

Asian Language & Culture Awareness

Chinese Language & Culture



*New York State Asian Languages Bilingual/ESL
Technical Assistance Center
(ALBETAC)*

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CHINESE

The areas where Chinese is recognized as an official language include China (Mainland China), the Republic of China (Taiwan), Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China and the Republic of Singapore. China, Taiwan and Hong Kong are located in eastern Asia, while Singapore is located in southeastern Asia.

Please see the following chart for information on these areas.



FACTS ON CHINA, TAIWAN, HONG KONG AND SINGAPORE (from the CIA World Factbook https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)				
	China	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Singapore
Area	9,596,960 sq. km.	1,092 sq. km.	35,980 sq. km.	692.7 sq. km.
Population	1,338,612,968 (July 2009 est.)	7,055,071 (July 2009 est.)	22,974,347 (July 2009 est.)	4,657,542 (July 2009 est.)
Capital	Beijing		Taipei	Singapore
Chief of State	Hu Jin Tao, President	Hu Jin Tao, President	Ma Ying-Jeou, President	Sellapan Ramanathan, President
Government	Communist State	Limited Democracy	Multiparty Democracy	Parliamentary Republic
Exchange Rate	6.9 Renmibi = 1 U.S. Dollar (2010 est.)	7.7 Hong Kong Dollars = 1 U.S. Dollar (2010 est.)	32 New Taiwan Dollars = 1 U.S. Dollar (2010 est.)	1.3 Singapore Dollars = 1 U.S. Dollar (2010 est.)
GDP* (per capita)	\$6,000 (2008 est.)	\$43,800 (2008 est.)	\$31,900 (2008 est.)	\$52,000 (2008 est.)
Flag				

* Gross Domestic Product



China



Hong Kong



Taiwan



Singapore

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EDUCATION

Education in China is a state-run system of public education overseen by the Ministry of Education. Private schools are not common and are often “international schools” offered to the children of diplomats or businessmen in China. The most prestigious universities and high schools are all public schools. Receiving a good education is perhaps viewed as the most viable means to change lives and social status to the Chinese youngsters and their parents. Entering a good high school or a college requires high scores in the “joint entrance examination,” given only once a year by the government. These examinations are an accumulative test at the end of 9th grade for high school admission and the end of 12th grade for college admission. In 2010, about 9.57 million high school graduates in China attended the national college entrance examination in June. A similar entrance examination is given in Taiwan and Hong Kong by their local governments. Because the stake of the examinations is extremely high, a lot of money and energy are invested in studying and test preparation.

Note to Teachers: Chinese parents may think that their children would need to take a uniform annual entrance exam” to get into a college. It is suggested that the multiple pathways to college (including both 4-year and 2-year colleges) be explained to them. Parents also need to know that their children’s school report cards are as important as the SAT exam, which is given multiple times a year.

Confucius (551-479 BC) is considered the greatest sage and teacher (至圣先师) in the Chinese



A ceremony to pay respect to Confucius is conducted in the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in New York City Chinatown.

culture. His teaching was organized into “The Analects of Confucius,” and has influenced how the Chinese view relationships, politics, and education greatly. His philosophy is followed and practiced by many Chinese as Confucianism, sometimes considered as a religion by some scholars. As an educator, he opened doors for teaching to all civilians who wished to learn (有教无类), a bold idea to the society dominated by the elite and nobility 2,500 years ago. He spoke about teaching of a well-rounded curriculum including various subjects such as math, arts, archery and ethics.

Chinese people honor educators on Teacher’s Day in September to remember Confucius. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1977), Confucius and Confucianism were banned;

temples that worshiped Confucius were destroyed. However, Confucius is gaining his popularity in recent years. The Chinese government sponsored Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) names its globally situated posts to promote the Chinese language and culture “Confucius Institutes” can be viewed as an important sign of how China values Confucianism today and is giving it a new life.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY RATES IN AREAS IN ASIA WHERE CHINESE IS SPOKEN				
Country	Years of Compulsory Schooling	Literacy Rate 15 and over can read and write in these countries)* (Age		
		Total %	Male	Female
China	9 years	90.9%	95.1%	86.5% (2000 Census)
Hong Kong	9 years	93.5%	96.9%	89.6% (2002)
Taiwan	9 years	96.1%	-	-
Singapore	6 years	92.5%	96.6%	88.6% (2000 Census)

**Statistics for Hong Kong indicate those age 15 and over who have ever attended school.*

Sources:

- Statistics for the Literacy Rates are from the CIA's *The World Factbook*.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html>
- Statistics for Compulsory Education are from the following:
Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (for China and Hong Kong)
http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/en/basic_b.htm
Ministry of Education - Republic of China (Taiwan)
<http://english.moe.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=153&CtNode=499&mp=1>
Ministry of Education- Singapore
<http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/primary/>

Factoid: Students attend school five and a half days a week, usually for seven hours Mondays through Fridays. The two-semester school year consists of nine and a half months. The school year begins in September with a summer vacation during the months of July and August. Winter vacation takes place in the month of January or February scheduled around Chinese Lunar New Year.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- ***Chinese Speaking Population in the USA, NYS and NYC***

