

## Teaching Materials

### Teaching Sources

There are three main trends in the primary sources that may be useful to focus on in a classroom discussion:

- Making distinctions
- Issues of authority
- Gender and representation

Although each of these trends may be found in any given source, the packet was organized to facilitate discussion of specific trends within a discrete group of documents. Thus, the first three sources (Remarks on Chinese Character and Customs; The Seven Deadly Sins of Confucianism; The Ethics of Christianity and Confucianism Compared) were chosen because they highlighted the distinction between Confucianism and Christianity. Students should consider the manner in which Chinese women are located in this discussion. In each piece, it is these women's perceived hardships that are presented as proof of the degeneracy of Confucian civilization. This "proof," in turn, implicitly points to the superiority of Christian/Western civilization.

The sources that relate to the practice of foot binding (The Small Feet of Chinese Females, 1835; The Small Feet of Chinese Women, 1869; Small Feet: Two Opinions; Bound Feet: An Alternate View) are quite interesting in their own right. They also nicely demonstrate the rhetorical strategies used to assert Western authority on the subject of Chinese culture. The first three of these pieces utilize scientific language to defend a moral judgment on a cultural practice. Students with a background in natural or social science will quickly realize that there is very little that is "scientific" about these observations. These documents also show the insularity of the Western observer: these authors most often cite other Western observers (or, in the case of the letter writers, each other) in forming their arguments about foot binding. Ultimately, the discussion is guided by the authors' prejudices rather than "facts" about the practice. The photograph provides a contrasting view of bound feet by placing "small feet" in their proper cultural context—as a form of adornment.

The final three pieces (Schools for the Education of Chinese Girls, Women's Work for Woman, Domestic Life of Woman) are authored by women. Students will note that the tone of these articles differs markedly from those authored by men. Chinese women are presented as agents rather than victims. In each of these articles, women are either explicitly or implicitly acknowledged as enjoying authority within the domestic sphere. In Women's Work for Woman, it is even possible to read resistance on the part of adult women in that they are portrayed as less willing to convert. Nevertheless, there is also a consistent effort made to distance Chinese women from Western women. In each case, the reader is made to understand that the Western woman enjoys a superior position relative to her Chinese counterparts.

### Discussion Questions:

- In these pieces, how do the authors distance themselves from their Chinese subjects? How does the implicit distinction between the West and China affect the way in which Chinese women are presented to the Western public? In exploring this question, students should look to the language and style of the articles in this packet. Often, an aside or a qualified comment stands as a marker that links the author and the reader together and excludes the Chinese subject. References to “us” or “we” proliferate, for example. The Chinese subject becomes “the other,” laden with descriptors that distinguish “us” (active, scientific, moral) from “them” (passive, superstitious, depraved).
- What distinctions may be made between female and male authorship in these pieces? Can these articles teach us something about their female authors?

Students may wish to compare the representation of Chinese women in the first group (Remarks on Chinese Character and Customs, The Seven Deadly Sins of Confucianism, The Ethics of Christianity and Confucianism Compared) to the third group (Schools for the Education of Chinese Girls, Women’s Work for Woman, Domestic Life of Woman). Generally speaking, women in the first group of documents are presented as passive victims of Confucian culture. In the latter group, women are presented as either active participants in their own culture or as possessing the potential to influence those around them.

Students should be encouraged to consider the conditions of male versus female authorship. For example, male missionaries sought to convert patriarchs who would bring their families into the church with them. Female missionaries worked with women and therefore needed to present their subjects as both worthy of conversion (i.e. possessing the mental aptitude to convert) and as influential within the larger family. Students should also be encouraged to grapple with the question of why Western women employed the same techniques as their male counterparts in distancing Chinese women from themselves. Rather than lamenting women’s common lot in patriarchal societies, Western women represent themselves as being better off than Chinese women—in many cases implying that the Western gender order represents the universal ideal.

## **Lesson Plan: Western Missionary Views of Chinese Women: A Roundtable Discussion**

### **Time Estimate**

Three 47-minute class periods.

