

cross-curricular suggestions for each.

Personal narratives are an integral part of this study. The *Ping Wei* series and *Last Train Home* resources provide strong video narratives, and *Last Train Home* also contains written biographies that give insight into the film's characters. Leslie Chang gives us a narrative from Lu Qinming's point of view in the first chapter of *Factory Girls*, and Lu Qinming's narrative is further explored in Chang's TED talk. Each can be evaluated and used as models for writing or speaking. Students can (1) write or tell their own narratives with the understanding that personal experiences shape identity; (2) assume the identities of migrant parents, migrant children, and government officials, and debate the economic benefits in relation to the social cost of mass migration; and (3) compare the narratives of Chinese migrants with migrants from around the world.

Still images enhance written and spoken narratives. Chang's book cover and cover art for *Last Train Home* and the *Ping Wei* films convey a sense of what the reader or viewer will experience. Slideshows in the *Leaving the Land* series support the related narratives and highlight points that the author wishes to emphasize. Each can be evaluated and used as teaching tools in art classes. Students can (1) evaluate still images from this study and create their own images to support a variety of narratives, (2) create their own cover images for the *Leaving the Land* pieces, and (3) produce slideshows to demonstrate an understanding of the Chinese migrant experience.

Music is used to heighten meaning in video. Traditional Chinese music is often used in the *Ping Wei* films, and the *Leaving the Land* series uses Western music in its video. *The Last Train Home* video clips contain a musical introduction but no music in the narratives. Music, or the absence of music, can affect the way a video is interpreted, and the use of music to convey meaning connects these resources to music class content. Students can (1) analyze the effectiveness of the use of music in the video resources, (2) compose their own music for the *Last Train Home* clips, and (3) discuss possible reasons for the filmmakers' choices in music (i.e., traditional Chinese vs. Western).

KAREN GAUL is a fifth grade teacher specializing in language arts and social studies at the Winchester Thurston School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Karen is an advisory board member for the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA) National Coordinating Site at the University of Pittsburgh and a regular guest lecturer for NCTA classes there. In 2009, Karen was awarded Winchester Thurston's Judy Apt Nathenson memorial chair for excellence in childhood education. She earned her undergraduate degree in accounting from the University of Wisconsin and her master's degree in education from Winona (Minnesota) State University.

Encountering Migration: Factory Girls and BaFa BaFa

By Matthew Sudnik

In his recent book, *The Power of Place*, Harm de Blij, the John A. Hannah Distinguished University Professor of Geography at Michigan State University, writes, "Of the seven billion current passengers on Cruiseship Earth, the overwhelming majority ... will die very near the cabin in which they were born."¹ De Blij underscores the situational differences humans experience throughout the world. Place remains one of the most salient factors in our individual and collective destinies. While movement is an important theme in world history and human geography classes (it is one of five geography themes!), it is important to remember that migrations of great distance, spanning cultural boundaries, are not experienced by most people. De Blij names this special group "mobals." He writes, "Mobals are the risk-takers, migrants willing to leave the familiar, to take a chance on new and different surroundings, their actions ranging from legal migration to undocumented border crossing, their motivations from employment to asylum."² We may assume that the majority of our students have limited experience with the phenomenon of migration. Yet careful research reveals that each of us has our own migration story. Furthermore, the study of migrants is an important part of our study of human history. Migrants are unique and are often agents of cultural diffusion. In this essay, I will suggest three tools for engaging our students in a thoughtful, experiential exploration of migration: a book, a research project, and a game. Each of these tools has been tested in my classes at Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

There are many books written about migration. Even if one is not teaching an Asian studies course, it is valuable to include a text about East Asian migrants. Many educators may use texts about migrants entering the United States from our southern border. In my opinion, one difficulty of beginning our study of migration with this

contemporary example is that the topic has become saturated with political ideology and passionate opinions that make it difficult for both educators and students to present and study the phenomenon of migration objectively. For an alternative text to open this lesson, I strongly recommend Leslie Chang's *Factory Girls*. The book profiles the lives of two young Chinese women—Lu Qingmin and Wu Chunming—who leave behind the rural countryside to find work in the city of Dongguan. While this story may seem removed from our students' experiences, the author points out that the girls' migration story is not so different from those of other migrants. Two connections can be made. Our students will record similarities and differences between the story of Min and Chunming and the story of migrant workers in the United States. Then, after doing research, they will also observe similarities and differences with their own families' stories of migration.

In chapter 6 of *Factory Girls*, Chang introduces her own family migration story, and its similarities and differences with the workers of Dongguan she has profiled for the book. She writes:

After I moved to China, I had always resisted the pull of my own family ... I wanted to learn about this country on my own terms ... But the more I learned, the more I saw connections. Almost a hundred years ago, my grandfather had been a migrant too. He had left his village, changed his name, and tried to remake himself for the modern age. In his youth, China was emerging from a long, self-imposed isolation to rejoin the world—and so it is again today. My grandfather left home for good when he was sixteen years old—although he probably did not know it then, just as today's migrants might not know it now. Chuqu, to go out: This is how the story of my family also begins³

This section of *Factory Girls*, comparing the girls' stories with Chang's family history, should prompt a discussion about our students' own accounts of family movement. This discussion makes both the reading and the phenomenon of migration more comprehensive. Consider the following questions for discussion: What do you know about your own family's migration story? Why are you here rather than somewhere else?⁴ All students, even those who have not been affected by a recent migration, can learn more through reading, discussion, and writing.

