



Recommended Resources & Documentary Film List Chinese Now!

OUR GOALS FOR THIS LIST OF RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

We love watching our students learn about China through its language. Our personalized approach to Chinese language education enables us to understand students' needs well, and to tailor our approach to your studies while you are in classes. A list of resources cannot be as "personalized" as our classes, but we hope that it can be helpful in your studies. Our goal for this list is to empower you – as our student, or as an alumnus of our school, or as a friend of Chinese Now! – to become a better Chinese language learner. For parents of young Chinese language learners, we hope that these resources enable you too to understand China better – perhaps by taking advantage of one of the documentary films mentioned below – and to support what may be a lifelong opportunity for growth, for your young student!

This list includes: internet resources on language learning, suggestions regarding getting involved in the China community in Washington, D.C., internet resources on China generally. Finally, we conclude with our picks for some of the best documentary films on China. We hope that you find this useful, and we also invite you to help us add to the list – talk to your instructor or email us at info@chinese-now.com if you have suggestions (or if you'd like to receive future updates, as we make them)!

INTERNET RESOURCES: GENERAL CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING SUPPORT

Resources available to support Chinese language studies on the internet are amazing. We have selected these websites because they are well-organized, well-edited, engaging, and offer content on many topics. These sites are frequently updated, and you can use apps to access them on computers, laptops, smartphones, or other devices. Great materials online can make studying a joy, and now that many people have portable devices, you can even "study" on your way to work or on your way to class.

General

- **Hacking Chinese** – Hacking Chinese (www.hackingchinese.com) is a blog dedicated to unveiling the mysteries of learning Chinese. It's our favorite of the genre, with lots of practical tips to support your studies.
- **Books Every Chinese Language Learner Should Read** – Chris Livaccari, formerly the Director of Education and Chinese Initiatives at the Asia Society of New York, developed a great list of books – about Chinese language and culture – that is worth reviewing. Check out this list at <http://fivebooks.com/interviews/chris-livaccari-on-language-and-culture-china>.

Listening

- **ChinesePod** - ChinesePod (www.chinesepod.com) is our favorite Mandarin Chinese learning platform. It is great for working on listening. A 10-15 minute podcast introduces each lesson, and learners can access target dialogues as well as other resources to work on listening comprehension. ChinesePod provides audio lessons, mobile study tools, and exercises, for learners of all proficiency levels, with a mission "to make language learning easier for adult students". Access content via

smart phones, RSS feeds, and directly from www.chinesepod.com. ChinesePod is great because its searchable library of well over 3000 lessons permits students to study at an appropriate level, and to explore topics that are of interest. We often use ChinesePod lessons in our classes, because they offer efficient access to such a variety of topics, for students at any given level.

- **FluentU** – FluentU (www.fluentu.com) brings language learning to life with real-world video content.
- **Yabla Chinese** – Yabla Chinese at <https://chinese.yabla.com/> has a great online dictionary, as well as videos and language-learning games.

Reading

- **Popup Chinese News** – Popup Chinese News (<http://popupchinese.com/tools/newsinchinese>) offers daily articles annotated with English and Pinyin for easy reading. Put your mouse over any word for an instant popup with English and Pinyin.
- **Wenlin** – Wenlin (www.wenlin.com) is a software application that contains a dictionary function as well as a text reader/writer function for reading and creating Chinese text files. Flashcards of new characters can also be compiled to aid in learning. By pointing the cursor at a Chinese character the software looks up an English word, and vice versa, working like a dictionary.
- **ChinesePod** – ChinesePod also has flashcard functionality built into its site, so you can create a personalized flashcard library based on lessons you have completed. This is much, much easier than the way that past generations of Chinese language learners had to learn Chinese – doing their own paper flashcards! Use your smartphone to improve character recognition, wherever and whenever is convenient.

Writing

- **Skritter** – Skritter (www.skritter.com) teaches stroke order as you go. This means that you learn rules as you need them and always in context. If you are having trouble, Skritter will animate the stroke order for you.