### **Objectives**

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. analyze point of view in primary source documents
2. determine the effect of gender on point of view
3. participate in a roundtable discussion on Western views of the status and role of Chinese women in their society
4. reflect on how their discussion may reflect the point of view of 21st century Americans

### **Materials**

- A printed packet of all of the sources listed below should be made for each student, so that s/he can mark directly on the copies to analyze point of view. Of course, students also could be directed to use the versions online with editing programs (like Microsoft Word) instead.
  - Source 1: Missionary Journal, "Chinese Character"** Lay, G. Tradescant. "Remarks on Chinese Character and Customs." Chinese Repository 12 (1843): 139-142.
  - Source 2: Newspaper, Confucian Women** North China Herald and Supreme Court and Consular Gazette, "The Natural History of a Chinese Girl," July 18, 1890.
  - Source 3: Missionary Journal, Christianity and Confucianism** "The Ethics of Christianity and Confucianism Compared." Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal 17 (1886): 377-378.
  - Source 4: Missionary Journal, Foot Binding 1** "Small feet of the Chinese females: remarks on the origin of the custom of compressing the feet; the extent and effects of the practice; with an anatomical description of a small foot." Chinese Repository 3 (1835): 537-539.
  - Source 5: Missionary Journal, Foot Binding 2** Dudgeon, J., M.D. "The Small Feet of Chinese Women." Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal 2 (1869): 93-96.
  - Source 6: Missionary Journal, Foot Binding 3** Kerr, J.G., M.D. "Small Feet." Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal 2 (1869): 169-170; G., H. "Correspondence: Small Feet." Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal 2 (1870): 230-232.

**Source 7: Photograph, Foot Binding** Photograph of Northern Chinese woman, late Qing period. In *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet*, Dorothy Ko. Berkeley: University of California Press; The Bata Shoe Museum Foundation, 2001.

**Source 8: Missionary Journal, Chinese Education 1** “Schools for the Education of Chinese Girls.” *Chinese Repository* 3 (1834): 42-43.

**Source 9: Missionary Journal, Chinese Education 2** Farnham, J.M.W. “Women’s Work for Woman.” *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 16 (1885): 218-219.

**Source 10: Missionary Journal, Chinese Culture** “Domestic Life of Woman.” *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 17 (1886): 153-154.

- Sufficient copies of **Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Texts**

## Strategies

### Day 1:

1. **Hook:** The teacher will introduce the lesson by showing students images of different kinds of fashions for women that restricted or inhibited their movement such as corsets, high heel shoes, mini-skirts, heavy jewelry, and Chinese foot binding. To show Chinese foot binding, the teacher could use **Source 7: Photograph, Foot Binding**, which depicts a Northern Chinese woman with bound feet from the late Qing period. The teacher will start a discussion by asking the following questions:

- How do these fashions restrict or inhibit movement?
- Why would women willingly choose these fashions?
- What kind of people might criticize these fashions?

2. **Objectives:** The teacher will then explain the objectives of the unit and how the students will be working toward a roundtable discussion on Western views of the status and role of Chinese women in 19th-century China. The teacher also will show the students the Document-Based Question on the topic.

3. **Modeling:** The teacher will demonstrate how to use the **Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Texts** for one of the sources. The teacher also should explain how to identify point of view in the sources by highlighting or underlining parts of the documents that reveal the author’s opinion on the status and role of Chinese women in their society. Point of view comes from the author’s gender, occupation, culture, religious affiliation, purpose for writing the document, audience for the text, and social class. Furthermore, point of view can be determined from the text itself.

The teacher can alert the students to look for key phrases that indicate tone and therefore the author’s attitude toward Chinese women’s status and roles in Chinese

society. The teacher should model how to find tone by pointing out the positive and negative words used in the sources. For example, in [Source 1: Missionary Journal, "Chinese Character"](#), "Remarks on Chinese Character and Customs," the author labels Confucianism a "diabolical system of ethics," and in [Source 8: Missionary Journal, Chinese Education 1](#), "Schools for the Education of Chinese Girls," the author observes that in China women are "generally and greatly despised," but that "it has been pleasing to witness for some years the gradual decline of prejudice against female education."

4. **Homework:** The teacher will distribute the primary sources as a packet for the students to analyze for homework (and show them how to access the documents online if they prefer to read and mark on electronic versions). The students will use the [Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Texts](#) to identify the authors' points of view on the status and role of Chinese women in their society, i.e. what opinion do they have about Chinese women and how does their gender, occupation, culture, religious affiliation, audience, social class, and purpose inform their point of view on Chinese women's status and role in Chinese society.

