Summer Institute 2025: Mongolia - Past and Present

Name, School, Grade Level
David Pickett, Ralston Middle School, 6th grade English

Title of Unit/Lesson:
Yavie! (Let's go!) A Mongolian Podcasting Journey

Organizing/Essential/Guiding Questions
What is the history, culture, and present day challenges in Mongolia?
How has Mongolia preserved its cultural heritage for the future?

Introduction/ Overview
Mongolia is a unique, complex, and multifaceted country. It has a rich history influenced by its landscape and neighboring countries. Mongolia has had an impact on world history throughout the ages, with the peak of its influence in the 13th and 14th centuries. Chinggis Khan started an empire that spanned across Eurasia and was subsequently ruled by his ancestors for over 150 years. One important impact of the Mongol empire was its unified control of the trade along the Silk Road. This control created safety along the route and improved infrastructure. This time period was known as the Pax Mongolica (Mongolian Peace) and increased trade and the spread of information, technology, religion, and disease along the Silk Road. Buddhism first came to Mongolia in the 13th century, and thrives today, despite an attempt by the Soviet Union to eradicate it during the 20th century.

Today, Mongolia has a rich culture characterized by nomadic life in the countryside, traditional clothing, music, dance, cuisine, and games. In the last 35 years since the end of Communist control, Mongolia has been reestablishing its culture and heritage. A strong attempt has been made to preserve historical documents, like Buddhist texts that were spared destruction. In addition, a number of sites and intangible cultural heritage have been recognized and protected by UNESCO. In an attempt to emphasize the Mongolian language, as of the beginning of 2025, all government documents must be written in both Mongolian and Cyrillic script (rather than just Cyrillic).

Mongolia faces a number of challenges today. These include dealing with their neighboring countries and an influx of people moving to the capital (creating) air pollution and strains on its education system. Despite these challenges, Mongolians look to the future with optimism that their country will continue to improve.

In this unit, students will select one of 15 essential questions about the history and present day life in Mongolia. With a partner, they will research to find the answer to the essential question they pick, and then create a podcast to share the information they learned.

Content Standards
<u>Writing</u>
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
c. Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

Speaking and Listening

4. Present claims and findings (e.g., argument, narrative, informative, response to literature presentations), sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details and nonverbal elements to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

a. Plan and deliver an informative/explanatory presentation that: develops a topic with relevant facts, definitions, and concrete details; uses appropriate transitions to clarify relationships; uses precise language and domain specific vocabulary; and provides a strong conclusion.

Objectives

- Gather information from multiple sources, evaluate the credibility of the sources, take notes, and quote or paraphrase the information.
- Write explanatory text to explain the information. Include a hook, definitions, transitions, and a conclusion.
- Present their findings in an organized fashion, using details from their research, while using adequate volume and clear pronunciation.
- Collaborate with a partner to create their podcast.

Materials/Resources & Teacher Preparation

Students will need their Chromebook for research, writing their script, and recording their podcast. Also, each student will need a copy of the Research Notes handout (alternatively, students can take notes digitally) and Podcast Rubric.

Special Equipment

N/A

Time/Timeline

This unit will take approximately three weeks. During the first week, students will select a topic and conduct research. In the second week, students will plan and write their script. In the third week, students will record their podcast, listen to their classmates', and get feedback.

Procedures

Day 1 (~55 minutes)

1. Introduce Mongolia to the students, locating it on the map and sharing about the Summer Institute 2025 (if the teacher attended). Give an overview of the history of Mongolia, using the paragraph in the Introduction section above.
2. Explain to students that they will be creating a podcast about one essential question on Mongolia. The essential questions are on slides 8-26 here. Present each question to the class, giving them some background information about the pictures and questions. Teachers can use the Mongolia Notes for background information.
3. Show slide 27, which has all the questions students can choose from. Ask them to turn and talk with their neighbor about which topics they are most interested in. They should select several as they'll need to compromise with a partner.
4. Tell students they will select a partner next. Remind students that they should be respectful and open when selecting partners. Alternatively, the teacher can pick partners randomly or pair them however you wish. I sometimes ask students to fill out a form where they tell me a few classmates that they would like to work with, and I make the partners. Groups of three are okay if the class has an odd number of students. Give students time to find a partner.
5. Once all the students have a partner, they should discuss what essential question they want to pick. Each student should pitch their favorite choice. Ultimately, they'll need to compromise and pick one.
6. If desired, only allow one pair of students to pick each question to ensure a variety of topics.

