

## CROSSING CHINA BY SAMPAN

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**Grade Level:** Grade 6

**Purpose:** The purpose of this lesson is to enable students to determine the geographic features that facilitate and prevent communication and commerce between parts of China.

1. Students use maps of China in ways that are increasingly difficult from the previous lesson.
2. Students make inferences about the ways that China's topography slows travel and communication between some parts of the country, but not others.
3. Students will "sail" and "portage" a sampan, the traditional flat-bottomed boat used in China and other Southeast Asia countries, as they travel across the country to designated cities.

(This lesson has been adapted from *China, A Complete Resource*, by Diana Granat and Stanlee Brimberg, Scholastic Professional Books.)

### **National Geography Standards:**

#### *The World in Spatial Terms:*

- #1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- #3. How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface. Places and Regions:
  - #4. The physical and human characteristics of places.  
Human Systems:
    - #11. The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface.
    - #12. The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.  
Environment and Society:
      - #15. How physical systems affect human systems.  
The Uses of Geography:
        - #18. How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

#### **Materials Required:**

- \*A previous introduction to the geographic features of China.
- \*Two maps of China, one showing specific cities, and a topographic one (showing major rivers, mountains, and deserts  
(Suggestion: Good maps are available in the Scholastic Professional Books.)

**Purpose:** Upon completion of this activity, the student will be able to

1. recognize a sampan, the traditional flat-bottomed boat used in Southeast Asia,
2. find routes between cities,
3. make comparisons of the distance traveled between cities,
4. analyze the distance according to miles traveled by water and miles portaged over land,
5. contrast the routes according to difficulty of travel, and
6. infer how China's topography makes travel and communication more difficult between some cities.

**Procedures:**

1. Introduce the sampan as a traditional boat used for travel and shelter; propelled by one oar: containing a small living structure covered by a roof of mats. (Use photo or video segment of a sampan.)
2. Explain that the Chinese use the respected spirit of the dragon to show the importance of their rivers. They traditionally describe their rivers as dragons. The dragon's limbs are the smaller streams. They flow into the dragon's body, or Main River. The dragon's mouth is the delta, where the river flows into the sea.
3. Point out that the rivers of China may have more than one name or reference, and that the spelling of these names may vary from one publication to another.
4. Clarify that students will be working in groups that will require an explorer, a navigator, and a recorder.
5. Each group's assignment is to determine the distance traveled on four routes across China and to specify the miles traveled on land and the miles traveled by water.
6. These numbers are written on the chalkboard so a whole class assessment can be made.
7. After calculations are completed, the class discusses the results and draws conclusions. Some questions asked during this discussion may include:

“What part of China was traveled by sampan the easiest?”

“What part of China was traveled mostly on land?”

“What might this comparison show about the development of China through the centuries?”

“What are the natural barriers to communication and travel in China?”

“What naturally occurring feature facilitates communication and commerce?”

8. The class composes a paragraph of conclusions.

**Adaptations/Extensions:**

Read about construction of the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze (yang see) River and the problems posed by the Yangtze (also Yangzi or Chang Jiang) River.

**Evaluation Mechanism:**

Rubric attached

**References:**

The Ancient World, Prentice Hall, 1998.

China, A Complete Resource by Diana Granat and Stanlee Brimberg, Scholastic Professional Books, 1999

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Group

No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Social Studies Activity: Crossing China by Sampan**

**Overview:**

Your group will be taking four trips across China in a sampan. All the trips will begin in Harbin, in the northeast corner of China. Each of the four trips will end in different cities. You will want to stay on the water (in your sampan) as much as possible because crossing land means you have to portage, or carry, your sampan. You will record the distance you travel on land and the distance you travel by water on each of the four trips.

**Job descriptions:**

1. The explorer determines the shortest route between the two cities, noting whether you will have to cross a

desert, a mountain, or any other geographical feature.

2. The navigator calculates the distances covered each time you travel on land and each time you travel on water.
3. The recorder finds the totals for land travel and water travel.
4. Everyone writes the totals on the chart.

**Routes:**

#1 is Harbin to Hainan Island.

#2 is Harbin to Lhasa.

#3 is Harbin to Kunming.

#4 is Harbin to Urumqi.

**Materials:**

Map of China with Major Cities

Map of China with Major Rivers, Mountains & Deserts

Record:	Distance sailed	Distance portaged
Route #1	_____miles	_____miles
Route #2	_____miles	_____miles
Route #3	_____miles	_____miles

Route #4 \_\_\_\_\_miles          \_\_\_\_\_miles

Now write these distances on the chalkboard (or overhead) under your group's number.

**Conclusion:**

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**Evaluation**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Evaluation of Quality    Poor    Average    High**

1. Cooperation and voluntary participation with my group 1 2 3
2. Completion of my job description 1 2 3
3. Neatness and clarity of written work 1 2 3

**Teacher Evaluation of Quality**

1. Cooperation with your group 1 2 3
2. Completion of your job description 1 2 3
3. Neatness and clarity of written work 1 2 3
4. Completion of distances for class totals 1 2 3
5. Spelling in paragraph 1 2 3
6. Sentence structure of paragraph 1 2 3
7. Content of paragraph 1 2 3

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_