

For residents of [Your Community]

COFFEE AND A COUNTRY · HOST GUIDE · WEEK 1

China

The Second Cup

Tea, a grandfather, and the traditions we pass along

Purpose. Give residents a real taste of China, then use one short story to open up their own memories of welcome, travel, and what we pass along. **The big question:** If the story is new, is it still the same tradition?

45 minutes · 6–14 people · No knowledge of China needed. You read; residents talk, listen, or pass.

AT A GLANCE: 45 MINUTES

0–5 min	Postcard	Welcome, guessing game, say words together.	Reader p. 1–2
5–12 min	The story	Read “The Second Cup” aloud (about 4 minutes).	Reader p. 3–4
12–25 min	Talk about the story	Pick two or three questions.	Guide p. 3
25–30 min	The real thing	Read the short true story; one question.	Reader p. 5
30–40 min	Your journey	Travel, memory, passing things on.	Reader p. 6
40–45 min	Close	One takeaway, zàijiàn, next week.	Guide p. 3

FIVE-MINUTE PREPARATION

- **Print** one six-page reader set per person (double-sided is fine) and this guide for you.
- **Read the story aloud once** at home. It takes about four minutes. Note the three moments to act out (page 2).
- **Bring a hardcover book** to knock on the table when the storyteller’s wooden block cracks. It wakes the room up.
- **Set the table** (see below) and seat people so everyone can see and hear one another.

SET THE TABLE: A POT OF JASMINE TEA AND A PLATE OF FORTUNE COOKIES

One simple pot of jasmine tea in ordinary cups is perfect; no ceremony needed. Have coffee, decaf and water too, and follow your community’s usual food arrangements. Fortune cookies make a fun conversation starter: most people assume they are Chinese, but they were most likely invented in California, probably by Japanese-American bakers, and are rare in China. Save the answer for the guessing game.

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0-5 MIN · READER PAGES 1-2 Welcome and a postcard from China

SAY

Welcome to Coffee and a Country. Each week we take a short trip: a postcard, a story, and your own stories. Today we're going to China. You don't need to have been there. Talk, listen, or pass; all are welcome. One story can't sum up 1.4 billion people. Think of today as a doorway, not a portrait.

Guessing game. Ask before anyone turns to page 2. Take a few guesses, then give the answer. The fun is in guessing.

1. How many time zones does China use?

Just one: Beijing Time.

2. Is China bigger or smaller than the United States?

About the same size.

3. Where were fortune cookies invented?

California, most likely by Japanese-American bakers in the early 1900s.

SAY

Let's say three words together. Hello is nǐ hǎo ("nee how"). Thank you is xièxie ("shyeh-shyeh"). We'll save goodbye for the end.

5-12 MIN · READER PAGES 3-4 Read the story aloud

SAY

Now a short story. The people are invented, but the customs are real. It takes place in a teahouse in Chengdu ("chung-doo"), a city in southwest China famous for its teahouses. Follow along on page 3, or just listen.

Three moments to act out:

- **"Wang taps two fingers on the table."** Tap two fingers on the table yourself, slowly, so everyone sees.
- **"...the crack of a wooden block on a table."** Knock the book on the table. Pause.
- **"You tell me," says Wang.** Read the last line slowly. Let it sit for a few seconds before you speak.

Reading tip. Read slower than feels natural and pause at each paragraph. Say Wang as "wahng" and Lei as "lay."

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12–25 MIN Talk about the story

Start with question 1, then pick one or two more.

1. What stayed with you from that story? A person, a moment, a smell?
2. Wang never answers Lei's question. If the story is new, is it still pingshu? What would you have said?
3. Wang taps the table the way his grandfather did. What small habit did your family pass down without explaining it?
4. When grandchildren visit, what new things do they bring into your life?

Host note. If answers stay general: "Can you tell us about a time that happened to you?" If one view takes over: "Has anyone seen it differently?"

25–30 MIN · READER PAGE 5 The real thing

SAY

Our story was invented, but the storyteller on Lei's phone was inspired by a real one. Here's what's happening with this old art now.

Read page 5 aloud. Then ask the question at the bottom of page 5, or: When we borrow someone else's story, song or recipe, what do we owe the people it came from?

30–40 MIN · READER PAGE 6 Your journey

SAY

We've been to a teahouse in China. Now let's travel back through our own lives. Pick any question on page 6 that sparks a memory.

- This is the heart of the hour, so give it room. Ten seconds of silence is fine.
- Ask for travel stories: "Has anyone been to China, or to Asia? What surprised you?" Let them tell it, then invite others in.
- Many people here grew up gathered around a radio for stories, just like Wang. A warm place to start if the room is quiet.

40–45 MIN Close

SAY

Look at the old saying on page 6: "When you drink the water, remember the spring it came from." What is one small thing you'd like to pass along to someone? A word or two is enough.

Take a few volunteers; don't go around the circle.

SAY

Thank you for traveling with us. Next week: Brazil, for music, memory, and belonging. Goodbye is zàijiàn ("dzai-jyen"), "see you again." Zàijiàn!

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FOR THE HOST · NOT A LECTURE

Background notes

What is invented? Wang, Lei and their teahouse are imaginary. The customs are real: Chengdu's park teahouses, the long-spout kettle, the two-finger thank-you, and pingshu with its fan and wooden block. The Monkey King comes from Journey to the West, a 16th-century Chinese novel in the public domain.

The finger tap. Most common at Cantonese dim sum tables in southern China. The emperor tale, usually told about the Qianlong Emperor of the 1700s, is a legend, not recorded history.

Golden Week. National Day, October 1, marks the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. The week-long holiday after it is one of the busiest travel times on Earth.

Fortune cookies. Usually traced to California in the early 1900s, probably to Japanese-American bakers adapting a Japanese cracker. An American custom, rare in China.

About the news source. Sixth Tone is an English-language site owned by Shanghai United Media Group, a state-backed media company. We use it only for this culture story about named people.

SAYING NAMES ALOUD

nǐ hǎo	"nee how"	hello	pingshu	"ping-shoo"	the storytelling art
xièxie	"shyeh-shyeh"	thank you	xingmu	"shing-moo"	the storyteller's wooden block
zàijiàn	"dzai-jyen"	goodbye	jiaozi	"jyow-dzuh"	dumplings
Chengdu	"chung-doo"	city in the story	Qi Jingchuan	"chee jing-chwahn"	the real performer

Friendly approximations, not a guide to Mandarin tones.

KEEP THE ROOM WELCOMING If the conversation goes off track

IF THE ROOM IS QUIET

Start small: "Who poured your first cup of coffee?"
Or share your own answer first.

IF ONE PERSON TAKES OVER

"Thank you. Let's hear from someone who hasn't had a turn yet."

IF POLITICS TAKES OVER

"That's a big subject for another day. Today we're at the tea table." Then return to a question.

IF SOMEONE GENERALIZES

"People everywhere differ a lot. What in your own life makes you see it that way?"

IF A MEMORY IS PAINFUL

Thank the person, don't press for more, and gently move on.

IF SOMEONE HAS CHINESE HERITAGE

Welcome whatever they choose to share, the same as anyone. Don't ask them to speak for China.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW AN ANSWER

"Good question. Let's look it up afterward." Sources are on the back of the reader set.

Please note. Don't add outside photos, song lyrics or video clips. Everything here is our own writing and our own pictures.

After the session (two minutes). Note attendance, actual length, and which part got people talking most. Session notes only; never residents' personal stories.