## Day 2:

5. **Roundtable Discussion Preparation:** The teacher will assign students to the following roles for a roundtable discussion on Western views of the status and role of Chinese women in 19th century China. The numbers in parentheses indicates the maximum number of students to be assigned to that role in the roundtable. If the class size exceeds 28, then the teacher can assign moderators to keep the discussion going. The teacher also could assign a student to give a brief introduction to the roundtable and one to summarize the major arguments at the end. Another role could be to lead a reflection on the extent to which their current views about women's status and roles in American society affected their presentation of their role in the roundtable. If the class is small, the teacher should fulfill those duties.

### Roundtable Speaking Roles:

- Missionary men (3)
- Missionary women (3)
- Male readers of the missionary journals in the United States or Great Britain (2)
- Female readers of the missionary journals in the United States or Great Britain (2)
- Chinese Confucian men with wives whose feet are bound (2)
- Chinese Christian men with wives whose feet were not bound (2)
- Chinese Christian women without bound feet (2)
- Chinese women with bound feet (2)
- Chinese peasant women without bound feet (2)
- Qing Dynasty government official posted in Shanghai (2)

- Qing Dynasty government official posted in the Forbidden City (2)

The students will work on preparing their arguments for a roundtable discussion. They must show the teacher the three statements they plan to make during the discussion and the source(s) they used to prepare their statements. The teacher should encourage the students to anticipate arguments from the other side, and to confer with their classmates who have the same views to make sure that their statements are not too repetitive.

### Day 3:

6. **Roundtable Discussion:** Students will conduct the roundtable discussion on the status and role of Chinese women in their society. If possible, the chairs in the classroom should be organized in a circle.
7. **Wrap-up:** Students will discuss how much their current views on women's roles affected their statements on behalf of 19th century people.
8. **Homework:** Students will write the DBQ.

### Differentiation

**Advanced Students:** After the roundtable, advanced students should be able to have a more sustained discussion of the problems of presentism when looking at controversial issues in the past, such as foot binding of Chinese women. The teacher could direct their attention back to their comments about current fashions that restrict women's movements to compare their attitudes toward fashion today and the norm of foot binding in 19th-century China among the elite of the Chinese social classes.

**Less Advanced Students:** For students needing additional introduction to analyzing primary sources, the teacher should model the analysis of one source in detail, using the same analysis sheet that the students will use for homework, the [Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Texts](#). I recommend using the [Source 2: Newspaper, Confucian Women](#), "Natural History of a Chinese Girl," to help students see the Western attacks on the negative effects of the Confucian system on women. Students will be able to follow the teacher's analysis in the list of "Seven Deadly Sins of Confucianism."

Additionally, the teacher should sustain a discussion with the students on how the missionary background of most of the authors and their audiences would make them use negative adjectives about Confucianism and positive adjectives about Christianity. The teacher also should give the students some information about Victorian sensibilities in 19th-century Great Britain and the United States that elevated middle class women to a "separate sphere" where they held the responsibility for moral education of their children and moral standards for their husbands.

**Document Based Question (Suggested writing time: 40 minutes)**

*Directions:* The following question is based on the documents included in this module. This question is designed to test your ability to work with and understand historical documents. Write an essay that:

- Has a relevant thesis and supports that thesis with evidence from the documents.
- Uses all of the documents.
- Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible.  
Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
- Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the authors' points of view.

You may refer to relevant historical information not mentioned in the documents.

*Question:* Using the sources provided, compare and contrast different 19th century Western attitudes toward Chinese women's status and roles in Chinese society.

What additional sources, types of documents, or information would you need to compare and contrast more completely 19th century Western attitudes toward Chinese women's status and roles in Chinese society?

## Bibliography

Fleming, Leslie, ed. *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1989.

This edited volume provides a pan-Asian context for women's missionary work in China. Articles by Marjorie King and Jane Hunter discuss the relationship between American models of domesticity and the message propagated to (and about) Chinese women.

Hunter, Jane. *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn of the Century China*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

This book provides valuable information on the circumstances of female missionaries in China. Not only does it describe the conditions of these women's lives in China, but it also delves into their motivations for undertaking missionary work.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.

A nice complement to Said, Pratt's study of travel writing by Western authors provides insight into the tropes which have characterized the genre in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Although the author focuses on South America, her findings are applicable to the Asian case.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979 [1978].

The now classic text on how the West views the East, this book lays out a theoretical framework for understanding how Western accounts of Eastern societies should be read and interpreted.

Spence, Jonathan. *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.

This nicely written text provides a historical context for the interactions between the West and China. Beginning with Marco Polo, Spence traces the narrative evolution of "China" in Western texts through the centuries, ending with Nixon's visit to China in 1972.