

Rise & Fall of the Canton Trade System – Lesson 02

A Tale of Two Cities: The China Trade in Canton and Hong Kong

Handout 02-A

Comparing Canton and Hong Kong

Introduction

Canton and Hong Kong developed as important centers of interaction between China and the West in the late-18th and 19th centuries. As they developed, life and trade in these cities was captured through artwork of the time. Artwork captured the growth of these cities, the foreign and Chinese quarters, daily life, and interaction between Chinese and Westerners in the two ports.

Whether created by Western artists or Chinese artists, this artwork was created for Western buyers. Thus, artists set out to capture Westerners' perceptions and experiences of life in these cities. The artists tried to depict how Westerners saw their own places and roles in those cities and how they saw themselves in relation to the Chinese. Looking back now at these paintings and drawings offers a window into daily life. Examining the art also provides insight into a changing economic and power relationship between China and the West, and changing perceptions of Chinese by Westerners.

Task

Your teacher will assign you one of two trade centers of 19th-century China to study in depth. Your task is to use several important ideas developed by geographers to analyze and create a detailed profile of that city in the 1800s. You will use the text and visual information provided in the *Rise & Fall of the Canton Trade System* as the source material for your research. Be sure to pay careful attention to information provided in pictures, paintings, and photos as well as written text.

Write your assigned city here: _____

1. Relative Location. The locations of both Canton and Hong Kong promoted each city's development as a center of trade with the West in the 18th and 19th centuries. Through the questions below, identify the location of each city in relation to important natural features and the built environment that contributed to it becoming a center of trade.

- A. Where is the city located within China?
- B. What geographic features surround the city?
- C. Are there other cities nearby?
- D. Which of its geographic features would contribute to the city's usefulness as a port for foreign products?
- E. What geographic features would contribute to its usefulness as a transfer point for goods entering or leaving other areas of China?

Write at least three statements about the city's location that answer these questions. For each of your three statements, illustrate your point with one image from the [Lesson 02 mini-database](#) or the online essays.

2. Place. All places have characteristics that give them meaning and character and distinguish them from other places on earth. Geographers describe places by their (a) physical and (b) human characteristics. Physical characteristics include terrain, geographic features, and so on. Human characteristics include such things as architecture, patterns of settlement, occupations, human interaction, land use, land ownership, and so on.

Canton and Hong Kong developed in their own ways and thus developed different characteristics. By answering the questions below, describe your city as a unique place with its own characteristics. Use the online essays and the images in the Lesson 02 mini-database to gather information.

- A. Did foreigners and Chinese live together in this city? If not, where did each live?
- B. Using images from the Lesson 02 mini-database or the online essays, describe the living areas of the Chinese and the Westerners.
- C. Describe architecture and public spaces in the city. What buildings are recorded in the artwork? Who built them and for what purposes?
- D. Did the government of China or Great Britain control this city? If China, what evidence of Chinese government control do you see? If Great Britain, what evidence of British control do you see?
- E. What evidence do you see of women, children, or family life?
- F. What was life like for Westerners in this city, according to the available artwork?

Write at least three statements about the characteristics of this city that made it a unique place. For each of your three statements, illustrate your point with one image from the Lesson 02 mini-database or the online essays.

3. Movement of People and Ideas. People interact with other people, places, and things almost every day of their lives. They travel from one place to another; they communicate with each other; and they rely upon products, information, and ideas that come from beyond their immediate environment. Canton and Hong Kong were places where the people of many cultures mixed and exchanged products, information, and ideas. Westerners learned from Chinese and formed ideas and attitudes about them. Chinese did the same.

Through answers to the questions below, describe the movement of people and ideas in your city. Use the online essays and the images in the Lesson 02 mini-database to gather information.

- A. Did foreigners and Chinese live in the same areas in this city?
- B. Did foreigners and Chinese come into much contact in this city? Did they work together?
- C. Based on the available artwork, what kinds of interactions took place between foreigners and Chinese in this city?
- D. What aspects of Western culture, everyday life, and ideas were Chinese exposed to?
- E. What aspects of Chinese culture, everyday life, and ideas were Westerners exposed to?
- F. How did Westerners feel about the Chinese? How did Chinese feel about the Westerners?

Now, write at least three statements about the movement of people and ideas in your city that address the questions posed above. For each of your three statements, illustrate your point with one image from the Lesson 02 mini-database or the online essays.