- ❖ **Facts and Figures**

Factoid:

According to the 2008-2009 NYC BESIS, there are 17,068 English Language Learners (ELLs) whose native language is Chinese. These students comprise 11.4% of New York City's total ELL population of 149,255 students. ²*

** Bilingual Education Student Information Survey*

CHINESE SPEAKING POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND NEW YORK STATE ¹	
	<i>Number of people, five years and older, who speak Chinese at home</i>
United States	2,455,583
New York State	454,479

Sources

1 U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

2 The 2008-2009 Demographics of New York City's English Language Learners, The Chief Achievement Office-Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners, New York City Department of Education, Fall 2009

Factoid: *The Borough of Queens has the largest Chinese population in New York City. However, there are more Chinese speaking recent immigrants residing in Brooklyn.*

Note to Teachers: *Chinese parents get involved with the education of their children by supervising their children to do homework and study for tests. To many parents, a visit to the school usually means that their children are in trouble. Their trust in public education and perhaps lack of English language proficiency very often hold them back from communicating with schools. In addition, many of the recent immigrant parents work long hours just to make their ends meet. Schools can help Chinese parents learn how to be involved in various school activities to support their children. Providing translation at the PTA and for school important notices will be helpful.*

- **NYC Chinatowns**

- ❖ **Manhattan Chinatown**



Established in the 1890s, Manhattan Chinatown is comprised of dozens of small streets along Canal Street.

Cheap souvenirs as well as pricy jewelry can both be found in this ethnic neighborhood. Many non-profit organizations such as Chinese schools, organizations of immigrants by their last names and hometowns still play an important role in helping the Chinese immigrants settle in NYC. Manhattan Chinatown used to be an area where Cantonese was the dominate language. However, with the influx of recent



immigrants from China, Mandarin has gained its popularity as well. Many Chinese

Note to Teachers: [Museum of Chinese in America](#) (MOCA) not only features the exhibition of American Chinese history in its gallery, but also offers walking tours in Manhattan Chinatown.

schools now choose to teach Mandarin instead of Cantonese. In addition to providing services to the local and neighboring Chinese immigrants, Manhattan Chinatown also handles a lot of tourism business, which is a distinct difference from Flushing and Brooklyn Chinatowns.

- ❖ **Brooklyn Chinatown**



In the 1980s, the real estate prices became very high in Manhattan Chinatown and the Flushing area. With some clothing factories moving into Brooklyn, Sunset Park along 8th Avenue soon became a gathering and business transaction center for the new Chinese immigrants. Today the Sunset Park Chinatown is centered on 8th Ave and 59th Street and expanding outwards to the blocks along 7th Ave. In Chinese, the word “eight” (pronounced as “ba”) sounds like word for “prosperity,” and 8th Avenue” can be interpreted as “Road of Prosperity.”

Public schools in this neighborhood are populated with Chinese immigrant children who need ESL and bilingual education services.

❖ **Flushing Chinatown**

Flushing Chinatown started in the late 1970s with a few grocery stores and Chinese restaurants along Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue. Today this area of about 20 blocks around the last stop of # 7 train has at least 20 banks and is filled with

Chinese stores, selling merchandise from bubble tea, Chinese books, to electronics. Karaoke as well as dance studios are popular pastimes for the Chinese here. And like Manhattan Chinatown, travel agencies arrange for daily buses to Atlantic City and Foxwoods casinos. Another interesting line of service here is the omnipresent “learning centers” or “cram schools” featuring classes of

musical instruments, early childhood gifted and talented, advanced math and English, specialized high school preparation, SAT, and college application, evidence of how Chinese view education – hard work and test prep.



The following chart provides some useful phrases in Chinese that will help create a welcoming and supportive environment for your Chinese English language learners.

USEFUL PHRASES FOR THE CLASSROOM: CHINESE

English	Pronunciation	Chinese (Writing)
Hello!	Nǐ hǎo	你好!
My name is ...	Wǒ de míng zi shì.....	我的名字是...
What is your name?	Nǐ jiào shì me míng zi?	你叫什么名字?
How are you?	Nǐ hǎo ma?	你好吗?
Fine. (answer to "How are you?")	Wǒ hěn hǎo.	我很好。
Thank you.	Xiè Xiè	谢谢!
You're welcome. (answer to "thank you")	Bú kè qì	不客气。
Welcome. (as a greeting)	Huān Yíng	欢迎!
Good-bye.	Zài Jiàn	再见!
Please sit down.	Qǐng Zuò xià.	请坐下。
Please stand up.	Qǐng Zhàn qǐ lái.	请站起来!
Let's begin.	Kai shǐ Ba	开始吧。
Good.	Hǎo	好。
Very good.	Hěn hǎo.	很好。
Try again.	Zài shì yì cì	再试一次。
This is the homework.	Zhè Shì gōng kè	这是功课。
Please open your book.	Qǐng dǎ kai shū.	请打开书。
Do you understand?	Dǒng bù dǒng?	懂不懂?

