Tibet

A SHORT HISTORY & RELATIONS WITH CHINA
Where is Tibet?

It is a country located between India and China.

China now considers Tibet as part of their country.
Tibet: Geography

The Tibetan Plateau is about 4500 meters high, making it the highest and largest plateau in the world. That is why Tibet is often known as the “roof of the world”.

The highest mountains in the world, the Himalayas, can also be found in Tibet. Tibetan glaciers are the source of many rivers in Tibet, India, and China.
Tibet and Its People

**Population:** estimated 6 million Tibetans

**Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism

**Language:** Tibetan
Life before 1950s

Tibet was very isolated from the outside world. It was also not a modern country.

Many Tibetans lived as nomads. Nomads always move around when the season changes from summer to winter. They have to find proper fields where their animals can eat.

They live in big tents in the middle of grassy fields where they herd yaks, cows, and sheep.
Most Tibetans are Buddhists.

Most parents send at least one child to the monastery to become a monk or a nun.

The spiritual leader of Tibet is The Dalai Lama.
Tibet: Before 1950s

The Dalai Lama is both the spiritual and the political leader.

Tibet and China had close relations but they remained separate countries.

In 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibet’s independence to the outside world.

The 14th Dalai Lama was discovered at the age of 3 in Northern Tibet.
1951-1959

The People’s Liberation Army led by Mao Zedong attacked Tibet in 1951.

The Dalai Lama, at the age of 16, had to lead his country.

About 1 million Tibetans died.

6000 monasteries and holy places were destroyed.

Tibetans from all over Tibet staged a big revolt on March 10th 1959 in front of Tibet’s capital, Lhasa. But, the uprising failed.
The Aftermath

Because the uprising failed, the 14th Dalai Lama at the age of 24 had to escape to India under a disguise.

About 100,000 Tibetans also fled to India and are still escaping today.
The Escape

Many Tibetans escaped by climbing across the Himalayas.

It is a very dangerous and a long journey to India. It can take on average two to three months to cross by foot.

They walk during the night under only moon light.

During the day, they rest and hide so that they won’t be caught by the Chinese police.
Life in India

Tibetans who have escaped usually live in refugee camps for a few years.

The Dalai Lama established the first Tibetan community in Dharamsala, India to make a safe space for Tibetans-in-exile to live and work.

At first, many Tibetans struggle to earn a living and make India their new home.
Life in India

Tibetans had to quickly learn new languages like Hindi and English. Tibetans in India could no longer be nomadic like they were in Tibet.

But they could still be monks & nuns because new monasteries had been built in India with the help of the Dalai Lama and other high monks.
Tibetans Move Around The World

Tibetans continued to move to other parts of the world such as America, Europe, and Australia. They moved to find work and more opportunities for their children. Many Tibetans wish to return to Tibet but are not allowed back. For those that do return, they are closely watched by the Chinese government.
Tibetans who did not flee to India have no freedom of speech. They have no freedom of expression: Tibetans cannot publicly protest, even if it is done nonviolently. Tibetans in Tibet can be jailed for owning a picture of the Dalai Lama.
Tibetan language in Tibet is being replaced with Mandarin Chinese in schools, businesses, etc.

Singers can be jailed for singing about the Dalai Lama or Tibet.

It is illegal to raise the Tibetan flag, wish for the Dalai Lama’s return to Tibet, or publicly protest for Tibet’s independence.
Working on Peace

Many people around the world, especially in countries where Tibetans have gone to live, support Tibetan protestors as they work to improve the lives of Tibetans in Tibet.
Credits

This PowerPoint is part of *A Teachers’ Guide to a School-Wide Folk Arts Residency: Losang Samten, Tibetan Sand Mandala Artist.*

Created by Rinzin Lhamo, a member of Tibetan community in Philadelphia, PA.

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