

## Unit Three – China (or a substitute country): Similar in Some Ways, Different in Others

### Introduction to the Unit

**Essential Questions:** *How do culture, history, geography, people, and government shape life in China? How is life in China similar to and different from life in the USA and in Brazil--and what factors contribute to those similarities and differences?*

You started the year simple. You started with home (the United States) teaching children basic map-reading and note-taking and gradually ramped up the level of both these skills as they looked farther and across the United States. Children used maps to make sense of all they knew about the country they call home and they learned to use notes not just to record facts but to grow ideas. In the second unit, they studied a new country, one slightly farther away (Brazil). Because their own bank of knowledge could no longer be enough, you flooded the room with photographs, statistics, video clips and books on Brazilian landscapes and lifestyles, cities and countryside, population and economy, festivals and beliefs. As they acquired all this new information about Brazil, you challenged them to connect it with what they found on Brazil's maps, to ponder the factors that affect life in this country. All the while, children drew on their knowledge of the United States to make sense of life in this new country.

To prepare for this third unit, it is important for you to note that trajectory, of where the year began and how it picked up speed. That is because this month is designed to take children further and faster down the road of map-reading, note-taking, connecting lifestyles and culture with a place's geography, using knowledge of familiar places to learn about new ones. Also, children will 'travel' even further from home, all the way to the eastern hemisphere. We've written this unit up to be about China, but in a way that you may easily substitute China with another country of your choice.

In this unit, you'll also extend the skills you taught in the previous two, so notes will move on from being sketches, lists and mini-summaries to become more extensive and complex as children begin the work of comparing and contrasting, using their notes to 'write to learn'. Maps, too, will suddenly show territories, rivers and landmarks with unfamiliar names and children will constantly use what they know of San Francisco and Rio de Janeiro to process

what they learn about Shanghai or Beijing, for example. This emphasis on comparing and contrasting is the key feature of this unit and we anticipate that it will uplift children's understanding of the world as being composed of places that are different but have much in common.

## Getting Ready

In Bend One, you'll need to resource about half a dozen centers with materials for students to study and task cards to shape their studies. You'll want to select materials with great care so that students are almost bound to stumble on big insights. For example, you may in one center put a map showing the density of population in different parts of the site, and then showing also a collection of photos, some of which show life in urban Brazil, some in rural Brazil. You'll also include a task card in each center. These cards should always be worded to channel students to learn replicable ways researchers go about studying a place and to leave students space to collect their own notes, their own way, and to reflect on those notes. Some examples of centers are included in the Appendix, and if you are willing to share centers you and your colleagues develop, teachers from other schools will reciprocate. More information about the resources you need for these centers is included in the write up of the bends, below.

## Social Studies Standards

- 3.2 The American culture and cultures from around the globe share similarities and demonstrate differences in terms of their values, traditions, beliefs, holidays, and lifestyles.*
- 3.3 Communities from around the world interact with each other and exchange cultural ideas and practices.*
- 3.5 The concept of universal human rights suggests that all people should be treated fairly and should have the opportunity to meet their basic needs.*
- 3.7 Geographic regions represent areas of Earth's surface that have unifying characteristics.*
- 3.9 The causes and effects of human migration and settlement vary in different world regions and may be influenced by the physical environment.*

**3.10** *People living in communities around the world depend on, adapt to, and modify their physical environments in different ways.*

**3.12** *World communities and civilizations change over time. They are influenced by interactions with other cultures.*

## CCSS Standards

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.3** *Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.*

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.7** *Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).*

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.10** *By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.*

## Vocabulary

**You will want to consider the needs of your students when it comes to vocabulary**

<b>Vocabulary suggested by the National Social Studies Curriculum:</b>  political social and economic development suburb rural city urban Farmland dialect demographic	<b>Possible Tier Two words include:</b>  culture natural resources trade traditions conservation
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## Bend I: Researchers recall all they know and talk with others to organize notes about a topic

### **Guiding Questions:**

*What is life like in China? How is it like or unlike life in Brazil, in the US? What factors influence life in China?*

You'll want to rally children's excitement for this new month of work, announcing that they'll be studying a country that is even farther away from home than Brazil. Take a look at the globe and have students begin to think about the location of China to America. You'll want to gather children round the globe for just a few minutes, to study the United States to China. Your class might realize where China is in relation to the United States or some of its geography. In any case, studying the globe in this way will introduce them to the general location of this new country, reveal that both are in the Northern Hemisphere and perhaps make them realize why, when it is day in the United States, it is night in China.

