

Editor's Note: What follows are three teaching resource essays by, respectively, an undergraduate instructor, middle school teacher, and high school teacher. We thank both the three contributors and Brenda Jordan, Japan Studies Coordinator and Director of the University of Pittsburgh National Coordinating Site for the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA), for suggesting the segment and assisting with editing and organizing the essays, which were first developed in a 2013 summer NCTA seminar.

Special Segment: Chinese Migration

Understanding and Teaching Migration in China

By David Kenley

Migration in China

In 2012, the Chinese Ministry of Railways created a new online ticketing system. Promising an end to long lines and frustrated customers, the program was intended to streamline operations and demonstrate China's growing sophistication in the transportation industry. However, it was not prepared to handle the immense amount of traffic during New Year. On one day alone, the server took 1.4 billion hits. As a result, potential customers overwhelmed the online system, causing it to crash and become unusable, and many passengers were forced to use low-tech methods, such as paying a scalper or queuing up for hours at station ticketing windows.¹



The Guangzhou Train Station at New Year's. Source: *Mark's China Blog* at <http://markschinablog.blogspot.com>

Each holiday season, Chinese make an estimated 3.2 billion passenger trips. Roughly ten times the demographic size of the United States, this annual traffic jam is one of the more visible reminders of China's great urbanization revolution. Over the past thirty years, an estimated 160 million Chinese have left their rural homes and are now working in cities, primarily along the east coast. Each New Year, they clog the roads

and rails as they make their way back home. Today, China has forty-five metropolitan areas of at least two million people and fourteen of at least five million. By comparison, the United States—which is nearly the same geographic size—has only about half as many such cities and a total population less than one-fourth the size of China's.² What is even more remarkable than the size of these urban areas is the speed with which they have come into existence. For instance, the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen had a population of roughly 30,000 in 1979. Today, it is home to approximately twelve million, a 40,000 percent increase in just over three decades. Though the spectacular growth of Shenzhen is not the norm in China, the country still has experienced remarkable urbanization in recent years.

Demographers are now describing China's urbanization as the largest migration in the history of humankind. Yet it is insufficient for us as educators to simply shock and awe our students with numbers that are beyond their comprehension. The story of China's great migration and urbanization becomes meaningful and instructive by emphasizing individuals and families. Only by sharing their histories and stories can this tale of demographic transformation make an impression on our students and aid in their understanding of China's past, present, and future.

History of Migration and the Hukou

There is a long history of migration in China. At times, individuals moved for economic opportunity, landing in Hawai'i's sugarcane plantations, California's railroad fields, or Malaysia's tin mines. At other times, they left their homes in response to natural and man-made disasters. For example, during World War II, millions of Chinese fled

from Japanese troops to the relative safety of Chongqing and other locales in China's western provinces. Perhaps because of this migratory tradition, when the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, Mao Zedong and his associates quickly established a method for managing population flows. Known simply as the *hukou* system, it required each individual to carry papers indicating where he or she could live, work, attend school, or visit the hospital. Moving away from your registered village or city would be illegal. Furthermore, you would surrender access to land and all government-subsidized services by moving.

Until 1979, this system functioned as the government intended, though there was always tremendous disparity in resources between the rural and urban areas. With Deng Xiaoping's liberalization of the economy, however, the government realized it had to relax the limitations on migration and allow for a more flexible and efficient labor pool to develop. Between 1980 and 1984, Beijing opened up "Special Economic Zones" (SEZs) in Shenzhen, Shantou, Zhuhai, and Xiamen. These quickly became magnets for foreign investment, as companies created factories producing goods for export. These factories, in turn, relied on cheap labor from the surrounding countryside. Although moving to the city was technically illegal, thousands and then millions of poor farmers did so, with the government's tacit approval. Some rural families decided to hedge their bets, with fathers remaining at home to cultivate the fields while sending their young, unmarried daughters to work in urban factories. Predictably, the receiving municipalities quickly became teeming megacities, filled with individuals from the surrounding countryside and other parts of China.

