

# Chinese Now!

Understanding China Through Its Language

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## Exploring China Through Documentary Film

We invite you to explore the complexity of modern China through the stories and images of the following documentaries:

**Best of Travel: China (2010)** presents China as a potential tourist destination. Produced for the armchair traveler, it offers images of the sights, smells, and tastes of China and weaves a narrative of a country that balances between history and rapidly-changing contemporary culture. *Chinese Now! library.*

**China: A Century of Revolution (2007)** offers what many consider the best comprehensive account of modern Chinese history. This six-hour, award-winning documentary describes the forces that shaped through the late twentieth century. A remarkable story of foreign invasions, war, communism, the free market, and more. *Chinese Now! library.*

**China's Century of Humiliation (2011)** explores the tumultuous interactions between China and the European powers of the 19th century. A good, short (77 minutes) review of the historical underpinnings of the changes in modern China. The film:

- Begins by comparing Confucianism and Christianity and how they translated in political thought, resulting in a collectivist society in China and a individualistic one in Europe.
- Explores why the industrial and scientific revolutions did not happen in China.
- Describes the early encounters between the British Navy and the isolationist Qing Dynasty and comments on the root causes of the two opium wars.

This commentary concludes with the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and a comprehensive view of the decay of the last Chinese dynasty. *Chinese Now! library.*

**China's Lost Girls (2005)** examines the effects of the one-child policy in China. National Geographic reporter Lisa Ling explores the stories of the uneven gender distribution, trafficking in women, orphanages filled with baby girls, and foreign adoption. Since this film was produced, the pace of international adoption from China has slowed dramatically, but the underlying phenomena of the one-child policy has not. *View this film free online at [http://www.snaqfilms.com/films/title/chinas\\_lost\\_girls](http://www.snaqfilms.com/films/title/chinas_lost_girls).*

**China Rises (2008)** highlights the immense changes that China has undergone throughout the past few decades. This film was co-produced as a general introduction to contemporary China in anticipation of the 2008 Olympics by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, ZDF in Germany, the New York Times, and others, and at the time it was broadcast was probably the best medium-length (four hours, broken into four programs) documentary of its type. Gain a deeper understanding of the many facets of Chinese life in this gripping series that includes fascinating and complex topics such as human trafficking, factory life, pop culture, astronaut training, and the 2008 Olympics. *Chinese Now! library.*

**The Cross: Jesus in China (2003)** presents the surprising story of the recent history of the Christian church in China. Considered by many the best documentary account of the development of the Christian church in China, the film tells the story of how the number of Chinese Christians has increased from approximately 700,000 in 1949 to probably 70 million today, despite constraints on church growth. This four-part, four-hour film tells the stories of Chinese Christians at both the individual level and as a social movement, and addresses the roles of both the "house church" and the registered church. This film may show you a side of China you did not anticipate – it was even shown as part of a "Faith and Globalization" seminar conducted by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair at Yale University. *Chinese Now! library.*

**Discovery Atlas: China Revealed (2006)** tells the story of China through personal narratives. From rice farmers, to Olympic hopefuls, to leading construction tycoons, gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of China through stories of its people. Enjoy stunning visual technology and photography as the story of China unfolds in this compelling documentary. *Watch the full program online at <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/discovery-atlas-china-revealed/>.*

**Found in China (2007)** views China through the lives of young adults born in China, who have been adopted by American parents and return to China to explore their heritage for the first time. See contemporary China through the eyes of these bi-cultural youth in this story of culture, family, and belonging. *Chinese Now! library.*

**Last Train Home (2011)** was considered by some critics to be one of the best documentary films on any topic in 2011. About 130 million Chinese citizens make an annual Chinese New Year's train journey from urban centers to their provincial villages in what is called "the largest human migration in the world." This documentary tells the story of a married couple who left their home in Sichuan Province 16 years ago to work in Guangzhou, an industrial city near Hong Kong. The couple saves every yuan they can to send home to the children they left behind to be raised by a grandmother, searching for a better life and traveling home annually to visit their family. *Chinese Now! library.*

**Learning Chinese in American Schools (2010)** was produced by the Asia Society to provide information – and a useful tool – to American education leaders and parents who want to encourage their schools to develop Chinese language programs. This high-quality video provides a thought-provoking look at the reasons why Chinese language programs represent a meaningful strategic move for many schools. Chinese Now! supports the Asia Society and the development of Chinese language programs in area schools, and we would be delighted to provide this video to you if you – or your colleagues, friends, or acquaintances – might be interested in championing Chinese language programs in your community. *Ask about this DVD as well as Asia Society materials on Chinese language as well as "Asia in the Schools."*

**Manufactured Landscapes (2006)** is a striking documentary with a focus on large-scale photography of “manufactured landscapes”—quarries, recycling yards, factories, mines and dams, etc. The film takes an artistic approach, searching for beauty and story through images of civilization’s materials and debris. The film takes the viewer through China and assesses the evidence and effects of the country’s massive industrial revolution. *Chinese Now! library.*

**The People’s Republic of Capitalism with Ted Koppel (2008)** examines the economic story of contemporary China, exploring the increasing economic interdependence between the United States and China as well as ongoing conflicts between personal aspiration and governmental control. This four-hour documentary provides insight into the challenges and complexities surrounding China as it participates in the global market economy. *Chinese Now! library.*

**Wild China (2008)** explores the natural wonders of the fourth largest country in the world. In this unforgettable film, experience the beautiful diversity that lies in this enigmatic country while journeying through places such as the Himalayas, desert landscapes, tropical zones, and arctic regions. *Available free for Amazon Prime members.*

**Win in China (2010)** documents a fascinating phenomena – a nationwide business plan competition that pits China's best and brightest entrepreneurs against each other for 10 million RMB in business-start-up money. Capturing the culture of China’s active entrepreneurial culture, this documentary by Ole Schell (son of long-time Asia Society China hand Oliver Schell) presents a great story of contemporary capitalism. *Chinese Now! library.*

**Young and Restless in China (2008)** Another story of China through Chinese, this film visits nine Chinese Gen X-ers every year for four years, tracking their struggles to achieve personal goals in the context of a rapidly changing political, social and economic climate that presents unprecedented opportunities. The nine subjects come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from two young women who leave their farming communities to become migrant workers in urban factories to one young man who was raised in the U.S. and another who was educated in Canada, both of whom return to China to make their fortunes. *Watch the full program online at <http://www.pbs.org/wqbh/pages/frontline/youngchina/view/>.*

*We thank you for your interest in documentary films about China, encourage your interest, and also ask if you could help us make this list even better by offering comments about the above-mentioned films or suggestions about others.*