Few children will be blank slates when it comes to China--in fact you may be Chinese-American kids sitting in the room, children who've actually visited China or at least a Chinatown somewhere. They may have Chinese neighbors, will likely have tasted Chinese food, experimented with chopsticks, seen a dragon dance in a parade and may own a dress or artifact from China. Almost all will have noticed the *Made in China* label on things they own. It is important to invite in and honor what children already know and to build upon this. Ask students to think in silence of two or three big things that they know about China and jot these before inviting them to share what they know with a partner. You might then elicit a quick whole-class share, expecting to hear informational tidbits that third graders might know: China is a big country; China has a large population; Chinese people eat with chopsticks. They might share experiences from a Chinese New Year parade and dragon dance, or movies about martial arts. This is your chance to add a few things you know: China claims the world's oldest existing civilization, that it contains one fifth of the world's population, and that it is the third largest in terms of landmass (only Russia and Canada are larger).

Tell children that they will build a bigger, better understanding of China this year, adding to all that they already know. You'll want to reiterate the guiding question that children ought to recognize from previous units: *What is life like in China and what factors made it this way?* You'll remind youngsters that based on their knowledge of Brazil and the United States, they should already expect to learn that China's geography--its land, rivers, resources and climate--will affect how people live their lives, what they eat, how they dress, where they live. From

the globe, you might move on to a map of China, quickly labeling in some of the bigger land features, provinces and cities--it makes a difference, at this stage for children even to hear you pronounce the unfamiliar names: Yangtze, Sichuan, Beijing, Guilin, Xian, Tibet...

From the very first day, you might decide to give students the feeling that they can access information on China on their own, without needing to go through you. You'll want them to approach the prospect of learning about a new country with open ended curiosity, knowing that learners need the freedom to build up their own understandings from the very start. For this reason, you'll set up various centers around the room where children may study images, books, video-clips, statistics and maps to grow their understanding about China. But you also want them to approach these centers prepared to record and grow learning.

Before sending children off to work at centers, you'll want to remind them to begin creating notes on all that they learn about China this month, quickly revising the note-taking strategies they already have from previous units. You may add some explanation of graphic organizers:

- if they are using notes to compare and contrast two things, they might use a *T-bar*
- if they're comparing/contrasting three things, they may construct a *table with three columns*
- if they encounter a narrative about China at the media or reading centers, their notes can record the chronology of events on a *timeline*.
- if they want to grow ideas or examples from of a main topic, they may create a *spider ma*
- if they want to record images, they may make *quick diagrams* or *sketches*

You might remind students to use shorthand (instead of whole words) and phrases (instead of whole sentences) so that they can record information quickly but emphasize also that notes must be legible and well organized. Share the expectation that they will develop their notes as the month progresses, that they will share notes with partners and use them to grow thinking later in the month. "Remember, when recording notes, researchers don't just scribble haphazardly across the paper like you'd scribble a phone number! There is method and organization in the way that we jot ideas," you'll want to tell children. Above all, you'll remind children to connect all they see at centers with the guiding questions: What is life like in China? How is it like or unlike life in Brazil, in the US? What factors influence life in China?

To accommodate students at centers, you'll divide the class up into as many groups as there are centers and send each group off to one of the various centers around the classroom, so they may study the resources at the center and choose one of the multiple cues on the task cards to construct knowledge from. Then, in the next session (although you may exercise your judgment of time spent at a center) you'll direct each group to move on to the next center. In

this way, groups will move from one center to the next until each group has had the chance to spend adequate time in at least one visit to each center.

