

MATERIALS for Qiu Ju

(Shihong Zhang, Joanne Karr, Cindy McNulty, Gary Detore, Chuck Koplinski, Chris Bryant)

SUMMARY

Qiu Ju (Li Gong) is a woman who lives in a small farming community with her husband Qinglai (Peiqi Liu), his sister Meizi (Liuchun Yang) and their father. She is in the final trimester of her first pregnancy. We see the two woman taking Qinglai to a doctor in the city because he has been severely hurt. Only later do we find out that recently Qinglai was talking to Wang Shantang (Kesheng Lei), the village chief, when a miscommunication occurred. Qinglai's comment that Shantang "only breeds hens" is taken to mean that the chieftain is unable to produce a son (he has only daughters). Wang Shantang takes exception to this and assaults Qinglai, kicking him so severely in the groin that he requires medical attention and is forced to miss work.

Qiu Ju wants an explanation of Wang Shantang's behavior, but he refuses to do so. Qiu Ju, is left no choice so she goes to the local police office and complains. The policeman suggests that the village chief pay 200 yuan to Qinglai in damages. Qiu Ju goes to Wang Shantang and informs him of this decision. Ultimately, he throws the 200 yuan notes onto the ground disdainfully and does not apologize. Dissatisfied, Qiu Ju, with Meizi in tow, then takes her complaint to the provincial capital, where they stand out as country people due to their clothes and demeanor. Staying at a cheap hotel, the manager gives them directions to the head of the district police and when Qiu Ju and Meizi inform him of her complaint, he promises to review it.

This does not happen immediately and when Qiu Ju hears of the district police's verdict, she's disappointed and angered by this. The only real difference is that Wang Shantang is now required to pay 250 yuan. This decision has no effect on him and when he still refuses to comply, Qiu Ju returns to the capital where she hires a lawyer to file a new complaint. This has become a personal fight for her, something her husband wishes she would drop as he has recovered from his injuries.

Ultimately, this does no good as the court upholds the decision of the district official. This disappoints Qiu Ju and she pursues another appeal. As a result, officials visit the village and Qinglai is examined by local doctors.

Time passes, winter arrives and Qiu Ju goes into labor. Complications ensue and Qinglai is so desperate he wakes Wang Shantang in the middle of the night and pleads for help. Reluctantly, he gathers a group of local boy men and they take Qiu Ju, to the hospital, where she gives birth to a healthy baby boy.

Four weeks later, Qiu Ju and Qinglai hold a "one month party" for their son and invite Wang Shantang to attend. Ironically, he is not able to come as he is being sent to jail to serve a fifteen-day sentence as the results of Qinglai's medical exam have finally been revealed, showing that he suffered a broken rib.

Realizing the error of her ways, Qiu Ju, tries to stop the police from taking Wang Shantang away but this is all in vain. The last we see of Qiu Ju is her shocked expression as she attempts to process the irony of the situation.

Historic and Cultural Context

The film *Qiu Ju* is based on a novella entitled *The Wan Family Lawsuit*, by Chen Yuan Bin. Released in 1992, the story examines village life, the rural/urban divide, and the tensions sometimes created when a traditional society adopts new institutions and practices. While on the surface the story is simple, analyzing the film's cultural context requires a basic understanding of a few concepts and facts.

The early village scenes do little to establish the time period but the scenes shot in the city suggest the very late 80's or early 90's. The action depicts the growing vitality of the city and contrasts sharply with the traditional village, creating a tension that even now produces challenges for the government. The film gently pokes fun at the villagers attempting to negotiate the big city. They may as well have been transported in a time machine to another century. The time period of the film's release is important because Zhang's previous two films (*Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lantern*) had been banned in China, while this film received enthusiastic support of the Chinese government. Its positive depiction of government officials, just a few years after the crackdown on Tiananmen Square protestors, was welcomed by the Chinese Communist Party looking to improve its image.

Another thing to keep in mind when preparing to teach the film is the role of Confucian ideals within traditional society. While the communists may have attempted to eliminate Confucian ideas as one of the "four olds", the way in which interpersonal relations formed the basic structure of the village is deeply embedded in society, whether identified as Confucian or not. Neither the chief or Qiu Ju seem concerned with sincerely reestablishing harmony; disrupting social relations within the village could have serious social consequences, especially for a woman. When Qiu Ju's husband complains that people will think they are difficult if they pursue their case, her answer that she doesn't care what others think must be viewed through a Chinese cultural lens. While Americans may admire her pluck, Chinese are more likely to see the enormous risk she is taking with the social relations of the village. For further background on Confucianism, see the teacher resources below.

