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## GRADE 4: HERITAGE AND IDENTITY: EARLY SOCIETIES, 3000 BCE – 1500 CE: LIFE IN ANCIENT CHINA

### ABSTRACT:

This series of lesson ideas uses a fictional story *Hana's Wedding* (from the anthology of stories in the book *On A Medieval Day: Story Voyages Around the World*) as a jumping off point to address the Grade 4 Heritage and Identity strand. The book describes a young girl's marriage preparation experience in ancient China and provides opportunities to explore culture, daily life and gender roles, both past and present.

**Source:** Arato, Rona. *On a Medieval Day: Story Voyages around the World*. Toronto: Maple Tree Press, 2010. Print. ISBN: 978-1-897349-95-3

**Language Literacy Focus:** The lessons suggested cover a range of literacy targets including: questioning, determining importance, gathering and sorting information, evaluating and judging texts, making connections and writing for a variety of purposes using different forms.

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### SOCIAL STUDIES STRAND / RELEVANT GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- What methods can we use to compare societies from different eras and regions?
- How are the cultural practices of ancient China similar to, or different from, those in Canada today?
- How does geographic location impact social organization and access to opportunities/services?
- How will I decide which information that I have collected is relevant to my purpose?

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### LEARNING GOALS

In Social Studies, students will:

**LG1** compare key aspects of life in a few early societies both among themselves and to modern life in Canada (continuity and change)

**LG2** identify ways in which the environment influenced daily life and life choices for citizens in early societies (interrelationships)

In Language, students will:

**LG3** identify and use the conventions of interview and report writing (knowledge of form and style)

**LG4** extend an understanding of oral texts by making connections to ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience or to other texts (listening to understand)

**LG5** sort and classify information for their writing in a variety of ways (developing and organizing content)

## Prior Knowledge and Concepts

- Students should have some awareness of examples of aspects of social organization (class, political life, economic structure, gender roles)
- Students should have some prior knowledge of how to use T-charts and Venn diagrams
- Students should have some prior knowledge of how to use features of non-fiction texts to help them locate information

### A. Instructional Strategies:

#### Read Aloud - whole class

Before reading the story, engage students in a discussion about different ways that we can understand life in the past. Share the idea that historical fiction, that is well grounded in research, can be a potential starting point for learning about a time period in history.

Direct students to listen for examples of aspects of daily life and culture in Ancient China that can be inferred from the text. For example, what clues do we get about gender roles, responsibilities, work, tools and technology, cultural traditions, education?

After the reading, have students share some of the “clues about the past” that they picked up on. Encourage them to share any questions that came to mind about Hanna or her family or the historical time period and record them. These questions could be stimulus for future inquiry.



## B. Student Activities:

### Read Aloud



1. After reading the story, review the rites and rituals associated with the wedding in the text and record them as a class. Next, examine each of the observations and discuss what each one tells about life during that time period (gender roles, relationship between marriage and status/wealth). Using interviews as a data gathering tool for inquiry, work with students to co-construct a set of interview questions about the wedding traditions and experiences of family members from two generations. Have them conduct and record their interviews and compare the data collected to the wedding rites and rituals that can be inferred from the story.

Teach students how to use a Venn diagram with three overlapping circles. Have students highlight any meaningful similarities or differences that they notice in their data. As an extension, encourage students to make connections between the information gathered and the cultural and historical context in which each of the weddings took place. (e.g. Laws around who could get married, the religious faith of the participants).

#### Assessment suggestions:

Have students submit a draft of their analysis of their interviews so that they can receive feedback about the richness and depth of their comparisons and, potentially, how well they have accounted for culture and historical context before creating a good copy. **(LG1, LG3)**

Create an anchor chart for the features of an interview as a writing form and provide feedback for students after they have completed their summary notes from their first interview. **(LG3)**

Have students create a short report which outlines the similarities and differences that they observed in the wedding experiences that they examined and evaluate it according to success criteria that you co-generate with the class. **(LG1, LG3, LG5)**

2. Have students conduct an inquiry about the approximate costs of weddings in ancient China for a girl of Hana's status and a person in modern Canada. Co-construct a series of items to research and compare (ex. food, clothing, gifts, entertainment).

#### Assessment suggestions:

Create success criteria for the task (which reflects research skills, insight and connection to content, comparison skills, and the organization of information in product) to provide descriptive feedback during the process of gathering information and to evaluate the work as a finished product. **(LG1, LG5)**

3. A Window into Daily Life (Story deconstruction): Introduce the idea of historical fiction as being a source from which we might gain insight into the daily lives and experiences of people who lived in the past. As a class, brainstorm some aspects of social organization or culture that we learn about ancient China after having read this text. In groups, have students create a graphic organizer to record their observations.

For example:

Gender roles | Labour/industry | Food | StatusPower | Education

Assessment suggestion:

Circulate among groups as they develop their organizers, providing feedback about aspects of social life that are perhaps missing or to provide scaffolding for groups who have not clearly understood aspects of social organization (LG2, LG5)

4. This story demonstrates how lifestyle was affected by urban and rural settings. Have students compare rural and urban life using Hana's family as a point of reference. Then, in consultation with maps of the two regions, have students make some hypotheses about what factors might be influencing the observed different experiences in these two areas. Aspects of life that could be compared might be: education, jobs, roads, transportation.

As an extension, students could pick an urban and rural region in Canada (could be within the province or a comparison across provinces) and compare some aspects of opportunity and privilege (access to opportunity, jobs, education).

Scaffolding suggestions:

- Brainstorm definitions of Opportunity and Privilege
- Brainstorm examples of both opportunities and privileges
- Brainstorm what kind of data might use to help support arguments and where one might go to find that information
- Have students select a region of Canada to narrow their focus in answering the question

Have students work with a partner or small group to conduct research and co-develop a short essay that will argue their point of view on the question. Provide students with a tree diagram graphic organizer to help them organize their thinking.

Assessment suggestions:

Schedule writing conferences with each pair or group at two points (minimum) during the research and writing process. Provide descriptive feedback about the relevance of the data collected and about how the argument has been organized and crafted. Assess students' ability to use the environmental features of the settings when analyzing the two. (LG4, LG5) Co-construct success criteria for a short essay. Have peers provide feedback according to the criteria as formative assessment and use the same criteria to evaluate the final draft of the essay. (LG2, LG5)

*A note about assessment: The achievement chart on pages 32 and 33 of the Ontario Curriculum Social Studies document and the achievement chart on pages 20 and 21 of the Ontario Language curriculum will prove helpful when assessing the various components of these activities.*

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## OVERALL EXPECTATIONS

Social Studies:

Application: A1

Inquiry: A2

Understanding Context: A3

Language:

Oral Communication: 1

Reading: 1, 2

Writing: 1, 2

Media Literacy: 1

## SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

Social Studies:

Application: A1.3

Inquiry: A2.2, A2.4, A2.5, A2.6

Understanding Context: A3.2, A3.3

Language:

Oral Communication: 1.5, 1.6

Reading: 1.5, 1.6, 1.8

Writing: 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 2.1, 2.8

Media Literacy: 1.3

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## OTHER RESOURCES

<http://ancientchinalife.com/ancient-chinese-women.html> A brief, straightforward description of the main struggles women faced in Ancient China

<http://www.chinavoc.com/history/tang/women.htm><http://www.chinavoc.com/history/tang/women.htm>

Site describing some what life was like for women during the Han dynasty (includes some challenging vocabulary so is best used for guided reading or as a scaffolded read aloud by the teacher)

<http://www.pinterest.com/traditionsblog/wedding-traditions-infographics/>

<http://visual.ly/price-saying-i-do-canada>