

For KS4 Mandarin

Delivered in partnership with UCL IOE Confucius Institute

Please Vote For Me Weijun Chen, 2007 A film study guide

Synopsis

In an elementary school in the city of Wuhan in central China, eight-year old children compete for the position of Class Monitor. Their parents, devoted to their only child, take part and start to influence the results. *Please Vote for Me* is a film about an experiment with democracy in China.

Teachers' notes

This resource is aimed at students studying Mandarin at KS4, to support both language and cultural elements of both the Edexcel GCSE Chinese and AQA GCSE Chinese specifications. This resource focuses on the short documentary film *Please Vote for Me* (Weijun Chen, 2007) which appears as a key text on the Edexcel A Level Chinese Specification.



Curriculum links

AQA Themes

Theme 1 Identity and culture: relationships with family and friends; customs and festivals in Chinese-speaking countries / communities.
Theme 3 Current and future study and employment: my studies; life at school; jobs careers and ambition.

Language: To enable students of all abilities to develop their Chinese (Mandarin) language skills to their full potential, equipping them with the knowledge to communicate in a variety of contexts with confidence.

Edexcel Themes

Theme 1: Identity and culture: who am I?; daily life; cultural life. Theme 3: School: what is school like?; school activities. Theme 4: future aspirations study and work: using language beyond the classroom; ambition; work. *Language: To enable students to manipulate and use the target language effectively, independently and creatively, so that they have a solid basis from which to progress to A Level or employment.*

Students' notes

The documentary film *Please Vote For Me* offers a unique insight into a modern Chinese school, its teachers, pupils and their families. The following activities in this resource are designed around clips from the film that will help with understanding elements of Chinese culture and society, as well supporting your language skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The full film is 45 minutes long and is available to watch online as part of this resource.

INTRODUCTION

Please Vote For Me zooms in on a Grade-three class in a Primary School in the city of Wuhan, central China. These schoolchildren, ingrained with “official standard” ideology, have their first encounter with democratic rules through a class experiment. Following the process of a democratic election, eight-year old children compete for the position of Class Monitor, egged on by their teachers and influenced by doting parents. The three main characters, Cheng Cheng, Luo Lei and Xiaofei Xu, take up the challenge in different ways, and their campaign strategies, canvassing and election promises provoke startling responses from their classmates and their parents. Even playing by the rules of democracy, they are not immune to influence, and display the ruthlessness of government officials in their attempts to maximise their advantage. Less self-conscious than their parents, they reflect existing social values more bluntly and honestly than adults.

The purpose of director Weijun Chen’s investigation is to determine how, if democracy came to China, it would be received. Is democracy a universal value? And do politicians all over the world behave in the same way – even Chinese children?

This is the first time an election takes place in a school in China. The film is also a portrait of a society and a town through a school, its children and its families.

The full film is 45 minutes long and is available to watch online as part of this resource.

ACTIVITY 1 INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS

You will need:

- Clip 1 on Vimeo timeline: Introducing the characters
- Worksheet 1. Introducing the characters

Tasks

1. The director of *Please Vote for Me*, Weijun Chen, claimed that the film is “also a portrait of a society and a town through a school, its children and its families”.

Watch Clip 1: Introducing the Characters. What do we learn about the class monitor candidates - Cheng Cheng, Xu Xiaofei, and Luo Lei, their school, and their families? You can make reference to things like clothes, jobs, homes, school, friends, parents, etc.

2. Based on the film’s introduction, for each candidate, what predictions can you make about:

1. The role their parents may play in their election campaigns
2. What you think their motivations may be for running for class monitor
3. Who you think may win and why?



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Extension task

March of the Volunteers

You will need:

- Clip 1 on the Vimeo timeline
- Worksheet 2: March of the Volunteers

In China, many schools sing the Chinese national anthem in the morning, whilst raising the nation's flag.