CHINESE LANGUAGE

The Chinese language is considered as a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family, which includes languages such as Burmese and Tibetan. The basic sentence structure follows the subject-verb-object (SVO) order. There are hardly any morphological changes. For example, there is no subject-verb agreement, nor grammatical distinction between singular and plural forms. The time is indicated by the adverbial phrases while the form of the verb stays unchanged. There are some vocabulary words in English that are “borrowed” from Chinese, mostly related to food. These words include tea, dim-sum (Cantonese style appetizers), lo-mein (stir-fried noodles), lychee and kumquat (fruits). Examples of some other popular English words borrowed from Chinese are: feng-shui (Chinese geomancy), kung-fu, taichi, silk, and typhoon.

Factoid: Chinese is the most widely spoken tonal language. By using a different tone for one word, the meaning of that word can be dramatically changed. There are four (4) tones in Mandarin Chinese. If you think this is tricky, try Cantonese and Taiwanese, which have more than six (6) tones.

- ***The Dialects***

China is an immense country with a rich linguistic heritage. Depending on where the Chinese people live, they use different “dialects” as their mother tongues of communication. It is believed that there are more than 100 dialects spoken in China which vary from region to region. In fact, some of the dialects are so linguistically different that they are considered different languages. For example, a monolingual Mandarin speaker will not be able to understand Cantonese, Shanghainese, or Taiwanese, and vice versa. Mandarin Chinese (Pu Tong Hua or Guo Yu, the national language) is designated as the official dialect of the country. While speaking a home dialect and learning Mandarin in schools, many Chinese become bilingual or trilingual.

Note to Teachers: The most common dialects spoken by the families of Chinese immigrants in New York include Cantonese, Fukianese, Shanghainese, and Taiwanese.

Note to Teachers: Sounds in English that are more challenging for a native Chinese speaker to pronounce include “v”, “z”, short vowel “i”, and “e”. Because Chinese is a mono-syllable language, speakers of Chinese also tend to add vowels to the English blends and final consonants when speaking English. For example, “st” “bl”, “fl” may sound like “soot”, “bal” and “fala” and “beef”, “pipe” may sound like “beefu” and “paipoo”. This happens more often with adult English learners whose pronunciation may be “fossilized.”

- ***The Chinese Writing System***

The Chinese written language is pictograph based. Although there may be many different dialects spoken in China where people cannot communicate with each other if they do not speak the same dialect, the written language is the same regardless of what dialects they speak. Current Chinese written language was unified by Qing Shi Huang, the Emperor from Qin Dynasty (in 221 B.C.) There are two written formats: simplified characters which are common in Mainland China and Singapore, and traditional characters which are common in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Chinese immigrant communities in United States, Canada and Europe.

The earliest known examples of Chinese written characters in their developed form were carved into tortoise shells and ox bones. The majority of these characters are pictographs. However, unlike other writing systems which eventually developed a phonetic alphabet to represent the sounds of their spoken languages, Chinese is the only major writing system of the world that continued its pictographic-based development without interruption. Not all Chinese characters are impressionistic sketches of concrete objects. Some Chinese characters incorporated meanings and sound as well as visual image into a coherent whole.

“Characters” or “Hanzi” are used to indicate the meaning, and sometimes with a hint of pronunciation. Chinese written language does not have an alphabetical system, but to help people pronounce the characters correctly. The Chinese government created the “Pinyin” system, which

utilized the Roman alphabet to help people pronounce each character. Although

Note to Teachers: Because Chinese writing is character-based, its writing “directionality” is very flexible and sometimes creates confusion. Some store signs can be read from either left or right. Ancient literature based materials were recorded as written top down in vertical lines and from right to left. With the influence of western culture, many books, particularly books printed in China, are shown from left to right in horizontal lines as well.

Pinyin is used to sound out the Chinese characters, it is only a transitional tool used to help to develop oral proficiency, hence NOT considered as a Chinese writing system.

One notable feature of Chinese characters is the “radical.” “Radical” in English means “roots,” but in Chinese, the “radical” of a character is more like a general classification of the referent of a character. Some radicals can be considered as

Note to Teachers: Chinese literacy instruction should focus on teaching the “radicals.” It is recommended that students be exposed to the characters or Hanzi from the very beginning.

“morphemes” bearing semantic meanings. If you know the radical of a character, you can very often get a general idea of the meaning of that character of which the radical is a part. Although there are a total of almost 50,000 written Chinese characters, only about 5,000 of them are frequently used.

Chinese characters (Hanzi) are also used in Japan as Kanji and in Korea as Hanja, especially in names and calligraphy. Chinese character writing has evolved over the years and has developed several calligraphy styles.