The late 1970's brought the advent of reform to China, including adjustments to the legal system. Hopes of increasing international investment and trade required China to move to a more transparent judiciary system. In the case of Qiu Ju, her complaints move through the Public Security Bureau at increasingly higher levels: the local, district and city (provincial capital) offices. In each case, the officials hand down decisions based on incomplete reports which are only superficially investigated by a local official, who works to mediate a resolution between the parties. Procedures such as a thorough review of evidence (including getting an X-ray of the chest injury) seem not as important as establishing how the injured parties feel about the episode. Officer Li tells Qiu Ju that the chief lost face when her husband suggested that he produced only hens (daughters rather than a son). When his efforts to reconcile the parties seem to be at risk of failing, he buys gifts for Qiu Ju's family, telling her they are from the chief as his way of apologizing while saving face. Li's desire is to smooth things over rather than risk his important working relationship with the chief. He's clearly a good man who is frustrated by the chief but Qiu Ju's case requires

him to use his official authority over the chief, rather than rely on cooperation born of a harmonious personal relationship. For further background on the subject of the traditional practice of mediation, see the teacher resources below.

Resources for teaching *Qiu Ju*:

Confucianism:

- Asia For Educators at Columbia University is a tremendous website for East Asian History. This is a link to their material on Confucianism.
<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/cosmos/ort/confucianism.htm>

Relationships within a Confucian Society:

- Yum, June Ock. "The Impact of Confucianism on Interpersonal Relations and Communication Patterns in East Asia".
<http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~diepthai/images/The%20impact%20of%20confucianism.pdf>

Traditional Mediation:

- Chow, Deborah. "Development of China's Legal System Will Strengthen Its Mediation Programs". **Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution**.
<http://cojcr.org/vol3no2/notes01.html>

Director of Qiu Ju - Zhang Yimou

Zhang Yimou was born November 14, 1951. He is a director, producer, writer and actor, and former cinematographer. He is considered a "Fifth Generation" filmmaker and has won numerous prizes and much international recognition. One of his recurrent themes is the resilience of Chinese people in the face of hardship and adversity.

Zhang was born in Xi'an. His father was a dermatologist and had been an officer in the National Revolutionary Army under Chiang Kai-shek during the Chinese Civil War. Other relatives followed the Nationalist forces to Taiwan after their 1949 defeat. Zhang faced difficulties in his early life because of these family members. During the Cultural Revolution he left his studies and went to work, first as a farm laborer for 3 years, and later at a cotton textile mill for 7 years. During this time he took up painting and amateur still photography. In 1978, he went to the newly reopened Beijing Film Academy and majored in cinematography. Although he was over the requisite age for admission, he appealed and was accepted.

After working at Guangxi Film Studio, a small regional film studio, he (and fellow graduates) began making their own films. He worked as Director of Photography on ONE AND EIGHT (Zhang Junxiao) and YELLOW EARTH (Chen Kaige) in 1984, both successes at the Hong Kong Film Festival, helping to bring the new Chinese Cinema to the attention of world audiences and demonstrating a departure from propagandist films of the cultural revolution. YELLOW EARTH is today widely considered the inaugural film of the Fifth Generation directors.

In 1987, he made his directorial debut with RED SORGHUM.

A good resource for information about Zhang Yimou is the New York Times page http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/z/zhang_yimou/index.html

"In the first part of his career, Mr. Zhang made beautiful art films set in rural China that were banned by censors here. In the second part, he made beautiful historical epics that alienated many of his early supporters, who say Mr. Zhang's narratives now toe the party line.

...But Mr. Xi's criticism of Mr. Zhang in 2007 shows that Mr. Zhang does not necessarily command respect from Chinese leaders. And Mr. Zhang said he did not see himself as a voice of the government."

A Filmmaker Walks a Line Between Artistic Acceptance and Official Approval
NY Times archives

Another good resource:

<http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=242&catid=7&subcatid=42>

"The government didn't like Zhang's depiction of the dark side of Chinese culture in his early films. Some labeled his works as poison and even accused him of making veiled attacks of the Chinese leadership....

To get To Live made Zhang submitted a fake script to the censors that said the film was about China's bright future and then made their film under a veil of secrecy, The censors were infuriated and banned Zhang from making films with foreign funds for five years. Worried that he would never be able to make film again, he never seriously challenged the censors after that....

