

Title: *Leaving Home: Journeys across America and China*

Integrating global music into classroom instruction provides a gateway to exploring and connecting across cultures. Music has always been a vital part of human expression. It has the power to engage, motivate and inspire students and builds bridges between both what is familiar and what is unfamiliar. The integration of music across the curriculum enables students to engage in rich textual analysis of diverse, interdisciplinary primary source materials, as well further develop global competency skills such as recognizing perspectives and communicating across cultures. This lesson integrates music from the album [Wu Fei and Abigail Washburn](#), available through Smithsonian Folkways.

Lesson Theme: Home, Filial Piety, Geography and its Effect on Society

Featured Songs: “Who Says Women Aren’t as Good as Men” and “The Roving Cowboy/Avarguli”

Overview: Students will discuss the topics of filial piety and gender roles, as they relate to Confucianism, as they explore the collaborative song “Who Says Women Aren’t as Good as Men.” They will also analyze the impact of geography on the Chinese speaker of the song “The Roving Cowboy/Avarguli.” Students will be asked to compare and contrast the Chinese and American elements in the songs.

Suggested Grade levels: 7-8

Subject: Social Studies

Corresponding Standards: North Carolina 7th Grade Social Studies Standards

- 7C.1 Understand how cultural values influence relationships between individuals, groups, and political entities in modern societies and regions.
- 7C.1.2 Explain how cultural expressions--lyrics and songs--influence modern society.

Corresponding Global Competency Skills: [Asia Society Global Competency Skills](#)

- Investigate the world
- Recognize perspectives
- Communicate ideas

Essential Questions:

- How can expressions of culture prompt social change by exposing social issues?
- How can cultural exchange improve mutual understanding between societies and help decrease prejudices?
- How does geography affect individuals and their journeys?

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain the concept of filial piety in Confucian philosophy.

- Students will be able to use text evidence to support their claim that Mulan does or doesn't uphold the Confucian concept of filial piety.
- Students will explain how geography affects individuals in their journeys.

Materials

- A clip of Henan opera, without English subtitles, "[Henan Opera Mulan Subtitle](#)"
- White board or other display area
- Map of China
- Paper and pencil
- Laptop and projector, with sound
- Video of a Henan production of Mulan, with English subtitles, [Saga of Mulan](#)
- •Clip from Disney's animated Mulan, "[Mulan Trailer](#)"
- Thought Company's [Article on filial piety](#)
- Copies of "[The Ballad of Mulan](#)"
- Index cards
- Background information on Uigher people
- [Lyrics to "Who Says Women Aren't as Good as Men"](#)
- [Lyrics to "The Roving Cowboy/Avarguli"](#)
- [The Uyghur American Association](#)
- "[Who Are the Uyghurs](#)" from Radio Free Asia
- Frank Jenkins's version of "The Roving Cowboy," "[Frank Jenkins - Roving Cowboy](#)"

Background information for the educator

- Abigail Washburn's [website](#):
- Wu Fei's [website](#)
- Abigail Washburn discusses the banjo in the video "[Banjo Basics with Abigail Washburn](#)"
- Wu Fei Introduces the guzheng in the video "[Guzheng Showcase by Wu Fei](#)"
- Abigail Washburn's TED Talk "[Building US-China relations ... by banjo](#)". "TED Fellow Abigail Washburn wanted to be a lawyer improving US-China relations -- until she picked up a banjo. She tells a moving story of the remarkable connections she's formed touring across the United States and China while playing that banjo and singing in Chinese."
- [Map of China](#)
- Podcast Interview with Abigail Washburn and Wu Fei "[Beijing Meets Banjo: Wu Fei and Abigail Washburn](#)". Abigail Washburn and Wu Fei talk about their life as musicians and the paths that led to their collaboration.

Student Activities for featured song "Who Says Women Aren't as Good as Men"

Step 1

- Tell students they're going to watch a clip from a very famous opera from Henan, China.
- Ask students to identify Henan Province on a map.
- Pair & Share or Quick Write: Ask students to turn to a partner, or jot down bulleted points, about what they know about opera.
- Discuss student's knowledge as a whole class and record students' responses on a white board or other display surface.
- Play 20 - 30 seconds of the clip "[Henan Opera Mulan Subtitle](#)". Stop the video and ask students how the Chinese opera compares to their expectations for opera. Allow students to express their

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reactions, as some may not be familiar with the musical style, costumes, or choreography.

- Remind students that the opera tells a very famous story. Play the clip again, from the beginning, and ask them to try to identify the story.
- Ask students to share their guesses about what story is being told.

Step 2

- Tell students they are going to watch a clip of the same opera, performed years later, with English subtitles. Explain that subtitles are the translations of the lyrics, which appear on the screen.
- Ask students to guess what the opera might be about. If no students guess Mulan, ask students to stand up/raise their hand/put a hand over their heart (whatever strategy works best for your class) as soon as they recognize the story.
- If they did guess Mulan, continue with showing the video.
- Play video, "[Saga of Mulan](#)"
- Ask for student responses to the video.

Step 3

- Tell students they might be more familiar with the following version of the story.
- Play the clip from the animated Disney version, "[Mulan Trailer](#)"
- Give students time to respond verbally. Perhaps some students have seen the new live action movie from Disney. Allow those students to share.
- Ask a student familiar with the story to give a brief summary. This will allow students familiar with the story the opportunity to speak, while those unfamiliar with the story can listen/watch and learn the story.
 - If teaching English as a Second Language or Exceptional Children/Students with Special Needs, consider providing word cards to help students put key events of the story into order.

