



Learning Scotland

China Stories



Autumn 2008

Programme One: *Monday 15 September 11.40–12.00*

Programme Two: *Monday 22 September 11.10–11.30*

BBC 2

China Stories

Introduction to the unit

The *China Stories* programmes are aimed at upper primary and secondary school pupils. With the increased exposure in the western world to China, these stories open doors to the real lives of a cross section of the Chinese people. Through the telling of the stories, the viewer is exposed to a diverse culture containing both traditional and modern elements, and to a different range of views, values and opinions.

Supporting the Curriculum for Excellence

An overarching statement setting forth the Curriculum for Excellence is as follows.

'One of the prime purposes of education is to make our young people aware of the values on which Scottish society is based and so help them to establish their own stances on matters of social justice and personal and collective responsibility. Young people therefore need to learn about and develop these values. The curriculum is an important means through which this personal development should be encouraged.'

The *China Stories* programmes provide an invaluable teaching aid which dovetails with the aims of the Curriculum for Excellence, supporting its draft 'experiences and outcomes' at both the primary and secondary levels. The programmes are structured to allow interaction with a broad range of viewers. Through the stories, pupils will gain a better understanding of the values, beliefs and culture in China. Consequently, these experiences and the discussions arising from the programme content will foster development of a better understanding of pupils' own culture and values, allow them to form a better understanding of the world in which they live, and help them develop their own personal values.

The programmes address many aspects of the four capacities set out in the Curriculum for Excellence: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. In addition they specifically address draft outcomes and experiences in the Social Studies, Literacy and English papers.

The programmes are designed to provide a stimulus for high quality teaching and learning. They arouse interest and motivate children to learn about cultures very different from our own, and raise opportunities for discussion, debate and collaborative learning.

Programme description

The two programmes introduce us to four people living in today's rapidly changing China. The four stories have been chosen to clearly illustrate similarities and differences in cultural values and beliefs between their culture and ours.

The local language used throughout the programmes is Mandarin. Listening to the dialogue will allow viewers to become acquainted with the sound of a foreign tongue that few of us are accustomed to, while the voiceover allows the viewer to understand the corresponding content.

All the programmes are available on the internet at bbc.co.uk/chinastories and to accompany the programmes there is an extensive filming diary on the website. This video diary allows exclusive access to the makings of the programmes and in turn allows, if required, a deeper analysis of the media and the construction of the programmes.

The programmes are full of contrasts and similarities which will allow extensive open questioning and debate. To help in this process, suggestions for questions that will help the teacher to start conversations and discussions in the class.

Before the programmes

Prior to watching the programmes, an introduction using the following questions as prompts will help in the setting of the scene for the programmes.

- Where is China? What do you imagine China is like?
- Do you think the people in China will be similar to Scottish people or very different?
- What is the population and size of China compared to Scotland?

Programme One

—Transmission date 15 September 2008

Programme content

In Programme One we meet Liu Xiao Di, a schoolboy, and his family. Subsequently, we also meet Jiang Feng Gui, a farmer. These two people are from very different backgrounds and are of very different ages. However, in both stories their lives have been influenced by government decisions: the boy and his family are subject to the 'one child per family' policy and the farmer is part of an experiment to slow the decline in rural communities and make farming more profitable.

Both these stories show great similarities with our culture in terms of the aspirations of families and farmers.

Questions for discussion

To help stimulate debate, below are some suggestions for questions that will allow the teacher to start conversations and discussions in the class.

Liu Xiao Di and his family, and the single child policy

- Does the picture the programme portrays fit your own ideas or opinions about China?
- Overall, how does the lifestyle shown in the programme resemble yours?
- Do you think that an increasing population creates a problem for a country? How?
- How has China set about controlling their population?
- Do you think it is right for the government of a country to impose such a rule on its people? Why do you think that?
- Do you think that the boy in the film benefits from being a single child?
- Are you a single child? If you are, do you like it? If you are not, how do you think you would feel about being a single child?
- In China it is traditional for children to look after their parents. Do you think Liu Xiao Di's family want this for their son? Do you think that this is a good tradition?
- What is the attitude of Liu Xiao Di's parents to his education? How does this compare to your own parents' attitudes?

Jiang Feng Gui, the farmer

- What is farming? What do we farm in the UK? What do they mainly farm in China?
- China is self-sufficient in food. What does this actually mean? Are we self-sufficient in the UK?
- In the programme there is discussion about 'staple foods', which are said to provide a low income despite a high investment. What do you think these statements mean?
- The farm in the programme has adopted a new crop. What are they now farming and why?
- The farm is one of ten which are acting as an experiment for the government. Has the new crop been successful?
- Growth of the city has caused a migration of population from the countryside. What does this mean and why has this happened?
- Do you think the Chinese government cares about the farmers' welfare?
- How has the farming of the new 'crops' affected the farmer and his life?

Programme Two

—Transmission date 22 September 2008

Programme content

In Programme Two the contrasting images portrayed are youth and wisdom. We meet Tian Tian, a young Kung Fu student, and Dr Hao who is a doctor. Both programmes portray familiar settings: a school and a hospital. There, however, the familiarity ends. We are shown how a completely different set of beliefs, values and cultural attitudes prevails within the Chinese population.

Both programmes cover a wide range of topics, all of which will be valuable for audiences in upper primary through to standard grade, intermediate and higher candidates.

Both programmes also lend themselves to in-depth investigation, collaborative group work and debate.

Questions for discussion

To help stimulate debate, below are some suggestions for questions that will allow the teacher to start conversations and discussions in the class.

Tian Tian, the Kung Fu student

- What do you think of the school Tian Tian attends? How would you feel about going to such a school? Give the reasons for your views.
- What does Tian Tian hope to achieve by attending this school?
- How does Tian Tian feel about this way of schooling, in particular the length of the school day and the amount of free time?
- Do such schools exist in this country? Would such a school be tolerated?
- Tian Tian feels her school builds independence and self-confidence. Do you think the sacrifices she has made are worth this?
- In the school there seems to be collective responsibility? Do you think this is good for the pupils?

Dr Hao, the doctor

- Despite China becoming a more westernised country, this doctor is very much a practitioner of natural healing methods. Based on the information in the programme, discuss differences and similarities between the medical systems in China and in this country.
- Dr Hao prescribes natural medicines. Where do they come from? Are such medicines prescribed in this country?
- The hospital works on a first come first served basis. Do you think this is fair? Would the system work in this country?
- In this country, the majority of our health treatment is free. Do you find it strange that in China, a communist country, people pay for their treatment? Do you think this is fair?
- Do you feel their system of medical treatment is better or worse than ours?