Let's Get to Know China!
By Anita Kim Venegas

The country of China is located on the continent of Asia. The shape of China is often compared to a rooster, with the rooster’s head facing east. Although China’s land area is nearly the same as that of the United States, the population is more than four times as large. The population of the United States as of 2019 is about 329,000,000, while the population of China is approximately 1,386,000,000. That’s right, cities live in high-rise apartments rather than in single family homes. Most families do not have a garage to park their car in, nor do they have a front or back yard. Instead, there are parks inside the city where people can take the opportunity to walk under shady trees, treat themselves to an ice cream or tasty snack, or simply sit on a park bench and watch people walk by. Inside elementary classrooms, there may be 40 to 45 students. The city streets are three lanes wide. Cars crowd the streets like sardines in a can. Family cars share the road with taxis, buses, scooters, and bicycles. In the last several years, subways have been built in major cities to decrease the traffic on the streets. During the morning and evening rush hours, cars honk their horns and weave in and out of traffic to get to their destination.
Food vendors selling dumplings, steamed buns, meat on a stick, and bowls of noodles are busy from early morning and into the evening along city sidewalks. Children and parents often buy a quick breakfast as they hurry to work and school. Bottled water is necessary because the local water is not safe for drinking. At home, families will boil water before using. Hot water is served in restaurants as well. Most people prefer to drink hot water instead of cold water.

At one time, China’s population was growing so quickly, the government wrote a law that families could only have one child. This seems strict; however, China has experienced many droughts, periods of time without enough rain, resulting in starvation of millions of people when there wasn’t enough food to feed everyone. The law was intended to limit the suffering of families who could not provide food for a larger family. In 2015, the law changed to allow families to have two children.

China is situated thousands of miles from the United States. Even though it is a country with a different language and cultural practices, the daily lives of Chinese people are more similar to ours than they are different. Adults work, children attend school, and someone cooks dinner. Clothes are washed, floors are scrubbed, and homework is finished. The biggest difference is that families move through their days speaking Mandarin, the people’s language.

About the Author

Anita Kim Venegas is the author of The Adventures of Peanut and Dutch.
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1. Based on the information in the article, which statement below correctly compares China with the United States?
   a. China's land area is much larger than that of the United States, but the United States has a larger population.
   b. China's land area is much smaller than that of the United States, but China has a larger population.
   c. The United States has a much larger land area than China, and it also has a larger population.
   d. The land area of China and the United States are about the same, but China has a larger population.

2. Before 2015, why did the Chinese government only allow families to have one child?
   a. Too many families were having more than five children.
   b. Too many families lived out in the country.
   c. The Chinese government wanted to decrease the country's population.
   d. The Chinese government wanted to protect families from starvation by preventing them from having to feed many children.

3. Why will you commonly find hot water served at restaurants in China?

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4. Describe what a typical family home is like in one of the major cities in China.
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5. If you wanted to pick up a quick bite to eat while you were out and about in China, what might you find?
___________________________________________________________________________________

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

_____ 1. continent
a. people who sell something, especially in the street

_____ 2. population
b. place where you ultimately want to arrive

_____ 3. sardines
c. the official and literary form of Chinese; the “people’s language”

_____ 7. droughts
g. extended periods of time without rainfall that lead to water shortages

_____ 8. Mandarin
h. the total number of people that live in a particular area, such as a town, city, state, or country

_____ 9. soybeans
i. indicating a rough estimate

_____ 10. approximately
j. small, savory balls of dough
In the article, “Let's Get to Know China!” you learned many fascinating facts about a country that is on the other side of the world from the United States.

On the lines below, tell about three things you learned about China from the article that were surprising or most interesting to you. Why did you find those things surprising or interesting?

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3. Why will you commonly find hot water served at restaurants in China?

   Hot water is served at restaurants in China because boiling the local water makes it safe to drink.

4. Describe what a typical family home is like in one of the major cities in China.

   A typical home in one of the major cities in China is probably in a high-rise apartment building. Homes do not have garages, front yards, or backyards.

5. If you wanted to pick up a quick bite to eat while you were out and about in China, what might you find?

   You might find dumplings, steamed buns, meat on a stick, or bowls of noodles.

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