

Trading Partners

U.S. trade with China is not new. Before the American Revolution, Americans were prohibited from trading with China. British companies wanted to keep the profits from "The China Trade" themselves! After the Revolution, Americans built beautiful, fast clipper ships like the *Flying Cloud* to reach the Chinese port of Canton as quickly as possible. They brought back loads of tea, porcelain dishes (called 'China ware'), silk fabric, and decorative items. Chinese goods were so popular that sixteen US states have a city named after the Chinese city of Canton. Chinese furniture, art and clothing items were displayed with pride in the homes of wealthy Americans.



The Chinese officials at the time tried to limit the contact of Chinese people with the Americans and Europeans who came to buy their goods. Only one port was open to foreigners, and sailors were kept on their ships while in port.

- Do you think these methods were effective at limiting cultural diffusion?
- Would they be as effective today? Why, or why not?

Trade with China Today

Today trade between the United States and China is strong, but there is a new characteristic. The United States imports manufactured consumer goods from China. But the goods are not distinctively "Chinese." The materials, styles and design of products from Chinese factories are set by American importers. Labels are printed in English. Chinese imports from the U.S. include heavy machinery and equipment, airplanes, plastics and oils.

American companies are becoming more common in China. Many Chinese like to buy American goods and adopt American styles. Look at the photo to find examples of cultural diffusion.