In recent years, Zhang has been accused of selling out to the Chinese government. Some have even accused him of being a kind Chinese Leni Riefenstahl, the German director who made propaganda films under Hitler. Michael Berry, who teaches contemporary Chinese culture at the University of California at Santa Barbara told the New York Times, "He went from being the renegade making films that were banned and an eyesore for the Chinese government to kind of being the pet of the government in some people's eyes." Zhang has served as an artistic advisor to the Communist leadership, promoted China abroad and produced a short film that helped China win the right to host the Olympics. He now is a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body."

Filmography:

Director

1987 Red Sorghum
1988 Codename Cougar (co-director)
1990 Ju Dou
1991 Raise the Red Lantern
1992 The Story of Qiu Ju
1994 To Live
1995 Shanghai Triad
1997 Keep Cool
1999 Not One Less
1999 The Road Home
2000 Happy Times
2002 Hero
2004 House of Flying Daggers
2005 Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles
2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2009 A Simple Noodle Story
2010 The Love of the Hawthorn Tree
2011 The Flowers of War

Cinematographer

1982 Red Elephant
1983 One and Eight
1984 Yellow Earth
1986 Old Well
1986 The Big Parade

Actor

1986 Old Well

1987 Red Sorghum

1989 Fight and Love with a Terracotta Warrior

1997 Keep Cool

He also was chosen to direct the Beijing portion of the closing ceremonies of the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China. In addition, he has had a stage and opera directing career since the 1990's.

Qiu Ju - Reception and Reviews

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0105197/externalreviews>

IMDB is the first place to look for reviews. There are twenty reviews available on Qiu Ju.

Below are some highlights of various reviews.

Cohen and Cohen "Did Qiu Ju Get Good Legal Advice?"

-Cinema, Law and the State in Asia

-Creekmur and Sidel, eds Palgrave Macmillian 2007 162- 173

-“Qiu Ju” has become a verb –

meaning to go to court in an effort to fight a wrong

-many viewers, especially American, do not see the film as a farce: both rural and city scenes ring true

-only four professional actors are used in the film; the rest are ordinary people filmed with hidden cameras and microphones

-some aspects of the film do not ring true: the relation of rural people to those who administer justice, especially in the following areas:

-easy access to police

-kind police and administrators

-competent, conscientious, judges

-she wanted “justice,” an apology not retributive justice

-she is not afraid to challenge the conventions of society, in order to advance her cause

-article concludes civil litigation actually would be a better path, but not necessarily for the story

Roger Ebert www.rogerebert.suntimes.com

-very favorable review: “absorb more information about the lives of ordinary people in everyday China than in any other film I’ve seen”

David Holley Los Angeles Times 2/19/12 F 1-4 “China’s Village Voice”

-favorable review

-demonstrates the “difficulty of making films that meet governments standards regarding censorship”

Edwin Jahiel www.edwinjahiel.com/storyqui.htm

-favorable review

Janet Maslin New York Times 10/2/92 B9

“A Chinese Woman’s Arduous Search for Justice”

- favorable review
- gives “ a detailed view of contemporary Chinese life”
- a documentary aspect

David Sterritt Christian Science Monitor 4/23/93 p.12
“Qiu Ju Breaks New Ground”

- very favorable review: “deserves to be a smashing hit”
- one of the best films of 1993

Alan Stone Boston Review bostonreview.net/BR18.5/alanstone.html
September/October 1993 Boston Review

- notes that American audiences found the film serious but that Chinese audiences describe it as a comedy
- Stone argues that Chinese audiences understand the film is not attempting to portray a realistic picture of the Chinese legal system
- argues that the film should be viewed as a “fable” that considers humans as universal, not as a particular culture
- also argues that Zhang Yimou and Gong Li are nearly transcendent national figures

Physical Map of the “ Story of Qiuju”

The story was happened at 陕西省宝鸡市陇县 Longxian(county), Baoji city, Shaanxi province, about northwest 160 mi to Xi’an.

陕西省宝鸡市陇县 China - Google Maps

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Here is the hotel, Named Qiuju Hotel, which was built after the movie got popular. (the first two Chinese characters are Qiuju. The whole sentence means that “ Qiuju hotel welcomes you!”)



