

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Travel

~ Asia ~

Unit 3 of 5

CHINA

China is a vast country within Asia; it has the fourth largest land area in the world after Russia, Canada, and the U.S. China's population is FOUR times that of the United States, and it's estimated that one in every five people in the world is Chinese. Its government is communist.

Kites were invented in China over 2,500 years ago. They were first made to measure distances to help armies moving across difficult terrain. Some have very intricate designs. In fact, a dragon-shaped kite made in 2015 was 6,000 meters long! It took two years to build and three people six hours to get it airborne. (The "Chinese" fortune cookie was not a Chinese invention. It was invented in 1920 in a noodle factory in San Francisco!)



1. Design and draw a kite of your own!

In China, there is a city called Harbin which is known as the Ice City. Harbin is the eighth most populous city in China, although it was once simply a small settlement on the Songhua River. In fact, Harbin means "a place for drying fish" in the language Manchu. In 1897, Russia was granted their request to build a railway through northern Inner Manchuria. The fishing settlements of Harbin had an influx of immigrants from the Russian Empire as the railroad personnel stayed there to work, and Russian Jews escaped to Harbin during times of persecution.



← Harbin
(also spelled "Haerbin")

The Russians then went on to use Harbin as a military base during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). After Russia's defeat, thousands of people from thirty-three different countries -- including the U.S., Germany, and France -- flooded Harbin. Harbin became an international hub, featuring brewing, food, and textile companies. Harbin was also known as a fashion capital in the 1920s, as the designs from Paris and Moscow went through the city before arriving in Shanghai.

2. What are (at least) two advantages and (at least) two disadvantages of having a railroad go through your town?

3. What other trades do you imagine would be prevalent in a place known as the Ice City?

Harbin is also known for its frigid temperatures; the average temperature is -13 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter months. This may make you want to grab a blanket and never step outside, however Harbin's population has a thriving outdoor skiing, swimming, and shopping environment during the winter. In 2015, Harbin was a potential location for the 2022 Winter Olympics.

4. What would be your favorite sport to watch during the Winter Olympics and why?

Because Harbin is located on the Songhua River, there are a surprising amount of locals who go for morning winter swims! A hole is drilled in the ice, and a "swimming pool" is made in the middle of the river. The swimmers warm up with some exercises, and then plunge into the *freezing* water. Apart from the risks of winter swimming, which can lead to hyperventilation and hypothermia, there are actually quite a few benefits. Those who engage in swimming in cold temperatures for short periods of time find they experience less stress and fatigue in their lives, feel more energetic, have better memory function, and do not contract diseases as often.

5. If there are so many benefits to winter swimming, why don't more people participate in it? Can you think of a way to convince more people to try it?

6. Write a poem or story about winter sports (including winter swimming) or living in the Ice City.

One of the greatest allures of coming to Harbin in December and January is their *International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival*. There are gigantic snow sculptures on the other side of the Songhua River from the city, as well as an "Ice and Snow World", which consists of full-scale buildings that are lighted from the inside and out. The ice blocks used to create these amazing sculptors are taken from the frozen Songhua River, and it takes 15,000 workers about sixteen days to transform these ice blocks into something beautiful.

Along with the sculptures, there are food and drink stands, ice slides, winter swimming, snow mobile driving, skiing, and an ice-lantern exhibition. The only three ice and snow festivals that are this big in the world are in Japan, Canada, and Norway.



Winter Swimming



Ice and Snow World

7. How do you think the workers go about carving and arranging the ice? Take us through what you imagine happens to get the ice from the Songhua River into an amazing sculpture.

8. If you were an ice-carver, what would you carve out of the ice blocks from the river? Sketch your design below.

"Airpocalypse"

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion and activism around pollution: water pollution kills our marine animals and contaminates our drinking water; air pollution causes respiratory problems and limits visibility. China has been under a microscope when it comes to these issues. In fact, on October 20, 2013, there was a wave of smog that covered the city. Over 2,000 schools were closed for three days, and visibility reduced to 150 feet. Researchers believe that this cloak of smog was due to several factors: very little wind, farmers burning their crop waste, and turning on the district's coal-powered heating system.

