



DeAgostini/Getty Images

# THE OPIUM WARS IN CHINA

Assessment and Activity Options

## ABOUT THESE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

The activities provided in the following pages are intended for use with *The Opium Wars* background reading, available on the Asia Pacific Curriculum website (<http://www.asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/opium-wars>). They can be used to build and assess the curricular competencies outlined in the new social studies curriculum for British Columbia (B.C.) high schools. These competencies are (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/10-12#ss>):

1. Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions.
2. Assess the significance of people, locations, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their significance at particular times and places, and from group to group (significance).
3. Assess the credibility of and justification for evidence after investigating the reliability of sources and data, the adequacy of evidence, and the bias of accounts and claims (evidence).
4. Compare and contrast continuities and changes for different groups, at different times and places (continuity and change).
5. Assess how prevailing conditions and the actions of individuals or groups influence events, places, decisions, or developments (cause and consequence).
6. Explain and infer different perspectives on past and present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs (perspectives).
7. Recognize implicit and explicit ethical judgments in a variety of sources (ethical judgment).
8. Make reasoned ethical judgments about actions and assess varying responses to events in the past or present (ethical judgment).

These activities and assessment options were designed and developed by **Ms. Christine Paget**, a high school social studies teacher at West Vancouver Secondary (B.C.) and a member of the B.C. Social Studies Teachers Association (BCSSTA) executive team.

Questions and feedback may be directed to the Asia Pacific Curriculum project, an initiative of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, at [curriculum@asiapacific.ca](mailto:curriculum@asiapacific.ca).

The rubrics presented for Activities 2, 3, 4, and 5 were developed using Rubistar, available at <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>.

## ACTIVITY 1: QUIZ ABOUT THE OPIUM WARS

1. Draw what you know about the Canton System. You should include the countries involved and the goods traded.

*(Three marks total—two for the accuracy of the countries and goods traded, and one for the quality of your graphical representation)*



2. Analyze the political cartoon and answer the questions below. (Three marks total)



Source: Pictures from History/Granger, NYC—All rights reserved

a. What do you think the nationality of the cartoon artist is and why? (One mark)

b. What is the cartoonist trying to tell you about the Opium Wars? (Two marks for accurate analysis)

3. Perspectives analysis:

In his letter to Queen Victoria in 1839, Lin Zexu said, "Suppose there were people from another country who carried opium for sale to England and seduced your people into buying and smoking it; certainly, your honorable ruler would deeply hate it and be bitterly aroused. We have heard heretofore that your honorable ruler is kind and benevolent. Naturally you would not wish to give unto others what you yourself do not want."

However, William Lamb (also known as Lord Melbourne), a British Member of Parliament then serving as Prime Minister, said that "opium was probably less harmful than gin and anyway it was the Chinese who insisted on smoking it...unless one reduced demand, there was no point in trying to strangle only one of several sources of supply."

Nevertheless, in this discussion, the British people's need to consider "preserving the morals of the Chinese people, who were disposed to buy what other people were disposed to sell them" is also mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

In your opinion, to what extent is Britain responsible for the opium trade and its impact on China and the Chinese people? Make reference to both quotes (Lin Zexu and Lord Melbourne) to support your argument either as evidence or refutation of their points of view. *(Four marks—one mark for clarity of your argument and three marks for well supported points with reference to the quotes)*

---

1. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Vols. 39-55, indexed. 1838-1840, cited in Christine Su, "Justifiers of the British Opium Trade: Arguments by Parliament, Traders, and the Times Leading Up to the Opium War," *Stanford University Research Journal*, 2008, p. 49, [https://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Su\\_SocSci\\_2008.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Su_SocSci_2008.pdf)

4. Name three specific gains Britain made from the two Opium Wars and the resulting treaties, like the Treaty of Nanking. *(Three marks—one for each specific and correct treaty gain made by Britain)*

1.

2.

3.

## ACTIVITY 2: TREATY JUDGEMENT

**Courses:** 20<sup>th</sup> Century History 12, Asian Studies 12

**Curricular Competencies:** 1, 2, 3, 8

**Content:** Local, Regional, and Global Conflicts

### RATIONALE

During this historical period, a series of complex treaties were signed by countries around the world. Some historians and politicians have considered these treaties “unfair,” and many believe the terms of these treaties contributed to further conflict, hardship, and strife.