Glossary

1. Administrative divisions of the People's Republic of China

From bottom to up, the levels are :

Village - District(township) - County - City - Province - Centrol

Village and Village Chief

The **village** level serves as an organizational division (census, mail system) and does not have much importance in political representative power. But it has defined boundary and designated head (one per area):

In urban areas, every sub-district of a district of a city administers many communities or neighborhoods. Each of them has a neighborhood committee to administer the dwellers of that neighborhood or community. Rural areas are organized into village committees or villager groups. A "village" in this case can either be a natural village, one that spontaneously and naturally exists, or an administrative village, which is a bureaucratic entity.

District or Townships

Township level divisions (*Xiāng* 乡) is the basic level (fourth-level administrative units) of political divisions in China. They are similar to municipalities and communes in other countries and in turn may contain village committees and villages. With the stamp from village on their marriage application, couple may apply marriage license through township as the movie showed.

In the PRC's dual governance system, the township's governance is divided between the Communist Party Township Secretary, and the Mayor (乡长). A township official is the lowest-level ranked official in the CPC government hierarchy. The township has very few defined government responsibilities, except for the Birth Planning Commission (计划生育委员会).

A town (镇; pinyin: zhèn) is larger, often more populous, and less remote than a township.

Qiuju first tried to solve the problem at the village level with officer Li. Then, she went to Xiang (even though on the movie it showed VILLIAGE) after the village chief accepted officer solution to pay 200 yuan as medical cost and compensation of missing work but threw the money on the ground.

County

County is the standard English translation of **Xiàn** or formally **County level divisions**. Counties are found in the third level of the administrative hierarchy. The term *xian* is usually translated as "**districts**" or "**prefectures**" when put in the context of Chinese history.

A county's is called the CPC County Committee (中共县委) and the head called the Secretary (中共县委书记), the *de facto* highest office of the county. Policies are carried out via the People's government of the county, and its head is called the County Governor (县长). The governor is often also one of the deputy secretaries in the CPC Committee.

City

A **prefectural level city** (市 *shì*) is an administrative division of ranking below a province and above a county in China's administrative structure. Since the 1980s, most former prefectures have been renamed into prefectural level **cities**.

A prefectural level city is often an administrative unit comprising, typically, a main central urban area (a city in the usual sense, usually with the same name as the prefectural level city), and its much larger surrounding rural area containing many smaller cities, towns and villages.

Prefectural level cities nearly always contain multiple counties, county level cities, and other such sub-divisions. This results from the fact that the formerly predominant prefectures, which prefectural level cities have mostly replaced, were themselves large administrative units containing cities, smaller towns, and rural areas.

2. Kang-bed

The Kang (Chinese: 炕; pinyin: kàng) is a traditional long sleeping platform made of bricks or other forms of fired clay and more recently of concrete in some locations. Its interior cavity, leading to a flue, channels the exhaust from a wood or coal stove. The heat of a cooking fire, usually in an adjacent central room which serves as a kitchen, either a low stove or a stove actually set just below floor level, may be used for maintaining comfort in cool weather. Typically, a kang occupies one-third to one half the area the room, and is used for sleeping at night and for other activities during the day.

Like the European ceramic stove, a massive block of masonry is used to retain heat. While it might take several hours of heating to reach the desired surface temperature, a properly designed bed raised to sufficient temperature should remain warm throughout the night without the need to maintain a fire.

3. Circular bread

It is shaanxi regional tradition. The bread has to be made by the mother's mother specifically for a child's one-month old celebration party. It said it would help the mother to produce more milk for the baby.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China#Village_level_subdivisions

The Story of Qiuju by Chen Yuanbin 1991 Chinese Literature Press

Panda Books Beijing ISBN 7-5071-0277-7

Major differences between the novella and the feature film

There are many vital differences between the novella and the feature film. For those using the film in class, it may be a useful exercise to compare and contrast the novella with the film version of the story. The novella is only sixty five pages long and it is a very quick read. There are very few difficult vocabulary words and the story is quite straight forward.

In the preface, the author tells us that he learned that the apartment building in which he lived had burned down and that all his belongings were gone. He claims he felt, "unusually calm and was suddenly struck by the urge to write a story." The Story of Qiuju is what he wrote.

1. In the film the husband and the village chief get in a fight and the husband is kicked in the groin. The husband makes a comment about the chief only having "hens," a reference to his only having daughters.

In the novella, the chief hits the husband because the husband has refused to grow rape seed and instead grows wheat. No comment is made about the daughters and we never learn about the chief's children. It is implied that the beating is much more serious than that shown in the film. The husband cannot work for months after the incident.

