

UChicago 2023 Summer Institute *Beyond the Headlines* Lesson Plan

Where in the World are the Uighurs? Kristen Witte, Archmere Academy, Delaware

I. Plan Your Lesson

What is the current event and/or pressing issue you are exploring in your classroom and why?

I am interested in exploring the most recent coverage on the situation of the Uighurs in China's Xinjiang province, a once autonomous Uighur region. As global tensions are rising and since the anti-Asian feelings in America were brought out during the COVID pandemic, it seems as though the spotlight on this issue has fallen to the wayside. In the AP World History curriculum, students learn about the Uighurs during the time of the Tang Dynasty in China (618-907), a brief mention under the Mongolian Khanates, and then not again. I think it is important to know that these people exist and are in danger of being historically erased. In much of the world history curriculum and textbooks, East Asian ethnic diversity and various indigenous peoples are simply not covered.

I also was particularly interested in this topic to highlight how the story of the Uighurs was international news in 2019 and how the story seemed to disappear in the wake of the pandemic. When searching for follow up information on news websites, my students and I struggled to find more recent news coverage. Recently, President Biden has referred to the treatment of the Uighurs as a genocide, while the Chinese government has officially stated that all of the Uighurs have "graduated" from the "re-education camps". So, I

Find 2 to 5 articles on the [Pulitzer Center website](#) that align with this story. Your articles should capture stories in East Asia or the Middle East:

<https://pulitzercenter.org/projects/unrest-uyghur-homeland>

<https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/china-cracking-down-muslim-minority-uighurs>

[Survival in Xinjiang | Pulitzer Center](#)

wanted to use this lesson to highlight how we often hear about stories and then there isn't always the follow-up to the people or places involved in the mainstream media. We should remember that the stories we hear on the news don't just end and the consequences of the events usually have longer lasting effects.

What are some of the systemic issues that drive this issue and/or event?

Systemic issues driving the issue for the Uighur population are islamophobia and a desire to crack down on extremism and terrorism and the issues surrounding civil liberties.

The rise of Xi Jinping and his authoritarian state as well as his desire to create ethnic conformity in the tradition of Chinese history.

The fear of western imperialism in East Asia.

II. **Get Familiar with *Beyond the Headlines***


Review the five unique lesson plans in the [Beyond the Headlines Lesson Series](#) and notice the sequence of the lesson plans:

1. Warm-up
2. Introduce the current event
3. Explore systemic issues through underreported stories: List the underreported stories you have found on the Pulitzer Center website
4. Discuss: Craft discussion questions that encourage students to...
 - a. Understand
 - b. Connect
 - c. Evaluate
 - d. Act
5. Extension Activity

Lesson Plan Template

Directions: Use the table to craft your lesson plan.

<p>Objectives (3 - 5)</p>	<p>Students will learn about the recent oppression of the Uighurs.</p> <p>Students will be able to understand the historical context for this conflict and how it relates to crackdown on terrorism.</p> <p>Students will understand the extent to which the oppression of the Uighurs is creating a ripple effect in the region and globally.</p> <p>Students will connect what they have learned about this issue to refugees and issues impacting minorities.</p> <p>Students will learn about how economic motives can foster cultural erasure.</p>
<p>Warm Up <i>Students make personal connections and/or activate prior knowledge of a theme, event, or idea using multimedia sources and/or statistics</i></p>	<p>Start by having students think about their own identities. Have students make a quick identity map.</p> <p>How does your school culture impact your identity or sense of community?</p> <p>Do you feel the need to be similar to others in that community or is it ok to be different? How and Why?</p> <p>Using the Map</p>

	 <p>On the map, identify how many provinces the modern state of China has? Which provinces have international borders and with which other states? Who are China's direct neighbors? Locate Xinjiang on the map. If your family was from this region and needed to leave China, where do you think you would go?</p>
<p>Introducing the Lesson</p>	
<p>Key Terms <i>Identify words that are central to the issues being discussed and the reporting student will read.</i></p>	<p>Xi Jinping Xinjiang Uighur/Uyghur Turkic Sunni Re-education camps Genocide Belt Road Initiative</p>

<p>Current Event <i>Succinctly describe the event or topic and provide context for that event by unpacking the interconnected, systemic issues that have driven that event.</i></p>	<p>Xinjiang was a semi-autonomous region for many years. In 2009, the Chinese government attempted to limit some of the province’s freedoms, which sparked protests and acts of terrorism. Beginning around 2017, the authoritarian government of Xi Jinping began to oppress the minority Muslim group, known as Uighurs/Uyghurs. The government denied these claims and proclaimed that they were simply implementing anti-terrorist strategies. An estimated 800,000 to 2 million Uighurs and other Muslims, including ethnic Kazakhs and Uzbeks, have been detained and sent to prison camps for “re-education”. Due to the oppression, waves of Uighurs began to flee China and migrate into other neighboring states. In 2019, China released a statement that the Uighurs that had been in the “reeducation camps” had “graduated.” China has quietly been making deals with neighboring states to provide infrastructure and increased trade through their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As they make alliances and deals with their neighbors, they are encouraging the neighboring states to resume the oppression of the Uighurs to the extent that President Biden of the US recently proclaimed the situation a genocide. Although leaving their ancestral territory, Uighur refugees are not ready to let their language, religious beliefs, and traditional customs be erased from history.</p>
<p>Pause to Process Emotions <i>Craft some questions or prompts to help students take a moment to process their emotions in community with one another.</i></p>	<p>What is your reaction to hearing about this story?</p> <p>Was this the first time you heard of the plight of the Uighurs? Does it connect to anything you are familiar with?</p> <p>How does it make you feel? Share one word that expresses your first feeling about this situation.</p> <p>As students share their words, the teacher or even the students could create a word cloud.</p>

