

Ming Dynasty and the Voyages of Zheng He

**Northwest Whitfield High School
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Northwest Whitfield High School is located in Tunnel Hill Georgia. It is a large school with almost 1800 students and 100 teachers. The student body is composed of approximately 80% Caucasian, 15% Hispanic, and 5% African-American students. The area is known for the prevalence of carpet mills and the majority of the students' families are involved in this industry either directly or indirectly through supporting companies. The socioeconomic range is from poverty to upper middle class. The school is benefiting from the addition of new technology in the form of both mobile and stationary computer labs.

Prior to covering this material the students will be familiar with Chinese history from the Qin dynasty through the Yuan/Mongol dynasty. The week prior to this unit will have covered the European discovery of the Americas. The lesson will incorporate a variety of methods and address multiple standards according to the Georgia Department of Education's World History curriculum. The specific standards that are covered are as follows:

SSWH10- The student will analyze the impact of the age of discovery and expansion into the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

SSWH10a- Explain the roles of explorers and conquistadors; include Zheng He, Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, and Ferdinand Magellan.

The lesson will begin with a brief warm-up/starter for the students. This will familiarize the students with some of the material prior to the PowerPoint. The warm-up consists of 5 short answer questions

accompanied by the page number that the student will utilize in order to find the solution. The following is an example of the type of question(s) that could be asked:

- Name the emperor who began the construction of the Imperial City in Beijing in 1406. (486)
- How many voyages did Zheng He make between 1405-1433? (486)

This activity should take no longer than 5-10 minutes. Following which the teacher should assess student learning by asking for volunteers to answer the questions or call on students to choose a fellow classmate to answer the question.

Following the warm-up the lecture/presentation will begin. The PowerPoint is set up in an outline format. The students will utilize a variety of note taking methods. The following is an example of a cloze outline that could be supplied by the teacher:

The Ming Dynasty Student PowerPoint Outline

- The _____ dynasty began with the overthrow of the _____ in China in 1368.
- The Ming period lasted until _____.
- China extended its rule into Mongolia and central Asia, and briefly reconquered _____ under the Ming emperors.
- _____ (1368-1398) founder who overthrew Mongols

The students should follow along with the PowerPoint and fill in the blanks. The major historical figures, dates, and/or key terms are highlighted throughout the PowerPoint. An example of the key with the highlighted words is provided on the following page.

The Ming Dynasty KEY

- The **Ming** dynasty began with the overthrow of the **Mongols** in China in 1368.
- The Ming period lasted until **1644**.
- China extended its rule into Mongolia and central Asia, and briefly reconquered **Vietnam** under the Ming emperors.
- **Ming Hong Wu** (1368-1398) founder who overthrew Mongols

The PowerPoint is approximately 14-15 slides in duration. If the teacher is unable to provide the necessary outline, the students should be able to take notes on paper.

The first few slides detail the fall of the Yuan dynasty and the rise of the Ming in 1368. Subsequent portions detail the founder of the dynasty: Ming Hong Wu, and the various projects that were undertaken by the Ming. A variety of pictures and maps show the location and extent of the Ming's rule as well as the path of both the Grand Canal and the Great Wall of China. Students should remember that similar projects began during the Qin dynasty and that the Ming completed the Wall. The portion of the lecture which discusses Emperor Yong Le provides the students with a variety of images to keep student interest high. Some of the pictures detail The Imperial City which students not that it is an immense walled compound with a maze of apartments, offices, and stately halls. Most students will want to know why it was called "Forbidden." It became known as the Forbidden City because commoners could not enter. Another picture is of the main gate going into the Forbidden City with a picture of Mao Zedong. This is normally a springboard to quickly discuss Mao's influence and prime the students for the coming weeks when communism will be detailed. Additional pictures are from Google Earth, and many students are familiar with this website's application.

The portion of the Power Point that covers the voyages of Zheng He incorporates a variety of images, detailed maps, and an original Chinese silk painting of one of the "treasures" brought back from Africa. In addition to the numerous pictures, the PowerPoint contains two hyperlinks to web videos.

The first video is *Engineering an Empire:China* - <YouTube - Engineering an Empire - China 5/5>

It is approximately ten minutes long, and is from the website YouTube. This site is familiar to many students. The video is from the History Chanel series called: *Engineering an Empire*, and it details a brief history of Zheng He. The video does go into great detail on the “engineering aspect of the Ming navy. At only ten minutes in duration this video should keep most students’ interest. Having finished a unit on European exploration, there is a short comparison slide and video on the difference between a Chinese Junk and a Spanish Caravel. Like the Youtube video it is only a few minutes in duration and is from http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sultan/media/expl_01q.html. The Zheng He portion finishes with the some of the benefits and costs of Chinese exploration.

