



REUTERS/Kim Kyung-Hoon

# CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY

Guide to Resources

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for exploring these resources on China's One-child Policy (1979–2015), a decades-long population control effort that has been described as "[China's most radical social experiment](#)." Many teachers already have a basic familiarity with the One-child Policy, including its more punitive and coercive aspects. We cover those aspects here, but also try to give students a sense of the context in which it was introduced and the consequences (both intended and unintended) that have resulted from the policy. Although the One-child policy was replaced with a two-child policy at the end of 2015, these consequences will shape the Chinese economy and society for years to come.

Learning about the One-child Policy is also a means of understanding the role of the Chinese state in people's private lives. China is by no means the only country to have implemented such a system for slowing population growth; however, the Chinese case is notable for its duration and for the level of intrusiveness into what many people would consider a very private decision: how many children to have and when.

These materials were designed for use in upper-level high school courses on human geography, 20th century world history, Asian Studies, or social justice. In the pages that follow, we provide a quick guide to the resources found at the Asia Pacific Curriculum website at <http://www.asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/chinas-one-child-policy>, in addition to other resources that you may find helpful.

We are grateful to **Ms. Christine Paget**, a teacher at West Vancouver Secondary (BC), who was the intellectual force behind two classroom resources: the Activities and Assessments package, and the powerpoint slides and activities. In addition, **Mr. Graeme Stacey**, a social studies teacher at Kelowna Secondary School (BC), provided insightful feedback and very helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of these materials.

We welcome your or your students' questions and suggestions. We encourage you to contact us at [curriculum@asiapacific.ca](mailto:curriculum@asiapacific.ca).

Sincerely,

The Asia Pacific Curriculum Team  
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## GUIDE TO RESOURCES

### OVERVIEW

- Background reading of approximately 2,200 words, covering the Chinese government's logic in introducing the One-child Policy; the means for enforcing and encouraging compliance; the consequences, both intended and unintended; and the long-term impact, not only on population size, but also on family norms and the role of girls. The reading includes key words and concepts.
- The full reading can be accessed in PDF form in the top-right corner of the Overview section.
- Clarification on the policy's dates and scope: The One-child Policy was a formalization and intensification of population-control measures already in place in the 1970s. Therefore, it is difficult to determine a precise date when it was introduced. Most studies cite 1979, which is the date we use. In addition, there were exceptions to the policy. For example, rural families were allowed two children if their first child was a girl (reflecting a traditional preference for boys, especially in rural areas). In the policy's early years, the majority of the population was rural, so this exception is significant. Ethnic minorities were allowed more than one child, although they make up only about 7% of the population, meaning the impact on total population size was small. In addition, the authorities loosened the policy in 2014, when it was announced that if one member of a couple was an only child, that couple would be allowed to have two children.
- *Hukou*: The background reading and some of the media resources refer to *hukou*, China's "household registration" system. A person's *hukou* is like their residency permit given to them by the state when they are born. A person's access to social welfare benefits is tied to their *hukou*; if you leave your village or city of legal residence without official permission, you generally lose access to your health care and education, for example. Some people have referred to the *hukou* system as kind of like having an 'internal passport.' (For more on this, see <http://projectpartner.org/poverty/hukou-system-explained-chinas-internal-passport/>).

### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- Five teacher-tested activities that can be used to assess comprehension and build and assess core competencies.
- Links to the BC curriculum core competencies have been noted.

### POWER POINT PRESENTATION

- These slides are meant to reinforce, but also add to, the information in the background reading.
- The slides are editable so that teachers can add or delete information; however, for any slides that contain images (including photos, cartoons, and propaganda posters), we ask that you not remove any of the credits from the notes section. For copyright purposes, it is essential to include these.

#### MULTIMEDIA (SHORT VIDEOS)

- "China's secret children," *News 352* (2:37) (embedded in background reading): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4-S\\_Oqq4ll](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4-S_Oqq4ll)
- "The unintended consequences of China's One-child policy," *Thompson Reuters Foundation* (3:21): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0BPWFnL\\_jY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0BPWFnL_jY)
- "China's One-child policy creates massive gender imbalance," *Al Jazeera English* (3:20): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndWuq6AzmQ>
- "China: unnatural selection," *Al Jazeera English, 101 East* (25:09): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8MVC2yCJUM>

#### AUDIO

- "China's 'little emperors' lucky, yet lonely in life," *National Public Radio, Morning Edition* (5:21): <http://www.npr.org/2010/11/23/131539839/china-s-little-emperors-lucky-yet-lonely-in-life>

#### IN THE NEWS

This section includes both Western and Chinese media coverage (in English) of the topic. Much of the western media covers issues similar to what is discussed in the background reading and videos, and some of it is critical in tone. The Chinese coverage tends to be more neutral in tone, and much of it focuses on the Chinese public's response to the end of the One-child Policy.

