

2023 EAST ASIA IN THE UPPER MIDWEST TEACHING INITIATIVE



Author: Michael Freydin	Unit: Community and Cultural Diffusion	Topic: Chinese Hip Hop Simulation
Skill: Compare and Contrast; Cause and Effect; Point of View; Vocabulary	Time Allotted: 2-3 class periods	Grade Level: 6-9

Essential Question: To what extent does modern music cultivate an understanding of shared elements across cultures? To what extent do cultural diffusion and appropriation play a part in creating a mass media culture and making underground music, fashion, and style available beyond their original borders?

Note to Teacher / Practical Directions:

This lesson exemplifies how the arts lead education. Visual arts and music help us hear and feel the times. Monuments and local places can improve our cultural pride, improve connections to the policies of the United States that have wavered and led or not led to friendship with other countries. We choose the arts as an entry point for this unit as it builds upon the student’s knowledge and provides an opportunity to apply new research skills and strategies as they learn about the people and how they are representing their country.

During this lesson, students will begin to reflect on the ideas of people using music as a strand that weaves throughout history. In addition, the student’s understanding of hip-hop songs will be used as a “jumping-off” point to look, first, at how songs have changed over time, and later, how other countries freedom songs are similar and different. Students will also begin to explore the concept of interdependence.

In these lessons, young historians will seek out common themes found in music, art, and community, and how those themes drive them to investigate further. It is hoped that their investigation into music, commerce, and cultural diffusion will synthesize a deeper understanding of the communities around them. Student historians may use their newly gained insight to create artistic or written work to synthesize their understanding of the themes they have encountered in the visual, textual, and interpersonal resources.

I think it’s important for us as educators and students to pay attention to the resources and comparisons that come from non-traditional sources, and realize that, in the words of Maya Angelou, “*we are more alike, my friend, than we are unlike.*”

Lesson will begin with a Warm Up activity of students practicing Visual Thinking Strategies as applied to music supplied by the teacher. Teacher may wish to ask not only **what the students see**, but **what it is they do not see**, and how the scene before them in the image **is different** than what they would have expected to find. Those differences and similarities ought to lead students to common themes, which may then be explored in the readings that follow.

Lesson Goals: Materials will be used to reinforce the goals of bringing to light cultural and musical connections between China and the United States, as well as giving voice to those experiences which may not be ordinarily shared across cultures, which tend to focus on macro rather than micro experiences.

Moreover, the goal of cultivating empathy and understanding by students of those who surround them in their communities, and making personal world-to-self connections through the lens of mutual or similar feelings others may have from shared experiences.

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Write the lyrics to an original song to express themselves and share their experiences.
- Understand how to write lyrics using verses and a chorus.
- Write lyrics that use rhythm.

Formative Assessment: daily exit slips may include but are not limited to a self-assessment as it relates to the daily lesson.

Goal 1: What can I learn from this story? What questions can I ask about these themes?

Goal 2: Now that I know what questions I can ask, whom can I ask these questions?

Goal 3: How would I go about finding a person or source to help me learn about this theme?

Summative Assessment: while no summative assessment is truly necessary for the lesson, collaborative work may be exhibited through a collaborative Padlet or poster, which will reveal student feelings about the themes discussed in the unit.

Alternatively, Teacher may make use of the Writing Scenario to have students produce a journalistic work where students conduct hypothetical or actual interviews of Chinese Hip Hop musicians.

Higher Order Thinking Question: What policy could nations enact to address issues brought up in this unit? Are musicians and artist truly free to express their genuine feelings, thoughts, and ideas, if they are sponsored by state agencies?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy Standards – History/Social Studies:

RH.6-8.2 – 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.

RH.6-8.6 – Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose.

RH.6-8.7–Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Depth of Knowledge Levels: 2 Skill/Concept; 3 Strategic Thinking; 4 Extended Thinking.

Social Studies Practices: A - Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence:

1. Define and frame questions about events and the world in which we live, form hypotheses as potential answers to these questions, use evidence to answer these questions, and consider and analyze counterhypotheses.
2. Identify, describe, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).

NYS Standards:

NYS SS2: World History: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

NYS SS3: Geography: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

Engage NY Scope and Sequence:

10.8 TENSIONS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL CULTURES AND MODERNIZATION: Tensions exist between traditional cultures and agents of modernization. Reactions for and against modernization depend on perspective and context.

10.9 GLOBALIZATION AND A CHANGING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT (1990–PRESENT):

Technological changes have resulted in a more interconnected world, affecting economic and political relations and in some cases leading to conflict and in others to efforts to cooperate. Globalization and population pressures have led to strains on the environment.