Especially for Children

- **Kids Learn Mandarin** – This is our favorite Chinese language learning app, for young children. Available on iTunes or for Android, and suitable for children age five and younger, this is one of those apps that is actually fun enough for kids to enjoy as they learn. Search “Kids Learn Mandarin” and you will find a free version, as well as add-on content that increases the vocabulary that children can access.
- **BBC Primary Languages/Mandarin** – The BBC’s online Mandarin program for elementary school children (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primarylanguages/mandarin/>) offers fun and interesting exercises, games, and videos that will entertain and instruct your child in the basics of Mandarin. This website includes audio clips for pronunciation practice using children’s voices that both your child and you will enjoy!

HSK and Other Test Preparation

The HSK test started in 1984 as a Chinese proficiency test for both foreigners, but also Chinese citizens for whom Mandarin was a second language. The test was developed and run by the Beijing Culture and Language University, and lurched along for about a decade in relative obscurity before it began to be used in the mid-1990s as part of the admissions process for applications to Chinese universities. See our favorite HSK test prep materials online at **Popup Chinese HSK Preparation**, www.popupchinese.com/hsk/test.

GETTING INVOLVED IN THE CHINA COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Chinese Now! is delighted to introduce students to the vibrant China-focused community in Washington, D.C. You may know about these organizations and opportunities, but if not we hope that you may appreciate and take advantage of them. The U.S. capital is a strategic place to study Chinese and to think about China. We hope that our Chinese language learning friends take advantage of the many special opportunities to “get involved” in the area.

- **American Mandarin Society** – The American Mandarin Society (www.mandarinsociety.us) is a non-partisan, non-profit, members-based organization that serves as a broad forum for the growing numbers of Americans who have studied, researched, and lived in Greater China since the early 1980's. Founded in and operated from Washington, D.C., the Society aims to facilitate communication, intellectual synergies, cultural and educational exchanges, and other productive collaboration among Americans and Chinese in an effort to support the development of future stewards of U.S.-China relations. Visit AMS's website to register. You will need to take a short Mandarin quiz online, to confirm that you have some language skills, but we encourage you to try – and to get involved in AMS's exchange, professional development, and social activities!
- **100K Strong Foundation** – The 100K Strong Foundation (www.100Kstrong.org) was founded as a State Department initiative by President Obama after a November 2009 speech in Shanghai where he set out a goal that 100,000 American study in China in the following four years. The organization has transitioned to status as an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization but continues to deserve your support. We encourage you to visit 100K Strong's website, learn about their programs, and – if you have the resources – support their efforts to build a stronger U.S.-China relationship, one student at a time.
- **The Kissinger Institute on China and the United States** – The Kissinger Institute at the Wilson Center, a Washington, D.C. think tank, has more public programs than other think tanks (as well as a well-curated monthly newsletter about China and U.S.-China relations). Visit their website at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/program/kissinger-institute-china-and-the-united-states> or email china@wilsoncenter.org for information. See also the list below of other think tanks, which sometimes hold public programs as well.
- **U.S.-China Education Trust** – The U.S.-China Education Trust (www.uscet.net) is a targeted, Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization that has longstanding program strengths in American Studies, Media Education, and U.S.-China relations. USCET promotes US-China relations by strengthening mutual understanding through conferences, exchanges, and seminars. We particularly focus on Chinese higher education institutions that carry out research on America, and which teach China's next generation about the US. By helping them develop a better understanding of America, our programs lay the groundwork for more trusting and informed relations in the 21st century. We encourage you to learn more about and to support USCET.

INTERNET RESOURCES: HIGH-QUALITY INFORMATION ABOUT CHINA

Learning Chinese can be much more enjoyable if you are also learning about China. Check out our favorite high-quality, free e-newsletters:

- **Sinocism** – The Sinocism China Newsletter (subscribe at www.sinocism.com) is a free email newsletter written by Bill Bishop that helps readers better understand China. Many China watchers consider it the best single best newsletter for keeping track of a rapidly changing China. The newsletter provides commentary and curated links to the important English and Chinese news of the day. Published multiple times per week.
- **ZG Briefs** – Our favorite weekly newsletter is ZG Briefs (subscribe at <http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/zgbriefs/>). Includes a wide range of news, including Chinese language learning tips.

- **The Month in U.S.-China Relations (Kissinger Center)** – This is our favorite monthly newsletter. Visit the Kissinger Center’s website at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/collection/the-month-us-china-relations-newsletter> to subscribe.