In your judgment, were these treaties unfair? If so, what about them was unfair? Were some treaties more unfair than others?

### OBJECTIVE

Examine three treaties written and signed during this historical period and determine the ways in which they were fair or unfair, especially when compared to each other.

### STEP 1

Examine the Treaty of Nanjing, the Treaty of Frankfurt, and the Treaty of Versailles. You will find summaries of these three treaties starting on page 8, along with a hyperlink to the full text of the treaties.

### STEP 2

Fill in the table below to compare the treaties. (Note: Not all boxes will be filled out because not all treaties had components that relate to all of the items in the table.)

### STEP 3

Make a summary judgement. In a short paragraph (300–500 words), answer the following questions with reference to your treaty table.

1. Was one treaty more or less fair compared to the other two?
2. Were they all equally fair or unfair? If so, explain.
3. If one treaty was more fair or unfair than another, in what ways was it more fair/unfair?

	TREATY SPECIFICATIONS			JUDGEMENT AND EVIDENCE	
	Treaty of Nanjing	Treaty of Frankfurt	Treaty of Versailles	Fair? Why?	Unfair? Why?
<b>Reparations</b> (note: be careful to compare currencies)					
<b>Land ceded/ border changes</b>					
<b>Trade terms</b>					
<b>Military restrictions</b>					
<b>Other</b>					

## TREATY SUMMARIES

### TREATY OF FRANKFURT

#### Overview

The Franco-Prussian War, from July 19, 1870 to May 10, 1871, was won decisively by Prussia. It shifted the balance of power in continental Europe away from France and in favour of the German states, which were united during and after the war.

#### Context

- Before the start of the War, Germany was not a united country, but rather a group of several independent kingdoms. Prussia was the largest and most powerful of these.
- Four years earlier (1866), Prussia handily defeated Austria in the Seven Weeks War. After that, Prussia seized control of several territories, uniting them with northern German kingdoms.
- Some historians believe that Prussia's ruler, Otto von Bismark, encouraged the escalation of tension between France and Prussia because he was looking for a justification for unifying the various South German states into a single national union.
- Many historians believe that this conflict marked the rise of German imperialism and Germany's rise as a military power.
- The South German states were of the view that France was the aggressor, and thus supported the start of the war.

#### Treaty

- An indemnity of five billion Francs, to be paid by France to Germany, within five years.
- A framework for the withdrawal of German troops from some areas of France, but continued occupation of other areas until France paid the indemnity in full.
- France's ceding of Alsace (except the Territory of Belfort) and a large section of Lorraine to Germany. (Residents of the Alsace-Lorraine region were given until October 1, 1872 to decide which nationality they wanted to keep—French or German. Those choosing French citizenship would have to emigrate to French territory.)
- Terms for the exchange of prisoners of war.
- French recognition of Wilhelm I of Prussia as the Emperor of Germany.
- Setting the terms of trade between the two countries.
- Setting the terms for navigable waterways in relation to the Alsace-Lorraine region.

The full text of the treaty is available at [http://imagine.wikia.com/wiki/Treaty\\_of\\_Frankfurt](http://imagine.wikia.com/wiki/Treaty_of_Frankfurt)

## TREATY OF NANKING

### Overview

Great Britain defeated China in the first Opium War, which lasted from 1839 to 1842. The pretext for the war was the British argument for being allowed to continue to sell opium in China under the principle of free trade. The British were frustrated with the Canton System, which the Imperial Chinese government had used to restrict trade with foreigners. And the Chinese Imperial government was frustrated with the worsening social and economic problems in China due to the opium trade and opium addiction.

### Context

- Earlier in the 19th century, Britain was running a trade deficit with China because English consumers were importing so many products from China, especially tea, while China had no comparable desire for goods produced in England.
- To reverse the trade gap, the British increased their sale of opium grown in India (which had been colonized by Great Britain) to Chinese consumers.
- While China had been one of the most technologically and culturally sophisticated parts of the world for many hundreds of years, by this point, the British had developed advanced naval and war-fighting technology that gave it an edge in battles against the Imperial Chinese military.