9. Explain (at least) three other ways that pollution negatively affects people.

Another pollution tragedy occurred in Harbin on November 13, 2005, when a benzene plant located along the Songhua River exploded. The river became severely polluted and the government shut down the water supply, saying the system was simply "being checked." The public was furious that the government called the explosion "just a rumor." The contaminated water began to enter Russian waters as well, and later, the Chinese government had to apologize to Russia for their poor handling of the situation.

10. Imagine you are the government official delegated to deal with pollution incidents. As soon as you found out about the explosion, what would your plan of action be? How/when would you tell the public, what would you do to stop the pollution, etc.?

China is not the only place experiencing these high levels of pollution. Unfortunately, pollution is becoming a standard problem all across the globe, although the issue seems to be more severe in Europe and Asia as of 2015. Western Europe and the Mediterranean regions have averages well above the "particle matter pollution" standard.

11. Why do you think these areas have more pollution?

12. Think of three ways we can reduce the pollution we're producing on Earth.

13. What can people in the United States do to help improve Asia's air pollution?

NEPAL

Among the mountains that lie directly between China and Nepal is Mt. Everest. Mt. Everest is the Earth's highest mountain. Can you guess how high it is? 29,029 feet above sea level! There are two main routes you can take up Mt. Everest. One goes through the southeast of Nepal and the other enters through the north of Tibet. Those attempting this great climb should have substantial climbing experience and be prepared for extreme weather such as blizzards, hurricane force winds, altitude sickness, and avalanches.

14. Why would anyone want to subject themselves to these dangers and miserable conditions?

15. What are three more activities/sports that pose great dangers? Explain the risks and rewards of each one.

Mt. Everest was named after George Everest, who participated in the Great Trigonometrical Survey, which surveyed the longitudes, measurements, etc. of India and the Himalayan giants. Mt. Everest goes by several other names as well. The Nepali word for Everest is "Sagarmatha", which means "Forehead of the Sky." Meanwhile, the Chinese call Mt. Everest "Chomolungma", meaning "Goddess Mother of the World."

Mountaineers from Britain were the first to attempt to climb Mt. Everest. In 1921, climbers passed 7,000 feet and in 1922, they crept up past 8,000 feet. In May 1996, tragedy struck as eight people perished in a storm. One of the other climbers that year was Jon Krakauer, who wrote about his experience in a book called "Into Thin Air." Over 230 people have died on the mountain, often in the "death zone" (the region above 26,000 feet). Since recovering the bodies can be such a difficult feat in itself, many of them are left up there, preserved in the snow. Even though people spend thousands of dollars to hike this mountain (plane tickets, supplies, training, etc.), about eight to ten people still die on the trails each year.

16. Write a fictional story about climbing a mountain.

If you are not planning on making the trek up Mt. Everest, there are still many activities to capture the allure of this beautiful country. Many people enjoy visiting the Chitwan National park; a place where they can explore the marshlands of Nepal and see a diverse range of wildlife. You can take a tour atop a gigantic elephant and keep your eyes peeled for monkeys, rhinos, leopards, and even Bengal tigers!



Nepal's Location



Mt. Everest



Elephant Ride



Ganesh

Speaking of the majestic elephants, they play a role in Nepal's mythological stories as well. Nepal has a strong history of folklore, and much of its culture is rooted around the tales of the past. One figure that is often worshipped in Nepal is the

elephant-headed God named Ganesh. The story goes that Parvati, the wife of Shiva, was tired of her husband not respecting her privacy. She decided to create her own bodyguard, and did so by covering her body in "bukuwa" (a paste made from sandalwood) and using this to then mold a child and give life to him. She asked the child to guard her door while she bathed, and one day Shiva appeared at the door trying to get past. In anger, he killed the boy by cutting his head off, not knowing that Parvati considered him her son. She was so furious at her husband she threatened to destroy the heavens and the Earth. Shiva ordered his guards to find the next living creature and cut the head off and bring it to him. They chopped off the head of a white elephant and brought it to Shiva, who attached it to the body of the boy and breathed life into him. And so, Parvati's guard then became a half-human, half-elephant creature that is still used in folklore and worshipped today.