Day 2 (~55 minutes)

1. Show students this video to teach them how to evaluate websites.
2. Pick any topic you wish and search online for a website with information about it. Demonstrate how to evaluate the website according to the CRAAP method. Then, demonstrate how to take notes using the Research Notes doc.
3. Share the Mongolia Notes with students and instruct them to start with reading those to get an overview of their topic. They can also use the links on the Mongolia Notes for their research.
4. Demonstrate how to use AI to help with their research. Use whichever AI you prefer and the students have access to. Demonstrate how to query the AI and follow up with additional questions. Demonstrate clicking through the links that the AI provides in order to evaluate its sources. Students should also use those sources and take notes from them, rather than just rely on the information stated from the AI. Remind students to use the CRAAP method on those sites. You can use the example on slide 30.

Day 3-5 (~55 minutes each)

1. Give each student a copy of the Research Notes. Have students sit with their partner and work on researching their topic.
2. Students should take notes when they find useful sites. The goal is to complete a page of notes from one source per day.
3. At the end of this time, collect students' research notes, grade them, and return them.

Day 6 (~55 minutes)

1. Pass out copies of the Podcast Rubric to students and review it with them.

2. Play aloud "The creation of YouTube" by BBC Witness History. You can also select another podcast that you think will interest your students.
3. After the podcast ends, ask students to discuss with their neighbor the positives and negatives of the podcast. Then have them grade it using the rubric. Discuss how they graded it and how you would grade it.
4. If there is extra time, give students more time to research.

Day 7 (~55 minutes)

1. Demonstrate how to complete explanatory writing using these slides.
2. Share the Podcast Graphic Organizer with students electronically. I assign it on Google Classroom. Demonstrate how to fill it out, using an example of your own (possibly the creation of YouTube).
3. Explain that students can copy and paste to create additional sub ideas on the graphic organizer.

Day 8-9 (~55 minutes each)

1. Give students time to complete the Graphic Organizer. The partners will need to work on one doc together. One partner will need to share it with their other partner (can edit).
2. Students should use the information in their notes to complete this step. Encourage students to continue researching if they find that they are missing information.

Day 10 (~55 minutes)

1. Students should create a script for their podcast from the graphic organizer. The script should label who will say each part of the podcast. Partners should alternate who is talking. Ideally, each partner should end with a question that their partner will answer in their section.
2. The script can be put below the graphic organizer. It may help to demonstrate how to do this using the creation of YouTube as an example.

Day 11-13 (~55 minutes each)

1. Create the podcast assignment on Soundtrap and push it out to students via Google Classroom before class. This video shows how to do that.
2. Show this video to teach students how to use Soundtrap.
3. Let them start recording their podcast. They can use one partner's Chromebook to record and one to read the script from.
4. You may want to take students outside or to the library, so they can spread out while recording.
5. Give students 1-3 days to complete recording and editing their podcast.

Day 14 (~55 minutes)

1. Have each student open their Chromebook and open their podcast. Connect headphones to each Chromebook.
2. Have students get up and move to another student's desk to listen to their podcast. Allow students to move around the room, listening to a podcast, and then moving to a new desk. If you wish, have each student put a piece of paper and pencil at their desk for classmates to give informal feedback. Before starting, prompt them on what type of feedback you would like them to write (maybe one compliment and one suggestion for improvement).
3. When finished, have students submit their podcast on Google Classroom, so you can grade it with the rubric.

Day 15 (Optional)

1. Have students prompt an AI of your choice to create a script of a podcast about their subject. Then, have students read it and compare it to their own. If you desire, students can fill out a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting their script to the one created by AI. Have a discussion as a class about how the AI did compared to the students. Below is a sample prompt to accomplish this: *Write a script for an*

8 minute podcast about nomadic life in Mongolia, focusing on what nomadic life is like in Mongolia. The script should have two speakers. It should have an engaging and friendly tone.

Assessment – Performance Standards, Rubric, Project

1. The rubric for this assignment is here.
2. Students will be assessed and given a grade and feedback for their podcast using the rubric.
3. The research notes should be graded on completion. I will require three pages of notes and three sources. This can be adjusted for your class depending on how much time you want to devote to research.