With the success of these early SEZs, the government pushed forward greater economic liberalization, enabling most of China's coastal cities to engage in manufacturing and international trade. Tianjin, Shanghai, Ningbo, Fuzhou, and other cities became major export centers shipping cheaply made products around the world. Eventually, interior cities also became immigrant destinations, with Lanzhou, Xi'an, Chengdu, Kunming, and other communities changing dramatically. By the 1990s, nearly every Chinese city hosted a sizable population of illegal workers from the countryside. Known as the "floating population," these workers transformed their own lives, as well as the lives of the original urban dwellers. To keep up with these changes, city governments constructed new buildings, roads, and subway systems, which in turn required even more laborers from the countryside. While migrant men performed most construction jobs, their female counterparts worked in factories, retail outlets, or as nannies for upwardly mobile urban residents. Today, the *China Daily* estimates nine million of Shanghai's twenty-three million residents are members of the illegal floating population.

Results of China's Urban Migration

This massive rural-to-urban migration has fueled much of China's economic growth of the past three decades. Based primarily on manufacturing and construction, China's economy has grown at approximately 9.8 percent per year since 1979. This means that China's gross domestic product (GDP) has been doubling every seven years, four months. Today, China has the second-largest economy in the world, though its per capita GDP is still only one-ninth the size of the United States's. Such growth has lifted millions of Chinese out of poverty and has materially improved the quality of life for the vast majority of the population.

Not all results are easily quantifiable. For example, urban migration has radically restructured family relations and social norms. For most of the recent past, the typical Chinese migrant has been young and single. Parents allow their sons and daughters to travel to the city and earn a few extra dollars, with the hope that they will eventually return to the native village to get married and raise a grandchild. Upon arriving in the city, however, many of these young people feel liberated from the constraints of family expectations. Though their work hours are long and grueling, they do have limited opportunities for shopping, attending movies, and socializing with members of the same or opposite sex. Gradually, they are transforming sexual ethics, as more and more couples cohabitate beyond the watchful eyes of their parents at home. Furthermore, they are becoming financially independent from their extended family, which has implications for traditional generation roles and notions of filial piety.

Migration is transforming gender expectations in twenty-first-century China. While it is impossible to track population flows completely, it appears as though a large percentage of the floating population is female. Manufacturers in particular have expressed a preference for female workers, believing them to be more docile and less likely to agitate for higher wages. Parents have also appeared more willing to allow daughters to leave the countryside. Upon arriving in the city, these women find themselves associating with similar migrants from all across China, representing various regional dialect groups. They are forced to speak Mandarin, the lingua franca of the nation, and only have a few leisure hours to shop and

explore their urban environment. Sons, by contrast, have a greater expectation for producing progeny and remaining on the family farmland. When men do migrate to the city, they often work on construction sites as part of all-male labor crews. They also tend to associate primarily with other men from their home village and spend less time interacting with the legal resident population. Consequently, male migrants fail to assimilate to the urban environment relative to their female counterparts. Not surprisingly, relations between male and female migrants are quite different from traditional norms. Having enjoyed a degree of economic and social independence, women are less likely to submit to patriarchal authority. Leslie Chang, author of the best-selling *Factory Girls*, has demonstrated the effect of migration on gender.³ The protagonists of her book are, for the most part, confident in their abilities and eager to expand their social and economic opportunities. Demanding in their selection of boyfriends, they move as frequently from relationship to relationship as they move from job to job.

This great demographic shift has also created a more inclusive “imagined community” than ever before. In the early twentieth century, Sun Yat-sen complained that the Chinese were like grains of sand, shifting in every direction—without any sense of national unity.⁴ Instead, they organized themselves according to dialects, clans, and occupations. Today, by contrast, many of these traditional groupings are fading away. Instead, an individual is much more likely to interact with men and women from all parts of China. In Shenzhen, for instance, local dialects are almost unheard, as everyone communicates in Mandarin. As a result, there is a newly emerging sense of Chinese nationalism.

Ongoing Challenges

Of course, migration has resulted in numerous intractable societal challenges. Whereas the former rural-urban divide is less pronounced than before, there still exists a two-tiered society within China’s cities. Legal residents with the proper urban hukou have access to the best schools and hospitals, while the illegal migrants are segregated into low-cost housing units with very few social services. Employers are able to financially, and at times violently, exploit migrants, who have limited options for legal recourse. At the same time, residents with an urban hukou often blame the floating population for rising crime levels, pollution, and a breakdown of urban civility. Even the most energetic and talented migrants must deal with social prejudice, preventing them from advancing to their fullest potential.