### Treaty

- Immediate release of British subjects (both European and Indian), who were being held prisoner, as well as an unconditional amnesty granted to Chinese
- The opening of five Chinese cities as treaty ports, including the establishment of British consulates in those cities.
- The allowance for British subjects and their families to reside in the treaty ports in order to conduct commercial activities without harassment or restrictions by the Chinese.
- The ceding of the Island of Hong Kong to Great Britain in perpetuity; Britain's right to rule Hong Kong as it saw fit.
- Abolition of the Canton trade system.
- A total indemnity of \$21 million, to be paid by China to the British. This included:
  - » \$6 million to compensate for the opium confiscated.
  - » \$12 million for "expenses incurred" during the war.
  - » \$3 million to settle outstanding debts by Chinese merchants.
- A requirement that the indemnity be paid in four installments prior to the end of 1845, with an interest charge of 5% per year on late payments.

The full text of the treaty is available at <http://www.international.ucla.edu/asia/article/18421>.

## TREATY OF VERSAILLES

### Overview

The First World War was fought from 1914 to 1918, pitting the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey) against the Allied Powers (France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan, and the United States). On November 11, 1918, an armistice was signed by the Allies and Germany. The Treaty of Versailles, a peace document, was signed at the Palace of Versailles, France on June 28, 1919.

### Context

- After the war, the Allied Powers gathered to discuss the peace treaty, but Germany and Austria-Hungary were not allowed to take part in the talks. Instead, they were only permitted to submit a response to the treaty, which was largely ignored by the Allies.
- The terms of the treaty were drafted by the 'Big Three' victors of the war: British Prime Minister Lloyd George, French Prime Minister Frances Clemenceau, and U.S. President Woodrow Wilson.
- President Wilson wanted all nations to reduce their armed forces, not just the losers of the war. However, Prime Minister Clemenceau wanted Germany to pay for the war by stripping the country of its land, industry and military. Prime Minister George agreed with Wilson, but faced opposition from the British public who agreed with Clemenceau.

### Treaty

- The territory of Alsace-Lorraine, captured by Germany in 1870, was returned to France.
- The Saar, a German coalfield, was given to France for 15 years, after which a plebiscite would decide ownership. (Note: 90.8% of voters favored rejoining Germany in 1935).
- Poland became an independent country.
- Danzig, a major port city in East Prussia (Germany) was put under international rule.
- All German and Turkish Colonies were put under the control of Allied forces. As a result, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Czechoslovakia became independent countries.
- Revision of boundaries split Austria-Hungary and Yugoslavia was created. The left bank of the Rhine River was to be occupied by Allied forces. Meanwhile 50km of the right bank of the river was to be demilitarized.
- The German army was cut to 100,000 men and airtime weapons were scrapped. The country was also banned from having an Air Force. The German Navy was cut to 36 ships and no submarines were allowed.
- In the 'war guilt' clause, Germany has to accept total blame for the war and pay for all damages. The payment was set later at £6,600 million in compensation.
- A League of Nations was to be created to prevent further world war and conflict.

The full text of the treaty is available at <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0043.pdf>.

An online version can be found at: <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/versailles.htm>.

RUBRIC

	4: EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	3: MEETS EXPECTATIONS	2: APPROACHING EXPECTATIONS	1: BELOW EXPECTATIONS	SCORE
Support for Position	Summary includes 3 or more pieces of evidence from the treaty table that support the position statement. The writer anticipates the reader's concerns, biases or arguments and has provided at least 1 counter-argument.	Summary includes 3 or more pieces of evidence from the treaty table that support the position statement.	Includes 2 pieces of evidence from the treaty table that supports the position statement.	Includes 1 or fewer pieces of evidence from the treaty table.	
Accuracy	All supporting facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Almost all supporting facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Most supporting facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Most supporting facts and statistics were inaccurately reported	
Grammar & Spelling	Student makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Student makes 1–2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Student makes 3–4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Student makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	

### ACTIVITY 3: DESIGN A POLITICAL CARTOON OF THE OPIUM WAR

**Courses:** Asian Studies 12

**Curricular Competencies:** 1, 2, 6, 7, 8

**Content:** Local, Regional, and Global Conflicts

#### RATIONALE

Show an in-depth understanding of the Opium War(s) by analyzing and creating a graphic representation in a political cartoon. Use your creativity to express your opinion in a structured form.

#### OBJECTIVE

Design and draw a political cartoon on any aspect of the Opium War(s).