EVENT OPPORTUNITIES: PLACES TO USE CHINESE & UNDERSTAND CHINA

While many think tank programs are private, off-the-record, and invitation-only, there are also others that are accessible to members of the public. We suggest that if you follow China and would like to meet people with common interests, that you register online for information about public programs:

- **Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)** – visit www.csis.org/region/china
- **Brookings Institution** – The John L. Thornton China Center has many activities and is accessible at www.brookings.edu/about/centers/china
- **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** – www.carnegieendowment.org/regions/?fa=251
- **Pew Global Attitudes Project** – Pew’s research covers the world but includes some very interesting findings about China. Focused on public opinion, visit <http://www.pewglobal.org/> and subscribe to receive information related to topics that interest you.
- **Wilson Center** – As noted above, Wilson’s Kissinger Institute tends to have more public programs than other think tanks. Also sign up for information on conservation issues at www.wilsoncenter.org/program/china-environment-forum, if these topics interest you.

EXPLORING CHINA THROUGH DOCUMENTARY FILM

Finally, you can follow China without leaving your home. More than ever, some of the top, classic documentary films about China are available for viewing without leaving your home. A great opportunity to share the China story with family or friends – and great for families with young Chinese language learners! Search on Youtube for these titles – many are accessible for free online – and we note where we own a copy, that we are glad to lend to students, their families, or friends. Explore the complexity of modern China through the stories and images of the following documentaries:

[Best of Travel: China \(2010\)](#) presents China as a potential tourist destination. Produced for the armchair traveler, it offers images of the sights, smells, and tastes of China and weaves a narrative of a country that balances between history and rapidly-changing contemporary culture. *Chinese Now! Library.*

[China: A Century of Revolution \(2007\)](#) offers what many consider the best comprehensive account of modern Chinese history. This six-hour, award-winning documentary describes the forces that shaped through the late twentieth century. A remarkable story of foreign invasions, war, communism, the free market, and more. *Chinese Now! Library.*

[China's Century of Humiliation \(2011\)](#) explores the tumultuous interactions between China and the European powers of the 19th century. A good, short (77 minutes) review of the historical underpinnings of the changes in modern China. The film:

- Begins by comparing Confucianism and Christianity and how they translated in political thought, resulting in a collectivist society in China and a individualistic one in Europe.
- Explores why the industrial and scientific revolutions did not happen in China.
- Describes the early encounters between the British Navy and the isolationist Qing Dynasty and comments on the root causes of the two opium wars.

This commentary concludes with the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and a comprehensive view of the decay of the last Chinese dynasty. *Chinese Now! Library.*

China's Lost Girls (2005) examines the effects of the one-child policy in China. National Geographic reporter Lisa Ling explores the stories of the uneven gender distribution, trafficking in women, orphanages filled with baby girls, and foreign adoption. Since this film was produced, the pace of international adoption from China has slowed dramatically, but the underlying phenomenon of the one-child policy has not. *View this film free online at http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/chinas_lost_girls.*

China Rises (2008) highlights the immense changes that China has undergone throughout the past few decades. This film was co-produced as a general introduction to contemporary China in anticipation of the 2008 Olympics by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, ZDF in Germany, the New York Times, and others, and at the time it was broadcast was probably the best medium-length (four hours, broken into four programs) documentary of its type. Gain a deeper understanding of the many facets of Chinese life in this gripping series that includes fascinating and complex topics such as human trafficking, factory life, pop culture, astronaut training, and the 2008 Olympics. *Chinese Now! Library.*

Chinatown (2013), a half-hour vérité style documentary film, takes an intimate look at D.C. Chinatown's past, present and future through the untold stories of three Chinese immigrants remaining in the gentrified neighborhood. *Chinese Now! Library.*

The Cross: Jesus in China (2003) presents the surprising story of the recent history of the Christian church in China. Considered by many the best documentary account of the development of the Christian church in China, the film tells the story of how the number of Chinese Christians has increased from approximately 700,000 in 1949 to probably 70 million today, despite constraints on church growth. This four-part, four-hour film tells the stories of Chinese Christians at both the individual level and as a social movement, and addresses the roles of both the "house church" and the registered church. This film may show you a side of China you did not anticipate – it was even shown as part of a "Faith and Globalization" seminar conducted by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair at Yale University. *Chinese Now! Library.*