The explosive growth of cities has led to the radical restructuring of the urban environment. For example, thirty years ago, Beijing was home to thousands of *hutong* neighborhoods. These neighborhoods consist of narrow pathways winding through dense complexes of courtyard homes. You can only find this unique housing style in Beijing. Today, developers have torn down the majority of these neighborhoods and replaced them with high-rise apartments and business complexes. While the new structures may be more convenient and agreeable to our modern sensibilities than the previous hutongs, a growing chorus of critics is now reminding us that we have irretrievably lost an important part of China’s physical and cultural heritage, and they are rallying to preserve the few hutong sections that remain.

Finally, migration has led to a sense of social displacement and alienation. Some have suggested that China’s social fabric has been torn beyond repair. For example, migrants are remaining in the cities for longer and longer periods. Many have no plans ever to return to their native village. While sojourning in the cities, they have married other migrants and birthed children. However, their living conditions are frequently not conducive to family life, and they often send their children back to their home village to be raised by grandparents. Huang Dongyan, one such migrant, recounted her experience visiting her own son during a New Year’s holiday break. The five-year-old child refused to play games with or even acknowledge his mother. As she fought back tears, Huang confessed, “I was a stranger to my son.”⁵

Teaching Migration in the Classroom

China’s recent history of migration holds great potential for classroom instruction. The tale of China’s migration wave is ultimately the story of millions of individuals. Shuanghai, for instance, works as a vegetable peddler at an open-air market. She starts her day at 3:00 a.m. buying vegetables wholesale and does not go home until 8:00 p.m., repeating the process 360 days each year. All day long, she argues with rich city shoppers, who assume she is trying to cheat them. By contrast, another immigrant woman works as a nanny in the relative comfort of another person’s home, caring for a spoiled child. She reluctantly admits that she knows and loves the child under her care more than her own child back in the home village. Still another, a man who wanders from street to street sharpening housewives’ knives for pennies a day, somehow socks away three-fourths of his income to send to his family in the countryside.⁶ Of course, not all stories are heart-wrenching tales of victimization. Liu Yuxia, a young woman working near the city of Shenzhen, taught herself

English and got a job in the international trade department of a telephone factory.⁷ Sharing such stories humanizes China's migration experience for our students.⁸

Another effective approach is to make comparisons between the situations in China and North America. The United States' Industrial Revolution also included great migratory waves, including immigrants from Europe and elsewhere. The Great Migration, the movement of rural blacks from the Deep South to the industrial cities of the Rust Belt and the Northeast, also contained numerous similarities to the Chinese experience. Of course, we can better-understand the recent influx of illegal immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries in light of the Chinese experience, and vice versa. Just as the Chinese Government has been complicit in undermining the hukou system, so too has the United States Government turned a blind eye to illegal immigration in the name of economic necessity.

There are many unanswered questions regarding China's floating population that can be used to spark classroom discussion. For instance, is China's migratory pattern sustainable into the future? How long can the government maintain the hukou system while ignoring the millions of individuals violating it? Will there come a point at which labor demands encourage a reverse migration away from the east coast cities and back into the interior regions (similar to what has already happened in America's Rust Belt)? What conditions or stimuli might trigger such a change?

Fortunately, there are numerous resources available to assist teachers in this process. BaFa BaFa, a simulation game developed to create culture shock within the classroom, mimics the effects of migration.⁹ Lixin Fan's 2009 documentary, *The Last Train Home*, portrays a couple journeying home for the Chinese New Year to visit their child.¹⁰ *The China Labour Bulletin* has prepared an online, seventy-page document titled "Paying the Price for Development: The Children of Migrant Workers in China," which includes numerous data sets with accompanying analysis.¹¹ *Eating Bitterness: Stories from the Frontlines of China's Great Urban Migration* by Michelle Dammon Loyalka looks at eight rural migrants and the challenges they face in the western city of Xi'an.¹² Chang, author of *Factory Girls*, highlights the gendered component of migration by following the lives of a handful of adventurous and entrepreneurial young women.¹³ In short, there are many tools to employ in the classroom as you teach this fascinating chapter in human history.