NYS Learning Standards for the Arts - Connecting 10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. 11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

National Core Arts Standards: The Arts as Community Engagement: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

NCTE / IRA Standards for the English Language Arts Standards:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Minnesota State Standards:

- 7.4.2.4.1 The differences and similarities of cultures around the world are attributable to their diverse origins and histories, and interactions with other cultures throughout time.
- 8.4.3.14.8 Describe how groups are reviving and maintaining their traditional cultures, identities and distinctiveness in the context of increasing globalization.
- 9.3.3.6.4 Describe the factors (transportation, government policies, economic development, and changing cultural values) that shape the modern world.

Materials and Resources: students can use the following websites and materials to help cultivate a deeper understanding of the topic.

- Music video: Billy Joel - We Didn't Start the Fire: <https://youtu.be/cDPnsTRAvIM>
- Music video: FallOut Boy - We Didn't Start the Fire: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LkVKCWL0U4&ab_channel=FallOutBoy
- Music video: Hiding – In Beijing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh6IJWfYyTo&list=PLzxSeMIFuQvEWM98oO_aBv1uPdEuJBoF1&index=2&ab_channel=GloriaChen
- Timeline of US - China relations.
- Extended Reading Article: A Tale Of Two Cities - Exploring China's Hip-Hop Capitals, text by David Zhou, source: <https://maekan.com/story/a-tale-of-two-cities-exploring-chinas-hip-hop-capitals/>, Accessed: July 9, 2023

Language Objective:

- Students will repeat precise vocabulary related to the various aspects of geography, expressions, youth culture, and of the cultures of China and of the United States.
- Students will verbally describe the main ideas behind the effects of cultural diffusion on individuals and communities, and the relevant points of view.
- Students will be encouraged to use causal words (because of, due to, leading to) and descriptive language.

Content Goal:

- Students will learn about the importance of hearing multiple voices through the lens of hip hop music and counterculture between China and the United States.

- Students will be encouraged to delve into a different culture, and into their own, by eliciting information from textual sources, as well as from an informant about their home culture and their experiences.
- Students will be guided to look at global phenomenon from the viewpoint of someone from another culture and place, and to see some similarities and differences in their experiences to students' own experiences.

Skills Goal: Apply historical thinking (complexity, causality, change over time, contingency, context).

- Students will use sources and contemporary contexts to consider their own and others' perspectives.
- Students will work with background knowledge and selected historical or contemporary sources of evidence to frame a perspective.
- Students will evaluate multiple perspectives from background knowledge and sources of evidence as part of an argument.

Mini-Lesson: How can young historians consider aspects of hip hop in US-China cultural exchange, and evaluate their effects on cultural diffusion and appropriation?

Academic Rigor:

Goal 1: Connecting Images to Themes

Goal 2: Connecting Themes to Community

Goal 3: Evaluating Multiple Points of View

NYC Arts Benchmarks:

- (Theater Making) Students participate in a variety of group and solo activities in rehearsal and performance, demonstrating and the ability to work collaboratively.
- (Developing Theater Literacy) Students refine their knowledge of dramatic literature through an examination of a range of scripts.
- (Making Connections) Students explore elements of theater shared with other art forms.
- (Working with Community and Cultural Resources) Students share their theater learning through performances for others, including their own schools, families and communities.

National Standard for Music Education:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
4. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
5. Evaluating music and music performances.

Notes to Teacher/Background: Modern counterculture and traditional cultural dimensions of music can play multiple roles at different times: it can inform, educate, inspire, and motivate people. It can expose corruption, spark conversations, understanding, and reflection about our very different and shared experiences as humans. It can allow people to see something or someone from a different perspective, or a new light.

By this point, students will be familiar with the concepts of networks, cultural diffusion, interdependence, and of influence.

Historical Background/ Connections:

To Teachers: Students will listen to hip hop songs, which were chosen to complement their understanding, as a strategy to learn about history and change. In addition to exploring listening strategies, students will begin to explore effective question about different forms of art, observing, and then analyzing data they have collected to make inferences and predictions. We want our students to be young historians as they gather, compile, and analyze their data in preparation for their final project.

Social Studies is an essential preparation for our students to be informed and active participants in our communities. Each of us must do our part to help students understand the complexities of our world and why we need to be involved citizens. This lesson may show our students how to become young historians in a different way. They gain essential skills and strategies as by immersing themselves in this unit of study. By gaining an understanding of how to interpret

symbolism and dramatically interpret songs, students can build upon their growing knowledge about our relationship with other countries, recognizing that they are both alike and different, and that everyone has a story that is interesting and unique.

