



Outside a restaurant in Washington's Chinatown neighborhood (Photo: Steve Ember)

From VOA Learning English, welcome to As It Is. I'm Steve Ember.

On today's program we go to America's Chinatowns – and tell about how they've changed over the years.

Next, we provide some expert suggestions for students writing academic papers from a university teacher and writer.

And, we note the birthday anniversary of an American president.

But first, just how Chinese is Chinatown?

People from China have been in the United States since the middle of the 1800s. Today, Chinese and other Asians are America's fastest growing minority. Almost every major city in the country has an area called "Chinatown."

They call it Grant Avenue, San Francisco, California, USA

Looks down from Chinatown, over a foggy bay...

(from "Flower Drum Song" by Rodgers and Hammerstein)

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II wrote a Broadway musical in the late 1950s called "Flower Drum Song." It was about generational conflict in Chinese-American families in San Francisco's Chinatown. In "Grant Avenue," Pat Suzuki joyfully sang of the attractions that brought visitors to the downtown Chinese community.

A western street with eastern manners

Tall pagodas with golden banners

Throw their shadows through a lantern glow

You can shop for precious jade or...



This archway is the entrance to Washington's Chinatown. In the foreground, the Pylon for the Gallery Place/Chinatown station of Washington's Metro subway.
(Photo: Steve Ember)

From San Francisco to New York, people visit Chinatown for restaurants, grocery stores, herbal cures, and other businesses. But many Chinese have moved out of traditional Chinatown neighborhoods and now live in suburbs just outside the inner city. For example, one of the largest mainly Chinese suburbs is just outside Los Angeles, California. But such areas are very different from the old Chinatown.

[Chinese conversation and music]

Steve Wong is acting director of the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles. He says Chinatowns in major American cities are now mainly for tourists.



“If you walk around Chinatown today in Los Angeles and many other big cities, you have these facades of Chinese-ness, which sometimes is real. Sometimes it’s not. And so you have gift shops, you have Chinese food which is catering towards American tastes. I don’t even call it Chinese food. I think it’s very American.”

But at one time, Chinatown was the only place where Chinese immigrants could live. The first Chinese immigrants arrived from southern China in the 1800s as laborers. Many worked on building America's first railroads. Then, in 1882, the United States banned Chinese immigration. Hostility toward the Chinese led to the creation of Chinatowns. Steve Wong tells about how the neighborhoods developed.

"Without being able to bring in families and women, they (Chinese men) weren't able to develop their communities. So they had to turn to the outside and create an economy based on tourism."

Min Zhou is a professor at the University of Southern California Los Angeles. In the past thirty years, Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, and then China, came to America as students – and then stayed in the United States. She describes their arrival.

"A lot of them are from middle class, they want to buy or rent houses rather than live in apartments and they also want to find good school districts. So Chinatown is not attractive to them."

As It Is is coming to you from VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember.

Next - to the university campus, and some help for students concerned with their ability to write academic papers.

Do you sometimes worry about writing reports for your school or university?

Expressing your thoughts can be difficult, especially if you are not writing in your first language. So we have asked some academic writing experts in the United States for advice. From time to time, we will bring you their suggestions, in their own words.

We begin today with Mary Ann Allison. She is an assistant professor in the Department of Journalism, Media Studies and Public Relations at Hofstra University in New York. She is also a poet and a writer. Ms. Allison says starting to write a paper for school is often the most difficult part. Here is some of her advice.

"If you have any choice at all of a topic, is to do something that you're really interested in, because the more you are interested in it naturally, the better you'll write and the easier it'll be."

She suggests first looking at the available information on the topic.

"...to see if there's enough for me to be able to easily research and write what I want to write. And if there's not, then I might choose something else to write on."

As the next step, she suggests what she calls

"...back-of-the-envelope outline. That's when I sit down, maybe not at my desk, not at my computer, maybe even at a café, or with a cup of coffee, but where I sit. And I just kind of think about it, and I think about the topic like, what would I say to a friend? And I just write down short notes about whatever – whatever comes to mind. What would I say to a friend about this? Or, what do I want to know about this? And when I have - oh, I don't know - anywhere between five and 10 points, I stop."

Mary Ann Allison says it's also important to wait for a day and sleep on it.

"...because your brain will work on it while you're sleeping. And then I take those notes and I make an outline. And then I take the outline and again check how much information is there. Is there easy information on all these points? And if the signals are all 'yes', then I might start writing."

It's important also to let your unconscious mind do a lot of the work for you.

"...because if you sit down and try to write it right now, you don't give your unconscious any time to organize things (or to) bring together other ideas. So do some research, which gives your subconscious something to think about. Right? And then let it rest for a night. You'll often find that it's much easier (to start writing) the next day, letting it seep. Also, the more rested you are, the better it will be.

"That works for exams, too, by the way. If you cram all night, you're much more likely to do worse than if you get sleep."

It's As It Is from VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember.

Today is the anniversary of the birth of Lyndon Baines Johnson. He was the 36th president of the United States.

He was born near Stonewall, Texas on August 27th, 1908.



Official White House portrait of LBJ

Johnson served as president during a difficult period for the United States, both at home and abroad. There was racial tension in American cities, and the country was increasingly involved in an unpopular and costly war in Vietnam.

LBJ, as he was popularly called, was serving as vice president when President John F. Kennedy was murdered in Dallas Texas, in November of 1963. Johnson finished Kennedy's term. The next year, he was elected to a full four-year term as president. He helped to enact a series of reforms called "The Great Society."

President Kennedy had promised to sign a bill that banned unfair treatment based on a person's race or sex. The measure also ended racial segregation – or separation -- in all public buildings.

As president, Lyndon Johnson successfully urged Congress to pass the bill.

"We believe that all men are created equal. Yet, many are denied equal treatment."

He is widely praised for the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Johnson did not seek a second full term in office. He died on January 2nd, 1973.

And that's As It Is for today. As It Is is a production of VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember. Thanks for joining us.