



North American Toponyms: Canton Case Study

Description: This lesson will help students understand toponyms and their connection to historical events, trends and patterns. The lesson is divided into two parts. The first part asks students to make connections to key Human Geography concepts such as colonization, migration, urbanization, agglomeration, economic zones, etc. using Canton/Guangzhou as a case study. This first part of the lesson also explores the evolution of the city of Canton/Guangzhou throughout history. The second part of the lesson focuses on toponyms and examines the adoption of international place names in North America using Canton as the case study.

Subject(s): AP Human Geography

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Key Word(s):

Toponym

Economic development (SEZ, agglomeration, etc.)

Urbanization

Colonization

Migration

Culture (food, language, etc.)

Essential Questions:

- What factors lead to a city's development (pull factors)?
- How does a city's location affect its function?
- What factors determine place names?

Region(s): East Asia and North America

Rationale/Objectives: This lesson aims to apply key AP Human Geography concepts and content (colonization, migration, economic development, urbanization, etc.) using the city of Guangzhou (formerly Canton) as a case study.

School Proficiency (Our school is proficiency-based and does not have content standards.):

Geographic Analysis & Application: I can use geographic information to draw connections, compare, contrast, and apply to new learning and situations.

Prerequisite knowledge: This lesson would be most useful at the end of the year as a way to apply/review key information from various units in AP Human Geography. Alternatively, it could easily be modified to use early in the year (perhaps by omitting some of the economic development information/expectations) or in the unit on economic development.

PROCEDURES & EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

ACTIVITY 1: Warmup (10 min)

- Answer the following questions:
 - What is a "Chinese National Central City"?
 - What are the Chinese National Central Cities?
 - Which of the National Central Cities would you choose to live in and why?

ACTIVITY 2: Introduction to Guangzhou (13 min)

- Independently or as a class watch, "[Guangzhou China. Modern Bustling City in Southern China](#)"
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rhnGhnfH1M>
- As you watch, record your observations of the city, paying particular attention to key APHG concepts related to economic development, urbanization, migration, and colonization.

ACTIVITY 3: History of Guangzhou (15 minutes)

- Timeline: With your table partner and using a valid online resource (apply the CRAAP test) such as this [Britannica article](#), create a digital timeline for the city of Guangzhou that identifies key historical shifts/events/functions.
 - <https://www.britannica.com/place/Guangzhou/History>
- Reflection: 1. What was the primary function/purpose of the city of Guangzhou throughout history; 2. How has the city's location affected its primary function?

ACTIVITY 4: Toponyms - Cantons in North America (30-40 minutes)

- Use the [World Historical Gazetteer](https://whgazetteer.org) to locate cities and towns named "Canton" in North America.
 - <https://whgazetteer.org/search/>
- (Teacher logs into WHG and projects the image that students are seeing on the class whiteboard.)
- As a table group, choose two places named Canton in North America and claim your site by putting a star over the dot on the white board. (This will ensure that students are exploring different sites.)
- Click on each site to identify where the city/town is located and then investigate when and why the city was given that name.
 - Consider your search terms: Name origin; history; etc.

State where Canton is located	Date*	Explanation of Toponym & Source(s)
Maryland (MD)	1785	Named for Canton, China by Capt. John O'Donnel of Baltimore who traded with Canton, China. https://baltimoreheritage.org/how-canton-got-its-name-probably/ https://www.baltimoresun.com/features/retro-baltimore/bs-fe-retro-canton-20200325-h7zy2vyqtremxim3n6zbdellay-story.html

*Dates may be when the town/city was settled, named, or incorporated.

- Reflection:
 - In the case of the toponym *Canton*, what factors determined this common place name in North America?
 - How does the case of Canton differ from other naming trends we've seen this year?

Some Examples (for teacher's benefit):

Canton, OK

- Town's name comes from the nearby *cantonment*, a residential (military and civil) section of a military establishment.

Canton, TX

- Named for settlers coming from "Old Canton" in a nearby town
- Old Canton is likely named after Canton, Ohio

Canton, Ohio

- Named after Canton, China

Canton, PA

- Named after Canton, CT

Canton, CT

- Disagreement about origin of name (could be from a Swiss canton or Canton, China)

Canton, MD

- Named after Canton, China

OPTIONAL HANDOUT (Extension Activity)

North American Toponyms (Canton Case Study)

Purpose: This lesson will help students understand toponyms and their connection to historical events, trends and patterns.

ACTIVITY 1: Warmup

- What is a "Chinese National Central City"?
- What are the Chinese National Central Cities?
- Which of the National Central Cities would you choose to live in and why?

ACTIVITY 2: Introduction to Guangzhou

- Observations and Connections (economic development, urbanization, migration, and colonization):

ACTIVITY 3: History of Guangzhou (Timeline)

- With your table partner and using a valid online resource (apply the CRAAP test) such as this [Britannica article](#), create a digital timeline for the city of Guangzhou that identifies key historical shifts/events/functions. Paste or link your timeline in the space below.
- Reflection Questions:
 - What was the primary function/purpose of the city of Guangzhou throughout history?
 - How has the city's location affected its primary function?

ACTIVITY 4: Toponyms - Cantons in North America

- Use the [World Historical Gazetteer](#) to locate cities and towns named "Canton" in North America.
- Which two Cantons is your table exploring (note the states in which they are located)?
- Record your findings in the table below, then copy and paste into the class table.

State where Canton is located	Date*	Explanation of Toponym & Source(s)
Maryland (MD)	1785	Named for Canton, China by Capt. John O'Donnel of Baltimore who traded with Canton, China. https://baltimoreheritage.org/how-canton-got-its-name-probably/ https://www.baltimoresun.com/features/retro-baltimore/bs-fe-retro-canton-20200325-h7zy2vyqtremxim3n6zbdellay-story.html

*Dates may be when the town/city was settled, named, or incorporated.

- Reflection Questions (complete after reviewing the class's findings in the table):
 - In the case of the toponym *Canton*, what factors determined this common place name in North America?
 - How does the case of Canton differ from other naming trends we've seen this year?