Pulitzer Center Reporting	
<p>Underreported Story 1</p> <p>https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037</p>	<p>Title: <i>Who are the Uyghurs and why is China being accused of genocide?</i></p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>This article gives a broad overview of the issue and even includes images of the growth overtime of the camps. In this overview, the article also addresses the heavy censorship of the press, especially foreign, in that area.</p>
<p>Underreported Story 2</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/01/29/magazine/china-globalization-kazakhstan.html</p>	<p>Title: <i>Can China Turn the Middle of Nowhere into the Center of the World Economy?</i></p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>Kazakhstan is a landlocked area that has been fairly untouched by modernization or infrastructure. China is seeking to link itself and Kazakhstan to the modern world through their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While the area that interests China is an ancient trade city from the days of the old Silk Road, it also happens to be a place where many Uighurs migrated to during the various waves of oppression of the Muslim minority. Now that China is displaying more economic interest in the area, they are extending their anti-Uighur policies into Kazakhstan.</p>
<p>Underreported Story 3</p> <p>https://www.bbc.com/news/world-66337328</p>	<p>Title: <i>China using families as 'hostages' to quash Uyghur dissent abroad</i></p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>A fairly recent article which details the account of a Uighur refugee in the UK who was contacted by Chinese police and bribed to spy on Uighur human rights organizations in order to be able to have contact via telephone with his mother back in China.</p>

<p>Underreported Story 4</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/28/xi-urges-more-work-to-control-religious-activities-in-xinjiang-on-surprise-visit</p>	<p>Title: <i>Xi urges more work to 'control illegal religious activities' in Xinjiang on surprise visit</i></p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>In August of 2023, Xi Jinping made a surprise visit to Xinjiang Province. He made a speech encouraging the region to continue the process of cultural conformity and the suppression of Islam.</p>
<p>Discussion Questions</p>	
<p>Understanding the Story</p> <p><i>Write 2 -3 comprehension questions.</i></p>	<p>What are the claims made by the author?</p> <p>What facts or evidence does the author use to support his claims to make the story credible?</p> <p>What could be missing from the reporting that would help the reader understand the issue more clearly?</p>
<p>Connecting to the Story</p> <p><i>Write 2 - 3 questions that help student connect with the experiences of people most impacted by the issues in the articles.</i></p>	<p>How does the oppression or fear of a religious minority connect to your local community?</p> <p>Have you witnessed discrimination towards religious groups?</p> <p>How does the oppression of the Uighurs create a more global issue?</p> <p>What do you think will be the future of Uighur culture?</p> <p>Can you think of local communities that have to change their cultural expression in order to fit in socially?</p>

<p>Evaluating the Story Write 2-3 questions that encourages students to connect the story to their understanding of a systemic issue and/or highlight underreported elements of a larger issue.</p>	<p>How does geographic and increased political control over the Xinjiang province help with the BRI initiative?</p> <p>Why does the Chinese government target minority groups?</p> <p>What does the ability of China to reach migrant communities of Uighurs outside of their political borders demonstrate about China's global position?</p>
<p>Acting on the Story Write 2-3 questions that inspire students to follow curiosities and/or list solutions to problems described in the story.</p>	<p>What kinds of assistance can we give to communities, such as the Uighurs, who are facing cultural destruction?</p> <p>What are the plans and actions of various human rights groups?</p> <p>Where can the Uighur language and customs be recorded and kept for future generations?</p>
<p>Extension Activities</p>	
<p>Extension Activity 1</p>	<p>Historical comparison- compare the reeducation camps in their size and development to the growth of the detainment camps in United States History (Japanese, Native Americans, or Central American immigrants) and the scale and scope of the concentration and prisoner of war (POW) camps in WWII.</p> <p>This activity could be done either as a powerpoint presentation to the whole class, a recorded video, or as a poster presentation.</p>

<p>Extension Activity 2</p>	<p>Infographic activity- using your academic resources, make a map on google earth showing the diasporic migrations of those who have fled Xinjiang Province.</p> <p>Where have they fled to?</p> <p>How have they been received in those new communities?</p> <p>How are they able to connect back with their homelands and any remaining family in the region?</p>
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Assessing Student Learning

In what ways do you plan to assess student learning through this lesson plan? (e.g., rubric, collecting and scoring discussion question-driven written responses, exit tickets, participation, etc.)

Students should be assessed via written discussion questions, annotations on the articles, as well as in-class participation.

Plan for Implementation

Describe your plan to teach this lesson; Provide the context and how it may align with your vision for instruction this academic year.

At the beginning of the school year, we take a look at the Tang Dynasty in China to see how they first come into contact with Turkish Muslims at the Battle of Talas in 751. The Turkish victory stopped the expansion and spread of the Tang Dynasty.

At that point, I would like to bring up the term Uighur and probably show them various maps.

This specific lesson, I would use during our time discussing China's aversion to external cultural influences, the Mongolian adoption and reliance on Uighur script and scholars, and the establishment of the Ming Dynasty and its attempts to spread Chinese culture.

Additional Background Materials

[Chinese Dynastic History Visualization](#)

[Use of Uighur vs Uyghur](#) (Radio Free Asia)

[China's Strategic Interests in Xinjiang Resources](#) (ChinaFile, Asia Society)

[China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang](#) (Council on Foreign Relations)