Please note that some of these sources (*New York Times, Globe and Mail*) allow only a limited number of clicks per month without a paid subscription.

#### Western News

- "The ghost children: In the wake of China's One-child Policy, a generation is lost," *Globe and Mail*: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/the-ghost-children-in-the-wake-of-chinas-one-child-policy-a-generation-is-lost/article23454402/>
- "See how the One-child Policy changed China," *National Geographic*: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/151113-datapoints-china-one-child-policy/>
- "Timeline: China's One-child Policy," *New York Times*: [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/10/29/world/asia/china-one-child-policy-timeline.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/10/29/world/asia/china-one-child-policy-timeline.html?_r=2)
- "Reaction to end of One-child Policy," (Video) *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/asia/100000004006943/chinese-react-to-end-of-one-child-policy.html>

## Chinese News

- “Two-child policy won’t bring desired baby boom, experts say,” *Caixin*: <http://english.caixin.com/2015-11-13/100873780.html>
- “Cost of second child puts couples off,” *China Daily*: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/27/content\\_18988577.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/27/content_18988577.htm)
- “Chinese legislators applaud law amendment to allow ‘one couple, two children,’” *People’s Daily*: <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/1223/c90000-8994657.html>
- “Xinhua Insight: China’s ‘little emperors’ reluctant as two-child policy takes effect,” *Xinhua*: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/20/c\\_135029002.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/20/c_135029002.htm)

## OTHER TEACHING RESOURCES

- “China shifts from a One-Child policy to two: Will families?” *PBS Newshour Extra*, October 30, 2015, available at [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily\\_videos/china-shifts-from-a-one-child-policy-to-two-will-families/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily_videos/china-shifts-from-a-one-child-policy-to-two-will-families/). Includes a short video, key vocabulary, warm-up questions, and critical thinking questions.
- “China’s One Child policy debate,” Geographic Alliance of Iowa, <https://uni.edu/gai/lesson-plans-and-curricular-materials/9-12/chinas-one-child-policy-debate>. Includes background essay, several document analysis exercises, and materials for a class debate.
- “China’s ‘One child’ Policy,” Bethany Neubauer, The Archer School for Girls. Provides several activities that focus on, for example, interpreting population pyramids and sociological change, and can be downloaded at [www.uschinaforum.usc.edu/getattachment.ashx?fileid=1120](http://www.uschinaforum.usc.edu/getattachment.ashx?fileid=1120).
- “Among the hidden,” <http://ncta.osu.edu/lessons/china/politics/Nickell-ch.pdf>. This is for lower grades (e.g., Grade 6), and is based on the novel *Among the Hidden* by Margaret Peterson Haddix (available through some public libraries). This book has been used by teachers to give students the perspective of an “above-quota” child who is not legally recognized (“black children,” in Chinese).

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- (book) *One child: The story of China’s most radical experiment* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016) by Mei Fong, a former reporter for the *Wall Street Journal’s* China bureau, is current and very readable. Some sections will be inappropriate for younger readers, so it is best used as a resource for teachers. One of the author’s entry points is the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan province, in which many students died in an unstable school building, leaving hundreds of parents childless. This book is available through some public libraries. In addition, the author has given several interviews that are available on YouTube.

- (book) *Only hope: Coming of age under China's One-child policy* (Stanford University Press, 2004) by Vanessa Fong, a professor of anthropology and sociology at Amherst College (US), is more dated and academic, but still an excellent and very readable book. It is based on the author's field work in northeast China in the late 1990s–early 2000s when she conducted in-depth interviews and observation of teenaged only-children (referred to as “singletons”) and their parents and grandparents. The study illuminates how the One-child Policy feeds family tensions and pressures on young people to meet their parents' expectations. This book is available through the UBC library and Vancouver Public Library.
- “The end of China's One-child Policy,” Feng Wang, Baocheng Gu, and Yong Cai, Brookings Institution, March 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2016/03/china-one-child-policy>.
- “China's population destiny: The looming crisis,” Feng Wang, Brookings Institution, September 30, 2010, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-population-destiny-the-looming-crisis/>.
- “Without One-child policy, China might still not see baby boom, gender balance,” Gretchen Livingston, Pew Research Center, November 20, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/20/will-the-end-of-chinas-one-child-policy-shift-its-boy-girl-ratio/>.

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