The final part of the PowerPoint is on the Portuguese entry into China and the decline of the Ming Dynasty. The majority of this information is from the textbook: *A brief history of Chinese and Japanese civilizations*. Highlights from this portion of the PowerPoint include:

European Contact

- In 1514, a Portuguese fleet arrived off the coast of China.
- The emperor was unimpressed with the Europeans, whom he considered barbarians.
- He viewed foreign rulers as “younger brothers” of the Chinese emperor, who was seen as the Son of Heaven.
- After outraging the Chinese with their behavior, the Portuguese were expelled from Guangzhou (Canton) but were allowed to occupy Macao.

European Missionaries

- Highly educated Jesuit missionaries made the trip to China and impressed Chinese officials with such devices as clocks and eyeglasses.
- The Jesuits were impressed with Chinese architecture and the printing of books.
- More importantly, both sides benefited from the exchange of ideas.

- The Jesuits were impressed with the teachings of Confucius, and they taught Christianity to the Chinese.

MING DECLINE

- The Ming dynasty declined due to a series of weak rulers, government corruption, high taxes, low crop yields, peasant unrest, and a major epidemic in the 1630s.
- The suffering from the epidemic in part caused the peasant revolt led by Li Zicheng in 1644.
- He occupied Beijing, the capital, and the last Ming emperor committed suicide.

All of these sections are accompanied by pictures and maps which should keep student interest high. Following the PowerPoint, the students notes can either be turned in for a grade or the teacher can informally assess the students' work by going around the room in preparation for the last activity.

The last portion of the lesson involves two short articles on Zheng He and a map making activity. The students will read the articles either from the websites:

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/chinawh/web/help/readings.html>,

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/china/trad/disc_q.htm#Recommended%20Resources

or the teacher can issue them as handouts. Both of these give excellent description of the voyages of both discovery and commerce that the Ming engaged in during their reign. Following the reading, the students will begin to construct their maps. The students can either do this individually with pre-printed maps supplied by the teacher, or they can be grouped and construct a large map. If the large map method is chosen, teachers will need to use an overhead projector in order to project an image on the board of the map in order for students to trace onto butcher paper. A variety of maps can be found either on the internet or teacher resource materials. The map below is an abbreviated example of how the activity appears.

Magellan

5*W-40*N

50*W-10*S

55*W-35*S

daGama

9*W-40*N

20*E-32*S

33*E-20*S

Cabot

0*-53*N

45*W-63*N

55*W-48*N

Columbus

5*W-40*N

70*W-19*N

Zheng He

110*E-9*S

0*-100*E

80*E-9*N



In addition to the map, the students are required to chart the course of each of the explorers. They do this by using latitude and longitude to find the country. Many students have acquired this skill during elementary and middle school. Many textbooks include an atlas, so the students can use this to find each location. If the school has a mobile computer lab with internet capability the students can utilize this excellent website for finding countries using latitude and longitude. The website is <http://www.gorissen.info/Pierre/maps/googleMapLocation.php> and the students key in the coordinates and the site displays the country. Most students are familiar with or interested in GPS (global positioning systems), so interest should remain high during this part of the lesson.

Overall this lesson addresses numerous Georgia State Standards and can be modified for to meet any other state's standards. The PowerPoint lesson is very straightforward for High School students. By providing the students with an outline this enables those students who take notes slowly to keep up, and it frees up time for students to ask questions and look at the pictures provided. Also, the map making activity is very clear-cut, and can be modified for other cultures/explores. By grouping the students, the lesson enables peer-tutoring in order for all students to be successful. With the addition of the GPS program, this enables higher level students to maintain interest. In closing, the lesson provides students with a brief example of how the Ming Dynasty developed, and the world opened up for Europe and Asia with the introduction of sea trade.

Following the action plan is the source page and copies of the web articles

SOURCES

- Ming Hong Wu- <http://www.socialfiction.org/img/Hongwu1.jpg>
- Ming Map - <http://ace.acadiau.ca/history/nearcwor/Imperial%20China%20-%20New%20Website/China-html/JPGs/Ming%20Map%201.gif>
- Emperor Yong Le - <http://www.learningchinesecenter.com/chs/DT041-08.jpg>
- Forbidden City - <http://www.paulnoll.com/China/Excursions/Beijing-ex-Forbidden-City-map.jpg>
- Zheng He -- http://www.thedctraveler.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/11/admiral_zheng.jpg
- Chinese Junk - <http://img169.imageshack.us/img169/2705/sizemattersnotip0.jpg>
- Junk Video - http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sultan/media/expl_01q.html
- Ming Map – Glencoe World History Textbook. 2005.

- Voyages of Zheng He websites -

<http://search.freefind.com/find.html?id=70726870&pageid=r&mode=ALL&n=0&query=zheng+he>

- Latitude and Longitude Website -

<http://www.gorissen.info/Pierre/maps/googleMapLocation.php>

- Engineering an Empire Video - [YouTube - Engineering an Empire - China 5/5](#)
- Ming Dynasty Information - brief history of Chinese and Japanese civilizations

Handouts:

- New Directions in World History, 1500 to Present, Asia for Educators,

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/chinawh/web/s1/index.html>

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/chinawh/web/help/readings.html>

- The Voyages of Zheng He, Asia for Educators,

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/china/trad/disc_q.htm#Recommended%20Resources