Oracle Bone Script	Seal Script	Clerical Script	Semi-Cursive Script	Cursive Script	Regular Script (Traditional)	Regular Script (Simplified)	Pinyin	Meaning
						—	rì	Sun
						—	yuè	Moon
						—	shān	Mountain
						—	shuǐ	Water
						—	yǔ	Rain
						—	mù	Wood
						—	rén	Human
						—	nǚ	Woman
							mǎ	Horse
							niǎo	Bird

Chinese character. (2008, November 21). *New World Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 16:23, August 4, 2010 from http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Chinese_character?oldid=860660.

For more information on the Chinese Language, you may visit the following website:

<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/chinese.htm#intro> Omniglot: Writing Systems and Languages of the World

- **Having Fun with Chinese Homophones**

Many people are aware that the different Chinese tones can mark significant differences in semantics. In fact, even with the same tones, a sound can generate many different meanings. For example, the pronunciation of “yi” has about 20 corresponding Chinese characters with the first tone, 40 with the second tone, 20 with the third tone, and 90 with the fourth tone. These “homophones” can sometimes cause confusions. (An example in English can be “to,” “too,” and “two.”) Relying on the tones alone is not enough to tell one word apart from another. Chinese speakers rely heavily on the context and the writing to differentiate the meanings. While English speakers provide spelling for clarification, Chinese speakers describe the “components” or “radical” that make up the writing of the word and provide an example of the context of how the word is used for clarification. For example, when introducing his last name, Mr. Zhang may provide an explanation of his last name: 张, combined by two parts 弓 and 长 or a homophone 章, combined by two different parts 立 and 早. He can also provide a referent: a famous historical figure who has the same name 张飞的张 or a movie star 章子怡的章. In short, using contextual clues and writing referents is crucial in differentiate the numerous Chinese homophones.

Homophones or words of similar sounds are often applied in the use of “superstitions.” For example, number 4 is an unlucky number because it sounds like “death” and number 8, on the other hand, is a lucky number because it resembles the sound of “prosperity”. Here are some commonly used homophone pairs.

Examples of common pairs of homophones (or like sounds)					
Sounds	Writing	Meaning	Sounds	Writing	Meaning
si	四	4	si	死	death
ba	八	8	fa	发	prosperity
(bian) fu	(蝙蝠)	bat	fu	福	fortune
yu	鱼	fish	yu	余	abundance
Jie	桔	tangerine	ji	吉	luck
Sheng cai	生菜	iceberg lettuce	Sheng cai	生财	Grow wealth
Ping (guo)	苹(果)	apple	Ping (an)	平(安)	Peace

Factoid: Fish, apples, tangerines, lettuce are popular food particularly around Chinese New Year’s time. Posters or paper cutting of bats can be observed for decorations. Can you tell the rationale behind these cultural practices?

(See the chart above for clues.)

CHINESE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK

• *Bilingual Programs*

There are two types of bilingual programs currently implemented in New York City: transitional bilingual programs and dual language programs. Both have achieved academic success. As its name suggests, the transitional bilingual program helps new immigrant students transition into mainstream classes. Once the students gain English proficiency, they will leave the bilingual program and be placed in classes where English is the only medium of instruction. On the other hand, the dual language program students are committed to the attainment of dual literacy, regardless of their entitlement to the English As a Second Language(ESL) mandated services.

Transitional Bilingual Programs

Transitional programs provide the following components:

- *native language arts,*
- *content area instruction in the students' native language and English, and*
- *intensive instruction in English as a Second language.*

As the students develop proficiency in English, using the strengthened knowledge and academic skills acquired in the native language, instruction in English increases while instruction in the native language decreases.

Example: [PS 105](#) in Brooklyn now has a population of over 1,700 students, with 86% Chinese and at least half of them are English language learners (ELLs). The school meets the needs of these students by hiring bilingual staff and developing literacy in both languages.

Dual Language Programs

Dual Language programs are bilingual programs that provide half of the instruction in English and half of the instruction in the native language of the English language learners participating in the program.

Students of the native language are taught alongside English-speaking students so that all students become bicultural and literate in both languages.

Language arts and content area instruction are provided through specific instructional strategies intended to support language development and learning across the curriculum.

Example: [High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies](#) in lower Manhattan is a small high school with about 350 students, 40% of whom are identified as ELLs. The school provides mandated ESL instruction to ELLs and 2 periods of intensive Chinese language instruction to the non-Chinese speaking students. Content area classes are taught in both languages following the school's Language Allocation Policy (LAP).

For more information on Chinese Bilingual Programs in New York City, you may visit ALBETAC– [New York City Schools with Chinese Bilingual Programs](#)

- ***Chinese Foreign Language Programs in New York***

Chinese language programs have flourished within recent years around the United States. According to a [2008 national survey](#) conducted by The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), although still low, the Chinese language offering in K-12 schools has gone up within the past 10 years from 0.3% to 3% at elementary school level and from 1% to 4% at the secondary school level. (At the same time, the percentage of programs offered in French, German, Russian and Japanese has a significant decline.) In New York State, the Chinese language programs now attract both heritage language learners as well as learners from various cultural backgrounds. For example, [Medgar Evers College Preparatory Schools](#) in Brooklyn has a Chinese language program where 400 grades 6-12 students, mostly African Americans, study Chinese on a daily basis. The school has recently received a [Confucius Classroom grant](#) to enrich its Chinese language program. (Another Confucius Classroom grant recipient in New York State is [Herricks School District](#).)

