

# **Approaching Tibetan Studies**

## **Curricular Ideas and Support Materials**

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### **Questions for Discussion and Writing Assignments**

- How has the geography of Tibet helped shape Tibetan culture?
- How has Buddhism influenced Tibetan culture?
- What made traditional Tibet, before Chinese occupation in the 1950s, a civilization?
- What is unique about traditional Tibetan society and culture?
- How has Tibet and Tibetan culture changed since Chinese occupation?
- Explain the People's Republic of China's claim that Tibet is part of China.
- Explain the Tibetan Government in exile's claim to independence.
- How has The Dalai Lama's approach to resolving the conflict in Tibet, and the issue of Tibet's independence, differed from the approach taken by the Chinese government?
- What similarities can you notice between traditional Tibetan culture and traditional culture of native peoples of the Americas? What do these peoples have in common in the way they were colonized? What current political, economic, social and religious issues do both the Tibetan and American Indian situations share?
- Before 1950, Tibet was able to maintain one of the last few traditional ancient civilizations. Explain why.
- What have The Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Government in exile, and exiled Tibetans done to preserve their cultural heritage and maintain their struggle for Tibet's independence?
- Draw connections between the Tibet-China conflict and other global conflicts.
- Why do you think so much of the world knows so little about the Tibetan situation? Why is the Tibetan situation is not a prominent issue in international politics?
- What can we learn from Tibetan culture and the Tibetan situation?
- What will be the future for Tibetans and Tibet?

### **Essential Questions on the Tibetan Issue**

- How do you define the Tibetan issue?
- What is the claim of the People's Republic of China's claim to Tibet?
- What is China's interest in Tibet: historical & current?
- How do Tibetans define their claim to Tibet as an independent nation?
- What makes a nation independent?
- What progress has the Chinese made in modernizing Tibet?
- How has Tibet changed (in the areas of geography, politics, culture, religion, and economics) since 1959?
- What has been international reaction and response (political, economic, human rights) to the Tibetan situation? Why have so few Heads of State and official governments supported an independent Tibet?