You'll already have several functional centers from the previous unit: the Images Center (photos, illustrations, art and calligraphy), Statistics Center, Map Center, Reading Center and Media Center. Instead of stripping these bare of all Brazil content, you might leave some content from the Brazil Unit, including also some of the maps of the world and of the United States that children studied earlier--particularly content that will help children connect and compare what they're learning about China with what they already know about Brazil and the US. Or you may decide to create a separate display area for stuff from the previous units to provide this backdrop for reference/ comparison. Here are some ideas on how you might refurbish each center with interesting and provocative content that invites children to immerse themselves in questions and ideas about China.

### ***Images Center:***

A picture is worth a thousand words and this center will serve as proof. Images reveal details and nuances that provide countless ways for children to notice and connect information and develop ideas and questions. Stock this center with compelling photos and postcards of China's landscapes, its people and culture, its history and politics.

To support children's ability to compare and contrast, you might deliberately search for images that reveal polar opposites, such as urban cityscapes (the Shanghai skyline) versus rural landscapes (terraced rice fields and ox-ploughs in the countryside), or Chinese youth in traditional uniforms versus Chinese youth in colorful punk hairstyles. Images can be a great way to provoke questions, particularly if they depict something that children will find easy to connect with and/or process. If you want to spark interest in China's economy, for example, you'd hunt for photographs showing uniformed factory workers at the assembly line, putting together parts of toys and electronics that children might recognize (such as clothes, Barbies, or ipods). Since children enjoy knowing about others of their own age, hunt for images of Chinese children eating, taking care of siblings, participating in sports, festivals, arts and working in school classrooms and at home. The aim is to spur speculation of how life as a third grader in China might be different from your students' lives as third graders in the United States.

When selecting images, you'll probably want to choose ones that evoke an understanding of China as a land of varied culture, geography and lifestyle. You'll want students to note China's varying geographical landscape from snow-capped Himalayas, the blue of the Yangtze as it winds through the country and sand dunes in the Gobi Desert. Students might also study images of famous Chinese landmarks: the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square and the Qin

Terracotta Army. Photographs are but one kind of image, you'll want to set children up to also notice pictures of Chinese art and calligraphy, to draw attention to written characters of the Chinese script.

Of course you'll want to have captions for some of the images at the center so children know what they're looking at and also to give them key words to research further. Although best yet will be images that contain enough information that children can surmise a lot from studying them. In addition, task cards that you place at the center must be designed to push children to study images deeply, to make connections and to formulate theories and questions that will guide further inquiry. You could have a series of task cards as follows (expecting that children will pick one or two to work off of):

1. Open Sort: *If you had to pick three or four categories to sort these images into, what would these categories be? Which picture would go into each category?*
2. Photo Analysis: *Study the persons/focal point in the photo. Study the background and the foreground. Study the place where this picture has been taken. What do you notice? Is this picture trying to convey a mood or a message?*
3. Compare and Contrast: *China is a land of contrasts. Do some of these images help you notice these contrasts?*
4. Compare and Contrast: *Through the images, what do you notice about China that is similar to what you know about a) Brazil? b) The United States?*
5. Analyze: *China is a large country with many faces: rural and urban; modern and traditional. What face of China does an image present? Pictures of a country can reveal a country's values. Choose a photo of China. What does it show about what is valued in China? Use what you know already about China to ask, "Why might this be?" How are these values similar to what is valued in Brazil/the US? How are they different?*
6. Develop Inquiries: *Pick an image that provokes a thought or question. Jot these thoughts and questions down. Is there a way to research your question further to find an answer?*

### **Statistics Center:**

At the statistics center, you'll want to provide children with data that they might study, sort, analyze, compare, interpret and build knowledge from. Examples of the kind of data to include:

