

Foochow Road, Shanghai

Mini role play for Asia, the Pacific and the West in History

ABSTRACT

'Foochow Road' shanghai streetscape role play is designed to encourage students to reflect on their existing knowledge and conceptions of Chinese history. It aims to support their historical imagination, encourage thinking about various historical perspectives, stimulate creativity, and support interactivity online. Interactivity and the various roles encourage students to reflect on the nature of power, privilege and historical perspectives.

KEYWORDS

History, Asia, Asian Studies, China, Globalisation, e-Learning.

CONTACT

Dr Nicki Tarulevicz
Cleveland State University
N.TARULEVICZ@csuohio.edu

Claire Brooks
La Trobe University
c.brooks@latrobe.edu.au



DESCRIPTION

'Foochow Road' Shanghai Streetscape is a simple flash animation designed to allow students to explore a character in colonial Shanghai. It is aimed at an early point in a history course and designed to build student confidence in expressing themselves online. Students participate and interact in a variety of ways (flash, discussion board, chat, blog) and are given choice to explore a variety of potential ways of presenting the outputs of their interaction. For example, students can choose to write a short piece in the voice of a particular character.

This activity can be extended in various ways depending on the learning objectives targeted. For example, the activity can be tuned towards development of historical reading and/or writing skills, historical perspectives, bias, creative writing and/or inter-cultural awareness.

Possible character choices range include western businessman, concubine, street sweeper, missionary, Confucian scholar, rickshaw driver, policeman, Manchu official.

AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE

- Embedded into the *U21 Certificate in Global Issues*; a multi-disciplinary program offered by the [Universitas 21](#) network to the students of the Universities of British Columbia (Canada), Hong Kong (China), and Nottingham (United Kingdom), Queensland (Australia), Lund (Sweden), and Tecnológico de Monterrey (Mexico);
- This small activity was part of a larger 8 week program designed to give students an overview of the history of Asia, the Pacific and the West;
- The cohort represented a mix of Australian-based and external students. The diversity of perspectives was beneficial in this exercise;
- The exercise can be scaled to accommodate various sized cohorts by running parallel role plays in small groups.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Participants are provided with an opportunity to further develop their understanding and appreciation of the:

- diverse perspectives which inform history;
- creativity, historical imagination, empathy;
- information and ideas which students bring to any task;
- opportunity to review preconceptions and stereotypes.

TIME AND SETTING

This role play is set in colonial Shanghai in the late 19th and early 20th century.

RESOURCES

- Flash animation of Foochow Road Shanghai purpose-built for the role play;
- LMS (Blackboard) utilising the functionalities of flash, discussion board, small group area and large group area.

ASSESSMENT

Weekly online participation, of which this activity was one component, contributed 30% towards the final assessment mark for the course. The remainder of course assessment was allocated to two research essay activities. The Foochow Road Shanghai role-based activity was not independently assessed. It was a gateway activity used to ensure students were familiar and confident in using a variety of technologies and in communicating online with each other in small group sets.

Role Play Processes

Foochow Road Shanghai is a very simple role-based learning activity. It was used as an introductory exercise in a wholly online course in order to generate a sense of fun and adventure. Through this activity students gained confidence in using the online learning environment underpinning their course. Used as an ice-breaker, Foochow Road, Shanghai represented one of the weekly online activities students were required to undertake throughout the course. It was conducted asynchronously over a one week period. This activity ensured students were comfortable and familiar with several technology based elements of the online course- LMS site (Blackboard based), flash, discussion board, small group area and large group area

Using a flash animation, students explored a variety of historical and cultural viewpoints by choosing a character and writing a personal response in the form of their choice and sharing it with their fellow students in the small group discussion board. Students reviewed each character outline and wrote a short piece from the character's point of view. After reading each others work, students commented on the story line of Shanghai Road or undertook other activities as required by the tutor.

Each role begins "*imagine you are a*"

Example

Imagine that you a colonial figure in Shanghai. As the representative of an important trading company you have high status in Shanghai and considerable power. Your company buys tea and porcelain from China to sell in Europe. You are required to write a few hundred words from the Colonial Official's perspective. What kind of document might you write? (Letter? Memo?). To whom would you write? About what? What issues might you think important? Are you worried about something? Do you have good news to report? You may want to think about how your age, gender, status, race, etc. affect the content of your writing as well..."

FACILITATOR ISSUES

- Facilitators can use this simple role play in a blended or online environment.
- Larger writing and interactive assignments can be set using the same source material
- Students can choose their character or, if desired, be allocated a specific role.
- Discretion about how students might present their output is encouraged eg blog post, discussion board post, web page etc.
- Issues arising from the activity can be discussed in the discussion board or blogged or kept in a reflective journal.

REUSABILITY

Suitable for use in a variety of contexts, especially entry-level history. This role-based activity could also be used to develop creative writing and/or cultural studies skills.

REFERENCES AND LINKS

Shanghai Road role based activity

<http://pebblepad-dev.latrobe.edu.au/viewasset.aspx?oid=45287&type=file>

tinyurl: <http://tinyurl.com/shanghai-street-roleplay>