

Institute on China 2016

Group Projects Abroad

Fulbright-Hays-UC Berkeley

Ancient Chinese Art: Diversity and unity.

Multicultural forces that shaped the artistic representations of Ancient Chinese art.

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Ancient Chinese Art Visual Arts Unit

Grade Level

6th Grade Visual Arts

Guiding questions:

- 1- What are the defining factors of traditional Ancient Chinese art? How are they reflected in the imagery presented places such as the Mogao Grottoes, Emperor Qin's tomb, calligraphy scrolls and landscape paintings?
- 2- Who are the people that influenced the manner in which visual arts were developed?
- 3- How were symbolism and visual narrative used in the arts?
- 4- Was ancient Chinese art the result of a single unifying principle, the combination of multiple regional and multicultural influences or the blend between all of these factors?

Introduction:

Chinese Art has long been the source of inspiration for many artists. Throughout the times, artists have used Chinese Art as a source of inspiration for their own compositions. Francois Boucher and Antoine Watteau created many images that depict what they considered traditional Chinese compositions. Post-Impressionist Artists such as Van Gogh used their bright coloring, pattern and emphasis on the linear aspects of their composition as sources of inspiration for their own artwork. They also admired their dedication and single minded focus on their chosen studies. However, most of this artists had no first-hand knowledge of China, its culture or the people that inhabited the land. The western world was eager to receive the many goods that came via the silk road, but few made the journey to the Far-East. The objects and stories that reached the West sparked the collective imagination of many Westerners. As a result, they created an imaginary idyllic and peaceful construct that lumped several eastern countries (Japan, India, etc.) into a "Chinese "one. (Getty Museum Educational Instruction Visit).

Students in Middle School explore Ancient China. The unit will introduce the different cultures and factors that shaped what would give birth to Ancient Chinese Art. For many years, scholars sustained that the Chinese civilization had its origins in a central location along the Yellow River Valley. However, later discoveries and research have given credence to a new theory where several different regional groups contributed to shape Chinese history. Findings from excavations in sites such as Sangxindui near Sichuan, emperor's Qin's tomb and sites such as Dunhuang and the Mogao Grottoes tell a different story. The contributing factors that shaped Chinese art are deeply rooted in the diversity of cultures that inhabited the vast expanse of the Chinese country. Moreover, the interaction that commerce brought through what in the 20th century would be called the "Silk Road" (Western term that defined several trading routes that communicated east and west) added a variety of external influences that shaped the artistic expression in many sites. Nowadays it is estimated that China consists of 56 diverse cultures. However inside of China, 91% of population identifies as Han ethnic group, and the rest are recognized as 55 minority groups.

In this Unit we will explore the art created on the walls of the Mogao Grottoes, the sculptures built for the burial site of the first Chinese emperor Qin Shihuangdi, the different strokes used to write calligraphy and traditional bamboo paintings. We will review some competing theories regarding the artistic influences in the creation of some of the artifacts and places being studied. Students will apply the knowledge acquired during this journey through some of the most known art forms of Ancient China and develop their own theories as to what were the forces that developed Ancient Chinese Art.

The class will culminate this unit with a Museum Exhibit of the treasures found inside of a newly discovered Cave in the deeps of the Mogao Grottoes We will set up the classroom as if it was a museum gallery and the kids will simply display their calligraphy in scroll format, paintings and sketches on the wall.

Unit Objectives:

- 1) Students will write a prediction of what they believe Ancient Chinese Art looks like in terms of styles choices, diversity, principles and elements of design.
- 2) Students will create a small replica of an image similar to one in the Mogao caves using the technique learned from the Dunhuang Arts Academy.
- 3) Students will learn the basic calligraphy brushstrokes and apply them when copying a simple Chinese word or sentence in a scroll format. They will use bamboo brushes and ink on rice paper.
- 4) Students will explore the symbolism of natural elements such as plants, geological formations, etc. They will create a bamboo painting using the previously learned brushstrokes and write a "Lushi" style poem in the shape of a fan (Dunhuang High School). The poem will reflect their understanding of the meaning of the Bamboo plant in the Chinese tradition and the season they choose to represent.
- 5) Students will study the 3-d quality of a terracotta army warrior. They will choose one of them to be represented in a linear drawing using texture to convey volume.