Demographers describe China's urbanization as the largest migration in the history of humankind. As teachers, it is our responsibility to put a human face on this process, highlighting the issues of economic advancement, displacement, and social transformation that are common across the human experience.

NOTES

1. Peter Ford, "China's New Year: There Be dragons, But Not Enough Train Tickets," *Christian Science Monitor*, last modified January 20, 2012, <http://tinyurl.com/73u2e9j>.
2. *Wikipedia*, s.v. "List of Urban Areas By Population" and "List of Countries By Population," accessed June 14, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/244zwmw>; <http://tinyurl.com/hs65e>.
3. Leslie Chang, *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing Society* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008), 264-266.
4. Elizabeth Dale, "Scattered Sand: The History of Liberty in Sun Yat-sen's Constitutional Theory." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Law and Society Association, Chicago, IL, May 27, 2010. Available at <http://tinyurl.com/l42ul5j>
5. Deborah Jian Lee and Sushma Subramanian, "China's Left Behind Children," *Foreign Policy*, last modified May 1, 2012, <http://wp.me/p4Os1y-guM>.
6. Each of these stories can be found in Michelle Dammon Loyalka, *Eating Bitterness: Stories from the Frontlines of China's Great Urban Migration* (California: University of California Press, 2012).
7. Chang, *Factory Girls*.
8. For a wonderful visual resource, see Lucas Schifres's *Faces of Made in China*, a photographic account of individual Chinese migrants, at <http://tinyurl.com/o5offbs>.
9. R. Garry Shirts, "BaFa BaFa: A Cross Cultural/Diversity/Inclusion Simulation," *Simulation Training Systems*, last accessed July 14, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/ps7helm>.
10. *Last Train Home*, directed by Lixin Fan (New York City, NY: Zeitgeist Films, 2010), DVD.
11. Aris Chan, *Paying the Price for Economic Development: The Children of Migrant Workers in China* (Hong Kong: China Labour Bulletin, 2009).
12. Loyalka, *Eating Bitterness*.

13. Chang, *Factory Girls*.

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A Media-Enhanced Middle School Study of Modern Chinese Migration

By Karen Gaul

Multimedia lessons are an effective way to reach middle school learners, and this is especially so when teaching the complexities of China's rapid urbanization. Key to understanding the effects of migration on the fabric of Chinese society is viewing this phenomena from the perspective of the migrant worker. A variety of resources exist with which a teacher can provide students both the voice of the migrant and vivid images that bring his or her experiences to life. At the heart of many of these visual media pieces lie questions essential to the understanding of Chinese urbanization: Why is this mass migration occurring? What are its social implications? How might China's future be impacted?

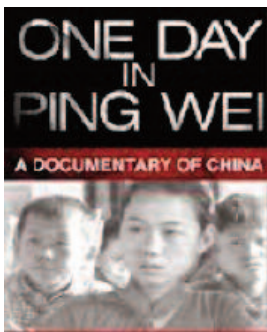
Some initial understandings of human migration in general are necessary before launching a study on Chinese urbanization. It's likely that students possess prior knowledge about migration. Most will recognize America's Nineteenth Century Industrial Revolution as an event that spurred Europeans to seek opportunity in the United States, and many may have knowledge of war refugees from places such as Việt Nam, Kosovo, or the Sudan seeking a new home. Establish a baseline with your class that includes examples of factors that push migrants away from home, challenges faced when in a new environment, and factors that draw migrants back home.

Suggested resources for this study include films, videos, slideshows, and background readings, all of which are brief in length and accessible to the middle school learner. Students who complete this study should be able to articulate the forces driving internal migration in China, and the current and future implications of this phenomena. Each should also be able to draw on the narratives to present an understanding of Chinese urbanization from the perspective of the migrant.

Film Resources for Classroom Discussion on Chinese Migration

The Ping Wei Film Series and Discussion Questions

Set in the village of Ping Wei in Anhui Province, this series of half-hour films follows the life of Liu Yen Twin from the ages of ten to seventeen. These films provide a glimpse into rural Chinese family life. Confucian values are evident, as are the changes that modernization brings to the village. Students will be grounded in their understanding of village life as seen through the eyes of a child of similar age. All films in the series are narrated in both English and Mandarin with subtitles.