To Students:

- In past lessons, we have learned of the importance of music to the study of United States history.
- We also learned that as certain group reestablished their communities in the United States, they brought with them their ideas, tastes, religions, music, arts, cuisine, and architecture.
- We learned about the positive and negative aspects of cultural diffusion and have seen its long-term effects.
- We have also learned about the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the devastating effects it had on communities.
- The Chinese Exclusion Act marked the first time the US specifically denied an ethnic group the right of entry and citizenship. The law remained in effect for over 60 years, from 1882 until 1943.
- We discovered the interdependence between US and its need for labor, leading to immigration waves.
- Today, we will begin to learn how certain examples of cultural relations can be compared, to be found similar and/or contrasting.
- To do so, we will look at the rise of hip hop music in China, from its birth in America, and engage in an activity where we will draft new lyrics to a Chinese hip hop tune.

Warm Up: Turn And Talk – Discuss in Small Groups:

- What significant events shaped the 2020's?
(Think about historical events, politics, the economy, literature, movies, athletes, celebrities, technological breakthroughs)
- Answers will vary.

Anticipated Answers may include:

- COVID 19, Donald Trump, Killing of George Floyd, Inflation and rising prices
MeToo movement, Joe Biden
War in Ukraine

Proceed with discussion by using micro analysis.

- Ask students what they understand the referenced items in the lyrics to be.
- For struggling learners, explain that those lyrics reference past events, people, fads, and places that were “trending” between the year Billy Joel was born, and the year the song came out.
 - Attempt to elicit from students what they think Billy Joel means by "We didn't start the Fire", and what it means in regard to future events.
 - Explain that students will re-word a Chinese hip-hop song using their own lyrics, creating their own secondary sources to emulate a primary source. In other words, they will be doing a cover of a song.
- Ask students what additional information they are able to gather from the addition of these lyrics.

Model:

- Today, will collaborate with the group to write a song while continuing to reinforce and explore the concepts from the model song.
- What I see when I listen to this song, is its unusual style. I recognize that this is not the kind of song I regularly hear.
- My first thoughts go to the rhythm of this song. It is really very catchy, I like it.
- My later thoughts go to the lyrics of the song. I wonder what they are, and to find out I will use the lyric sheet.
- I would want to find out more about this band, and all the places they are talking about in the song.
- You will use the same approach, but you will then also use the original melody and original song as the foundation for your own songs. You will create new lyrics. Begin with one line, then review.
- You will begin by exploring your own history, your own community, and your own geography. Begin by exploring the participant's own ideas of what is around you.
 - Ask if anyone would like to volunteer information about a memory that sticks out in their mind that they would like to write about.
 - Ask for three or four stories and see if a common theme emerges or if there is a particular story to which the class responds.

- Then begin to build a song around what is chosen by brainstorming, always bringing the ideas back to the chosen theme to reinforce and demonstrate how the songwriting tips work or don't work.
- Build verses, a chorus, and a melody.

Quick Check: Make a list of significant people, relevant places, and major events that you already know or would like to know about China.

Anticipated answer: Student responsiveness will be gauged as they respond to questions posed throughout introduction to see what connections they are making to their prior knowledge.

Work Period: Individually and in groups, students will:

1. Task 1: Listen and Learn: teacher intro to topic;
2. Task 2: Engage: Review the significant people, places, and events we have been discussing in class.
3. Task 3: Evaluate: relevant information about your life, times, locations, personal journeys, etc.
4. Task 4: Construct: Use this information to create a 3-stanza modern version of a Chinese hip hop song, based on the model. Paste copy of your song on the following slide.
5. Task 5: Reflect: on how US-China relations offered opportunities for musical exchange, based on a love of a musical genre, drawing conclusions on similarities and differences.

Differentiation, Scaffolding, and Workshop Model Seating: Group seating grouping and placement based upon Prosper pretest and post-test skills assessments, behavioral needs, linguistic needs, IEP goals, baseline assessment, and conferencing. An engaging and interactive introduction will be given. Introduction may include visual components to engage students who need visual stimuli. Visual components may include handouts or organizer.

ELL/IEP/FELL/SIFE students may receive a Vocabulary in Context or imbedded definitions. Students may receive differentiated reading. ICT/SETTS teacher may instruct selected group. Varying academic levels: individual writing time to allow students to progress at their own ability level. Auditory learners: encourage small-group discussion to create notes for information.

Extension Activity for Early Finishers may include **Extended Reading**.

Scaffolding	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5
Identified by pretest data, students not proficient in central idea may receive main idea scaffolded support.					
Identified by pretest data, students not proficient in determining the meaning of words /phrases may receive vocabulary in context.					
Un-scaffolded	All other students	All other students	All other students	All other students	All other students

Share Out:

1. Begin by reviewing what happened during the lesson.
2. Ask participants to reflect on what they think they learned and ask them how they are feeling about the song they wrote.
3. Listen to it or play it together, and then lead the group in a critical conversation about what they have created.