- population density in various regions; the population of various Chinese cities; the population of China now and in recent decades
- the different social classes and the differences in wealth
- the heights of the tallest mountains and skyscrapers,
- the length of the Yangtze, other rivers and of the Great Wall,
- temperature high and lows at various points in the country
- costs of various items in China (converted to US dollars)

Remember to have similar data from Brazil also lined up nearby, so that children have a reference point to compare and contrast. For example, in order to negotiate the length of the Yangtze, it might help to compare this to the length of the Amazon. To imagine Shanghai and Beijing, it may help to compare their population densities with Brasilia, New York or your own city. Through task cards at this center, children may be set up to do the following kind of statistical work:

1. Making Sense of Data: *To make sense of data, (e.g. the length of a river) researchers compare it with something known or familiar (e.g. the length of a football field--almost 110 meters). To truly understand the length of a river, researchers might ask: How many football fields (or city blocks) would I need to run through to run through the length of this river? Using data and math, we can make better judgments about what the numbers are telling us.*

2. Ordering Data: *Researchers often use data to figure out biggest to smallest, and the most to the least. How might you use the data to order the sizes of China's cities, rivers, mountains or other physical features (i.e. list biggest to smallest)?*

3. Using Data to Compare and Contrast: *Researchers often place data from one source side-by-side with data from another source and compare the two. How might you compare data on China with similar data from Brazil and the United States?*

4. Creating Bar Graphs to Compare and Contrast: *Researchers use bar graphs or bar charts to record and compare data. How might you chart data from China, Brazil and USA on a bar graph to compare a land feature, e.g. the Yangtze, the Amazon and the Mississippi?*

5. Synthesize New Information with Previous Learning: *When researchers learn new information, they think about how it might connect/contrast with what they have already learned about a topic. Consider new information you have learned about China in this center. How does it connect with what you have already learned? What theories are*

*you starting to have about China now?*

### **Maps Center:**

At this center, you might also want to display a globe, several atlases or maps that show China's cities and geographical features, and you might also place several copies of blank maps for students to pick up and label or jot into as part of their notes. Task cards at this center might push third graders to consolidate the information they've acquired at other centers by labeling these on the map. For example, if they've seen a photograph of a cityscape or seen a video about a geographical feature, they'll want to find and label these on their maps. This geographical orientation is critical in helping children see the country as a composite whole, to notice how cities, rivers, boundaries and oceans fit together on the landmass. A task card at this center might inform children that China is divided into 23 provinces and five autonomous regions, challenging them to locate these and label them onto their own map copies. As in units on other countries, students can look at maps through several lenses, for example: Who are China's neighbors? Are the big cities located on the banks of rivers? Where did the ancient Silk Route run through? Where is the Great Wall of China; what area did it protect and from who?

A globe can be a valuable tool for comparing and contrasting, especially so that students can place China in context to Brazil and the US on the planet. Students may look at the globe to ponder questions such as: If one had to travel to China from a particular city in the United States or Brazil, what countries and oceans would they fly over to take the shortest route possible? Students might use a thread to wrap around the globe to calculate the shortest distance. Similarly, the globe will help children notice where on the planet various countries are with respect to each other, You might have them shine a torch on China (to substitute for the sun) and ponder: If it is day in China, would it be light (day time) or dark (night) in Brazil? In the United States?

Task Cards at the Map Center could have students choosing to do one or more of the following:

1. Layering One Type of Map Over Another: Place two different types of maps of China (e.g. cities and roads map and population map) next to each other. What do you notice?
2. Using a Map to Study a Country's Neighbors and Location in the World: Where is China in the world? Which hemisphere? What countries/oceans lie to its North, South, East and West? What places would you need to travel through to get from your hometown to Rio de Janeiro?

3. Comparing Maps of Different Countries: Compare the maps of China, Brazil and the United States? Which covers a larger land area? If you place the population maps or the climate maps (or any other kid) next to each other, what do you notice?

Even though you have a separate Map Center, you will still find it useful to post a map of China (its main physical features and cities) at every other center for students to constantly refer to as they work here.