#### PROCESS

Political cartoons poke fun at individuals or events, and are meant to provoke the readers' thinking. They use caricatures or satire to create humour. Caricature selects and exaggerates a characteristic of the subject of the cartoon. Satire uses sarcasm or irony to make fun of someone or something.

Here is one example of a political cartoon on the Opium War(s):



Source: *London Charivari* (British publication), September 4, 1858.

## CAPTION

“Britannia asks: A little more gunpowder, Mr. China? (a play on words as gunpowder is also a kind of tea). China replies: O-no-tan-ke-mum, in a somewhat xenophobic parody of a Chinese person speaking English. Towards the end of 1856, British troops had been on their way to the Far East as fighting had broken out between China and Britain. As a number of French citizens had been brutally murdered, France came into the conflict as a British ally. In June 1858, China was brought to sign the Treaty of Tientsin which gave a number of commercial concessions to Britain and France. The treaty also renewed the Treaty of Nanking between Britain and China, originally signed in 1842 to end the Opium war. It was then that Hong Kong was first ceded to Britain and five treaty ports were opened to foreign trade. This cartoon shows Britain holding a teapot in the shape of a large gun and pointing it straight at the alarmed Chinese. France delicately sips from her teacup and watches the Chinese reaction. The Chinese nobleman (illustrated by his long fingernails and rich clothing) declines further punishment.” (Source: Getty Images)

Guiding questions in designing a political cartoon:

1. Whose perspective are you taking?
2. What’s the message? What are you trying to say?
3. How is it accurate (historically, symbols used, perspective taken)?
4. Why is it funny?

Make sure to give your cartoon a title and include the author’s information (your name) and the date and place it is ‘published’!

## RUBRIC

	4	3	2	1
Graphics: Originality	The graphics used in the cartoon reflect an exceptional degree of student creativity in their creation and/or display.	The graphics used in the cartoon reflect student creativity in their creation and/or display.	The graphics are made by the student, but are based on the designs or ideas of others.	No graphics made by the student are included.
Content: Accuracy	The cartoon is clear and accurate in the use of its symbols, its perspective, and representations.	The cartoon is clear in the use of its symbols, its perspective, and representations. It is mostly accurate.	The cartoon is clear in the use of its symbols, its perspective, and/or representations. The cartoon has some inaccurate aspects.	The cartoon is not clear or accurate in the use of its symbols, its perspective, and/or representations.
Required Elements	The cartoon includes all required elements in a clear and accurate manner.	All required elements are included in the cartoon.	Most of the required elements are included in the cartoon.	Several required elements are missing from the cartoon.

## ACTIVITY 4: THE RATIONALE FOR WAR

**Courses:** Asian Studies 12

**Curricular Competencies:** 1, 6, 7, 8

**Content:** Local, Regional, and Global Conflicts

### RATIONALE

Both the British and the Chinese had strong motivations for fighting the first Opium War. Was this war justified?

### OBJECTIVE

Determine whether, in your view, the war was justified. Specifically, make a case for which (if any) side's motivations for the war were justified. To do so, examine the motivations of British and Chinese, both government and citizens. In your answer, you have the option of negating all viewpoints and instead arguing for peace.

### STEP 1

Read the following primary document excerpts outlining the perspectives of individuals on various sides of the issue about their motivations behind the Opium War.

1. "...gain-seeking and corrupt men will for profit and sensuality defeat my wishes, but nothing will induce me to derive revenue from the vice and misery of my people."

Daoguang Emperor of China, circa 1844 via Yilibu, speaking on the legalization of opium in China (an argument supported by the British merchants); Quote available in several sources through Google Books.

2. "Take tea and rhubarb, for example; the foreign countries cannot get along for a single day without them. If China cuts off these benefits with no sympathy for those who are to suffer, then what can the barbarians rely upon to keep themselves alive? Moreover the woollens, camlets, and longells [i.e., textiles] of foreign countries cannot be woven unless they obtain Chinese silk. If China, again, cuts off this beneficial export, what profit can the barbarians expect to make? As for other foodstuffs, beginning with candy, ginger, cinnamon, and so forth, and articles for use, beginning with silk, satin, chinaware, and so on, all the things that must be had by foreign countries are innumerable. On the other hand, articles coming from the outside to China can only be used as toys. We can take them or get along without them. Since they are not needed by China, what difficulty would there be if we closed our the frontier and stopped the trade? Nevertheless, our Celestial Court lets tea, silk, and other goods be shipped without limit and circulated everywhere without begrudging it in the slightest. This is for no other reason but to share the benefit with the people of the whole world. The goods from China carried away by your country not only supply your own consumption and use, but also can be divided up and sold to other countries, producing a triple profit. Even if you do not sell opium, you still have this threefold profit. How can you bear to go further, selling products injurious to others in order to fulfill your insatiable desire?"

