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CHINA'S THREE GORGES DAM: CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION OR CONTROVERSY?

Lynn Tilley

OKAGE Teacher Consultant, Norman, Oklahoma

World Geography Academy – Session I

Wednesday, November 6, 2013

University of Oklahoma, Norman

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100 East Boyd, SEC Rm 684 | Norman, OK 73019-1018 | 405.325.5832 | 800.522.0772 x 5832

www.okageweb.org | okage@ou.edu

CHINA'S THREE GORGES DAM: CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION OR CONTROVERSY?

Lynn Tilley, NBCT and OKAGE TC
Library Media Specialist
Comanche Elementary School
Comanche, Oklahoma
ltilley@comanche.k12.ok.us

Grade Level: 7th

Purpose/Overview:

The purpose of this activity is to help students understand why China built the Three Gorges Dam, the controversies that arose, and the impact the construction of the dam had on the environment and people. Originally conceived as a solution to flooding on the Yangtze River as well as to generate electricity for approximately 10% of the country, construction quickly began to create controversy. Over a million people were displaced, a thousand towns and villages were engulfed by the rising water, numerous important antiquities were flooded, and important downstream sediment flow necessary for river and coastal ecosystems was threatened. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to understand how progress and change can have both positive and negative consequences.

National Geography Standards from *Geography for Life*

Geographic Elements and Standards:

The World in Spatial Terms --

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information
2. How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context
3. How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface

Human Systems --

9. The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.
13. How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface

Environment and Society --

14. How human actions modify the physical environment
15. How physical systems affect human systems

Oklahoma Academic Standards:

Grade 7 World Geography: Eastern Hemisphere

Literacy Skills Standard 1: The student will develop and demonstrate Common Core Social Studies reading literacy skills.

- A.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

- A.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- C.7. Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Literacy Skills Standard 2: The student will develop and demonstrate Common Core Social Studies writing literacy skills.

- A.1. Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
- b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.

Content Standard 5: The student will analyze the interactions of humans and their environment in the Eastern Hemisphere.

3. Integrate visual information to analyze regional problems and policies having spatial dimensions in the Eastern Hemisphere including the
- C. Transformation of the environment and population centers caused by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam in China.

Geographic Themes: Human Environment Interactions, Movement

Objective:

Using primary and secondary sources of visual information, and printed and digital texts, students will choose a position and write an essay with accurate data and supporting evidence either favoring or opposing construction of the Three Gorges Dam.

Materials:

Computer, LCD projector (or equivalent), and Internet access

Copies for each student of the following (from **Resources**):

- China's Three Gorges Dam, by the Numbers
- Lansat Photos of Three Gorges Area in 1987 & 2006
- Five W's Chart

Paper, pencils, yellow highlighters

PowerPoint – *China's Three Gorges Dam: Cause for Celebration or Controversy?*

[**NOTE:** Prior to activity, the teacher will need to create a free user account on the OETA PBS LearningMedia site. After doing so, search for the media video clip *Up the Yangtze* and save video clip to "My Favorites" folder. See **Resources** below.]

Time Frame: 3 hour-long class periods (more for **Extension** activities)

Procedures:

1. Explain to students that many times change or progress can have both positive and negative effects for both humans and the environment.