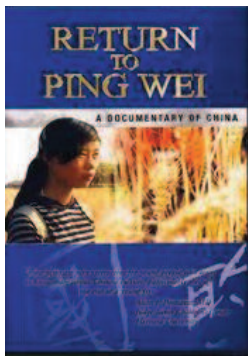
One Day in Ping Wei

Produced and filmed by Andrew Fone

30 minutes

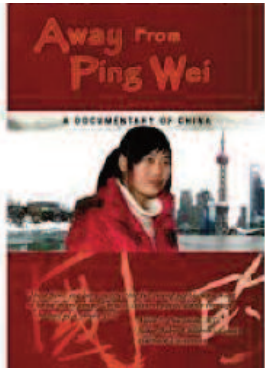
DVD, Pearl River Productions, 2004

In *One Day in Ping Wei*, we are introduced to ten-year-old Liu Yen Twin and experience an average day in the village. Students will immediately realize that village life lacks many amenities. Roads are unpaved, and few motorized vehicles can be found. The Lius' home is without running water and most modern conveniences. They are not wealthy by American standards, yet the Lius are a seemingly happy, healthy, and content family.



Return to Ping Wei
Produced and filmed by Andrew Fone
30 minutes
DVD, Pearl River Productions, 2007

Return to Ping Wei is the second documentary featuring the Liu family. Filmed two years after *One Day in Ping Wei*, the changes the village has undergone are obvious. The dirt road leading into the village is now paved, and the influx of cars and other motorized vehicles is noteworthy. The family now has a freezer and a new counter in the kitchen. Students will agree that life seems a bit easier for the villagers. Liu Yen Twin is now a teenager and expected to perform well academically.



Away From Ping Wei
Produced and Filmed by Andrew Fone
30 Minutes
DVD, Pearl River Productions, 2011

In *Away from Ping Wei*, Liu Yen Twin is seventeen and a migrant worker in a Beijing restaurant. Beijing, where she shares a small room with her cousin, is far from home, and she misses her family in Ping Wei. When separation from family becomes too much to bear, Liu Yen Twin seeks a job closer to home. Much of this film also focuses on the importance of the New Year's celebration, and students will recognize further evidence of changes to village life brought on by modernization.

Discussion Questions for Students on Ping Wei Film Series

1. What family values are evident in the film?
2. Would you describe the family as wealthy?
3. How does life change for the Liu family and other villagers over time?

Last Train Home: Web Resources and Discussion Questions



Last Train Home
Directed by Lixin Fan
85 minutes
DVD, EyeSteelFilm, 2009 (distributed by Zeitgeist Films)

Last Train Home, a feature-length film by Lixin Fan, highlights the hardship of migrant life, particularly its effect on the family, as epitomized by one migrant couple's struggle to catch a train home to be with family for the Chinese New Year. Video clips from the film's web page coupled with a PBS teaching guide will extend a topic introduced in *Away from Ping Wei*: the high human cost of migrant work.

"Documentaries With A Point of View (POV): Last Train Home," *PBS.com*, accessed November 24, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/7dectcf>.

The PBS website provides links to related short videos that are accessible to middle school students. A few of these videos are noted below, each of which provides a unique perspective on the migrant experience.

Interviewers at Guangzhou Train Station (6 minutes)

As thousands stand in lines at the train station, migrants discuss the financial barriers preventing more frequent travel home and the effects these long separations have on family relationships.

How Can There Be Any Feelings? (0:47 minutes)

The daughter of migrant workers expresses her frustration about having been raised by her grandparents.

A Mother Leaves Her Child for Work in the City (1:28 minutes)

The mother of the girl featured in *How Can There Be Any Feelings?* shares her reasons for leaving her child in the care of grandparents.

“POV: Community Engagement & Education Discussion Guide: Last Train Home,” *PBS.com*, accessed November 24, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/ob4wegy>.

This PBS study guide for *Last Train Home* provides short background readings on the magnitude of China’s current migration phenomena, the life of a migrant worker, Confucian values, the Chinese economy, and biographies of selected people featured in *How Can There Be Any Feelings?* and *A Mother Leaves Her Child for Work in the City*.

Discussion Questions for Students on *Last Train Home*

1. What forces are pushing rural Chinese to migrate to urban areas?
2. What forces are pulling rural Chinese to return home?
3. What are the effects of migrant work on family life?

