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## Lesson Plan #2-China and Communism

### Class Description

Sixth Grade social studies: "World Geography"  
One 66-minute class

### Rationale

Sixth grade students study world geography. One of our focus continents is Asia. With this lesson, we are meeting the following state of Ohio grade level indicator for sixth grade:

**Explain how opportunities for citizens to participate in and influence the political process differ under various systems of government**

This is leading to the benchmark that the students should be able to meet at the end of eighth grade:

**Show the relationship between civic participation and attainment of civic and public goals.**

### Objectives for this lesson

Students will create a chart that compares the Chinese Communist government to the United States Democratic government. The chart will show the participation of the people in their countries.

For an interdisciplinary lesson with language arts, students can write a comparison/contrast paragraph.

### Materials

We are using journals in the History Alive style. On the left side of the journal, students will answer a prompt to get them thinking about the topic. On the right side, students take notes, create diagrams, etc. of the material we are learning.

- 1) Junior Scholastic: February 2004 article, "China Looks to the Future." (Or another article/encyclopedia entry about China and communism.)
- 2) Social studies journals.

### Activities

- 1) Ask students to answer the following question in their journals, "What might happen if the government owned the TV stations, Internet, radio stations and other media?"
- 2) Share their answers.
- 3) List the positives and negatives.
- 4) Tell the students that we are going to read about a country where this is the case. They have a communist government.
- 5) Pass out the Junior Scholastic article (attached) and ask the students to read it while looking for 1) ways that the people can participate and/or 2) ways that they are kept from participating.
- 6) After students have read, ask them to create a T-chart in their notebooks. Label one column Communism and one column Democracy.
- 7) Ask students to share participation/non-participation that they found for Communism and put this into their chart. (**government took over private factories/ farmers are told which crops to plant/ government controls tv, radio, internet, and media/ are not allowed demonstrate/ cannot elect their leaders, people can be imprisoned for protesting government/people pay little attention to new President/Students are provided an education/**)
- 8) After filling in the chart, challenge students to fill in the democracy side with ways that are similar or different than communism.
- 9) If desired, students can write a comparison/contrast paragraph using information in their chart. To wrap up the ideas, ask students to create a definition for communism in their own words. "**Under the economic and political system called Communism, all people are meant to enjoy an equal share of a country's property and wealth. In practice, however, most of the wealth and power in Communist countries has often ended up in the hands of the countries' leaders. Communism has been practiced in a number of countries around the world, including [China](#) and the former [Soviet Union](#).**" (Taken from Britannica Online.)

#### Assessment

- 1) Students will share their ideas during the classroom discussions.
- 2) Completed chart will show that students have filled in the correct information for each type of system.
- 3) On the final unit test, students will describe the ways that people participate (or are kept from participating) in a communist government.

#### Adjustments

Older students can investigate the results of communism in China. Using Internet research, students can see the link between the communist take-over and the poverty and famine that resulted.

# 中国

## China Looks to the Future

**China is in a race to become the world's second-largest economy.**

### Words to Know

- **collective farm:** a farm or group of farms managed and worked by a group of laborers, usually under the supervision of a Communist government.
- **referendum:** placing a decision before voters rather than deciding it through a legislative body.



A crowded street in Beijing, China's capital.

By Craig Simons in Beijing

**Z**hang Bochao (*jang bo-chow*), 13, lives with his parents in a two-bedroom apartment in Beijing, China's capital. Not far from his school is the Forbidden City, the imperial palace that was home to China's emperors from 1420 until the early 1900s.

Today, Beijing is a modern city with 13 million people. When Bochao walks to school, he passes stores selling brand-name clothes, toys, and electronics, most of them made in China. He also passes traditional restaurants that sell

steamed bread and fried dough.

At school, Bochao studies algebra, chemistry, English, history, music, physics, and physical education (PE). "I like PE best," he says.

That is probably because Bochao is almost six feet tall, much taller than his friends. Sometimes they call him Yao Ming, after the 7-foot 5-inch NBA All-Star who plays for the Houston Rockets.

### Life in the Village

Xie Nan (*shay nan*), 15, lives with her parents in Yingchengzi

(*ying-chung-zee*) Village, about 40 miles north of Beijing. Cornfields stretch almost to the family's apartment building. From her window, Nan can see a 400-year-old section of the Great Wall, which Chinese emperors built to keep invaders out.

On weekdays, Nan lives in Beijing. Last year, she took a test to determine which high school she would attend. Because she scored high, she was accepted at one of Beijing's top schools.

Back home, Nan used to ride her bicycle along a dirt road to school. Now she lives in a crowded dormitory room with seven other girls. They like to imagine what life was like in Beijing in the 19th century, when Chinese emperors lived nearby.



During the SARS epidemic, Bochao (left) was especially worried about his mother, who works as a nurse at a Beijing hospital.

The two characters on page 16 stand for "Central Kingdom," the name the Chinese gave to their country centuries ago.



A Chinese tourist on a deserted Tiananmen Square in Beijing last spring, at the height of the SARS epidemic.



More people live in China than any other country in the world.

### The SARS Scare

Like most Chinese, Nan and Bochao were alarmed by last year's outbreak of SARS—severe acute respiratory syndrome. By the time China's government spoke openly about SARS, the disease had spread from China to some 30 other countries, killing 800 people worldwide.

People in China were so frightened they stopped going out to eat. "We didn't know how the disease spread," explains Bochao.

In the spring, schools in Beijing began a two-month vacation to protect students from SARS. Bochao watched his lessons at home on TV.

### Communist Rule

The Communist Party has ruled China since 1949. For years, Mao Zedong (*maow zeh-dawng*), who led the Communist struggle for power, kept tight control over everything, including the economy.

Farmers had to join large **collective farms** and were told what crops to plant. The government took over private factories.

Such measures were intended to create a society in which all people were equal. But instead, poverty and famine resulted.

After Mao's death in 1976, China's leaders began to open the economy to the West. U.S. and European companies moved their factories to China to take advantage of cheap labor. That trend continues today. Many U.S. companies are now hiring Chinese software programmers, engineers, and others for jobs once done by Americans.

Despite increasing openness after the SARS epidemic, China's leaders still refuse to change the political system. The Chinese government controls TV, radio, the Internet, and other media. Recently, several peaceful labor demonstrations were crushed, their leaders imprisoned.

Citizens cannot even elect their national leaders or protest government decisions. So when Hu Jintao (*hoo jihn-taow*) became China's President last year, people paid little attention.

### Keeping the Peace

U.S. officials sometimes criticize China for not allowing more freedom. But they are careful not

"That's a good way to have class," he says, smiling.

Why did the government wait so long to warn the Chinese about SARS? Many people think China's leaders feared that widespread panic would cause an economic slowdown.

Since the 1980s, China's economy has grown faster than that of any other large nation. Billions of dollars are invested each year in new skyscrapers, highways, airports, and other projects.

China is now in a race with Japan to have the world's second-largest economy. China will win this contest, experts say, in less than two decades.



The ancient Chinese invented paper and gunpowder.