2. In the film, the chief throws the fine money on the ground and tells Qiu Ju to bend over and pick it up and in the process she will be bowing to him.

This also happens in the written version, but the chief also points out that the money isn't his anyway and it all comes from the government.

3. In the novella, Qiu Ju is not pregnant and thus does not need the chief to help her. This removes the whole part of the film involving children, the debt she owes the chief and the very ending of the film.

4. In the novella, there are long passages where Qiu Ju goes to a temple and an amusement park while she waits. Months and months pass between the various decisions by the authorities. When she goes to see the director, in the novella, (a Captain Yan), he is stabbed during a break in at his home. As in the film, all the authorities are very kind to Qiu Ju and take her seriously.

5. In the novella, Qiu Ju does all her traveling alone. She does not have the companion that is shown in the film. She sells pigs instead of crops to raise money for her trips.

6. In the novella, Qiu Ju witnesses a very strange scene where she sees people in various states of undress swimming in pond or lake. Others are watching with glee as a young woman changes her clothes in broad daylight.

7. At the end, the wheat crop is destroyed by a disease (“smut”). We are told that after the rape seed was harvested, a rice crop was planted which required a great deal of water. The irrigation destroyed the wheat crop that was planted.

From the above differences, it is clear that the novella is very different than the film version. However, the story line is still very similar. In a film or English class, many interesting questions could be asked comparing the two versions.

Study Questions

GENERAL:

1. Explain whether Qiu Ju received justice.
2. How do public officials treat Qiu Ju?
3. How could Qiu Ju have sought justice without going to any Chinese officials outside of her village?
4. What was life in a small village like?
5. In what ways could this film be seen as a criticism of Chinese officials/government?

DRAMA:

1. Choose someone you see in a street scene and create a backstory/ character for him/her.
2. Based on the facts given in the film, recreate the argument between the chief and the husband.
3. If this story were to be dramatized on stage, sketch a set that would account for the various locations using suggestive furniture and lighting.
4. Compare the dress of Qiu Ju and her family with people in the city.
5. Research uniforms for Chinese officials in the early 1990's and today. Highlight differences.
6. Discuss the music themes and how they reinforce repeated plot elements and excite emotional audience response.
7. Discuss the use of color in the film, especially reds and blues. Is there a significance to Qiu Ju's jacket being red?
8. In the scene when Qiu Ju and her sister-in-law become separated in the city, discuss Gong Li's facial expressions and how they convey everything without words.

History Questions - Qiu Ju

1. Can there be justice in today's China? Furthermore, what changes have taken place in the last twenty years?
2. How important is China's one child policy to the story in the film? How has the one child policy evolved over time?
3. Director Zhang Yimou has said:
"If you don't ask a question, nobody will ever give you an answer. You always have to fight in order that something be done. In China, you have to try 20 times, spend years in order to solve the most minor problems. To request that something to be done is the beginning of democracy. With this film I wanted to say that every Chinese should do the same: to fight for one's right and discover oneself in the process."
-quoted from Jahiel 1992, Cohen, 2007

This arguably, is a universal lesson. What seems to be particularly “Chinese” about the film? Is Qiu Ju sacrificing the harmony of the village for selfish means?

4. Some have seen this film as a commentary on China’s urban/rural split and the increasing disconnect between the two populations. Is there evidence of this in the film?

5. This lone, maverick reformer seeking justice despite any circumstances has always been a theme in American film. Provide an example of this and compare it to Qiu Ju.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Janet Maslin, "A Chinese Woman's Arduous Search for Justice" *New York Times*, Film Review, October 2, 1992

Film review by respected NYTimes film reviewer. Praises Zhang Yimou's stature as storyteller and sociologist.

2. David Sterritt, "'Qiu Ju' Breaks New Ground," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Friday, April 23, 1993

Describes how Zhang Yimou captures truth of peasant life in a satisfying and authentic way. Film Review.

3. David Holley, "China's Village Voice," *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 1992

Describes how Zhang Yimou has regained confidence, verve and imagination. Film Review.

4. Jerome A Cohen and Joan Lebold Cohen, "Did Qiu Ju Get Good Legal Advice?," in *Cinema, Law, and the State in Asia*, Creekmur and Sidel, eds. Palgrave MacMillan, 2007

Chapter in edited book that discusses the legal accuracies and inaccuracies of the legal system Qiu Ju experienced throughout the film

5. Jason McGrath, "The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhanle: From Postsocialist Realism to a Transnational Aesthetic," "The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the 21st Century" ed. Zhang Zhen, (Duke University Press, 2007)

Twelve essays on China's "Urban Generation" film makers who explore wrenching social and economic changes in Chinese Cinema.