2. Give each student a copy of the Lansat Photo of the *Three Gorges Dam* in 1987 & 2006. Working in groups, have students evaluate the two photographs and determine how the landscape has changed over time. One student in each group will write down the group observations. Groups will share their findings with whole class and infer how these changes may have directly affected the land and people in the Three Gorges area.
3. Use the PowerPoint provided to guide students through a pictorial presentation of China's Three Gorges Dam.
4. Show *Up the Yangtze* video Clip 1 - *Yangtze Cruise*. Prior to viewing, pass out to each student a 5W's Chart on which students will take notes during the film. After first viewing, have students share aloud their key points and add any notes to their own charts from discussion. Ask students why they think the boat trips were called the "farewell tour"? Play clip a second time to allow students to add any additional notes they may want.
5. Discuss with students how one can better understand photos, videos, or other visuals by looking at different elements within the visual. For example, look carefully at the expressions, gestures, backgrounds, props, and clothing for clues that can aid understanding.
6. View Clip 2 - *The River Swallows Up a Home*. Encourage students to continue their note taking, using back of 5 W's Chart as necessary. Discuss with students how the man may have felt watching the river swallow up his home. Explain that many of these simple homes had been in families for generations. Look carefully at the gesture he is making – hands on hips. Generate together "words" that express how this man must be feeling (e.g., happy, sad, optimistic, hopeless, confident, confused, proud, lost). Show the video a second time. Was there a change in gesture from the beginning of the clip to the end of the clip? Have students look carefully at the difference in his stance or gestures. [Teacher note: from hopelessness to resignation perhaps? Something else?] Have students add anything they like to their notes as discussion continues. Ask students why they think the man brought his family along at the end of the video but not the beginning. [Teacher note: to say a final goodbye perhaps?] Students should be encouraged to make the inferences and these may be different from each other. The purpose is to try to get them to practice generating some kind of response appropriate to the clues they see and hear.
7. Pass out to each student a copy of the June 9, 2006, National Geographic News article "China's Three Gorges Dam, by the Numbers" and a yellow highlighter. As you read the article aloud together and discuss, guide students to practice using their yellow highlighters to locate and mark key facts and information.
8. Provide students with a blank piece of paper that they will fold lengthwise down the middle. They will add title *Three Gorges Dam* at the top. On the left side, have them write *Pros* as the heading, and on the right side, write *Cons* as the heading. Working in groups, have students use their yellow highlighted information from the article to generate lists of pros and cons on their individual sheets about the building of the Three Gorges Dam. Have groups then share aloud with the whole class. Individuals may add to their lists anything they feel they may have left out.

Assignment:

Remind students that change or progress can many times be both positive and negative to both humans and the environment. From the various visual and textual sources they have examined, the students will have located and generated lists of pros and cons concerning the building of China's Three Gorges Dam. Have students choose one of the following positions and write a short essay expressing their opinions based on clues and evidence gleaned from information in the photos, film clips, visual or printed sources they examined:

Building the Three Gorges Dam was a good idea.

Building the Three Gorges Dam was not a good idea.

Assessments:

1. Informal Assessment: Teacher observation of student participation in group and whole-class discussions, individual and group note taking.
2. Formal Assessment: Written essay assignment. Paper should be evaluated on (1) whether or not student has followed directions, (2) chosen a clear position, and (3) supported his/her position thoroughly by reasonable, appropriate points gathered from the visual and textual components of this lesson.

Extension:

Have students research communities that were lost to lake creation in Oklahoma. Have them compare and contrast their findings to what they have learned about China's Three Gorge Dam area.

Have students do further research and then compare and contrast the forced migration of the Chinese people in the Three Gorges area to the forced migration of the Native Americans on the Trail of Tears.

Teacher Resources:

PowerPoint: *China's Three Gorges Dam: Cause for Celebration or Controversy?*

Streaming Video – *Up the Yangtze*

Clip 1 – *Yangtze Cruise* (1:18)

Clip 2 – *The River Swallows Up a Home* (1:54)

OETA PBS Learning Media – Free Online Classroom Media Resources [See note above under

Materials.]

<http://oeta.pbslearningmedia.org>

National Geographic News: *China's Three Gorges Dam, by the Numbers*

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/pf/48061222.html>

Lansat Photos of Three Gorges Area in 1987 & 2006

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a8/ThreeGorgesDam-Landsat7.jpg>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ThreeGorgesDam-Landsat7.jpg>

Five W's Chart

<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/5Ws.pdf>

Additional Resources:

The Three Gorges Dam Project

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~lpohara/index.html>

Atlantis in Oklahoma

<http://www.okmag.com/November-2011/Atlantis-in-Oklahoma/>

The Trail of Tears and the Forced Relocation of the Cherokee Nation

National Park Services

Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/118trail/118trail.htm>