

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

Grades 4-6

Acculturation is the process of adapting to another culture through integrating elements of that culture into one's first culture, while also retaining elements of one's first culture. Coming to the United States, a place that was very different from China, the Chinese faced a difficult acculturation process. Fortunately, the Sun Wing Wo store helped make this process easier by providing them with elements of their familiar and understood culture, as well as offering different American cultural elements they could integrate into their lives.



A traditional Chinese practice that continued here in America, that was also available at Sun Wing Wo, is that of Chinese Medicine. Having access to a familiar system of healthcare greatly helped the Chinese in their acculturation process. Now, many non-Chinese and Chinese in the United States use both Chinese and Western Medicine to maintain their health.

Chinese medicinal remedies often use the natural healing power of plants. Look at the chart below. Listed are some common ailments, their herbal remedy according to Chinese Medicine, and that of Western Medicine.

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

These herbs usually come in dried form, and are taken as broth or tea by boiling them in hot water to extract their nutrients.

1. Are there any special remedies that your family uses for these and/or other ailments that are different from those prescribed by Western Medicine? If so, list them below, and what culture these remedies come from.

AILMENT	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 remedies your family uses and those of Chinese Medicine? If so, 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 elements of traditional Chinese culture offered at Sun Wing Wo?

5. What were some new American cultural elements offered 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 retained or did not retain 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 do not originate 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, integrate these into your lives?

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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 offered at Sun Wing Wo?

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