On the worksheet, fill in the missing characters from the national anthem, and answer the questions:

- **What kinds of imagery do the words in the national anthem evoke?**
- **How might this be mirrored in the scenes of the schoolchildren's assembly shown in the clip?**

ACTIVITY 2

LANGUAGE ACTIVITY

Reading

You will need:

- Worksheet 2: Reading
- Clip 2 on the Vimeo Timeline - Reading

Task

On the worksheet, read each of the passages and underline the part(s) you think are wrong according to the film clips. Change them by writing the correct sentences in Chinese characters. An example is given.

成成 Chengcheng

罗雷 Luo Lei

晓菲 Xiaofei



这是一个小学，这是一个三年级的班。这个班有男学生，没有女学生。老师是女的，她穿黑色的上衣，她很亲切。

Correction:

这个班有男学生，也有女学生。

Extension: Translation

Translate one of the passages above into English.

ACTIVITY 3

LANGUAGE ACTIVITY

Writing

You will need:

- Worksheet 3: School Magazine
- Clip 3 on the Vimeo Timeline - Writing

Task

You are writing an article for your school magazine about the class monitor election. You can focus on one of the three candidates.

In your article, refer to the following points:

- A brief introduction to the school
- What the class is like
- The appearance of the candidate including their clothes
- The personality of the candidate
- Do you think he/she will become the class monitor? Justify your opinion.

Write approximately 60 - 80 characters in Chinese.

Extension: Writing

You are emailing your friend about how Luo Lei's father helps him prepare for the election.

You can refer to the following points:

- Where they are and what the room is like
- The appearance of father and son including the clothes they wear
- What the father suggests Luo Lei should do
- The festival that Luo Lei's father mentions and what you know about the festival

Write approximately 60-80 characters.

ACTIVITY 4

DEMOCRACY

You will need:

- Clip 4 on Vimeo timeline: Monorail
- Clip 5 on Vimeo timeline: Debate
- Worksheet 4. Democracy



Please Vote for Me is a film about **democracy**. The word democracy describes a form of government in which people have a say in how the government is run. They do this by voting. Democracies are different from dictatorships. In the UK, people can vote for a political party to represent them.

Does China have a democracy?

Since the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, China has been a "one-party State". This means that only one political party, the **Communist Party of China**, governs the country without opposition.

Since 2012, China has referred to itself as having a **Consultative Democracy**. Despite not being able to vote in general elections, people may still participate in decision-making through a process of consultations.

The film's experiment in voting introduces a new type of democracy to the Chinese school children, one that ensures the whole class will decide on who will 'govern' them. However, the children's parents play a huge role in influencing their campaigns. This gives us a strong insight into how some processes of democracy may be considered unfair, or be questioned.

Task

Watch clip 4: Monorail, and answer the following questions on the worksheet:

1. Why does Luo Lei's father suggest the class go on the monorail ride? Think about the values that he places on the trip.
2. Is there evidence in the clip that this worked?
3. Do you think the monorail trip was fair? Explain your answer.

Watch clip 5: Debate, and answer the following questions on the worksheet:

1. Are the topics debated what you would expect for a class monitor campaign? Do you consider this to be a democratic process? Explain your answers.
2. Imagine you are running for class monitor against one of the candidates. Write a debate speech (in Chinese if you can!) What 3 key points would you include?

Extension task

China has 12 Core Socialist values

They are separated into National values (held by the country) Social values (held by society) and Individual values (held by individual citizens)

National values

Prosperity	富强	fùqiáng
Democracy	民主	mínzhǔ
Civility	文明	wénmíng
Harmony	和谐	héxié

Social Values

Freedom	自由	zìyóu
Equality	平等	píngděng
Justice	公正	gōngzhèng
Rule of Law	法制	fǎzhì

Individual Values

Patriotism	爱国	àiguó
Dedication	敬业	jìngyè
Integrity	诚信	chéngxìn
Friendship	友善	yǒushàn

Institutions like the home and school are often described as 'microcosms of society'.

Can you think of moments in the film where these 12 core values are shown in school or in the home? Think about the campaigns, the speeches, and talent shows.

Further questions for watching the whole film:

1. What do you think the overall message of the film is?
2. Does the film change what you understood about democracy?
3. Who would you have voted for, and why?