4. Ask students to reflect on their experience. Questions may include:
- What was the experience like for you?
 - What common themes have you seen across the songs you created?
 - Was this surprising to you?
 - What felt familiar?
 - What felt difficult, challenging, uncomfortable?
 - What was new, enlightening?
 - What did you learn?
 - What connections did you make?

Answers will vary.

Discussion Question: What resources could you use to find out if other people across the world shared this experience? What would you expect to see in common with US and Chinese rappers?

Closing:

1. Today, we learned about the history of the rise of hip hop in China.
2. What similar themes did you recognize when listening to the experiences of individuals from today's songs?
3. Do you think these themes will be found in other communities and regions of art, and by other individuals?
Explain your reasoning.
4. Continue the work of comparing and contrasting by moving forward in time to extend comparisons between Chinese and American cultural views today.

Directed Question: What else would you like to learn about this topic?

Small Group/Individual Conferencing:

Class:

Student:

Reason:

Teacher Notes and Reflections:

Model: USA – Billy Joel: ‘We Didn’t Start the Fire’ Lyrics

Harry Truman, Doris Day, Red China, Johnnie Ray
South Pacific, Walter Winchell, Joe DiMaggio
Joe McCarthy, Richard Nixon, Studebaker, television
North Korea, South Korea, Marilyn Monroe

Rosenbergs, H-bomb, Sugar Ray, Panmunjom
Brando, "The King and I", and "The Catcher in the Rye"
Eisenhower, Vaccine, England's got a new queen
Marciano, Liberace, Santayana, goodbye

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning, since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
No, we didn't light it, but we tried to fight it

Joseph Stalin, Malenkov, Nasser and Prokofiev
Rockefeller, Campanella, Communist Bloc
Roy Cohn, Juan Peron, Toscanini, Dacron
Dien Bien Phu falls, "Rock Around the Clock"

Einstein, James Dean, Brooklyn's got a winning team
Davy Crockett, Peter Pan, Elvis Presley, Disneyland
Bardot, Budapest, Alabama, Krushchev
Princess Grace, Peyton Place, Trouble in the Suez

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning, since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
No, we didn't light it, but we tried to fight it

Little Rock, Pasternak, Mickey Mantle, Kerouac
Sputnik, Chou En-Lai, "Bridge on the River Kwai"
Lebanon, Charles de Gaulle, California baseball
Starkweather homicide, children of thalidomide

Buddy Holly, Ben Hur, space monkey, mafia
Hula hoops, Castro, Edsel is a no-go
U2, Syngman Rhee, Payola and Kennedy
Chubby Checker, Psycho, Belgians in the Congo

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning, since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
No, we didn't light it, but we tried to fight it

Hemingway, Eichmann, "Stranger in a Strange Land"
Dylan, Berlin, Bay of Pigs invasion
"Lawrence of Arabia", British Beatlemania
Ole Miss, John Glenn, Liston beats Patterson
Pope Paul, Malcolm X, British politician sex
JFK – blown away, what else do I have to say?

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning, since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
No, we didn't light it, but we tried to fight it

Birth control, Ho Chi Minh, Richard Nixon back again
Moonshot, Woodstock, Watergate, punk rock
Begin, Reagan, Palestine, terror on the airline
Ayatollah's in Iran, Russians in Afghanistan

"Wheel of Fortune", Sally Ride, heavy metal suicide
Foreign debts, homeless vets, AIDS, crack, Bernie Goetz
Hypodermics on the shore, China's under martial law
Rock and roller, cola wars, I can't take it anymore

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning, since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
But when we are gone
It will still burn on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on

Analysis Questions:

1. Why do you think Billy Joel chose to include these specific headlines in his song?
2. Which people/events do you consider the most significant?
3. What is the significance of the title, “We didn’t start the fire”?

