

Tradition in Felicities

Lesson Plan – Secondary

Rationale:

This lesson plan is to be used when viewing *Tradition in Felicities*, a film documenting Victoria’s Chinatown in the early 20th century. The short film highlights the 2013 Royal BC Museum exhibition *Tradition in Felicities* that marked the 155th anniversary of Victoria’s Chinatown, the oldest in Canada. It revealed a close-knit community of families developing new identities as Chinese Canadians.

This lesson invites students to learn about Chinese Canadian arts, culture, and everyday life through first-hand accounts of community members who grew up in Victoria’s Chinatown.

Students will observe and analyze primary and secondary sources relating to Victoria’s Chinatown; analyze Canadian society in the 20th century in terms of ethnicity, daily life, and cultural identities; describe factors that contributed to a changing national identity.

Curriculum Connections:

Grade 9 Social Studies

Content: Global demographic shifts, including patterns of migration and population growth

Grade 10 Social Studies

Big Ideas: Worldviews lead to different perspectives and ideas about developments in Canadian society.

Content: Canadian identities

Grade 12 Asian Studies

Big Ideas: Ethnic, regional and national identities, shaped in part by geography and migration, exert significant political and cultural influence in Asia.

Content: Demography, migration, urbanization, and environmental issues; local, regional, and national identities

Grade 12 Human Geography

Big Ideas: Analyzing data from a variety of sources allows us to better understand our globally connected world.

Content: Relationships between cultural traits, use of physical space, and impacts on the environment; factors behind increased urbanization and its influence on societies and environments

Grade 12 Comparative Cultures

Big Ideas: Understanding the diversity and complexity of cultural expressions in one culture enhances our understanding of other cultures; Interactions between belief systems, social organization, and languages influence artistic expressions of culture.

Grade 12 Urban Studies

Big Ideas: The historical development of cities has been shaped by geographic, economic, political, and social factors.

Curricular Competencies: Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Grade 9-12 Social Studies, Asian Studies, and Human Geography

Curricular Competencies: Assess the significance of people, locations, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their historical significance at particular times and places, and from group to group; Assess the justification for competing historical accounts after investigating points of contention, reliability of sources, and adequacy of evidence

Estimated Time Required: 60 minutes

Lesson Activities

1. Tell the class that today they will observe first-hand conversations from community members of Victoria's Chinatown about their experiences growing up there. The people interviewed touch on their family lives and community events, art and culture, and the history and importance of Chinatown itself. Ask students what they already know about Chinatowns in Canada and Chinese Canadian Culture.
2. Tell students that before viewing the video, they will look at three photographs taken around the early 20th century in Chinatown, to notice any trends within Chinese Canadian cultural identities over time. Hand out the Image Observation Activity sheets, have students pair up and let them discuss the questions on the sheet. Invite students to share what they noticed in the photographs. Discuss the answers as a class and record any key points on the board.

3. Explain that students will be using primary resources to find out about three different topics during the video: the History of Chinatown, Arts & Culture, and Daily Lives (this topic can include jobs, family life, contributions to the community etc.). Hand out the viewing guides. During the video, students are to find facts or ideas relating to each topic and record them under the ‘facts’ heading.
4. When the film is over, have students pair up and let them discuss and swap facts collected from each topic. Ask students to make connections to themselves or previous knowledge, and to think of questions for each topic that they still have (they might want to think of broad questions that could relate to Chinese Canadian communities across BC or Canada). Afterwards, open the discussion to the whole class, compiling the facts and connections collected. Discuss questions that students have about the history of the Chinese Canadian community and record them on the board for further research.

Discussion Prompts and Ideas:

- a. Why do you think Victoria’s Chinatown is the oldest in Canada? How old are other Chinatowns in Canada or North America? Cumulative
- b. Chinese immigrations to Canada began in the West and travelled eastward. What transportation would be available for people to move? What do you think prompted communities to move? How does this relate to other immigrations to Canada?
- b. How does the history of Victoria’s Chinatown compare to the history of other communities that you know about (or other Chinatowns)? Did they face similar struggles? What were reasons people started migrating there?

Extensions

From the class responses, choose three questions to keep. Students can choose one of these questions and research it by using the links provided. In a follow-up discussion, have students share what they found out about Chinese Canadian history from each website, and if it helped contribute to answering their question.

Fully immerse yourself in the Royal BC Museum’s Learning Portal by making a [playlist!](#)

Online resources:

Chinese Canadian Stories Project, hosted by the University of British Columbia
<https://chinesecanadian.ubc.ca/about/>

Critical Thinking Consortium: Chinese Canadian history
<http://sourcedocs.tc2.ca/history-docs/topics/chinese-canadian-history.html>

Victoria's Chinatown, hosted by the University of Victoria Libraries
<http://chinatown.library.uvic.ca/>

Print resources::

Amos, Robert and; Wong, Kileasa. *Inside Chinatown: Ancient Culture in a new World*. Victoria, BC: Torchwood Editions, 2009.

Harry Con et al. *From China to Canada: A History of Chinese Communities in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982.

Lai, Chuen-yan David. *The Forbidden City within Victoria*. Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 1991.

Lai, Chuen-yan David. *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988.

Lai, Chuen-yan David and; Madoff, Pamela. *Building and Rebuilding Harmony: the Gateway to Victoria's Chinatown*. Victoria, BC: Western Geographical Press, 1997.

Lawson, Julie. *White Jade Tiger*. Victoria: Dundurn Press, 1993.

Yee, Paul. *An Illustrated History of the Chinese Communities of Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax*. Toronto: J. Lorimer, 2005.