Note to Teachers: *Chinese Language Teacher Association – Greater New York (CLTA-GNY) is a professional organization servicing educators interested in the teaching and learning of Chinese. Members of the organization receive information of news related to teaching Chinese, job opportunities and can join in on-line professional discussions.*

Resources in New York area for the Chinese language professionals include:

[Asia Society](#),
[Asian Languages Bilingual ESL/Technical Assistance Center](#) (ALBETAC),
[China Institute/Confucius Institute at China Institute](#),
[Chinese language Teacher Association – Greater New York](#) (CLTA-GNY),
[Confucius Institute at Pace University](#)
[Museum of Chinese in America](#)

CULTURE

- ***Religions***

The religions practiced in China include Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. Some interesting facts about these religions are:

- Buddhism spread from India to China about 2000 years ago. The majority of Buddhists in China practice Mahayana Buddhism, which is also practiced in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. However, Hinayana Buddhism, which is practiced in Burma and Thailand, is also practiced by some ethnic minorities in southwest China.



A temple in Flushing, Queens

- Daoism is a religion that is native to China. The origins of Daoism date back to the fifth century B.C., and are based on the writings of Lao Zi, author of *Dao De Jing (The Way and Its Power)*. Daoism teaches that Dao (the way or the path) is the origin of all creation and the force behind the functioning of the natural world. Another Daoist concept, *wu-wei*, literally means “taking no action”, or following the natural way of things. These concepts together, provide the basis for a spiritual approach to living. In following the natural way of things, human life could flourish and people could experience, in their own lives, the harmony and order found in nature.
- Islam was introduced into China 1,300 years ago. Currently, there are ten national minorities who follow the Islamic faith. Most of the followers of Islam live in the provinces of Xinjiang, Ningxia, Ganxu and Qinghai in northwestern part of China.
- Catholicism was introduced into China in the seventh century. However, it did not take root and spread in China until after the Sino-British Opium War in 1840. Currently, there are approximately four million Catholics in China.
- Protestantism was first brought to China in the early nineteenth century. Like Catholicism, it did not spread until after the Opium War in 1840. There are approximately ten million followers of the Protestant religion in China today.

Factoid: Many Chinese are not religious. However, they will practice the rituals of worshiping ancestors, a long-lasting tradition derived from Confucius, which is considered as a religion by some scholars.

For more information on religion in China, you may visit the following websites:

<http://www.asiasociety.org/countries-history/religions-philosophies/chinese-belief-systems>

Chinese Belief Systems: From Past to Present and Present to Past

<http://www.asiasociety.org/countries-history/religions-philosophies/buddhism-china>

Buddhism in China

<http://www.asiasociety.org/countries-history/religions-philosophies/origins-buddhism>

The Origins of Buddhism

<http://www.asiasociety.org/countries-history/religions-philosophies/origins-buddhism?page=0%2C1>

The Origins of Buddhism (continued)

<http://www.asiasociety.org/countries-history/religions-philosophies/daoism>

Daoism: The Way

<http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/zjxy/t36492.htm>

White Paper-Freedom of Religious Belief in China

http://www.china.org.cn/china/2010-05/31/content_20152011.htm

A Catholic Church in Tibet

• **Family**

Although the structure of the traditional family has changed in China, some aspects of family life remain the same. The Chinese people value family and kinship. It is important to note that religion played a major role in family life and dictated how family members should treat one another as well as the roles, responsibilities and expectations for each family member.

Some interesting features about Chinese families are:

- In the past, the Chinese maintained strong family ties, with three or four generations usually living on the same family estate.

- The family unit has become smaller. There are more nuclear families nowadays than multi-generation families. However, you may still find three generations (grandparents, parents and child) living together.
- In the Chinese language, generations and relations are indicated by distinguished words of kinship.
- Many families maintain a family record going back hundreds of years.
- Roles and responsibilities are changing and evolving. Previously, the father was head of the family, the provider and the decision maker, while the mother's role was to care for the home and family. Now that women have equal opportunity for education and have joined the workforce as well, couples are working together and sharing family roles and responsibilities that were once unique to a particular family member.
- The Chinese government implemented the one-child policy in 1978 to slow down the population growth, which is associated with social, economic, and environmental problems. Many families now have only single child who gets all the attention and at the same time assumes all the responsibilities to take care of their parents.

Note to Teachers: Because the male carries the family name, some Chinese still favor boys to girls. In some schools with large new immigrant population, there are often more boys than girls. Chinese infants adopted by American families are generally girls.