Model: China – Hiding: ‘In Beijing’ Lyrics

<p>In Beijing, walking on Chang'an Ave In Beijing, there are many beautiful girls In Beijing, burn incense at the Yonghe Temple In Beijing, visiting your family's hutong In Beijing, learn history at the Forbidden City In Beijing, buy a t-shirt in Xidan In Beijing, Tiananmen is very big In Beijing, don't you know?</p>	<p>We live near the houses in Siheyuan Beijing Station has trains, and places for non-locals to stay Intercity buses roll from the station, onto the highway The art museum is the quietest place; Beihai has the Nine Dragons Wall</p>
<p>Taxis for 1 Yuan or 1.6 Yuan Traffic is usually okay but sometimes there are jams No need to bring up the roast duck and zhajiang noodles, and the hot pot, so many selections oh my! Get up in the morning and go to Xiangshan to experience nature On the way back don't forget to visit Yiheyuar On Chengfu Road there's a light rail into the city</p>	<p>My home is in Dongzhimen, their home is Xueyuan Rd We've been everywhere so Yin T'sang is very familiar with Beijing Haidian is full of schools and computer shops Wudaokou is full of foreigners and CD shops At night you can go to Sanlitar and drink a bit Everywhere there's Karaoke and bars Besides dancing, drinking, and chatting there's plenty more to do Wake up the next day and you're still flying Got a friend at Beijing University, a girlfriend at Qinghua University</p>
<p>Buy cell phones at Xizhimen, buy clothes at the zoo At Xike Train Station you will surely get lost From Jishuitan to Gulou, go east from Anding Gate At Sanyuan Bridge buy some old electronics, 5th Ring Road will be open soon. Dongsu has so many bridges [?], I can never tell them apart Zhaoyang has embassies and tree-lined streets Jianguo Gate faces the Central Business District</p>	<p>In Beijing the 2008 Olympics are coming In Beijing it's getting more and more beautiful In Beijing there are lakes and rivers In Beijing most people ride bicycles In Beijing, the Great Wall In Beijing the winter is a bit cold In Beijing, the Monument to the People's Heroes In Beijing, now you know</p>

Your Life and Times Data Organizer

	Famous People	Significant Trends
Relevant Places		
Important Events		

EXTENDED READING:

Select Timeline for US – China Relations in the Twentieth Century

Note: Quotes are from John Pomfret’s *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom* overview of US-China relations (see Unit 6 for details).

The State Department’s Office of the Historian also has a lengthy “**Chronology of US China Relations, 1784-2000**” from which a few of the following items were drawn.

1899-1901 – Boxer Rebellion, “a bloody antifeign crusade born in Shandong province in response to Western land grabs and other depredations. The Boxers, so named because they held that kung fu could repel bullets, blamed China’s poverty on Western goods and technology.” (p. 109) An Eight National Alliance, which included the US, used military force to crush the rebellion and forced payment, known as the Boxer indemnity, from the Qing Dynasty. The US indemnity was mostly diverted to a scholarship program which brought hundreds of Chinese students to American universities, including 95 to the University of Wisconsin, the largest public university recipient of Boxer Indemnity scholars.

1911 – The Republican Revolution led the fall of the Manchu Qing Dynasty and the end of the imperial era to Chinese history. Sun Yatsen was sworn in as the provisional president of the Republic of China on Jan. 1, 1912.

1913 – President Woodrow Wilson named **Paul S. Reinsch (photo at left)** as the first American ambassador to a post-imperial Chinese government. Reinsch, a Milwaukee native, was a former professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin and recommended several Chinese students to his department for graduate study.

1931 – Pearl Buck publishes *The Good Earth*, which was made into a 1937 hit movie and follows a Chinese farming family through a series of crises. The novel “was both a vivid portrait of faraway China and a very American tale: an up-by-the-bootstraps parable about the values—modesty, thrift, and closeness to the land—that had made America great. *The Good Earth* married the Protestant work ethic with Confucius.” (p. 175)

1937 – Edgar Snow publishes *Red Star Over China*, based on his lengthy interviews with Mao Zedong and other Communist leaders. These were the first encounters with an American for Mao, who went on to be the Chairman of the People’s Republic of China. “Red Star was as American as Huckleberry Finn, one long prose poem to the previously unmown Chinese Communists.” (p. 232) It proved influential to both Americans, and to students and intellectuals in China. Zhou Enlai (who became premier under Mao), called Snow “the greatest of foreign authors and our best friend abroad.”

1941-42 – Flying Tigers, an American volunteer group of pilots formed to help oppose the Japanese invasion of China. Commanded by Claire Lee Chennault and based in Kunming (southwestern China), the group was credited with destroying 296 enemy aircraft along the “Burma Road” supply line. John Wayne starred in a film about them, and memorials to their legacy can be found in China and Taiwan.

1943 – Madame Soong Mayling became the first Chinese national to address both houses of Congress, to rally support for China’s war effort. A graduate of Wesleyan College and the wife of Nationalist Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Madame Soong and her husband were declared “Man and Wife of the Year” by Time Magazine in 1937. This year also marked the **end of the Chinese Exclusion Act**, allowing Chinese immigration for the first time in 60 years.