### ***Reading Center:***

Luckily, there are many wonderful small books on China that you can collect and display at the Reading Center. In addition to entire books, you might photocopy excerpts from texts that specifically highlight a feature of China that you know children will encounter at another center. For instance, if, at the Images Center there are photographs of the interiors of toy factories, you might include a short text that serves to explain and deepen children's sense of what goes inside such a factory, what average laborers are paid, how many hours they work and why American companies choose factories in China to mass produce their products. Ask students to reflect on the number of items they own that have the *Made in China* sign on them to connect their understanding of images and texts with their own lives. Similarly, if children are ranking China's cities by size and population at the Statistics Center, you might want to add a layer to their understanding of China's main cities by including a short text provides details and information about these. Since locating and copying small texts is relatively straightforward to do (thanks to the internet), this center ought to give you a lot of flexibility in choosing and providing content, making it possible to choose content that supports the work at all the other centers.

Task Cards at this Center can challenge children to

- Study headings, subheadings, to find main ideas and supporting details,
- Look at texts with a critical lens: What is this book really trying to say about China? How is it different from another book at this center? Whose point of view does it express? What does it make its reader think about China? Do all the books about China make the reader think the same way?

### ***Media Center:***

If you have (or can borrow) a few laptops for your room, you might download various online videos that teach about an aspect of China's geography or culture. Task cards at the Media Center may set children up to jot the main idea or ideas presented in the videos, to jot new thinking and to make connections between what they see in these videos with content at the other centers.

***Intervene with moments of whole-class and small-group instruction***

As children work at centers, you can expect to be busy, assessing what they're able to do on their own and stepping in to intervene when they appear stuck. Occasionally, children will encounter content that they find difficult to comprehend and you might need to step in to help them problem-solve a new word or concept. For example, imagine that children come across the following line:

*'The Chinese use a lunar calendar. Their New Year falls between January 21 and February 20.'*

You might help them look up the concept of a lunar calendar in the encyclopedia or through a search engine, explore why lunar calendars vary from the solar calendar and push them to use this knowledge to explain why the Chinese don't know in advance what specific day the New Year might fall on each year.

Vocabulary is another area that you might want to teach. Intervene during one session to invite children to call out 2-3 new words they're noticing from studying at their centers, especially words that are relevant when talking about China (e.g. Buddhism, pagoda, Daoism, Mandarin) and jot these down on a chart (which can serve as your "Word Bank" for the unit). Remind children to incorporate the words on these charts in their notes and in their discussions about China. You might decide to create a similar bank of proper nouns connected with China, i.e. the names of specific provinces, rivers, cities, leaders and landmarks: Mao-Tse-Tung, Chou-en-Lai, Xin-jiang... Such Chinese names will be understandably difficult for third graders to remember unless they spotlighted in a word bank and unless children use them actively while jotting and talking.

One thing to watch out for is that students carry what they learn at one center to the next, layering their understanding with each new set of materials. Each time you signal students to move onto the next center, you might follow up after a while with a voice-over, reminding them to use what they know from previous centers to make sense of the material at the new center. You might even visit small groups at each center to push them to do this work more directly. "Can you think of ways that these maps connect with the texts you were looking at previously, at the Reading Center?" or "When you consider these statistics, are you reminded of any of the images you were looking at before? Give me an example? Wow! Jot that down."

Jotting down such connections is important--it is a way for children to catch and concretize the associations they're making, allowing for them to revisit and elaborate these at a later point.

***As children work at centers, make sure they are carrying previously taught skills forward into this new work***

As children work at centers, you'll want to hold them accountable to all that they know about taking notes, growing ideas from their notes, about reading and connecting maps with other materials to understand a faraway place better. As they move from one center to the next, you'll want to remind them to revisit older notes, layering those with the new information they're learning. In previous units you taught them to use writing prompts such as "This makes me realize..." or "This makes me wonder if..." or "This is important because..." to respond to the facts they're recording, so that notes are personalized, full of the note-taker's own thinking.

