



## Lesson Guide

### *What is Gaokao? The world's toughest college admissions test*

#### Vocabulary List

**Upward mobility** - the capacity or facility for rising to a higher social or economic position in one's country

**Liberal arts** - it refers to an expansive intellectual grounding in all kinds of humanistic inquiry

#### Suggested Discussion Topics

1. If Gaokao were brought over to the US, what would be the general reaction?
2. How do you think a student's mental health would be in this type of environment?
3. Compare the US's SAT or ACT to China's Gaokao, what are the similarities and differences? Analyze all aspects, including studying, mental health, parental influence, and relationships.
4. Do you think Ma Jia's concept of "quality education" is more similar to America's education philosophy?
5. Why do you think many students take the Gaokao path which heavily emphasizes cramming instead of "quality education" which emphasizes extracurricular and public service?
6. In the U.S. colleges and universities do take extracurricular activities into consideration in their admissions process. Do you think this aspect can also become a source of stress and pressure? Does this put Asian American students at a disadvantage given their cultural emphasis on academics or become an additional source of stress because now there is the added pressure to excel both in academics and extracurricular activities? Is the stress unique to Asian American students?

#### Suggested Activities

1. Ask students to attempt some of the Gaokao questions, and discuss what was difficult or easy.
2. If students have gained an understanding of the Gaokao, have them design a daily study schedule of a typical high school senior preparing for Gaokao.
3. Look into the [Keju](#) (科举), the predecessor to gaokao, which is the old imperial examination system in China and draw the link to between the two.



## Suggested Additional Filmography, Podcast, Videos

Video: [科举 \(kē jǔ\) Ancient Imperial Examination](#), Short explainer of keju, July 27, 2020, Chinese Learning Center of Miami

Video: [Chinese Traditional Education: Imperial examination system](#), a more detailed explanation of of keju that include mention of military exam, June 12, 2016, China Explore

Read: Civil Service Examinations - Keju 科举, Berkshire Encyclopedia of China, p405-410, 2009, Princeton University