1949 – Chairman Mao Zedong’s declaration from Beijing’s Gate of Heavenly Peace that “the Chinese people have stood up” and formed **the People’s Republic of China** led to a crisis in the US over “who lost China” and resulted in the “Two Chinas” geopolitical situation in which the PRC governs from Beijing, while the Republic of China governs from Taipei, Taiwan, and both claim to represent the true China.

1954 – First Taiwan Trait Crisis required intervention from the US after PRC forces amassed along the coast opposite Taiwan. Shelling of islands near Taiwan in 1958 constituted the second crisis, while military exercises in 1996 prompted the third.

1960 – President Dwight Eisenhower became the first US head of state to pay an official visit to a Chinese government when he met with Chiang Kai-shek (also spelled Jiang Jieshi) in Taiwan in June.

1966-76 – The Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution, a sociopolitical movement launched by Chairman Mao, closed universities, set off deadly power struggles, and ended essentially all relations between the US and China.

1971 – A US player at an international table tennis competition in Japan missed his team bus and hitched a ride with the team from the PRC, launching what became known as “**Ping-Pong Diplomacy**” and led to the first semi-official delegation of Americans in two decades – an American table tennis team visit to Beijing.

1972 – **President Nixon arrived in China** on February 21, the first American head of state ever to set foot on the Chinese Mainland. His weeklong visit resulted in the Shanghai Communiqué, which reduced US support of Taiwan and led to the normalization of relations between the US and the P.R.C.

1979 – **Chairman Deng Xiaoping visited the US** following the death of Chairman Mao in 1976 and the commencement of **normal diplomatic relations between the US and China** on New Year’s Day of 1979. Deng’s visit was part of his economic and reforms program which also encouraged **academic exchanges**. UW-Madison’s first delegation to China coincided with Deng’s return flight to Beijing – faculty snapped bleary photos of Deng on the tarmac. The first group of Chinese scholars arrived in Madison that fall, and students from the PRC have attended UW-Madison ever since, today constituting the largest international cohort on campus (totaling 3,286 students in fall 2021).

1980 – The US Congress conditionally granted China “**Most Favored Nation**” **trade status**, allowing essentially unfettered access to the US market, but requiring an annual review. This lasted until 2000, when Congress approved “Permanent Normal Trade Relations” status for China. (This trade status is given to members of the World Trade Organization, with MFN allowing equal and fair trade under most conditions and requiring negotiations between member countries.)

1989 – A spontaneous **democracy movement** in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square gained international attention. The movement was crushed on the night of June 3-4 in a military crackdown known outside of China as the **Tiananmen Massacre**. This severely strained US-China diplomatic ties, though trade remained open.

1995 – China hosted the U.N’s Fourth **World Conference on Women**, the largest and highest profile international event to be held in China up to that time, with First Lady Hilary Clinton in attendance.

1999 – **US accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade** killed four and injured 20, sparking a wave of anti-US protests across China and ending with an apology from President Bill Clinton.

EXTENDED READING:

A TALE OF TWO CITIES - Exploring China's Hip-Hop Capitals, text by David Zhou, source: <https://maekan.com/story/a-tale-of-two-cities-exploring-chinas-hip-hop-capitals/>, Accessed: July 9, 2023

When trap music is highlighted in the context of China and especially in English, the discussion often wanders into focusing on the showy garish side, before writing off the burgeoning scene as a shallow imitation of the popular North American genre.

But in this story, Eugene sits down with David Zhou and Lucas Farrar, who set the record straight on the Chinese hip hop scene, specifically as it pertains to Chengdu and Chongqing, the two rival cities building the scene from the ground up and laying claim to the title of China's hip hop capital.



The restaurant's loudspeakers blare an order number and a waiter brings over a plate of roasted fish laden with chilies. The three rappers at the table briefly set aside their phones, but it's not long before everyone huddles around one to hear a demo recorded hours earlier. They silently mouth the refrains from each other's verses. Their recorded bars are full of phrases from the local dialect, opening up phonological possibilities that'd be otherwise restricted by the rigid pronunciation of standardised Mandarin. Mid-mouthful, one of them announces that a video excerpt of the song is already racking up numbers on social media.

We're in Chengdu, the capital of China's south-western Sichuan province. Known for its tongue-numbing spices and Mahjong filled teahouses, this city of over 10 million people has recently become home to a burgeoning rap scene. The three rappers, AnsrJ, Lil Shin, and Mengzi, are part of the city's central rap collective, CDC (also known as the Chengdu Rap House). Founded in 2010, CDC's profile has risen onto the global radar partly due to the success of Higher Brothers, a 4-person supergroup often referred to as the Chinese Migos because of their similarly electrifying chemistry and their vocal debt to the triplet flow popularised by the infamous Atlanta trio.