For more information on Chinese families, you may visit the following websites:

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/2003/Jul/70037.htm>

Nuclear Families in Decline in Chinese Cities

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/Life/87295.htm>

Family Ties Maintained in Alienating Modern Society

- ***Customs and Manners***

Confucius (circa 551-479 BC) taught that everyone in a family must behave properly toward one another. In his teachings, he emphasized that if children obeyed and respected their parents, then as adults, they would respect authority. This, in turn, allows the whole country to be harmonious and at peace. The virtue of respect is one of the most important rules of behavior in Chinese culture.

- The one most important aspect of Chinese manners is to show respect. In addition to saying “please”, “thank you” and “excuse me” in their daily lives, Chinese people were taught to respect and obey their elders.
- It is customary to use both hands when giving or receiving an item. An older person can use one hand when giving an item to a child; however, a child should never give or accept an item from an elder using only one hand.
- Every member of the family is clearly identified by his or her title in Chinese. A title clearly identifies the position of the relatives, as well as their relations between maternal or paternal heritage. This is not the same in the United States. For example, the word “brother” in English could mean either older or younger brother, and the title “grandmother” does not indicate whether the grandmother is from the father's side or the mother's side. In Chinese, the older brother is called “ge ge” and the younger brother is called “dì dì.” If one has more than two older brothers, they are identified by numbers, as second older brother, or third older brother, etc.

- Aunts, uncles, and cousins are also identified by their titles, which indicate their order (whether older or younger) and lineage (whether from father's side or mother's side.)

• **Cultural Dos and Don'ts**

❖ **Do ...**

- ...greet the oldest person first using a formal greeting.
- ...address the person by an honorific title and their surname. If they want to move to a first-name basis, they will let you know which name to use.¹
- ...receive and give things with two hands. It is considered rude and disrespectful to give and receive things with only one hand. Also, when receiving something, always say, “xiè xiè” (thank you) at the same time to show your gratitude.
- ...look down to show respect; never look your elders or persons of authority in the eye.
- ...greet and welcome someone by asking if they have eaten. Say, “Nǐ hǎo.” (a common phrase for saying hello) followed by “Nǐ chī guò le ma?” (Have you eaten?). This is common practice in China.
- ...wait to be told where to sit. The guest of honor will be given a seat facing the door.
- ...try every food that is offered to you at dinner. Hold the rice bowl close to your mouth when eating and learn to use chopsticks.

❖ **Don't ...**

- ...initiate hugs and kisses when greeting someone. Bowing or shaking hands are considered more acceptable gestures when greeting.
- ...wear your shoes into someone's house. Take off your shoes when you enter the house unless you are told otherwise.
- ...accept a gift right away, but do not refuse to accept the gift. Always say, “Thank you.” and “It is not necessary.”, but accept the gift anyway. It is considered impolite to refuse someone's gift. In addition, refusing the gift may hurt your relationship with the giver.
- ...open a gift immediately after receiving it. The gift should be put aside and opened after the giver has left.
- ...stand up and reach across the dinner table to pick up food as it is considered rude to do so.
- ...take food from a new dish brought to the table before the eldest person has been served. In addition, youngsters may not take food from the dish unless the elder has taken from the dish first.
- ...pick only certain foods from a dish. Chinese cuisine usually consists of different ingredients cut into small pieces and mixed together. When picking up food, pick up whatever you can. Do not select only certain ingredients from a dish.

Note to Teachers: Some Chinese parents may have “nervousness or embarrassment laughs” when told their children are not doing well in school. It is not a sign of disrespect. You may feel uncomfortable if the parents start reprimanding the children in front of you. Consider this as their honoring your opinion and willing to take responsibilities to discipline their children. You may want to suggest a few ways how they can work with their children “the American way.”

For more information on Chinese customs and manners, you may visit the following website:
[Chinese Etiquette](#)

• *Calendar*

In China, the Gregorian calendar is used for civil and business purposes. However the Chinese calendar (Lunar Calendar) is used to determine festivals and holidays. Some interesting facts about the Chinese calendar are:

- The Chinese calendar is based on the exact astronomical observations of the sun and the phases of the moon.
- According to the Chinese calendar, an ordinary year has 12 months, while a leap year consists of 13 months.
- The number of days in a year also differs. A regular year can have 353, 354, or 355 days, while a leap year can have 383, 384 or 385 days.

For more information on the Chinese calendar, you may visit the following websites:

[*Calendars through the Ages: The Chinese Calendar*](#)
[*Celebrating the New Year in Asia*](#)

• *Holidays /Festivals*

Chinese people celebrate both traditional holidays and holidays that have a more modern meaning. National Day celebrates the birth of the new nation; Labor Day, Women's Day and Children's Day recognize different groups of citizens. Influenced by the Western culture, (Western) New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, and Christmas have become popular in the Chinese speaking world.

Traditional Chinese festivals are important events in the life of every Chinese. Festivals such as the Chinese New Year, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival are key traditional festivals. The common elements of all Chinese festivals include family reunions and the expression of a desire for happiness, good fortune and well being. Festivals also give family members the chance to get together, relax and rest.