- 6) Students will write a three paragraph essay reflecting on what they previously thought they knew about Chinese art and what they know now. They will compare their ideas with the facts and examples learned during class.

Unit Lessons:

- a) Dunhuang art from the Mogao Grottoes. Discovery, study and replication of some of the images on the cave walls.
- b) Qin Shihuangdi's study of the Terracotta Army warriors. Studies in style, using shading to create volume.
- c) Calligraphy exploration. Practice and development of skill necessary to write basic Chinese words using bamboo brushes and ink on rice paper.
- d) Symbolism in Chinese art. Application on the creation of a Lushi poem paired with a Bamboo painting.
- e) Conclusion. Unity and/or variety of influences in the formation and development of Ancient Chinese Art.

Lesson a: Dunhuang art from the Mogao Grottoes. Discovery, study and replication of some of the images on the cave walls.

Journey through the Silk Road: Arts and Life along the Mogao Grottoes

Objectives:

- Students will discover and predict the functionality and ownership of different objects used by people who lived and travelled along the Silk Road.
- Students will retell a story based on the images provided by the cave painting of Mogao Grottoes. They will also compare and contrast their stories with the ones told by the original writers of the stories.
- Students will choose a person or scene from one of their stories and recreate it using the techniques applied by the restorers from the Dunhuang Arts Academy.

Introduction:

Starting during the 2nd Century BC, the Silk road extended from Chang'an (Xi'an) to Constantinople (Istanbul). It is important to note that prior to this time, trade had already started from Central Asia westward, and Central Asia eastward. Nevertheless, the demand for silk products and the changes in the political environment, led to a more sustained trade that developed a series of routes that in 1877 would be labelled the "Silk Road" by the German Explorer Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen. The oasis at Dunhuang became an important stage along the Silk road because it was the last stop before (or after) facing the unforgiving route that crossed either the Gobi or Taklamakan desert. The tradesmen, soldiers, artists, farmers and other people who lived in or passes through the Dunhuang

area, stopped at the Mogao grottoes to either pray for a safe journey and prepare for it or to thank for their safe arrival.

The Mogao grottoes present a clear example of one thousand years of Chinese painting and sculpture. While most of it is solely focused in the teaching and worship of Buddha, they also give us a clear perspective of the people who lived and travelled along the area. Frequently we see images of donors with the outfits and hair styles that reflect their hierarchy and time period. There are also scenes accounting daily life occurrences, tales of redemption or punishments that would be used as means to create a visual and oral tradition of storytelling. Is in these stories painted in the more than five hundred decorated caves that we can see the variety of people and customs practiced during one thousand years of Chinese history. The art of the Mogao grottoes represents more than ten different genres such as painting, sculpture, music and dance amongst others. These wall are the graphic documentation of many log disappeared cultural information (I.E. long gone musical instruments played on some of the wall depictions).

This is an introductory series of lessons that will allow students to discover the different people that traveled through the silk road and eventually settled in Dunhuang. They will explore the objects that in many cases were used in their daily lives. They will also incorporate journaling activities such as quick linear drawings, writing, recipe box and others that they have used in previous classes. As the unit progresses, students will identify the people they are journaling about in the paintings found on the walls of the Mogao Caves. They will also write a story that reflects their interpretation of the images presented and compare it with the ones that were originally written or have been recently interpreted by scholars. Students will finally replicate a section of their chose story using similar method than the one done by the Dunhuang Arts Academy.

Materials:

7 Cloth Bags (depending on how many groups your classroom can be divided into)

3 objects that represent 7 or less different socio-economic groups from Ancient China to put inside of each bags. The object can be duplicated on more than one bag depending on availability. Some examples are: Artists- brush, inkstick, piece of rice paper or silk / female entertainer- mirror, music instrument, necklace / soldier- small plastic horse, small sword, arrowhead / merchant- wine goblet, coin, tea leaves / monk- Buddha image, bread crust, beads for praying.

Worksheet for sensorial drawing and prediction (one per student) *attached

Ultrafine Sharpies (one per student)

7 boxes of Inktense color pencils (or other water soluble color pencil)

Dunhuang Caves book for students to reference their images.