Discovery Atlas: China Revealed (2006) tells the story of China through personal narratives. From rice farmers, to Olympic hopefuls, to leading construction tycoons, gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of China through stories of its people. Enjoy stunning visual technology and photography as the story of China unfolds in this compelling documentary. *Watch the full program online at <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/discovery-atlas-china-revealed/>.*

Found in China (2007) views China through the lives of young adults born in China, who have been adopted by American parents and return to China to explore their heritage for the first time. See contemporary China through the eyes of these bi-cultural youth in this story of culture, family, and belonging. *Chinese Now! Library.*

Last Train Home (2011) was considered by some critics to be one of the best documentary films on any topic in 2011. About 130 million Chinese citizens make an annual Chinese New Year's train journey from urban centers to their provincial villages in what is called "the largest human migration in the world." This documentary tells the story of a married couple that left their home in Sichuan Province 16 years ago to work in Guangzhou, an industrial city near Hong Kong. The couple saves every yuan they can to send home to the children they left behind to be raised by a grandmother, searching for a better life and traveling home annually to visit their family. *Chinese Now! Library.*

Learning Chinese in American Schools (2010) was produced by the Asia Society to provide information – and a useful tool – to American education leaders and parents who want to encourage their schools to develop Chinese language programs. This high-quality video provides a thought-provoking look at the

reasons why Chinese language programs represent a meaningful strategic move for many schools. Chinese Now! supports the Asia Society and the development of Chinese language programs in area schools, and we would be delighted to provide this video to you if you – or your colleagues, friends, or acquaintances – might be interested in championing Chinese language programs in your community. *Ask about this DVD as well as Asia Society materials on Chinese language as well as “Asia in the Schools.”*

Manufactured Landscapes (2006) is a striking documentary with a focus on large-scale photography of “manufactured landscapes”—quarries, recycling yards, factories, mines and dams, etc. The film takes an artistic approach, searching for beauty and story through images of civilization’s materials and debris. The film takes the viewer through China and assesses the evidence and effects of the country’s massive industrial revolution. *Chinese Now! Library.*

The People’s Republic of Capitalism with Ted Koppel (2008) examines the economic story of contemporary China, exploring the increasing economic interdependence between the United States and China as well as ongoing conflicts between personal aspiration and governmental control. This four-hour documentary provides insight into the challenges and complexities surrounding China as it participates in the global market economy. *Chinese Now! Library.*

Under the Dome (2015), by former China Central Television journalist, Chai Jing, looks at air pollution in China, its impact on her own family, and on the country as a whole. Chai narrates this self-financed film, which has been compared with the seminal 1962 book, *Silent Spring* by American environmentalist Rachel Carson. After first praising the film, Chinese authorities subsequently ordered it to be blocked from potential viewers in China. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6X2unw!QGQM>

Wild China (2008) explores the natural wonders of the fourth largest country in the world. In this unforgettable film, experience the beautiful diversity that lies in this enigmatic country while journeying through places such as the Himalayas, desert landscapes, tropical zones, and arctic regions. *Available free for Amazon Prime members.*

Win in China (2010) documents a fascinating phenomenon – a nationwide business plan competition that pits China's best and brightest entrepreneurs against each other for 10 million RMB in business-start-up money. Capturing the culture of China’s active entrepreneurial culture, this documentary by Ole Schell (son of long-time Asia Society China hand Oliver Schell) presents a great story of contemporary capitalism. *Chinese Now! Library.*

Young and Restless in China (2008) Another story of China through Chinese, this film visits nine Chinese Gen X-ers every year for four years, tracking their struggles to achieve personal goals in the context of a rapidly changing political, social and economic climate that presents unprecedented opportunities. The nine subjects come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from two young women who leave their farming communities to become migrant workers in urban factories to one young man who was raised in the U.S. and another who was educated in Canada, both of whom return to China to make their fortunes. *Watch the full program online at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/youngchina/view/>.*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST & AN INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE

Thank you for your interest in these resources. We hope that this was helpful and that you can become a better Chinese language learner – and develop your interest in China – by considering these resources. We also ask for your recommendations, if you know great, high-quality resources that are not on this list! Talk to your instructor, or email us at info@chinese-now.com with your suggestions. We wish you well in your continued studies and hope that we can help you communicate more effectively in Chinese!