You'll also want to remind third graders of what they know of reading non-fiction, particularly of reading expository text structure. That is, you'll want them to approach books at the Reading Center, ready to begin previewing how information is put together, ready to latch on to main ideas and alert to supporting details for each of these ideas. Remind them to pay attention to the table of content and headings, to use text features such as the glossary and index. Hold children accountable, also, to carry this knowledge of expository texts forward into their writing. As they develop their notes, you might ask them to point out some main ideas and supporting details in what they've jotted. Remind them that notes will need headings and subheadings so that they are easy to read over later. Your aim is that even the notes children jot in a rush conform to a structure, that these notes support the development of longer writing.

Books are not the only medium where children will need to identify the main idea or pay attention to headings and pick out the supporting details. They'll often be required to do similar work watching video-clips. "As you watch a video," you might teach, "ask, what is this video mainly about? What are some of the main points and supporting details? Does the video feel like a story--is it a narrative? In *that* case, your notes may resemble a timeline. Or does it feel like an expository text...in which case your notes might contain boxes and bullets." Alerting children to how information is structured in texts and videos will help their note-taking become more purposeful.

***Embed Instruction on Comparing and Contrasting in the first bend of this Unit***

In this unit, you'll want to shine a spotlight on the skills of comparing and contrasting and to teach third graders to purposefully look at the new things they're learning in light of what they already know. "When you compare and contrast," you might tell them, "it is important to not just name similarities and differences, but also to think, talk, and write about why and how these points may be significant." You'll want to model for them, how they may place two 'like' features (e.g. two cities, two rivers or two 'ways people dress') side by side to ask what about them is the same, what is different--and how these similarities or differences play out in people's lives. For instance, they may look at a river in China (the Yang-Tze) to compare with a river in Brazil (the Amazon).

Students will also benefit from instruction related to language prompts that will support recognition of similarities and differences. Some prompts to help steer students towards compare:

- "I think these two \_\_\_\_ (cities, mountain ranges, buildings) might be similar because..."
- "These \_\_\_\_\_ are alike because \_\_\_\_\_"
- "Both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are the same. this is important because \_\_\_\_\_"

Some prompts to help steer students towards contrast:

- "I think these (cities, mountain ranges, buildings) might be different because..."
- "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are different because one is..... but the other is....."
- "Unlike the \_\_\_\_\_ which was \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ was....."

Children's structures for note-taking will need to be updated to accommodate this new compare and contrast work. That is, when engaged in compare and contrast work, it makes sense to set notes up in ways that foster this skill -- perhaps a Venn diagram, "double bubble," or a three column chart.

## Bend II: When you Study a Topic, You Begin to See it Everywhere Around You

In this bend children will continue to work at centers, layering what they learned at one center with what they find at the next to grow a more complete understanding of China as a multifaceted country. You'll also ramp up children's efforts at comparing and contrasting one or more countries and their features.

But to start this bend, you'll want to tell children that when researchers study a topic, they begin to notice this topic all around them. And it is true that while students are learning much about China from studying resources at the centers and growing notes and ideas off these, China (like all Life topics) is hardly contained in the classroom alone. For your students, it may exist in the red lantern that glows in a neighbor's window. It may exist in the take-away menu attached with magnets to a child's fridge at home. It may even exist in the form of a grandmother back home in Beijing. Students will constantly connect with what they learn about China in the classroom with what they know of China in their daily lives. In this bend you'll strive to bring that outside world into the classroom.

***Schedule an interview, study artifacts, bring the outside world into your classroom.***

One way to do this is to arrange for your class to interview someone who knows China well. This could be a parent, grandparent, friend or member of the community--anyone who has lived in China. If you have the resources and can manage the timing and technology required to this, you might even conduct a Skype interview with someone who is sitting in China at this moment--this might be an English-speaking Chinese relative of someone you know. You'll want to contact the interviewee beforehand and request a date and time. But before the interview itself, you'll want to teach children some strategies to conduct a research interview. For instance, students will benefit from learning how to structure open-ended questions, questions that don't put words in the interviewee's mouth, questions that encourage the interviewee to say more.

