

## Section II: Publishable Materials

### *A Little Chinese Seamstress*

Lesson designed for grades 9-12  
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#### Rationale:

One of the challenges history teachers face is making historical content real and relevant. The best way to make the material come alive is through the use of historical fiction. The following lesson draws on the novel, *The Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* by Dai Sijie. Students will pull on information they gained from the novel to create a series of diary entries about life as a Chinese citizen during the Communist Revolution.

#### Objective:

The lesson *A Little Chinese Seamstress* is designed to provide students with a greater understanding of life for Chinese citizens during the Cultural Revolution. A particular emphasis will center on Chairman Mao, the Little Red Book, the Red Guard, attacks on liberals and academics, and changes in the school system. Students will also engage in creative writing as those compose a “diary” from the perspective of a Chinese citizen during the Communist Revolution.

#### Essential Questions:

1. What was life like in China before the communism?
2. What was the Cultural Revolution?
3. How did the Cultural Revolution impact the lives of young people in China?

#### Duration:

The lesson plan is designed for two 50 minute class periods. Those operating on a block schedule may be able to complete the lesson in a single class meeting.

#### Materials:

Students will use laptops/internet, the novel *The Balzac and the little Chinese Seamstress* by Sijie Dai, *World History: Modern Times* by Jackson Spielvogel, and crafts supplies

Procedure:

Students will have read *The Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* prior to the lesson. Students will be divided into groups of three. Within their groups, students will pull five scenes/images from the novel. After jotting down the events/images, students will discuss the book with their group mates.

After discussing the book, students will do additional research on the Cultural Revolution using laptops. When finished compiling information, the students will be given the task of writing a series of diary entries addressing the following topics: Chairman Mao, the little Red Book, the Red Guard, attacks on liberals and academics, and changes in the school system. Students must incorporate scenes and characters from the novel in their entries. After typing out their entries students will bind and decorate their “diaries.”

Assessment:

Student diaries will be used as an assessment for the lesson. Students must address all of the assigned topics and incorporate examples from the novel into coherent and accurate entries.

Indicators: (Based on the Ohio Department of Education’s curriculum guidelines)

**Standard:**

*History (9-10)*

Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States and the world.

**Benchmark:**

C: Analyze the reasons that countries gained control of territory through imperialism and the impact on people living in the territory that was controlled.

**Indicator:**

6. Explain the global impact of imperialism including:
  - b. Political and social reform in China;

**Standard:**

*History (9-10)*

Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States and the world.

**Benchmark**

E: Analyze connections between World War II, the Cold War and contemporary conflicts.

**Indicator:**

12. Analyze the impact of conflicting political and economic ideologies after World War II that resulted in the Cold War including:
  - d. The Chinese Communist Revolution.

Bibliography:

*Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*, novel by Dai Sijie

*World History: Modern Times*, textbook by Jackson Spielvogel

*East Asia: A New History*, textbook by Rhoads Murphey

*The Great Leap Forward*. Accessed May 29, 2011. <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/prc2.html>

*The Cultural Revolution*. Accessed May 29, 2011. <http://www.morningsun.org>