Small bag of Terracotta Clay

7 Small containers with Liquid Glue (numbers depend on the groups)
Large flat brushes (regular wall painting brushes will do in lieu of large Bamboo ones- one per student)
Rice paper (cut into 8"x10"- One per student)
7 paper Tapes
Plastic covered cardboards or surfaces to place the painted images while working on them
7 Sets of Gouache
Gesso
7 Hair dryers
Small bamboo brushes (one per student)
Pencils (one per student)
Water containers (one per student)
Paint tray (one per table group)
PowerPoint presentation from Dunhuang Arts Academy Restoration Procedure
PowerPoint of Mogao Grottoes: Silk Road Stories
Color copies of images chosen by students
Text with stories from the Jatakas (number will depend on student choices)
Critique focus questions (one per student)
Rubrics for grading the painting, written and oral critique (one per student)

Equipment:

Computer projector
Computer
Elmo (is best, to be able to show students the procedure for the replica)

Bibliography:

Cave Temples of Mogao at Dunhuang. Art and History on the silk road. 2nd edition.
Dunhuang and Silk Road. Compiler: Du Douchong, Lanzhou University and Wang Shuqing, Dunhuang Academy.
Life Along the Silk Road. 2nd Edition. Susan Whitfield.

Line Drawing Selection of Dunhuang Frescoes (Chinese Edition) (Chinese) Paperback – January 2, 2012.
[Xie Cheng Shui](#)

Story from Frescoes and Fables: Mural Stories from the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang. 1998

by Naomi McPherson and Li Guishan

Film:

DVD Dunhuang Art and Silk Road- China Film Audio Publishing House (ISRC: CN-A02-93-0429-0/V.J4)

Web Sources:

rubistar.4teachers.org (great resource for making your own rubrics)

http://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/cave_temples_dunhuang/video_virtual_experience.html

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sb0aBfzRyg>

Dunhuang Research Academy <http://en.dha.ac.cn/>

<https://www.chinafile.com/> (Confucius Institute offers a variety of resources including articles regarding ancient and modern China).

Standards

Grade Six

Visual and Performing Arts: Visual Arts Content Standards.

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Develop Perceptual Skills and Visual Arts Vocabulary

- 1.1 Identify and describe *all* the elements of art found in selected works of art (e.g., color, shape/form, line, texture, space, value).

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Communication and Expression Through Original Works of Art

2.5 Select specific media and processes to express moods, feelings, themes, or ideas. (Key Content Standard for the Grade level).

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Role and Development of the Visual Arts

- **3.1 Research and discuss the role of the visual arts in selected periods of history, using a variety of resources (both print and electronic).** (Key Content Standard for the Grade Level).

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Derive Meaning

- 4.1 Construct and describe plausible interpretations of what they perceive in works of art.

Make Informed Judgments

- 4.3 Develop specific criteria as individuals or in groups to assess and critique works of art.

5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

Connections and Applications

5.3 Create artwork containing visual metaphors that express the traditions and myths of selected cultures.

Reading Standards for Literature Grade 6 (It is important to note that collaboration with the Language Arts and Social Studies department will further develop this unit's objectives and reach).

Key Ideas and Detail

2-Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

Speaking and Listening Standards Grade 6

Comprehension and Collaboration

1-Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

5-Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

Language Standards Grade 6

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

5-Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Teacher Preparation:

The teacher should have a collection of manipulatives to put inside of the bags that represent the different social, tribal and economic groups that travelled and lived in the Dunhuang area. It is important to be familiar with the objects placed in the bags and know what their purpose and who would have been the most likely owner of the chosen objects.

The teacher will familiarize him/herself with the images and background history of the Mogao Grottoes. The Getty Research Institute and the Dunhuang Research Academy provide plenty of resources including short movies on the subject. Confucius Institute offers a variety of online resources to familiarize the teacher with ancient and modern China information.

The teacher will make color copies of several of the murals painted on the walls of the caves, placing special emphasis on the panels that depict the people chosen for the opening activity.

The teacher will make copies of the Jataka stories from the book “Story from Frescoes and Fables: Mural Stories from the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang”.

The teacher will make all the photocopied handouts needed for the students to fill in during the activities.

The teacher will prepare a mix of clay and glue to test the replication procedure done by the Dunhuang Arts Academy.

The teacher will make copies of the linear drawings that students will use for their image replication from the line drawing books of the Mogao Caves paintings.