Excerpt from Lin Zexu's letter to Queen Victoria in 1839; full letter available at Digital China/Harvard, [https://cyber.harvard.edu/ChinaDragon/lin\\_xexu.html](https://cyber.harvard.edu/ChinaDragon/lin_xexu.html)

3. Richard Cobden, a critic of British imperial expansion, tried to acknowledge positive outcomes of the opium business: “[i]n a modern world of investment and trade, China and Japan could not possibly be allowed to remain isolated; and in any case, free trade was the blood-brother of international peace, welfare and virtue, even of Christian advancement.”

Excerpt from Samuel Warren, Esq., F.R. S. *The Opium Question*. London: James Ridgway, 1840.

4. “Thomas Macaulay, the Secretary of State for War, argued that the Chinese government had the right to restrict opium but not to seize “our innocent countrymen, and insult the Sovereign in the person of her representative.” Britain was going to war so that its subjects could “look with confidence on the victorious flag which was hoisted over them, which reminded them that they belonged to a country unaccustomed to defeat, to submission or to shame...surrounded as they were by enemies, and separated by great oceans and continents from all help, not a hair of their heads would be harmed by impunity...”. The war in Canton was essentially a signaling ground for British supremacy, to formally assert royal control over the resources of a region informally controlled by economic imperialism, and to demonstrate the empire’s treatment of subordinate races who imagined themselves equal to the Crown.”

Quoted in Christine Su, *Justifiers of the British Opium Trade: Arguments by Parliament, Traders, and the Times Leading Up to the Opium War*, *Stanford University Research Journal (Social Sciences)*, 2008, p. 49, [https://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Su\\_SocSci\\_2008.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Su_SocSci_2008.pdf)

5. “In a three-hour opening speech [in the British Parliament], Sir James Graham reasoned that it would be unfair to bar British traders alone from participating in the lucrative business of selling opium, while other opium importers such as the Americans reaped the benefits. They would win Britain’s market share in the opium business, and increase their profits by millions that would otherwise go to the crown. Melbourne agreed that “opium was probably less harmful than gin and anyway it was the Chinese who insisted on smoking it...unless one reduced demand, there was no point in trying to strangle only one of several sources of supply.” Palmerston distanced the British culturally from the sins of addiction, blaming the Chinese for opium demand. Why was it on the shoulders of the British to consider “preserving the morals of the Chinese people, who were disposed to buy what other people were disposed to sell them?”

Quoted in Christine Su, *Justifiers of the British Opium Trade: Arguments by Parliament, Traders, and the Times Leading Up to the Opium War*, *Stanford University Research Journal (Social Sciences)*, 2008, p. 49, [https://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Su\\_SocSci\\_2008.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Su_SocSci_2008.pdf)

6. “Other merchants sent reports detailing the revenue that the opium trade brought annually to India, and forecasts of silver that would be lost to the crown if it were halted. If the opium trade dried up, “such was the dependence of the Indian economy on their efforts that commerce in general would come tumbling down in ruins... [having] a catastrophic effect on firms in Britain which had trading interests in the east.”

Quoted in Christine Su, *Justifiers of the British Opium Trade: Arguments by Parliament, Traders, and the Times Leading Up to the Opium War*, *Stanford University Research Journal (Social Sciences)*, 2008, p. 47, [https://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Su\\_SocSci\\_2008.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/group/journal/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Su_SocSci_2008.pdf)

## STEP 2

Write an OpEd article on whether or not you think the war was justified, with reference to the primary source documents above. An OpEd is an opinion piece in which the author tries to convince her readers of her point of view. The author also tries to stimulate debate. In your case, use examples like the narratives and perspectives found in the primary documents.