LESSON PLANS

Course: Film, English, World History

(This should not be the first time students have examined a scene, or at least listened and watched as teacher examined scenes (modeling).

Scene one shows Jiu Liu walking/riding her bike in the country (minutes 16:35-17:00)

Scene two shows Jiu Liu and her sister in the city, surrounded by speeding bicycles; Jiu Liu momentarily loses her sister (minutes 52-54)

1. Objective: Study two scenes from Jiu Liu and attempt a detailed textual analysis of the scenes within the context of the film
2. Compare Jiu Liu in a country setting with Jiu Liu in a city city
(both scenes contain one or bicycles, which should be noted before hand as one of the film techniques)
3. General Goals:
 - a. become informed, reflective and critical film viewer
 - b. express ideas with confidence and competence
 - c. develop perceptual and analytical skills.

Steps:

1. Put students in groups of four
2. Distribute handout
3. Show the two selected scenes from Jiu Liu – ask students just to watch and listen, no note taking yet
4. Show scene a second time, encouraging students to jot notes
5. Give students a couple minutes to discuss
6. Continue showing scene in a loop until students have time to answer the questions
7. Allow students time to share and discuss answers
8. Direct a whole class discussion
9. Have students write a brief essay comparing the two scenes, using the information gathered during the group work and class discussion

Student Handout

Course: Film (scene analysis) or English (Comparative writing)

Scene Analysis Framework Questions

Try to answer these questions after watching a movie segment, or scene.

1. Setting:

- Explain how the setting is authentic or if it is constructed
- When and where does the scene take place?
- How does the director use color in the scene? If there seems to be a color scheme, explain it

2. Camera:

- Where is the camera in the scene? Is it moving or fixed?
- What is the effect created by moving or positioning the camera in this way?

3. Objects:

- Describe what elements/objects are in the scene
- Are all the elements treated in the same way, i.e. does the camera focus on some objects more than others? Explain how the element is treated (i.e. is there a photograph centered between the characters?)
- What emotion does the combination of the elements create?

4. Characters:

- What characters are in the scene?
- Briefly describe their function in the scene

5. Mood:

- What is the general mood of the scene?
- How do color, camera angles and movement contribute to this mood?
- What emotions does the director want to convey? How successful is the director in creating the emotion?

7. Sound

- What sounds do you hear that the character can hear? What is the purpose of these sounds?
- Describe any sound (usually music) that you can hear, but the characters don't hear. What is the purpose of these sounds?

8. Purpose of scene:

- What role does the scene have in the overall movie?

Essay question: Compare the two scenes. Explain what the viewer learns, and how the director imparted that information.

Lesson Plan for AP courses

What is the relationship of Chinese citizens to the legal process?

Rationale: The relationship between the Chinese people and their government is complex, weaving together tradition, culture, modernity and influences from the outside world. Zhang Yimou's movie *Qiu Ju* is, on the surface, a simple story of a rural woman working her way through different levels of government, seeking redress for an attack on her husband by the village chief. Officials at each level are sympathetic and helpful but when she is dissatisfied with the nearly identical decisions handed down from mediators at every level, she resorts to the formal legal system, unleashing a process she does not understand and which brings about several unintended consequences.

On a deeper level, the movie offers an opportunity to examine the evolving culture of legal and human rights in China. The ancient tradition of petitioning the government, the cultural practice of mediation instead of formal law suits, and the current rise in citizen protests and legal actions are aspects of a clear evolution in the relationship between China and its citizens which is reshaping their traditional culture.

Grade level: The following project is designed for either an AP World History class or an AP Language and Composition course.

Procedure:

1. View the film as a group. If this is not possible within class time, the film is readily available on Netflix and can be assigned for out of class viewing.
2. A one day discussion should be sufficient to lay the groundwork for further student research and presentations. Give the students the questions prior to viewing.

Discussion questions:

- Was Qiu Ju really seeking justice or was this a personal grievance? Is there any evidence that this is stubbornness is typical behavior for her? How would you describe her other relationships?
- The village is a small one. Although Qiu Ju says she doesn't care what people think, this conflict has the potential to seriously disrupt relations within the close community. Officer Li, acting as a mediator between the Wan family and the chief, presents the family with gifts he claims the chief bought for them, saying that this is the chief's way of apologizing, hoping this will resolve the dispute. Was Officer Li wrong to lie about the gifts? What was his objective? Was he trying to resolve the issue to avoid more conflict for his office or did he have a real concern about harmonious relations within the village? Present evidence for your ideas.