"They've had to make a lot of sacrifices in their lives, especially in the family context."

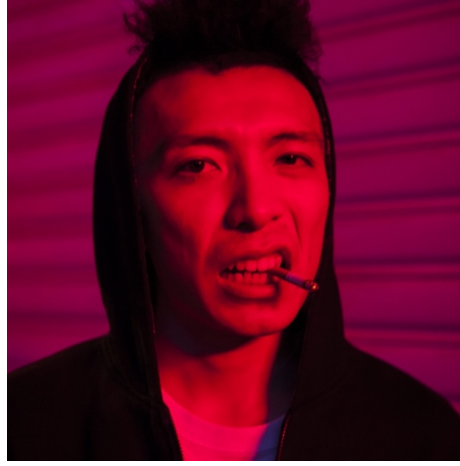
Rap in Mainland China can be roughly split into two eras. The first was dominated by the politicised Boom bap-influenced scenes of Beijing and Shanghai and took cues from Taiwan and Hong Kong. The current generation is more de-centralised, made by a hyper-connected WeChat generation accustomed to peeking over China's Great Firewall (the intricate state-sponsored system of Internet censorship). Trap is their vehicle of choice. Founded in 2010, CDC have been pivotal in spearheading this second generation.

Even to a Chinese audience, CDC's songs are often indecipherable. Chinese is a tonal language; the meaning of Chinese characters (which combine to make words) depend on the pitch of their pronunciation. In English language rap, rhythms are underscored by vocal stresses. However, when transplanted to Chinese, these stresses can cut across the tones of Chinese characters and muddy their meaning. The mirror effect of this is that Chinese rap that strictly adheres to the tones of standardised Mandarin pronunciation often comes off as staccato and rigid. This isn't too much of a problem for Boom bap's insistent rhythms, but makes a difficult fit for trap's slurred nature.

Chengdu's rappers get around this by mixing their provincial dialect with Mandarin. Unlike other Chinese dialects, which make heavy use of flat tones that can give the musical impression of monotony, the Sichuanese dialect is rich with rising and falling tones. The tone for one character can polar opposites when spoken in standard Mandarin or Sichuanese. This means that, when used together with Mandarin, the dialect unlocks a wealth of options as to where stresses can fall within a bar. Combined with the dialect's propensity for exaggerated pronunciation (think the drawn-out vowels of a Dirty Southern drawl) that the locals call Ya-Jian—literally, "sharp tooth"—Chengdu's rappers have been blessed with a linguistic toolbox that perfectly suits trap.

For CDC though, rapping in their dialect is just as much a matter of local pride. "We just rap about the everyday things that are in our lives," says Lil Shin. "We've lived in Chengdu for most of our lives, so naturally we're going to represent our culture." There's another layer to this choice—a common criticism in China of domestic music is that it has always

just been a staggered facsimile of Western trends. AnsrJ is aware of this, as he tells me: “we’re taking this Western import, assimilating the culture and adding our own flavor to make something new, something that’s ours.”



“Good music makes you feel a certain way and brings about a certain energy. And [even] if that energy is apart from a long historical knowledge of a genre, the music can still be good.”

As with most rap, CDC’s songs are littered with references to material wealth. However, Rap’s union with materialism and commodification goes deeper in China than just lyrical content. A popular reality e-TV show “Rap of China,” with over 3 billion accumulated views, is responsible for propelling the genre into the Chinese mainstream. The show is populated with the kind of conspicuous sponsorship that would prompt even an advertising executive to think twice about ‘authenticity.’ Yet, the show is generally received enthusiastically. Even Higher Brothers, who declined to appear on the show, approve. DZKnow, the Nanjing-born crooner of the group, explains: “It’s a good thing. The show made people aware of rap. They can go deeper into the culture if they want to.

Much of rap’s newfound audience in China has come from the idol culture of K-Pop. Teenage girls dominate the front of any Higher Brothers show nowadays, and you’ll find the same girls patiently queuing for autographs when the lights go on. Rap of China itself is a replica of South Korea’s Show me the Money. The formulaic music-as-commodity that drives K-Pop’s idol culture is a nagging undercurrent for the scene. DJ Cell, a veteran of the underground circuit, is decidedly unapproving: “Chinese people just want to follow trends. If they hear their friends talking about Battlegrounds [a popular mobile video game], they want to play it. If they hear their friends are talking about Rap of China, they will want to listen to rap music. There’s no longevity. There’s no desire to understand or develop the culture – just to consume.”