Tips on writing an OpEd article:

1. Keep it short – between 600 and 750 words.
2. Focus on only one or two major points and back it/them up with evidence. (In your case, you should use the information in your primary documents.)
3. Briefly reference other points of view and explain why those viewpoints are not correct. This should be done near the end of the article.
4. Keep it simple, punchy, and convincing!

## RUBRIC

	4: ABOVE STANDARDS	3: MEETS STANDARDS	2: APPROACHING STANDARDS	1: BELOW STANDARDS	SCORE
Position Statement	The position statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.	The position statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.	A position statement is present, but does not make the author's position clear.	There is no position statement.	
Evidence & Examples	All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant, and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant, and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Evidence and examples are NOT relevant <i>and/or</i> are not explained.	
Audience	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the potential reader and uses appropriate vocabulary and arguments. Anticipates reader's questions and provides thorough answers appropriate for that audience.	Demonstrates a general understanding of the potential reader and uses vocabulary and arguments appropriate for that audience.	Demonstrates some understanding of the potential reader and uses arguments appropriate for that audience.	It is not clear who the author is writing for.	
Grammar & Spelling	Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 1–2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 3–4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	

OP-ED ORGANIZER (OPTIONAL)

Main argument/ thesis	
Main point #1	
Evidence for main point #1	
Main point #2	
Evidence for main point #2	
Counter- argument and rebuttal #1	
Counter- argument and rebuttal #2	

## ACTIVITY 5: THE OPIUM DEBATES

**Courses:** Asian Studies 12

**Curricular Competences:** 1, 6

**Content:** Local, Regional, and Global Conflicts

### RATIONALE

This exercise encourages students to delve deeper into the debate in China in the 1830s over how to deal with the opium problem. It also provides a basis for exploring current debates on similar issues.

### OBJECTIVE

To understand the debate happening in China in the 1830s over how to deal with problems related to the opium trade.

### STEP 1

Read the following excerpts from two arguments made by Qing officials regarding the opium trade: 1) *Memorial of Legalizing Opium* (June 10, 1836), by Xu Naiji, a sub-director of the Court of Sacrificial Worship, who argued for legalization of opium; and 2) *Memorial on Banning Opium* (October 1836) by Zhu Zun, a vice-president of the Board of Rites and a sub-chancellor of the Grand Secretariat, who argued for a total ban on opium.

#### \*Note:

The excerpts provided below are an unofficial translation from a Chinese source, *Reference Material for General History of China*, by Jian Bozan and Zheng Tianting (eds.). (Chinese: 翦伯赞、郑天挺主编, 中国通史参考资料, 中华书局1980年6月, *Zhongguo Tongshi Cankao Zilia*, June 1980). Teachers may access other translations in, for example, Alan Baumler (ed.), *Modern China and Opium: A Reader*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001, or Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonthan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, pp. 111-119. (An online scan of the relevant pages can be found at [http://www.schmidtclass.com/uploads/2/4/2/3/24233476/opium\\_war\\_sources.pdf](http://www.schmidtclass.com/uploads/2/4/2/3/24233476/opium_war_sources.pdf)).

### STEP 2

Create a Summary of Arguments table.

SUMMARY OF OPIUM WAR DEBATES

Argument By	Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3	Reason 4
Xu Naiji				
Zhu Zun				

## Xu Naiji, *Memorial on Legalizing Opium, 1836*

### Excerpt 1

Some say we should cut off trade with foreign countries and remove the source of the evil. The imperial court would not hesitate to lose the millions in taxation that would result from cutting off trade with the British. However, the nations in the West have had an open market for their ships for more than a thousand of years. Refusing to trade with all foreign countries for the sake of cutting off the British is not an ideal policy. For the hundreds of thousands of Chinese people who are living in the coastal area, making their living solely on trade, how could they be supported? Additionally, for the barbarian ships voyaging on the high seas, they can choose to enter any island for harbor. And our domestic trade ships can access those islands to trade with them. In this case, how could we cut off trade entirely? In recent years, the barbarian ships traveled to the ports of Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangnan, Shandong, and even Tianjin and Manchuria to sell opium. Although local authorities had tried to expel the traders, private smuggling still prevails. Trading activities in the Canton port could be cut off, but that would not prevent the smuggled goods from entering Chinese borders.