HOLIDAY	DATE CELEBRATED			SIGNIFICANCE
		2010	2011	
Chinese New Year	Begins on the 10 th day of the new moon (may fall anywhere between January and March)	Feb. 3	Jan. 23	Celebrates beginning of the lunar new year
Dragon Boat Festival	Falls on the 5 th day of the 5 th lunar month	June 6	June 23	Commemorates the date the ancient patriot-poet, Qiū Yuén, hurled himself into the Miluo River out of despair over the future of his country
Mid Autumn Moon Festival	Falls on the 15 th day of the 8 th lunar month	Sept. 12	Sept. 30	Celebrates the harvest and honors the moon goddess

Factoid: Other important dates (mostly on Lunar Calendar) when traditional rituals are observed include:

- January 15, Lantern Festival
- April 5, Tomb Sweeping Day
- July 7, Chinese Valentine's Day
- July 15, Ghost Festival



Dragon Boat rowing competition, originated from a popular activity on Dragon Boat Festival is now a big annual event in Queens, New York.

• Surnames

Chinese names are comprised of both the family name and the given name. Unlike western names, in which the given name is written first and the family name last, the Chinese put the family name first, followed by the given name. For example, Yao Ming's family name is Yao and his given name is Ming. Most family names have one character, while most given names have two characters. However, the trend for the past twenty years has been that more and more parents are giving their children names consisting of one character. According to a 2006 survey, the followings are the most common Chinese surnames: Li, Wang, Zhang, Liu, Chen, Yang, Huang, Zhao, Zhu, Wu, Xu, Sun, Zhu, Ma, Hu, Gao, Lin, he, Gao, Liang. The above names are also popular in Korea and Vietnam.

For more information on Chinese names, please visit the following websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_common_Chinese_surnames

List of Common Chinese Surnames: 2006 Rankings

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_given_name

Chinese Given Name

• Cuisine

Chinese cuisine differs according to region. There are basically two styles of cooking, Northern and Southern. In general, Northern dishes are flavored with garlic and vinegar. Pasta also plays an important role in Northern cooking; noodles, dumplings, steamed stuffed buns, fried meat dumplings and steamed bread are favored flour-based treats. Beijing, Shandong, and Tienjing are the best known for their particular styles of Northern Chinese cuisine.

Szechwan and Hunan cuisine, which is hot and spicy due to the liberal use of chili peppers, is representative of the Southern style of cooking. Cantonese food, which is most commonly available in Chinatowns throughout the United States, tends to be somewhat sweet and full of variety. Rice and rice products, such as rice noodles, rice cakes, and rice congee, are the usual side dish accompanying the Southern style dishes.

In Chinese cooking, color (色), aroma (香), and flavor (味) share equal importance in the preparation of each dish. Usually a dish is prepared with contrasting colors and various seasonings and sauces. The use of appropriate cooking methods results in an attractive dish.

New York State Asian Language Bilingual ESL Technical Assistance Center (ALBETAC) 2010

For more information on Chinese cuisine, you may visit the following websites:

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/articles/article/China/Chinese-Food-Culture/1777>

Chinese Food-Culture: Interested in knowing about the culture that surrounds Chinese food? Get an insight into the Chinese way of cooking.

http://www.chinatownconnection.com/chinese_style_cooking.htm

Chinese Cooking

FACTS OF INTEREST

- ***Did you know that ...***

- The modern form of paper was invented in the second century A.D. Chinese people pounded ingredients, such as tree bark, hemp, old rags and fishing net into pulp, added water to the pulp and poured a thin layer onto a bamboo mat. When it dried up, it became a sturdy, lightweight piece of paper. It was believed to be invented by a Chinese scholar called Tsai Lun around AD 705.
- The modern compass, as used by sailors and pilots to navigate, has its roots in China in 4th century B.C. The compass was originally used in Fen Shui by Taoists looking for the best location and site for building a tomb. Later, in the 11th century, it was used to guide ships.
- The Chinese learned to make “fire trees” and “flame flowers” as early as the 17th century A.D. It was the origin of the fire cracker or firework. A Chinese monk named Li Tian, who lived near the city of Liu Yang in Hunan Province, is credited with the invention of firecrackers about 1,000 years ago. The Chinese people celebrate the invention of the firecracker every April 18th by offering sacrifices to Li Tian. Four hundred years after Li Tian discovered the firecracker, Marco Polo brought the black gunpowder back to Europe in the 13th century. Once in Europe, the black powder was used for military purposes, first in rockets, then in canons and guns.
- The methods for making silk were perfected in China. Chinese legend gives the title *Goddess of Silk* to Lady Hsi-Ling-Shih, wife of the mythical Yellow Emperor, who was said to have ruled China in about 3000 BC. She is credited with the introduction of silkworm rearing and the invention of the loom. Hungry worms are fed fresh mulberry leaves. Glands in the worm’s body make strong silk fiber, and produce the most luxurious smooth satin fabric in the world.
- The abacus, as a counting device, was created around the time of the Eastern Han Dynasty (120 CE). It is a counting device with wooden beads on rods. A person can use it to add, subtract, multiply and divide in high speed, similar to a calculator in modern days.
- The Chinese invented printing by spreading ink on carved wooden blocks, then pressing the blocks onto paper. The pattern of the block showed up in ink on the paper, and the block could be used repeatedly. This is the process of printing. The Ancient Chinese first used printing to print prayers, and then eventually used it in printing books.