Before beginning the painting portion of the project, the teacher should demonstrate how to hold the Chinese bamboo brushes and use them with the watercolors.

There should be an open space set aside for work in progress once students begin painting.

If students are not familiar with critiques or the attached critique format, it is recommended that the teacher demonstrates and practices an out loud critique with the students at least once before the end of the lesson.

I always bring some healthy treat when doing critiques. Since students are asked to orally present their findings in front of the class, I encourage them to take a treat after doing so. It turns a possibly stressful situation into a sort of a fun party and they usually vie for the first spots on the critique to get their pick of strawberries or raisins, etc.

Time:

This unit will be taught in seven-50 minutes’ class periods.

Procedure:

1st Session: One 50 minute class.

- 1- Divide the class into groups of no more than 4 students each.
- 2- Distribute a “discovery” bag and worksheet #1 to each group.
- 3- Explain to students that one of them will be using their hands to assess one of the mystery objects placed inside of the bag. The student will use verbal cues (without naming the object) to describe what he/she perceives of the object. The goal is for the team to be able to create a visual image of the object being described by the narrator. Students will rotate jobs so everyone draws and narrates. Students will use the provided worksheet to draw the objects.
- 4- This is a timed activity. They should have no more than 2 minutes per object.
- 5- Once they finish, ask students to discuss within their group the kind of object they think they described and what function it might serve (if any).
- 6- Have students take the object out of the bags
- 7- Have students draw them next to their original and compare them with the one they drew.
- 8- Explain the functional use of the object and have each group write a conclusion as to what kind of person would likely use the objects in the bag.
- 9- Quickly have a classroom discussion and comparison of objects and images.

2nd Session: One 50 minute class.

- 1- Introduce and present the Mogao grottoes to the students. Use the PowerPoint “Mogao Grottoes: Silk Road Stories” with images and description of the panels and stories.
- 2- Have students “Mind Map” the information presented in their sketchbooks. Emphasize the need to identify the purpose of the caves, location, thematic images and characters in the creative process.
- 3- Distribute the color photocopies of the Jatakas and other cave images to the students along with the written stories.
- 4- Have students analyze the images and the corresponding text from the copies you have made.
- 5- Students will choose the one image or section they want to use for their own project.
- 6- Using their sketchbooks students will draw a thumbnail image of their project.

3rd Session: Three 50 minute classes.

- 1- Present PowerPoint of the Mogao Grottoes Restoration Dunhuang Academy of Arts replica technique.
- 2- Explain that their project will consist on replicating the image they chose on the last class using a similar technique.
- 3- Give students one 8”x11” sheet of rice paper, a board and tape.
- 4- Demonstrate how to tape the rice paper sheet onto the provided board. Emphasize the need to evenly tape all four sides of the paper onto the board.

- 5- Have students prepare the mixture of red clay, glue and water and a slightly watered down gesso mix.
- 6- Students will apply the mixture onto their rice paper and then they will dry it using the hair dryers.
- 7- Students will apply the white gesso mix onto the dried out surface.
- 8- Students will either transfer or free draw their image on the prepared paper.
- 9- Students will begin applying colors onto the image
- 10- While students work on the painting portion of the project, you can have them watch and listen to the Dunhuang movie and the youtube CCTV “Dunhuang: Oasis city on the Silk Road”.
- 11- Once they finish their painting have students write down 3 ideas they think this project embodies related to the person they focused their work on.

4th Session: One 50 minutes’ class.

- 1- Students will discuss their impressions of the work and findings during their work, placing special emphasis on one of the three ideas they already identified.
- 2- They will write a ten sentences paragraph critiquing the image they created. They will guide their critique by using the questions posed in the ArtsEdge focus questionnaire.
- 3- Students will present their critique orally to the class.

Assessment

Formative Assessment

Daily worksheet. This is a formative assessment tool. Attached is a sample of assessment for the opening activity. The teacher is free to add or choose the categories he/she wants to use on the project. This form is a basic check, plus, minus assessment form.

Sketchbook review to monitor progress made by the student on note taking, central ideas, sketching of images, etc.

Summative Assessment

Rubric used to evaluate the written critique of the images. (rubistar.4teachers.org)

Rubric used for evaluating the oral performance of the student during the critique.

(rubistar.4teachers.org)

Rubric used to evaluate the finished image. (rubistar.4teachers.org)