### Excerpt 2

Moreover, there are bandits prevailing in our rivers, pretending to be acting on our government's orders. They take opportunities to rob our civilians under the pretense of searching for opium. During my previous service as the judicial commissioner of Canton, cases like this were frequently reported to me. More frequently, there were cases of bandits planting opium on civilians' ships to extort them.... A countless number of innocent civilians suffered from that. And those crimes only occurred after the strict interdict law against opium was implemented.

### Excerpt 3

Since we can not close our ports against foreign trade, nor can we rely on an inoperative law, the only solution is for us to make amendments to our former system. We should allow the barbarian merchants to export their opium, as long as they pay a duty equivalent to that of importing medicine. Once the opium has passed our customs, it can only be delivered to hong Chinese merchants in exchange for merchandise, rather than being purchased using silver. The barbarian merchants will find that the duty they pay is significantly less than their present spending on bribes, thus they would be happy to comply.

### Excerpt 4

Some suggest that the legalization of opium will challenge the dignity of our government. I question such a statement because drinking the finest wine and enjoying a dinner feast can also harm lives. Traditional Chinese medicines such as *fuzi* and *wutou*\* have poisonous qualities, yet since ancient times they have never been considered illegal. Additionally, legalization is only for those common and vulgar people who don't have to perform official duties. If government officials, scholars, and soldiers are not included in the policy, I assume it will not undermine the dignity of our government.

\* In other translations, there is some uncertainty about the spelling of these medicines.

## **Zhu Zun, *Memorial on Banning Opium, 1836***

### *Excerpt 1*

I propose that the law should never be compromised and the evil should be eliminated. For two centuries, our government has been receiving and transmitting the gift of peace from the heavens, and this has allowed us to perform our duty to eliminate evil from among our people. Governing the central nation and holding the barbaric states in submission is because of the rule of law.

### *Excerpt 2*

If the law is not strictly enforced by the government, desires will be ignited in people's minds and will lead to the violation of rules. These desires will grow day by day, month by month until they become a national catastrophe. If we don't address this problem early enough, it will be impossible for us to eradicate later. Officials who are responsible for this duty will feel as if their hands are bound and they will feel confused about what to do.

### *Excerpt 3*

Some say that opium trade should be accepted under the condition of taxation and that opium should only be bartered in exchange for merchandise instead of being exchanged for silver. This would prevent silver from seeping out of our borders. However, we have already expelled the British, who sell the opium, to Lintin Island and Macao since the first year of the Daoguang emperor's administration [1821] and banned opium trade in those two areas. As we have already suppressed the activities and expelled the foreigners, now recruiting them back would derogate the creditability of our government. Some say we should use tea in exchange for opium, and prohibit the outward flow of silver. It is a view that I disagree with. I am afraid that our tea won't be sufficient and money will still be paid in exchange for opium as a result. Besides, if we could be capable of prohibiting the outflow of our silver, why couldn't we also be capable of stopping the inflow of opium into our borders? If we ban the trade of opium, the outflow of our silver will then cease by itself, and our two biggest concerns will be resolved.

### *Excerpt 4*

The Emperor's advisers who compare opium to dried-leaf tobacco are entirely mistaken. Tobacco does not destroy people. The profit margin from tobacco is small, while the profit from trading opium is huge. Additionally, tobacco can be planted on bare and un-fertilized ground, while opium can only be harvested on rich lands. If our farmers see the profits and madly plant poppy instead of agricultural products, who will be responsible for planting mulberry trees for silk, and who will cultivate rye and rice for food?

### STEP 3

Choosing either a pragmatic or moral stance, write a letter to the Chinese Emperor to give your advice on whether to legalize the opium trade. Use arguments from the opium debate summarized in Step 2 to support your position and refute the other side's argument. Where possible, use your imagination to include your own viewpoint to support your argument.

### RUBRIC

	4	3	2	1
Creativity	The story contains many creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has really used her or his imagination.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has used her or his imagination.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions, but they distract from the story. The author has tried to use her or his imagination.	There is little evidence of creativity in the story. The author does not seem to have used much imagination.
Accuracy	All facts presented in the story are accurate.	Almost all facts presented in the story are accurate.	Most facts (about 70%) presented in the story are accurate.	There are several factual errors in the story.
Grammar & Spelling	The author makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	The author makes 1–2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	The author makes 3–4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	The author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education.

