

# **T**aming the Mighty Dragon

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**Country/Region:** China

**Purpose:**

Students will incorporate the five themes of geography to study the Yangtze river region and analyze the possible effects of the three rivers gorge damn project on this area.

**Skills:**

Absolute and relative location, reading charts and graphs, sequencing, analyzing human/environmental interaction

**Concepts:**

Latitude and Longitude, Cardinal and intermediate directions, research analysis, debate and argument

**Suggested time:**

2-4 hours

**Subject area integration:**

Language Arts, Math

## Top Secret Briefing Notes

The Yangtze (yang-see) is the longest river in Asia. The Chinese refer to it as Chang Jiang or Long River. It is also called the mighty dragon. To many Chinese the dragon has long symbolized a god of water. Many Chinese farmers believed dragons or water gods controlled rainfall, while herders prayed to the same gods while searching for lakes or rivers to water their animals.

The mighty Yangtze begins high in the mountains near the eastern edge of Tibet and empties into the East China Sea nearly 3400 miles to the east. It drains nearly 750,000 square miles of the Yangtze river basin where 70% of China's rice is grown. Its waters irrigate the mighty Sichuan basin, which is responsible for feeding nearly half of China's population. But along with the tremendous ability to bring life to those in its path comes the Yangtze's fury as it often rises above its banks. In this century alone, flooding has taken the lives of nearly a half million people in its reach.

The Yangtze is the busiest waterway in Asia, with nearly 75% of China's water trade traveling its path. It is also the proposed site of the largest dam the world has ever seen. The Three Rivers Gorge Dam project scheduled to be completed in 2009, would produce the equivalent of 12 nuclear power plants. The cost to the environment of such a project is the subject of a heated debate.

### INSTRUCTIONS

As part of the Three Rivers Environmental research team it is your job float the entire length of this dangerous river keeping a detailed log of your findings. As always should you or any of your team be caught, this office will disavow any knowledge of your mission. Your team has been assigned to chart the mighty Yangtze River, navigating its treacherous path. Because the upper reaches of the river are so dangerous, you call in your coordinates and departure time as well as logging your exact location in the journal you carry with you.

Latitude \_\_\_\_\_(1) Longitude \_\_\_\_\_(2)

Province \_\_\_\_\_(3) Distance from Shanghai \_\_\_\_\_(4)  
(As the crow flies)

As you consult your briefing notes you notice that your trip on the river will be nearly \_\_\_\_\_(5) as long as your earlier straight line calculations. How does this compare with the world's longest river?

(6) \_\_\_\_\_  
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