Further Classroom Resources for Chinese Migration Discussion: *Factory Girls* and *Leaving the Land*

Factory Girls

Leslie Chang’s *Factory Girls* offers readers a look at factory life in China from the perspective of the young female worker; Chang also offers her perspective on migrant factory workers in her 2012 TED talk, *The Voices of Chinese Workers*. Chang’s book follows two young women over the course of three years as they leave their rural homes to find work in the factories of Guangdong Province. Students can learn about the motivations of young Chinese migrants from the first chapter of *Factory Girls* and from Chang’s TED talk.

Leslie Chang, “Going Out,” *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008), 3-16.

“Going Out,” chapter 1 of *Factory Girls*, introduces the reader to Lu Qingmin. Qingmin is a teenage migrant who leaves her rural home and finds factory work in Guangdong Province. Students will connect with Qingmin as they read about her somewhat-rebellious yet fun-loving youth in her rural village, and they will understand that, even with poor working conditions and low pay, Qingmin finds her newfound independence liberating.

Leslie Chang, “The Voices of Chinese Workers,” *TED.com*, last modified June 2012, <http://tinyurl.com/mnaja9l>.

In this TED talk, Chang proposes that it is not global consumerism that drives Chinese migrants into factories. Particularly for the teenage girls who leave their rural homes, it is a sense of adventure and a desire for independence that draws workers to factory cities. Chang brings to life the narratives of young female factory workers, one of whom is Lu Qingmin, the focus of the first chapter of *Factory Girls*, and reminds us that life lessons learned and money earned while on the job are at the heart of the young female migrant experience.

Discussion Questions for Students on *Factory Girls*

1. What forces are pulling young women to migrate to urban areas?
2. Why does Leslie Chang feel that very few factory workers would like to go back to the way things were before urbanization?
3. How is globalization impacting the Chinese worker?

Leaving the Land

Leaving the Land is a *New York Times* multimedia series on China’s monumental plan to resettle rural families in urban environments by Ian Johnson. Articles in this series contain written narratives, accompanied by short videos, slideshows, and graphics that bring to life the human experience of mass migration. The videos, slideshows, and graphics in the first two segments of this series will be well-received by middle school students, and excerpts from the written narratives can be used to strengthen *Leaving the Land’s* message. The following are two parts of the series by Ian Johnson with sample multimedia resources from both.

Ian Johnson, “China’s Great Uprooting: Moving 250 Million Into Cities,” *The New York Times*, last modified June 15, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/khwmdp>.

Sample multimedia resources from “China’s Great Uprooting”:

***In China, A Staggering Migration* (Video)**

By Alicia DeSantis, Graham Roberts, and Derek Watkins

2:24 minutes

The magnitude of China’s plan to move 250 million rural Chinese to urban locations is overwhelming.

***A Chinese Push for Urbanization* (Captioned Image Slideshow)**

By Justin Jin

A captioned slideshow displaying former village dwellers at work and at home in their new urban environments.

Ian Johnson, “Pitfalls Abound in China’s Push From Farm to City,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/nqrjyfn>

Sample multimedia resources from “Pitfalls Abound in China’s Push from Farm to City”:

***China’s Consuming Billions* (Video)**

By Jonah M. Kessel

5:20 minutes

Consumerism is at the heart of China’s goal to move millions of people from rural to urban settings.

***Rocky Transition from Farm to Town in China* (Captioned Image Slideshow)**

By Sim Chi Yin

A captioned slideshow featuring former village dwellers struggle to make ends meet in in urban environments.

Discussion Questions for Students on *Leaving the Land*

1. How is China’s goal of moving 250 million people to urban areas viewed by migrants?
2. Will the impact of this forced migration be easier on the younger migrants?
3. How is migration affecting life in China?

Cross-Curricular Applications

Many of the themes commonly taught in social studies classes, including cultural identity, change over time, and governance, are captured in this study. When used as a part of a social studies unit, students should be able to articulate the forces driving China’s internal migration and how migration is changing China. Students should also be able to predict possible outcomes if China’s government is successful in moving 250 million people to urban locations. In addition, the use of multimedia to deliver personal narratives allows for broad use of this study within a middle school curriculum. Below is an analysis of themes found within the study and

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).

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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/>

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