Teach students also to check questions for conciseness--show them how to edit out excess words so that the questions is as simple and clear as possible. Challenge students to ask pertinent, intelligent questions. "You are no longer novices at China," you'll tell them. "You've spent the last week studying all about China. Make sure that you ask the kind of questions that builds on your knowledge." One way to do this is to ask for examples or clarification of something that they've read about China. For instance, children might have read:

*A North American person learning about China might wonder about the types of jobs they have or about their school.*

It is wise to check up beforehand on what particular skills or knowledge the interviewee has about China so that you can guide students to structure questions accordingly. For example, questions will be tailored differently if kids know beforehand that the interviewee is a chef of Chinese food or someone who has spent their childhood in China. You might set children up in partnerships or small groups to generate questions. Then, you'll want to go through the questions that children generate, sharing the best ones with the whole class and making a

final question bank to use for the real interview. Remind children to take notes during the interview. “Researchers record an interviewee’s answers, sometimes even the interviewee’s exact words to use as direct quotation,” you can tell them.

Another way to bring the “real world China” into your classroom is to bring in artifacts that represent an aspect of China’s life and culture. For example, you could bring in a Chinese menu and ask children to study the ingredients that have been used. Compare this with a Brazilian or American menu. You could have children place this side by side with an American or Brazilian menu to compare the differences in the ingredients used, to connect these ingredients with local climates and crops. For instance, North and South American food uses more bread (wheat) while the Chinese use rice and noodles (that area also usually made of rice). This reflects the crops they grow (i.e. the fact that Brazil’s main food product is wheat while China’s main food product is rice) which is in turn affected by their climate and geography. In other words, artifacts can be used to trace aspects of Chinese life, culture, geography or religion.

Other artifacts that might stimulate interest and discussion could include Chinese vases, pottery, art, dolls and figurines, musical instruments--it isn’t the artifact itself but the quality of discussion and ideas that it generates that will add value to children’s learning. You could bring in an entire museum’s collection but this is of value only as long as children create meanings and understandings from the objects they see. One way to ensure that this happens is to help conduct research on what the artifact represents or to connect it with something learned at one of the centers. Artifacts from one country will also take on added significance when it is used to compare or contrast with an aspect of Brazilian or American life. For example, children will have more to say about a traditional China doll when it is placed next to a traditional Brazilian or American doll or figurine. (You might add that modern dolls e.g. Barbies look quite the same in all three countries, and that most are Made in China!)

If you have a Chinatown close to school, you might arrange for the class to tour through the area, asking them to bring along their notebooks to jot whatever they see, to connect with what they know or have read about Chinese culture. If you have internet resources in the room, you and the children might even access a virtual together, e.g. at <http://www.thechinaguide.com/index.php?action=activity/greatWallOfChina> or <http://www.360cities.net/virtual-tour/hong-kong-museum-of-art?view=simple> or <http://oi.uchicago.edu/museum/virtual/tours.html>

### ***Raise the level of Compare and Contrast Work***

Meanwhile, you’ll want to ramp up children’s ability to look at every feature they’re learning about China through the lens of what they know of this feature from having studied Brazil and

the United States. In other words, at every center, there are so many categories to compare and contrast whatever children are learning about China with what they learned previously about Brazil. For instance, at the statistics center, the numbers that reveal China's population, city sizes, quantity of provinces and languages etc. all acquire new significance if placed next to the corresponding statistics for Brazil. Similarly, the maps and images of the two countries will show much that is common, much that is different, e.g. images of festivals and parades in China versus some from the Carnival in Rio will also provide room for third graders to notice a lot that is common and different.