After reading *Factory Girls*, a research project can bring to life the conceptual aspect of studying migrations and human geography. In this project, each student will ultimately produce a documentary film about his or her family's migration story. First, students must do research in order to answer the following questions: Which factors are most important in migration, "push" or "pull"? Which were most important for your family? Is there such a thing as "free" migration? Were you or your family part of a diaspora? What are the positives and negatives of migration for the receiving country? How is immigration policy in the United States similar to and/or different from policy in contemporary China? What are the similarities and differences between international and internal migration? Finally, consider the significance in the case of your own family of the following geographic concepts: remittances, the gravity model, distance decay, step migration, chain migration, and intervening opportunity. Students must rely on both library research and oral interviews with family members in order to answer these questions. Once the research is complete, students present their composite narrative in the form of a documentary film.

The family migration project, enhanced with technology, is also an opportunity to promote twenty-first century skills such as creativity, innovation, communication, and research. My junior Advanced Placement Human Geography class completed this project using iPads. My students gathered information by filming or voice recording interviews with family members. They shared old family photos dating back generations. They drew connections between their textbook, *Factory Girls*, and their own history and experiences. Each final product, a documentary film, was no longer than ten minutes. We watched these films together as a class. In addition to learning about one's own family, the students learned more about one another and observed similarities in their families' stories. They observed regional similarities and differences. Finally, they cultivated an appreciation for their ancestors as risk-takers who shaped the multicultural landscape of their own city, Pittsburgh.

Despite reading and research, students may still have difficulty grasping the salience of risk and culture shock involved in migration. De Blij writes, "Mobals challenge the power of place, carrying with them the assets and liabilities of locality and competing in new and unfamiliar environs for livelihood and security."⁵ BaFa BaFa, a role-playing activity, simulates the experience of competing in a new and unfamiliar culture, what is usually referred to as "culture

shock.”⁶ It has been used by government and industry to prepare adults for service overseas. While the game is often used with adult audiences, it can and should also be used with high school students to teach cross-cultural interaction. In fact, this activity could be especially meaningful for those students who have had limited contact with other cultures or little experience traveling.

In the game, the students are divided into two groups, the Alpha Culture and the Beta Culture. Each group is given a set of cultural rules. A few teachers should be assigned to each “culture” room: one to teach the culture’s rules and the other to facilitate the movement of students between culture rooms for observation and interaction. As one increases the number of student participants, more adult proctors may be needed.

When facilitating BaFa BaFa with high school students, there are two important factors to keep in mind. First, simplify the game. There are certain rules (e.g., signing of the Alpha cards) that take up too much time. The game itself takes about one hour, with another thirty minutes for debriefing and discussion. It is very important for students to learn the basic rules of the cultures and then observe and interact. The debriefing is equally important to put the experience in context.

Second, especially when working with very competitive students, it is important to underscore that there is nothing to “win” in the game. Rather, to achieve the game’s end, one must follow the rules faithfully. It is also important that the faculty proctors help students follow the cultures’ rules. Like an authentic experience of culture shock, the game can produce real frustration.

In the debriefing, encourage the students to talk about their views of “the other” culture. How does this exercise explain our attitudes toward other groups that we do not fully understand? In the end, students should gain an appreciation for the migrants’ confrontation with the unfamiliar, as well as grow in tolerance for others and appreciation for cultural diversity.

While most people may live and die “very near the cabin in which they were born,” it is the migrant, the risk-taker, who has carried, challenged, and changed culture throughout history. Through a close reading and discussion of *Factory Girls*, researching and presenting family migration stories, and playing the game of BaFa BaFa, students can encounter the phenomenon of human migration in a deeper, experiential way.

NOTES

1. Harm de Blij, *The Power of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalization’s Rough Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 6.
3. Leslie Chang, *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008), 121.
4. Keep in mind that we must often deal with uncomfortable revelations in family history. For example, some African-Americans are not able to trace their history past the triangle trade, and their family names often point to “ownership,” the result of forced migration. In some cases, students may have difficulty finding information about their family or uncover information that they are not comfortable revealing. Each educator must reflect on ways of discussing migration within diverse classrooms in order to enhance each student’s understanding and empathy.
5. De Blij, 6.
6. BaFa BaFa—Schools and Charities version—can be purchased from Simulation Training Systems (STS) online at <http://tinyurl.com/os8fltt/>

MATTHEW SUDNIK is Director of the Baginski Scholars Program at Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He teaches World History and Advanced Placement Human Geography.