruma, Ian. *God's Dust: A Modern Asian Journey* . New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989. An interesting travelogue that looks at the ever-changing politics and culture of Asia.
- Butterfield, Fox. *China: Alive in the Bitter Sea* . New York: Bantam Books, 1983. A good historical and fairly modern look at China before the Tianamen Square tragedy.
- Dong, Stella. *Shanghai: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City* . New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000. An excellent reading on the history of one of China's most fascinating cities.
- Edwards, Mike. "Genghis," *National Geographic* December 1996. This article gives an excellent background on the life and times of Genghis Khan while keeping one eye on modern Mongolia. Beautiful photos and useful maps adorn the article.
- Edwards, Mike. "Siberia: In From the Cold," *National Geographic* March 1990. An interesting look at Siberia and glasnost at the end of the 20th Century.
- Jenson, Carsten. *I Have Seen the World Begin: Travels Through China, Cambodia and Vietnam* . A fascinating trip through Asia. New York: Harcourt, 1996
- Lord, Bette Bao. *Legacies: A Chinese Mosaic* . New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990.
- Massie, Robert K. *Peter the Great; His Life and World* . New York: Ballentine Books, 1980. This Pulitzer prize winning biography is a very readable look at everything about the founder of St. Petersburg; Peter the Great.
- Montaigne, Fen. "Russia's Iron Road," *National Geographic* , June 1998. This is an interesting article on the Trans-Siberian railroad. Photos and a map accompany the article making it a great source for this project.
- Pasternak, Boris. *Dr. Zhivago* . New York: Signet Books, 1958. This is a classic Russian novel set in revolutionary Russia. The book was turned into an Academy Award winning movie which is used in the unit.
- Theroux, Paul. *The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train Through Asia* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975. An excellent read on traveling through Asia by rail.
- Theroux, Paul. *Riding the Iron Rooster* . New York: Ivy Books, 1988. An exciting look at travel on the Trans-Siberian railroad.
- Thurbron, Colin. *In Siberia* . New York: Harper Collins Books, 1999. A fascinating look at travel in Siberia.

Annotated Student Bibliography

Alley, Rew, Trans. *Li Pai: 200 Selected Poems* . Taipei: Cave Books, Inc. 1989. This is an excellent source for one of China's most cherished classical poets, Li Bai. The poems are separated according to phases of the poets life, for example one section is called "Before and After his Exile;Last Years." The book is also adorned with photos of beautiful Chinese paintings.

Benn, Anna, editor. *Insight Guides; Russia* . New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995. One of the many travel guides spoken of in the unit. The Insight Guides are especially useful with colorful photos and lots of maps for travelers.

Gibian, George, editor. *The Portable Ninteenth Century Russian Reader* . New York: Penguin Books, 1993. A great source for a Russian poetry, short stories and excerpts.

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. *Stories and Prose Poems* . New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970. An excellent source for lesser known shorter works and poetry of Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Wells, Henry W. editor. *Ancient Poetry from China Japan and India* . Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968. A nice selection of poetry from ancient China, Japan and India. Pieces and biographical information on Li Bai and Fu Tzu were especially helpful in putting the unit together.

Films

Below is a list of films considered during the production of this unit.

Beijing Bicycle . Dir. Xiaoshuai Wang. Sony Pictures Classics, 2001. This movie about two men and a bicycle depicts the diversity of Beijing well.

Close to Eden . Dir Nikita Mikhalkov. Miramax Films, 1991. A hilarious and beautiful depiction of life in Mongolia.

Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon . Dir. An Lee. Columbia Tri Star, 2000. A wonderful and exciting film in the tradition of Chinese filmmaking.

Dr. Zhivago. Dir. David Lean. Metro-Goldwyn Mayer, 1965. The classic Pasternak novel made into a classic film.

The Last Emperor . Dir. Bernardo Bertolucci. Columbia Pictures, 1987. A beautiful film shot partially in Beijing's Forbidden City.

Legend of the Drunken Master II. Dir. Chia Liang Lu, Jackie Chen. Miramax Films, 1994. A wonderful Jackie Chen movie with lots of action and interesting city settings.

The Mongolian Tale . Dir. Fei Xie. New Yorker Films, 1995. Beautiful depictions of Mongolia in this interesting film that accents Close to Eden well.

Mulan . Dir. Tony Bancroft, Barry Cook. Buena Vista Pictures, 1998. A spectacular Disney cartoon depicting a classic Chinese legend.

Not One Less. Dir. Yima Zhang. Sony Pictures Classics, 1999. The story of a schoolteacher looking for her student in a suburb of

Beijing.

Peter the Great . Dir Marvin Chomsky, Lawrence Schiller. National Broadcast Company, 1986. A made for TV mini series based on the Pulitzer Prize winning book by Robert Massie

Siberiade . Dir. Andrei Konchalovsky. International Film Exchange Ltd., 1979. An epic film that covers half a century of Russian history in Siberia.

Taxi Blues . Dir. Pavel Lungin. MKZ Diffusion, 1990. A modern look at Moscow through the life of a city taxi driver.

1 Rewi Alley, *Li Pai; 200 Selected Poems* , page 64.

2 Scammel, *Michael Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* . New York: W.W. Norton Co., 1985 Page 275.

3 Anna Benn, editor. *Insight Guides; Russia, Hong Kong* ; APA Publications, page 270

4 Belt, Don, *The World's Great Lake* in National Geographic, Vol. 181, No. 6, June 1992, pp2-39.

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