"We don't merely compare and contrast for the fun of it," you'll tell children. "Researchers compare and contrast in order to better understand whatever we're looking at." You'll want to explain this by showing children that it isn't enough to say:

*The Amazon and the YangTze are different because the Amazon is the second longest river in the world and the YangTze is the third longest. But both are similar because they're the longest rivers in their own continents."*

You'll *also* want third graders to make more of the similarities and differences that they're noting, for example, by adding a prompt to derive some sort of conclusion:

- *This suggests something about China (and Brazil), namely...*
- *This would mean that...*
- *This gives rise to the question...*

So, to their observation that the Amazon and YangTze are both the longest rivers in their continents, they might add:

*This suggests something about China and Brazil....Both countries probably have many cities on the banks of these rivers.*

Or: *Both countries probably use this river for transport and to irrigate crops.*

Or: *Both countries probably have their own kinds of boats.*

In other words, be prepared to teach children to push themselves to use their compare and contrast observations to develop a new theory or a new conclusion. Since by this point in the unit, third graders will have had the chance to visit all the centers at least once, their knowledge base about China will have increased enough to support such theorizing. You might, therefore, ask children to revisit the compare-and-contrast notes (the T-charts, 'double-bubbles' they drew) from earlier in the unit and use their new understanding of life in China to write longer off these, using the prompts above.

### Bend III: Picking a Topic of Interest and Embarking on an Inquiry

In this bend, you will channel third graders to look over all their notes on China and identify one area or topic to focus deep, exclusive attention on. Students have engaged in inquiry before, i.e. when they were studying Brazil. They picked a topic of interest, jotted some big questions from this to research further and then looked across the content at various centers to answer these questions. You can have students go through this inquiry process again, this time with China, pushing up the level of the work you expect them to do. You might divide children up into groups of three or four and encourage them to work collaboratively, sharing their notes with each other to figure out common questions and areas of interest.

First, you'll want children to narrow a focus for their inquiry. To scaffold this work (and to ensure that the topics that children pick are ones on which you have adequate supports and resources at the centers), you might post a list of possible focus topics for students to develop their inquiries from. Based on the resources you've managed to put together at the centers, this topic list might look like this:

1. The Key Events and People In History
2. The Yangtze River
3. Rural vs. Urban China
4. Chinese Culture
5. Impact of Chinese Climate

Of course your list may look longer and/or different. The important part is that the centers in your room have the resources to support inquiries on this topic.

Once groups agree on a topic, they will want to develop one or several research questions on this topic. To do this, each group might need to consolidate and look across their collective notes about this topic and even re-visit some of the centers to ask: What ideas do we have about this topic? What are some big ways this topic may be compared and contrasted with what we know about Brazil and the United States? What do we want to know more about? What is unclear still? What further questions are raised by our study?

Group members will need to work collaboratively to figure out answers to questions like the ones above. You might direct groups to sit together around a chart paper, each with a marker in hand, and write out the topic they've picked in a circle at the center of the chart paper. As the group discusses specific questions or curiosity about this topic, group members may draw a spoke protruding out of this topic and pen down a specific question. Teach groups that they can brainstorm an answer to some of these questions (and they ought to write down their

theory or confirmed answer beside each question). For other questions, groups may have to return to and examine the resources at the centers. Occasionally, if a group comes up with a particularly sticky question, you may have to help them find another resource (e.g. Google) to find answers. These ‘inquiry charts,’ though rough, can be displayed around the room as evidence of each group’s thinking, and provide groups with a chance to study each other’s questions. You might even conduct a gallery walk of these inquiry charts, where “outside” group members may contribute to a chart by writing a question or a possible answer on a post-it and tacking it onto a chart.

You might also teach groups to lay their notes side by side and discuss what they see in common and how these notes may be combined to compile an information booklet about this topic. As groups engage in this work, you’ll want increase their independence at working with each other. One way to do this is to teach them to delegate various tasks to each group member (e.g. record keeping, time keeping, summarizing, sketching etc.) so that everyone in the group is actively engaged in the common project they’re creating. To celebrate this month’s work, groups may teach each other about the topic they’ve studied, listing out some of the questions that they’ve pursued inquiry on and sharing the answers that they’ve found.