
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE FAKE PARIS BUILT IN CHINA

High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Reading Passage
- ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key
- ✓ Teacher Guide

GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4

Reading they'll actually do.

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

THE FAKE PARIS BUILT IN CHINA

About an hour outside Shanghai, China, there's a place that looks exactly like Paris, France—complete with a 354-foot replica of the Eiffel Tower, Haussmann-style apartment buildings, fountains, gardens, and cobblestone streets. Welcome to Tianducheng, a residential development built to house 100,000 people in an exact copy of the French capital.

Tianducheng is one of several replica cities built in China during the country's massive construction boom of the 2000s. Developers created copies of famous places from around the world, hoping to attract residents who dreamed of living in exotic locations without actually leaving China. Besides Paris, there are Chinese versions of Venice, London, and even entire Austrian alpine villages.

The Paris replica features remarkable attention to detail. The Eiffel Tower copy stands about one-third the height of the original but includes the same iron lattice design and observation platforms. Surrounding streets feature the cream-colored stone buildings with wrought-iron balconies that define the real Paris. Landscaped gardens mimic the famous Champs-Élysées.

Despite the impressive construction, Tianducheng initially struggled to attract residents. When journalists visited in the early 2010s, they found mostly empty streets and shuttered businesses—a 'ghost town' version of Paris that felt eerie rather than romantic. The development had been built before the infrastructure to support it, leaving early residents isolated.

However, the situation has improved significantly over time. As Shanghai's population expanded and transportation connections improved, more people moved to Tianducheng seeking affordable housing within commuting distance of the city. Today, tens of thousands of residents call the fake Paris home.

Critics question why people would want to live in a copy rather than simply visiting the real place. Supporters argue that Tianducheng offers a unique living experience and that imitation is a form of appreciation. The debate reflects larger questions about authenticity, globalization, and what makes a place meaningful.

Word Count: 288 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: BBC

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 How tall is Tianducheng's Eiffel Tower replica?

- ☐ A) 108 feet
- ☐ B) 354 feet
- ☐ C) 500 feet
- ☐ D) 1,063 feet

2 What was Tianducheng's population by 2017?

- ☐ A) 5,000
- ☐ B) 10,000
- ☐ C) 30,000
- ☐ D) 100,000

3 Why was Tianducheng initially called a 'ghost town'?

- ☐ A) It was haunted
- ☐ B) The streets were empty and apartments unoccupied
- ☐ C) It was painted white
- ☐ D) Only ghosts could live there

4 What unexpected uses has Tianducheng developed?

- ☐ A) Military training
- ☐ B) Wedding photography and tourism
- ☐ C) Film production only
- ☐ D) Agricultural research

5

What do China's copycat cities reveal about globalization and culture?

- ☐ A) China wants to be France
- ☐ B) Rapid urbanization has created demand for diverse architectural styles, including foreign-inspired designs
- ☐ C) European architecture is always superior
- ☐ D) China has no original architecture

6

What does the phrase 'for them, it's simply home' suggest about the relationship between authenticity and belonging?

- ☐ A) Fake places can never feel like home
- ☐ B) A place doesn't need to be 'original' to become meaningful to the people who live there
- ☐ C) Chinese people prefer copies to originals
- ☐ D) Authenticity is the most important quality

ANSWER KEY

The Fake Paris Built in China

1. B) 354 feet

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'a 354-foot Eiffel Tower replica.'

2. C) 30,000

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'the population had reached around 30,000 residents.'

3. B) The streets were empty and apartments unoccupied

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage explains: 'the streets were eerily empty' with 'empty plazas and unoccupied apartments.'

4. B) Wedding photography and tourism

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage states: 'Young couples discovered it was a popular spot for wedding photographs. Tourists began visiting to take selfies.'

5. B) Rapid urbanization has created demand for diverse architectural styles, including foreign-inspired designs

DOK 3 — Analysis. The passage notes these developments 'reflect China's rapid urbanization and a fascination with foreign architecture and culture.'

6. B) A place doesn't need to be 'original' to become meaningful to the people who live there

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. Despite critics calling Tianducheng 'inauthentic,' residents have made it their home. This suggests that meaning and belonging come from lived experience, not architectural originality.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Fake Paris Built in China

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- C3 Framework — Historical thinking skills

PACING OPTIONS

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is there anything wrong with building a copy of a famous place? Does it take something away from the original?
- The residents of Tianducheng call it home despite it being a 'copy.' What makes a place authentic?
- Would you want to visit Tianducheng? Why or why not?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Compare photos of the real Paris and Tianducheng. Create a side-by-side presentation highlighting similarities and differences.
- Research other replica cities around the world and map their locations.
- Design your own dream city. What elements would you include from different places around the world?

DIFFERENTIATION

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

SOURCE

- BBC / Business Insider