But ultimately, you’re more likely to become rich in China by being a mid-level provincial bureaucrat than a rapper. Most of the artists on Rap of China have been steadily cultivating an organic underground following for the best part of a decade, kilobyte by kilobyte. Success has not come easily; dotted throughout the comments of Masiwei’s (the ostensible ringleader of Higher Brothers) early Weibo posts (China’s version of Twitter) are personal attacks, accusing him of shaming his family for his life choices. Choosing to be a rapper still comes with real stigma in a country where Confucian notions of knowing one’s place in society loom large. Just as the Chinese characters for the word ‘trend’ can also mean a ‘tidal current’, most of the rappers realise that this wave of mainstream success will rise and fall. Ty, a CDC member with a natural screwface and a wicked sense of black humor, explains: “Rap has got a long way to go in China. The door’s only just been opened enough to let some light in. To be honest, many of the new fans are not particularly focused on the music. That’s cool, let them enjoy it. When the excitement fades, only a portion of them will remain and really follow the music. That will be a bottleneck—how we get through that bottleneck will be important”. On the western outskirts of Chengdu, some 400 fans have lined up an hour before doors open to see Higher Brothers and homecoming rapper Bohan Phoenix perform. A huddle of 16-year-old fans gives its view on rap’s staying power: “We first started listening to rap through CDC. Listening to these guys rap in our dialect made us proud—they were expressing something to us that we hadn’t heard before, either by Western rappers or old-school Chinese rappers.” After the show, another teenage fan tells me that he’s flown from Kunming, a city 1,000 kilometers from Chengdu, just to catch this show. Naturally, he plays me his mixtape.



The city of Chongqing is approximately 300 kilometres from Chengdu. Since the completion of a high-speed railway in 2015, the two cities are now only two hours away from each other and much like a pair of brothers, share some similarities but retain key differences. As might be expected of siblings, there's a rivalry between the two metropolises where Chengdu natives see themselves as the relaxed brethren to Chongqing's gruff hustlers. The saying goes that if you give a Chengdu native 100,000 RMB, he'll buy two cars worth 45,000 RMB each and save the rest for hotpot; if you give a Chongqing native 100,000 RMB, he'll borrow 50,000 RMB more to buy a better car. The two cities' rappers also happen to be frontrunners in the race for the Chinese public's attention.

Flying the flag for Chongqing is GOSH Music. Comprised of 12 members, the group's style spans a range as wide as the mountains that flank Chongqing. From Bridge's Day-Glo melodies to Wudu Montana's earthen portraits of everyday life, from Gai's classical canvasses to K-Eleven's iced tea sweet auto-tune, their music reflects the vastness of the city they call home. Their 4-character refrain ("this is the fog city") can be heard bleeding out of earphones all day. Whilst influenced by CDC, whose music shares much of the same genome as Western trap, GOSH's music is arguably a native Chinese species.

"A lot of them are focused on putting in their local or very traditional Chinese culture into their lyrics and music."



Chongqing is a place of confluences. It is where the Yangtze River joins up with one of its biggest tributaries, the Jialiang River, and where rap mixes closest with traditional Chinese culture. You can hear these in the songs of Gai, who is enjoying mainstream success after winning the Rap of China. His lyrics are laced with obscure references from Chinese literary classics and China's dynastic history. A characteristic feature is his use of Cheng-Yu, idiomatic phrases consisting of 4 Chinese characters which surpass the meaning of the individual characters. Gai often draws for such stylized phrases in his songs, opting for Cheng-Yu that are more commonly associated with formal banquet table speeches rather than the recording booth. He also draws heavily upon the classical Chinese heritage of Jiang-Hu culture (a romantic ideal of Robin Hood-esque vagrants roaming the rivers and marshes of imperial China rooted in the tales of the Song Dynasty in the novel Water Margin) and often eschews trap's slurred enunciation for the vocal stylings of traditional Chinese singing.

E.Y.E., one of GOSH's founding members, meets us in a car park on the riverbanks of the city's Jiangbei region. The engine of his Subaru purrs in the background. "It's important for our music to be Chinese, to sound Chinese", he explains, "but my raps aren't about traditional Chinese culture – they're about life in Chongqing now. I don't make any classical references in my raps – but I always make sure there's local Chongqing slang in there. I know people outside Chongqing might not understand these phrases and references, but it's important to me. My music is made for this city." It's a completely different perspective to the international outlook of Chengdu's Higher Brothers, who are focused on breaking into the US. "I've always been fascinated by the language of local gangsters. That's what I heard around me when I growing up. Their slang is so cool — did you know that they call Heroin Hai-Bai-Cai [a local Cabbage dish]? There was a late-night radio DJ I used to listen to when I was a kid; I learned from him that so many phrases I grew up with originated in this city's underworld. I remember thinking 'Damn, that's cool'."