- Fortune cookies and some Chinese dishes, such as Chop Suey may be popular in the United States, but they are absent in the restaurants in China. There are approximately 3 billion fortune cookies made each year around the world; most of them are consumed in the US.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

- ***Chinese Literature in English Translation***

- *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*-
Written by Luo Guanzhong, ca 1330-ca 1400
Translated by C. H. Brewitt-Taylor
Charles E. Tuttle Co., 2002
- *The Journey to the West*
Written by Wu Ch'eng-en, ca 1500-ca 1582
Translated by Anthony Yu
University of Chicago Press, 1980
- [*Renditions: A Chinese English Translation Magazine*](#)
Renditions is an international journal of Chinese literature translated to English. The literature included represents all genres of Chinese literature and covers 2000 years of writing, ranging from classical to recently published works.

- ***Chinese Wisdom – Proverbs and Sayings***

- 滴水之恩，当以涌泉相报
Literally: A drop of water shall be returned with a burst of spring.
Meaning: Even if it was just a little help from others, you should return the favor with all you can when others are in need.
- 福无双至，祸不单行
Literally: A person is blessed once, but his troubles never come alone.
Meaning: There are never enough blessings, but there are too many troubles.
- 冰冻三尺，非一日之寒
Literally: A single day of sub-zero temperature is not enough to create 3 feet of ice.
Moral: Great things cannot be accomplished in a short period of time.
Compare: *Rome was not built in a day* (Roma non fu fatta in un giorno, [Italian](#) proverb).
- 路遥知马力，日久见人心
Literally: Over a long distance, you learn about the strength of your horse; over a long period of time, you get to know what's in a person's heart.
Moral: Character can be revealed by time.
Usage: This can be used positively to praise a true friend; or negatively to criticize friends that could not stand the test.
- 世上无难事，只怕有心人
Literally: You must persevere to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks.

Moral: Everything can be done with enough perseverance.

Equivalent English Saying: Where there's a will, there's a way.

➤ 水能载舟, 亦能覆舟

Literally: Water can be used to make a boat float as well as sinking a boat.

Moral: The people (water) can raise someone (boat) to power, but can also take it away (sink).

Equivalent English Saying: The knife cuts both ways.

For more Chinese wisdom, you may visit the following websites:

<http://www.wisdomportal.com/Enlightenment/Wisdom-Chinese.html>

Chinese Wisdom for Contemplation

<http://www.wisdomportal.com/Enlightenment/ChuangTzuCook.html>

Wisdom Stories for Enlightenment

• **Famous Quotes**

By Laozi

➤ 千里之行, 始于足下 (qiān lǐ zhī xíng, shǐ yú zú xià) -- [Tao Te Ching](#)

Literally: A journey of a thousand miles began with a single step.

Meaning: The longest journey begins with a single step.

Variant: Even the longest journey must start from where you stand.

By Confucius

➤ 知錯能改, 善莫大焉

"To know your faults and be able to change is the greatest virtue."

➤ 己所不欲, 勿施於人。

"What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others."

➤ 知之為知之, 不知為不知, 是知也。

"To understand nothing is to understand everything."

➤ 學而時習之, 不亦說乎? 有朋自遠方來, 不亦樂乎? 人不知而不愠, 不亦君子乎

"Reviewing the day's lessons, isn't it joyful? Friends come from far, isn't it delightful? One has never been angry at other's misunderstanding, isn't he a respectable man?"

• **Famous Chinese Americans**

➤ Steven Chu (朱棣文, Zhū Dìwén): [United States Secretary of Energy](#).

➤ Elaine Lan Chao (趙小蘭; Zhào Xiǎolán): [Former U.S. Secretary of Labor](#)

➤ Gary F. Locke (駱家輝; Luò Jiāhuī): [U.S. Secretary of Commerce, 21st Governor of Washington](#)

- [Amy Tan: Writer and Best-Selling Novelist](#)
- [Ang Lee \(李安; Lǐ Ān\): Academy Award Winning Movie Director and Producer](#)
- [Yo Yo Ma \(馬友友, Mǎ Yǒuyǒu\): Musician/Cellist](#)
- [Dr. Henry Lee: Forensic Science Expert](#)
- [Martin Yan \(殷文達\): Famous Chef](#)
- [Michelle Kwan\(關穎珊\): Olympic Medalist for Figure Skater](#)

For more information on famous Chinese-Americans, you may visit the following websites:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/asian-american/notables.htm#9>

Asian Americans Who Have Made a Difference

<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/lin/index.html>

Maya Lin: Designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Chinese_Americans

List of Famous Chinese Americans