- The men in the story reach the point of wanting to reconcile several times. Describe the occasions in which the men discuss putting the case to rest. Why is Qiu Ju's husband more willing to settle and move on than she is?
 - The chief becomes a hero in the story, saving Qiu Ju and her baby by taking control of the emergency situation and exerting tremendous effort to round up men to carry her to the hospital. In light of this fact, how do you think the village will react when the chief is arrested? What do you imagine will be the attitude towards Qiu Ju? How do you read her last expression?
 - A small detail in the film is the issue of the X-ray which investigating officials insist that Qiu Ju's husband get of his chest. The X-ray reveals that her husband sustained a broken rib as a result of the beating and this fact makes the conflict more serious, resulting in the chief's arrest. How do you think the story would have been different if an X-ray had been taken right away? Why was that procedure initially ignored?
 - Although the Chinese government had banned Zhang Yimou's two previous films, they universally liked this one. Why do you think this film gained Party favor?
3. Divide the students into three groups. Each group will research one aspect of Chinese conflict resolution and/or legal procedure: mediation, petitioning, or protesting and current legal reform. Each group will create a panel presentation in which they explain the history of the procedure and its use in China today. Groups can divide the task of research and then a day can be set aside for the groups to pull together their findings. Each group must address the following questions:
- What is the history of the method? (Is it ancient, traditional or modern? How did it develop?)
 - What are the uses of the method? Who implements the procedure?
 - What is the role of government in the procedure? What is the current use of each method? (Research suggests that after the massive petitioning over land disputes leading up to the Beijing Olympics, the government tried to abolish the tradition of petitioning in Beijing.)
 - How does the method fit the Chinese cultural context? (For example, mediation is in line with a Confucian ideal of striving for harmonious relations.)
4. Each group will present their research through a panel, in which several students each explain some aspect of the research, or a power point, to which all of the students contribute material. Each group should be ready to answer questions from the class.

5. The discussion following the presentations should be centered on the way in which the Chinese system is adapting to modern concerns and influences while working to maintain the mediation system to handle personal disputes (such as Qiu Ju's).
6. Assessment:
 - For an AP Language and Composition course: Answer the following question: Is traditional mediation still a viable method of conflict resolution in modern China? Support your answer with specific evidence from the presentations.
 - For an AP World History course: Using the research presented, write an essay in which you discuss the changes and continuities in the Chinese approach to resolving legal disputes. Be sure to explain the government's role at each point and how the procedures reflect Chinese culture and society at each point in time.

Resources: Although students will find plenty of information on the web, it is important to provide reliable materials to get them started. The following articles, all available on the web, will give the students a solid foundation from which to proceed with further research.

MEDIATION:

Chow, Deborah. "Development of China's Legal System Will Strengthen Its Mediation Programs".

Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution. <http://cojcr.org/vol3no2/notes01.html>

Deng, Yiheng. "Strategy to Bring about a Predetermined Outcome in Chinese Mediation: A Study of Contemporary Chinese Mediation Sessions in a Southwestern Province of China".

Intercultural Communication Studies XIX: 3 2010.

<http://www.uri.edu/iaics/content/2010v19n3/01YihengDeng.pdf>

Mealey-Lohmann, Linda. "Using Mediation to Resolve Disputes – Differences Between China and the

United States".

<http://www.chinainsight.info/culture/chinese/526-using-mediation-to-resolve-differences-between-china-and-the-united-states-.html>

Wu, Connie. "Dispute resolution in China: How do traditional mediation committees fit into the post-

Mao economic revolution? ". **Student Journal: Dispatches from the Field.** University of California,

Berkley. 2004.

<http://berkeley.edu/news/students/2004/china/index.shtml>

PETITIONING:

Kuhn, Anthony. "Chinese Tradition of Petitioning Strong, Despite Few Returns". **NPR.** April 19, 2006.

<http://m.npr.org/news/front/5351072?page=0>

Chao, Loretta. "China Moves to End Tradition of Petitions". **Wall Street Journal.** August 22, 2009.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125090460008351021.html>

Petition: The Court of Complaints. A film by Zhao Liang. 2009.

