

Lesson 1: Abandoned Baby

Our stories exist as [iBooks](#), optimal for use on iPads.

Big Idea: When government intersects with families' lives.

Guiding Question: What are the generational consequences of China's one-child policy?

Our Challenge: To discover how a population policy affects families, society and a nation.

Guiding Activities: This lesson introduces students to the lives of Jennie Yuchang Lytel-Sternberg and Maya Xia Ludtke, Chinese girls abandoned as babies and adopted into Caucasian families in the United States. In meeting these two characters, students have the opportunity to explore the consequences of China's population policy on individuals – in China and America – and on the lives of families, the broader society, and the nations.

1 - Setting the Scene

Read the opening section of [Abandoned Baby](#). (Stop at the beginning of “Strong on Man, Light on Woman” section. For now, skip the embedded links if reading it on the Touching Home in China website.)

Ask students to react to what occurred in the opening of this story. Is this the first time they are hearing about this happening? If not, how else did they hear about it?

After sharing their initial learning, ask students to read the information at [this link](#) and [this link](#) about the one-child policy and China's [laws](#) relating to the abandonment of children.^[1] For upper-level middle school students, use this [one-child policy link](#).

In small groups have students complete a 3-2-1 exercise: List 3 new details you learned, 2 surprising details, and 1 question that remains. Discuss your 3-2-1 responses in pairs or in small groups. Ask each pair/group to share questions that surfaced with the class.

Guiding Resources: Hyperlinks in the website version of *Touching Home in China* direct students towards source material that expands contextual knowledge, prompts new inquiry, and guides them in responding to research questions. Direct students to source material appropriate to their age, reading level, conceptual understanding, and learning objectives. Along with our lesson plans, we provide [curated resources](#) in which each story or video is cataloged by subject and reading level and the content is described.

1 - Setting the Foundation

The interactive timeline in the [iBook](#) and the web version timeline, "[From Mao to Now](#)," provide students with a self-directed approach for understanding how the one-child policy fits into the broader context of China's conception and implementation of various population policies.

Work through the timeline with the entire class, taking note of critical moments, key leaders and developments that explain turning points in the evolution of China's population policies. Discuss with students what might be unfamiliar or confusing details, and then encourage them to engage in deeper level of self-directed investigation. For younger students, it will be helpful to direct them toward key dates/leaders/documents to facilitate deeper understanding of how and why the one-child policy came to be and to explore the societal changes it brought.

1 - Engaging Our Challenge

To begin the research stage of our lesson plans, divide the class into small groups. Each group will be assigned to explore one of four consequences related to China's one-child policy. Each group's task is described, below. Depending on class size, topics can be assigned to more than one group.

Prepare each student and each group to do the following:

- Read the entire [Abandoned Baby](#) story and engage with its various media elements paying special attention to the group's assigned consequence.
- Conduct independent research as a group on its assigned consequence, using the [curated resources](#) provided in the curriculum and seeking independent sources of information. Source material is identified by recommended reading level.
- Develop and refine the group's guiding questions, with teacher providing support and encouragement.
- Work collaboratively as a group to create a culminating project that illustrates the consequence based on research findings. Prior to asking the students to engage in research, introduce and explain this concluding expectation to the students, allowing ample time to discuss and respond to questions. A full description of possible culminating projects is included in the "Reflection and Action Project" section at the end of the lesson.

Group A: China's Gender Imbalance

One of the major identifiable shifts to result from China's one-child policy is the rapid increase in this country's gender imbalance. The long-standing cultural belief that daughters are not as valuable to families as sons combines with the government-enforced one-child policy to result in boys soon outnumbering girls starting at birth. Today, China leads the world with its highly distorted sex ratio at birth.

Students will examine China's population policies as they prepare to address the following questions. To do this, they will use the lesson's [curated resources](#) as well as the story's hyperlinks. This additional content — along with other information they find via key word searches online — should prepare them to discuss these questions:

- Describe what factors led to China experiencing its distorted gender imbalance during the decades of its one-child policy.
- Discuss as a group: Was this gender imbalance intentional? If not, should leaders have been able to predict that it would happen? Be prepared to state clearly your rationale and provide evidence used to reach your conclusion.
- What do you see as the consequences — cultural, familial, economical and cultural — of this gender imbalance?
- While out of the scope of this story, ask the students to explore factors that led the Chinese leadership to announce an end to its one-child policy in October 2015? What, if any, population policy is now operating in China?

Click [here](#) to explore the curated resources for Group A.

Group B: Impact on Girls' and Women's Lives

The one-child policy has disproportionately affected girls in China. For example, due to the decisions that this policy forced families to make, many girls are “[missing](#)” from the nation’s population. Students will explore China’s centuries-old cultural beliefs and the recent decades of its one-child policy to understand how girls’ lives have been affected by this policy. Information is found in the main story and curated resources earmarked for this section.

Students will focus their attention on the impact on girls’ lives to prepare to address the following questions. Students will examine China’s population policies as they prepare to address the following questions. To do this, they will use the lesson’s [curated resources](#) as well as the story’s hyperlinks. This additional content — along with other information they find via key word searches online — should prepare them to discuss these questions:

- What cultural beliefs and practices favor sons over daughters? What differences, if any, do you find in the attitudes of urban and rural families in China?
- What circumstances might lead families to abandon their daughters? Are there circumstances that have led families to abandon sons?
- When the term “missing girls” is used, what does it mean?
- When a couple raises a daughter as its only child are her the opportunities different than they were for girls raised in previous generations in China? If so, why and how.