17. Why do you think so many people worship Ganesh? Do you think gods/goddesses that are half human, half animal seem more comforting, more frightening, more powerful?

Parvati is also mentioned as a figure in a famous tale of "the story of death." In the tale, it is believed that death was once a visible body. When it was time for someone to die, death would come to them and the person would go with them to Yamaloka, which was the place for the dead. Death was thus seen as a gentle and powerful figure to celebrate. One day, death went to a young blacksmith who did not want to die yet. The blacksmith told death he wanted to show him his beautiful work, and led death to a chamber within his shop. The blacksmith then locked death in the chamber and told no one of what he had done. Parvati was sent on a mission to find death and unleash him once again. She went to the blacksmith and lured him with her beauty into drinking with her every night. Finally one evening, the blacksmith spilled all his secrets to Parvati while he was intoxicated. Parvati was then able to release death from the chamber, but death never went to the world of mortals in his visible form every again.

18. Draw a picture of what you imagine death in the visible form would look like.

19. It is said in the folklore that death was once a celebrated, respected figure. How do you think people view death now-a-days?

Nepal is also known for its beautifully designed temples, and there are tours that take you on treks through courtyards, and ancient buildings still exuding the magic that captures so many tourists' attention. Unfortunately, some temples have been destroyed by earthquakes in Nepal, though many still remain. The prime minister of Nepal assured the public that all of the destroyed temples would be rebuilt.

20. Do you think it is better to rebuild destroyed architecture, or does this dishonor the original piece? Explain your answer.

21. Write a tribute for a newspaper honoring a special architectural monument that has been destroyed. (This can be fictional!)

Nepal is also home to the only *living* goddess in the world, called "Kumari." The literal meaning of Kumari is "virgin," and these goddesses are pre-pubescent girls selected as children to live in temples, be celebrated in festivals, and are worshipped by thousands of Hindus and Buddhists. A new goddess is chosen when the previous one reaches puberty. It is believed that these girls are "earthly manifestations of divine female energy."

22. How would a girl adjust to being replaced as a goddess?

Nepal is a country deeply involved in the protection of the environment with more than nineteen percent of the country protected by National Park and Protected Area. Recent endeavors include saving the blackbuck (a species of antelope)

from near extinction, increased the tiger population, and helping endangered wildlife species like the Indian bison, wild buffalo, and other species.

23. What are some ways to increase the population of a species in hopes of preventing it from becoming extinct?

24. What are some other species that are endangered and why?

One particular species that has been under the threat of extinction for a while is the tiger. Tigers once roamed from Siberia, to Indonesia, to Turkey, and even the Far East lands of Russia and China. They have no natural enemies, except humans. Poachers kill tigers and sell their skin and body parts to be used in traditional Chinese medicine. Already, three of the nine subspecies of tigers are extinct from poaching. The tiger population has been reduced by 95% since 1900, and they are continuing to be hunted through cruel practices, such as poisoned waterholes or steel traps. Tigers have also lost their homes to habitat fragmentation.

25. How can we balance creating enough homes and farmland for people with keeping enough natural land for animals?

A movie came out in 2004 about two brother tigers that were taken from their home and separated. One brother was strong and fierce, and he was taken to a circus where his life in a cage took away most of his spirit. The second brother was gentle and shy, and was first used as a companion for a governor's son, but was then forced to become a fighter. The tigers were reunited later in life, but were pitted against each other. The movie shows the beauty and strength of tigers and the role that humans played in their life.

26. What would you title this movie?

27. Can wild animals benefit from human companionship?

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

**Appendix
Travel: Unit 3 of 5**

Citations

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