PROTESTS AND LEGAL REFORM:

Hess, Steve. "Nail Houses, Land Rights and Frames of Injustice on China's Protest Landscape". **Studies**

on Asia.

http://studiesonasia.illinoisstate.edu/seriesIV/documents/Steve_Hess.pdf

Goldkorn, Jeremy. "Property Rights: The Coolest Nailhouse in the World". **Danwei: A Website and**

Research Firm that Tracks Chinese Media and Internet. March 22, 2007.

http://www.danwei.org/bbs/property_rights_the_cooliest_na.php

"China waste water pipeline scrapped after protest". **BBC.** 28 July 2012.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-19026464>

Griffiths, Daniel. "China faces growing land disputes". **BBC News, Beijing.** 2 August 2005.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4728025.stm>

"Recent high-profile mass protests in China". **BBC.** July 3, 2012.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-18684903>

The following worksheet is intended for Middle School Level Language Arts classes.

THE STORY OF QIU JU

Below, you will find eight questions dealing with the film “The Story of Qiu Ju.” I would like for you to choose 5 of them and answer them in grammatically correct, complete sentences. Your answers will vary in length, as you may need to write only one paragraph to adequately respond to some of them but be more detailed with others. Make sure to answer every part of each question.

- 1) How would you describe Qiu Ju? Remember to tell me not only how she looks physically but also mention aspects of her character. How does she treat others? How does she approach challenging situations? Would you consider her an optimist or a pessimist? Why?
- 2) While the situation that is the focus of the film may seem humorous on the surface, this becomes a matter of great pride to Qiu Ju. Put yourself in her shoes and tell me how would you have solved this dispute?
- 3) Do you think Qiu Ju is right to continue to pursue the case, that is take it from one higher court to another? Why or why not?
- 4) Pride is defined as “a high opinion of one’s own dignity, importance, merit or superiority.” Tell me who the two most prideful people in the film are and mention how they act that makes them in a proud manner.
- 5) Qiu Ju is very stubborn, that is she won’t change her mind about something even though there are good reasons for her to do so. Tell me about a time when you were stubborn. What were you so determined about? How did the situation turn out in the end?
- 6) Qiu Ju asks repeatedly in the film, “Will the right thing be done?” What, in her mind, is the right thing? What kind of outcome is she looking for where this situation is concerned?
- 7) There is an old proverb that states, “Pride goes before a fall.” In your own words, tell me what this saying means. Then tell me how it relates to Qiu Ju’s situation.
- 8) We discussed irony in class on many occasions. Tell me what the ironic elements are in the story and explain how they are ironic.

High school Chinese II- “ Getting to know Chinese rural life and legal system”

Objective:

In this lesson, students will explore what China's rural life look like and have a basic understanding of Chinese legal system. Follow by this lesson and movie, they students will also be able to create a dialogue based on the story to practice Chinese language speaking skills. Students may be able to speak a few words with the local dialect.

Question before the movie:

Homework at the night before

1. Do you ever hear a Chinese movie named “the story of Qiuju”? Google and find out what it is.
2. Do online research of the movie reviews. Find at least two difference reviews of the movie and summery the difference of the two opposite review by using a list.
3. Online research: What is China’s legal system? Is it similar to ours?

5-10 minutes Discussing questions before watching the movie in class:

1. If two people fight and one was injured. What do you think the person who is injured will do?
2. How much do you know about the US legal system? Do you know the procedure to file a lawsuit in US?

In a 45-minutes period after a movie, the class will have 30 minutes discussion based the following questions :

1. Do you think where it happened in China, south, north, west or east? Can you find the actual place of the story on a China map? What are the weather, common food and other geographic features?
2. How many dialects do you know about Chinese language? Can you identify the dialect used in the movie?
3. What happened to Qiuju’s family? How does Qiuju handle it?
4. How would you handle it if it was you?

5. What is your impression of Chinese rural life in the movie? Is it similar as what is in your imagination before you watch the movie?
6. What do you think about the filmmaking skills? such as color music, customs, shooting angles, etc.
7. Is there a similar movie in US?

At the last 10-15 minute of the period, we will replay a few clips of the movie to hear a few short conversations to prepare for the group work.

Group work: Create a mandarin Chinese dialogue for the conversation of Qiuju first meet the officer of each level, and the man who writes complain letter for others. You may use the line in the movie or create your own dialogue that you think it will better.

Group work: acting out each scenes of Qiuju's journey with the conversation you wrote. Be sure to use some decorations, posters, costumes and gestures that are appropriate to the scene.