Click [here](#) to explore the curated resources for Group B.

Group C: Care of the Elderly

Consequences of the one-child policy are not limited to girls or young parents. This policy’s rippling effects are now reaching China’s elderly. Students will explore what is happening to traditional patterns of China’s elder care after nearly four decades of the one-child policy.

Students will focus their attention on the care of the elderly to prepare to address the following questions. To do this, they will use the lesson’s [curated resources](#) as well as the story’s hyperlinks. This additional content — along with other information they find via key word searches online — should prepare them to discuss these questions:

- How has the one-child policy affected the care of elderly people in China?
- What cultural beliefs, including those about gender, and economic considerations have led families to develop the traditional patterns of care for elders in China?
- Read the China’s’ New Family Form box in the [Daughter, Wife, Mother](#) story in *Touching Home in China*. What do you discover in this graphic about a Chinese family’s situation as it relates the potential challenges of elder care?

Click [here](#) to explore the curated resources for Group C.

Group D: Coming to America

Beginning in the 19th century, Chinese immigrants settled in the United States. Since then, distinct waves of immigrants have come from China, bracketed by the restrictive laws put in place by the American government from the late 19th century into the mid-20th century. As students learn about these various eras

of Chinese migration to the United States, they will focus on the changing composition of the Chinese coming to America, up to and including the wave of recent adoptees.

Students will focus their attention on immigration to America to prepare to address the following questions. To do this, they will use the lesson's [curated resources](#) as well as the story's hyperlinks. This additional content — along with other information they find via key word searches online — should prepare them to discuss these questions:

- What factors have affected the migration experiences of Chinese people to America during different periods of time?
- Prior to the early 1990s, the adoption of Chinese children by Westerners did not exist. What factors in China contributed to the rise in international adoptions?
- With most adoptees from China being raised in Caucasian families, what are some of the likely challenges they experience growing up in America? Are there things their families do to help their adopted children integrate their Chinese heritage into their American lives?
- Why would adoptees want to go back to a country where they were abandoned?

Click [here](#) to explore the curated resources for Group D.

All Groups: Wrap-Up

As a class, come together to discuss if other consequences of China's one-child policy stood out to individual students or groups. If so, what are they? Ask students to reflect on how the one-child policy was responsible for these consequences.

1 - Reflection and Action Project

This critical element of Touching Home in China's curriculum asks students to complete a culminating project to assess and demonstrate their learning. In doing this, students have an opportunity to try out new approaches as they share with others a finished project that reflects on the knowledge gained in their "Engaging the Challenge" group explorations. Students should not expect to "solve" problems — in the sense of finding a definitive answer — though they are likely to draw broader public awareness to the situation and/or its consequences by the activities they pursue. It's possible their project(s) will shift attitudes and inspire action. By reflecting and acting on what they have learned, we want students to gain deeper appreciation of the kind of challenges that individuals confront when they set out to "solve" a problem and/or inspire others to take action on an issue.

Ask students to explore the Abandoned Baby gallery "Lonely Childhoods and Missing Girls" that illustrates the different ways in which three artists use their creativity to present visual expressions of China's one-child policy. Then, watch two short videos: one is about Beijing painter [Meng Site](#), and the other introduces French-born multi-disciplinary artist Prune Nourry and her China project [Terracotta Daughters](#).

Share with the class some [poster art](#) the Chinese government used in its one-child policy campaign — and discover what those posters might look like in 2016, as China is trying to encourage couples to have a second child.

After viewing the gallery and poster art and watching the videos, discuss with the students how and why the artists' work encourages different understanding about China's one-child policy. This will encourage them to think about the role artists can play in getting people to see, feel or notice things in fresh ways — and by doing so inspire change. See if students can come up with examples of artists in their country or local community whose creative efforts help them or others think about policies, events or issues in new ways.

Inspiration might be found in these examples and stories:

- Maya Lin's design of the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#)
- The artist Christo on why he [creates with fabric](#)
- The AIDS Memorial Quilt Names Project, [short history](#)
- Artists as Activists: Pursuing Social Justice, [story with illustrations](#)
- On Artists Who Inspire Social Change, a [video](#)
- Your Waste of Time, [a visual exhibit](#) by Olafur Eliasson (Ask students to go to the text and image links at this website)

In their Reflection and Action Project, students come up with an issue or cause that they'd like to inspire other people to care more about and/or act on to bring about change. Each student decides on a form of creative expression – painting or drawing, poem or sculpture, cartoon or animated video – to use in designing an a campaign that invites fresh reflection. In the plan for the campaign, students explain why they chose this particular artistic form to convey their message, how their project will draw people's attention, where and how it will be displayed, and what change they'd like to see happen. (The change they envision can be in people's thinking.) They do not need to produce a prototype of the art though, if time permits, they can do so. Students do need to sketch and write about their idea to give a complete sense of how they arrived at their approach, what it will look like, how people will interact with it, and what response they expect their creative effort will receive.