

Sun Wing Wo general store and herb shop: Chinese Medicine and Acculturation

Grades 1-3

Acculturation is the process of getting used to another culture by adding parts of that culture into your first culture. Because America is very different from China, it was hard for many Chinese to acculturate. The Sun Wing Wo store made this process easier because it offered many things from traditional Chinese culture, as well as new things from American culture.



A traditional Chinese practice that continued here in America at the Sun Wing Wo store is Chinese Medicine. This really helped the Chinese in their acculturation process because they were able to take care of their health in ways that were understood and familiar to them. Now, many non-Chinese and Chinese in the United States use both Chinese and Western Medicine to keep themselves healthy.

Chinese Medicine uses the natural healing power of plants. Look at the chart below. Listed are some common symptoms of illness and their cures according to Chinese and Western Medicine.

SYMPTOM	CHINESE MEDICINE	WESTERN MEDICINE
Headache	Ju Hua (Chrysanthemum)	Ibuprofen
Stomach Ache	Lao Jiang (Mature Ginger)	Antacid
Asthma	Ma Huang (Ephedra)	Inhaler

The herbs used in Chinese Medicine are usually dried, then boiled in hot water to make a tea or broth that the patient drinks.

1. Are there any special cures that your family uses for these and/or other symptoms that are different from those of Western Medicine? If yes, list them below, and what culture these cures come from.

SYMPTOM	REMEDY	CULTURE
<i>example - Headache</i>	<i>Ju Hua (Chrysanthemum)</i>	<i>Chinese</i>

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2. Are there any similarities between the cures your family uses and those of Chinese Medicine? If yes, what are they?

3. Have you or anyone in your family ever tried Chinese Medicine? If yes, what practices have you tried? If no, why not?

4. What were some other things from traditional Chinese culture that the Sun Wing Wo store offered?

5. What were some new American cultural elements at Sun Wing Wo?

Chinese Medicine was a traditional Chinese practice that continued here in America. Think about your family and the parts of your own culture that your family kept or did not keep here in America, and then answer the following questions.

6. Give at least three examples of customs, beliefs and/or celebrations that your family practices that did not begin in the United States. If you could pick, what would you pass on to your children? Why?

7. Give at least three examples of customs, beliefs, and/or celebrations that you practice that are not a part of your ethnic heritage. Why do you think your family chose to or had to, add these into the way you live?

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Through completing these exercises, students will be able to reflect on their own cultural heritage and learn to recognize, value and respect the differences in all cultural practices in the United States. The Sun Wing Wo store provides a material example of the acculturation process for Chinese Americans and works to facilitate students thinking about, and sharing their own.

Chinese Medicine is an example of a practice and belief system brought to the United States by an immigrant group that has spread into mainstream American culture and practice. These exercises engage students with the practice, and facilitate the exploration of their own cultural medicinal practices.

The Sun Wing Wo Background Information should be gone over in class to provide historical context and pertinent information about Chinese American experiences before completing this exercise. Use the Sun Wing Wo Glossary when needed.

Students should complete this worksheet individually then gather in pairs or small groups to share their answers with each other. This will serve to generate conversation between the students about their different cultural practices they have retained here in the United States, and they will be able to learn about the differences and similarities amongst each other. The teacher can also lead the entire class in comparing answers.

For more information on Chinese American history and experience, please refer to the bibliography provided, and our "Chinese Americans in Los Angeles: A Timeline," posted on our website www.camla.org, under the Education Program link.

Possible answers for the following questions from this exercise:

4. What were some other elements of traditional Chinese culture offered at Sun Wing Wo?

language, food, clothing, household items, Chinese Medicine, the company of other Chinese

5. What were some new American cultural elements at Sun Wing Wo?

food, household items, clothing, people from different cultures, a different way of doing things