Step 4

- Tell students that the story of Mulan dates back 1,500 years in China. Many versions of the story have been told. Tell students they are soon going to read an early version of "The Ballad of Mulan." Explain that a ballad is a story that is sung about a remarkable character. Explain that "The Ballad of Mulan" can be read alongside the ancient Confucian idea of filial piety.
- Before reading "The Ballad of Mulan", instruct students to read an article about filial piety, "[Filial Piety: An Important Chinese Cultural Value](#)" by Lauren Mack As they read, they should write their own definition and explanation of filial piety on an index card.
- When students have finished, ask students to stand up. Instruct students that you are going to play the first Henan opera clip again ([Henan Opera Mulan Subtitle](#)). Students should begin to walk around the room with their index card. Allow students who feel the need to dance let out their wiggles. Tell students that when the music stops, they should find the nearest person to them and exchange index cards. Read the new card silently, then begin walking again. Play the music. Students find a new partner when you stop the music again. Students exchange cards again and read them. When the song ends, students should find their seats.
- Ask students to rewrite a definition of filial piety on the back of the index card, using what they first wrote, and the ideas they saw on other students' cards.
- Ask students to share their ideas. Take notes on the white board or other display space.
 - Leave the definition up--curated as you see fit--to help those students still struggling to grasp the concept.

Step 5

- Give students a copy of "[The Ballad of Mulan](#)".
 - Differentiate by providing just the first stanza to developing readers and the longer version to more advanced readers. Differentiate by asking students to read alone, with a partner, or in a small group.
- Instruct students to read the text. On the back of the text or on a piece of paper, students should respond to the following questions:
 1. What was expected of Mulan, as a girl?
 2. Did Mulan follow Confucius's ideas about filial piety by going to war in place of her father, or did she break Confucius's ideas about filial piety by going to war?
- Response expectations can vary. Strong writers should write a paragraph, restating the question and including one piece of text evidence from the article and from the ballad. Struggling writers can bullet point their ideas.

Step 6

- Yes or No: Tell students to go to one side of the room if they said Mulan followed Confucius's ideas, and go to the other side of the room if they said she didn't. Students should talk to those around them and share ideas.

Step 7

- Call students back to their seats. Ask them to imagine what a modern day version of the song might sound like. Give them a moment to be quiet and get settled.
- Tell students they are about to listen to an acapella version of "Who Says Women Aren't As Good As Men," sung by Wu Fei and Abigail Washburn.
- Give students a moment to reflect on what they heard on paper, or to share their reactions with a partner.
- Pass out the lyrics to the song, "[Who Says Women Aren't as Good as Men.](#)"
- Read the lyrics out loud once to the students.
- Instruct students to read the lyrics again to themselves.
 - Differentiate by asking them to read independently, or in pairs.
- Instruct students to answer the prompt: What is the speaker's attitude towards the role of women in society? What does the speaker think women should do to contribute to society?

Discussion questions

- "Who Says Women Aren't as Good as Men" is sung a cappella--without musical accompaniment. Why do you think these two talented musicians--one born in the USA and the other born in China--chose to sing this song a cappella?
- How much do gender roles influence our daily lives?

Learning Extension

- Write your own lyrics for a "Mulan" story set in 2020.

Explore Further:

- Trailers for Disney's Live Action Mulan
 - "[Disney's Mulan Official Trailer](#)"
 - "[Disney's Mulan Official Teaser](#)"

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Student Activities for featured song “The Roving Cowboy/Avarguli”

Step 1

- Tell students they’re about to listen to a song featuring a classical Chinese instrument called the guzheng, as well as the American banjo. Tell them it is a narrative--a song that tells a story.
- Ask students to listen to the first two minutes of the song, and then journal about what story they think the song tells.
- Students share their ideas in partners or small groups.

Step 2

- Tell students you are going to play the rest of the song. Ask them to pay attention to the lyrics and to jot down what they notice about the instruments, voices, and lyrics.
- **Step 3**
- Give students copies of the lyrics for “[The Roving Cowboy./Avarguli.](#)” Alone or with partners, students read the lyrics.
- Ask them to paraphrase the meaning of each line using their own words.
- Differentiation: For ESOL or Special Needs students, ask students to draw pictures to represent what is happening in the song.

Step 4

- Ask students to draw a Venn diagram. Instruct them to compare and contrast the stories told through the translated Chinese lyrics and the English lyrics.

Step 5

- Ask students to read about the history of the Uyghur people. Students should write things 3 things they learn, 2 questions they have, and 1 connection they can make between Uyghur culture and their own.
 - [The Uyghur American Association](#)
 - “[Who Are the Uyghurs](#)” from Radio Free Asia

Step 6

- Provide students with access to the following information on geographic features mentioned in “Avarguli.”
 - [TianShan, or Heavenly Mountains, Xinjiang Tianshan, UNESCO](#)
 - [Gobi Desert](#)

Step 7

- Instruct students to read the texts and then answer the following question. Students should restate the question and write at least one full paragraph to explain their answer. How does geography (region and location) affect or impact the speaker and his journey?

Step 8

- Listen to North Carolina musician Frank Jenkins perform the song, “[The Roving Cowboy](#)”.
- Ask students to think about how the use of a violin affects the mood of the song? Ask students to discuss which version of the song they prefer and why. “Frank Jenkins - Roving Cowboy” or “The Roving Cowboy/Avarguli” by Abigail Washburn and Wu Fei.

Learning Extension

- Research the contemporary situation facing Uighurs in China..
 - [“China’s Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang”](#) from the Council on Foreign Relations
 - [“Explainer: Who are the Uyghurs and Why is the Chinese Government Detaining Them?”](#), from The Conversation
- Watch a video of another Uigher love song. [“Beautiful Lover: a Uyghur Folk Song”](#)

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