

# Summer Institute 2024: Cross-Cultural Perspectives Along the Silk Road

Partnership with the British Library

## Lesson Plan Template

Lori Stubben, River Oak Charter School, 6th Grade

### **Making Mogao Magical**

#### **Organizing/Essential/Guiding Questions**

What is essential in a museum exhibit to engage an audience?

How do you limit searches within a museum's website?

How to curate images and text to tell a story

How to recreate 2d and 3d artwork and texts

#### **Standards**

CA HSS Guiding Questions addressed in this lesson:

How did Buddhism support individuals, rulers, and societies-

including the birth and spread of religious and philosophical systems which responded to human needs and supported social norms and power structures

How did societies interact with each other- including the rise of diverse civilizations, characterized by economies of surplus, centralized states, social hierarchies, cities, networks of trade, art and architecture, and systems of writing.

How did the establishment of the Silk Road increase trade, the spread of Buddhism, and the connections between China and other regions of Afroeurasia- including the development and growth of links between societies through trade, diplomacy, migration, conquest, and the diffusion of goods and ideas.

**CA HSS Content Standard:**6.6.3, 6.6.4

**CA HSS Analysis Skills (6–8):** Research, Evidence, and Point of View 3, 5, Historical Interpretation 1

**CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy:** RI.6.3, RI.6.10, SL.6.1, SL.6.4, L.6.4, RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.4, WHST.6–8.2, WHST.6–8.9

**CA ELD Standards:** ELD.PI.6.1, 2, 6, 10b,11; ELD.PII.6.1, 6

#### **Introduction/ Overview**

With the upcoming Mogao Cave focused show at the Asian Art Museum (potentially in 2027) students will create a focused selection of objects and reproductions with a similar focus to gain the experience of curating their own museum experience for others. In groups they will fulfill the roles of exhibit coordinator/designer, researcher, conservator, curator and docent.

## **Objectives**

Groups of 4-5 create a museum type showing from a specific cave. Each will include one 2D reproduction from the walls of the cave, one 3D part of the specific cave's sculptures or related time period object, and one manuscript sample from the time period of the cave, with museum labels for each item, and an interpretive panel for each item. There will be one collaborative introductory label per group/cave and one label for the whole exhibit. This will fulfill the roles of researcher, conservator, designer, and curator within the museum context.

Students will also improve their ability to use internet databases and navigate websites for research and source their work.

## **Materials**

- worksheets for individuals and group work
- toned sketch paper roll (warm tan) cut into pieces for students
- oil pastels in colors to match the paints in Mogao Caves (Sakura Cray-Pas Expressionist Oil Pastels in brown, blue green, burnt sienna, olive brown, ultramarine, cerulean blue, sepia, viridian hue, pale green, Prismacolor NuPastel Color Sticks pistachio green)
- oven bake super sculpey 8 lbs.
- acrylic paint
- carbon paper roll
- black curtains
- led warm strip lights x6
- wax pillar led candles x 12

## **Resources**

British Library/International Dunhuang Programme: <https://idp.bl.uk/>

British Museum: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection>

Getty Museum Exhibit object list and

website: [https://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions\\_events/exhibitions/cave\\_temples\\_dunhuang/index.html](https://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/cave_temples_dunhuang/index.html) ,

[https://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions\\_events/exhibitions/cave\\_temples\\_dunhuang/replica\\_caves.html](https://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/cave_temples_dunhuang/replica_caves.html)

Dunhuang Academy 3-d caves: <https://www.e-dunhuang.com/index.htm>

Dunhuang Academy introduction and game: <https://www.e-dunhuang.com/>

article on sketches found in library cave:

[https://www.academia.edu/19668926/Formulas\\_of\\_Creativity\\_Artists\\_Sketches\\_and\\_Techniques\\_of\\_Copying\\_at\\_Dunhuang](https://www.academia.edu/19668926/Formulas_of_Creativity_Artists_Sketches_and_Techniques_of_Copying_at_Dunhuang)

## **Special Equipment**

-student computers/headphones  
-museum set up: black cloth to hang for walls/ceiling, black cubes/pillars to set artwork on, black tagboard and black tape to set up "walls" to put artifacts and text panels on, mood lighting: led pillar candles and string lights

## **Teacher Preparation**

setup museum "walls" and hang cloths from the ceiling the evening before the show opening.

## **Time/Timeline**

6 hours of class time

## **Procedures**

ahead of lessons: an overview of Chinese history and geography through the Song Dynasty

### **Day 1 60 min Background**

slides 1-5: overview of project

give out worksheets: who - what - where - when - why - how Mogao Caves in General  
play 1:23 video <https://dlc.e-dunhuang.com/#> with teacher narrating about the library cave and collecting items and documents from the real caves through time

slides 6-10: give context to cave walls showing what previous classes have done to replicate cave paintings and what types of Buddhist motifs are represented on the walls  
Explore Jataka Tales with Mogao Magic Script from 2018- assign roles and read aloud and/or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uUljgIH-5s&list=PLqK7CXzG68ggXgwMqgWueoVUpwllB62b9&index=26> Getty Cave 45 experience

### **Day 2 70-90 min Overview**

slide 11: play the e-dunhuang game on individual computers students register for accounts and play game noting new information on yesterday's worksheet- the game play is about 30 minutes

review information gleaned and how it was to play the game.

slide 12: review visit to Asian Art Museum discussing why they enjoyed specific exhibits- artifacts, stories, interactive, attractiveness

slide 13: read the overview of class project

slide 14: give out cave numbers to groups of 4-5 students. They read and explore their cave and take notes on the new worksheet who - what - where - when - why - how # \_\_\_\_  
Cave

### Day 3: 90-100 min **Design and Research**

slide 15: groups decide who will do 2d walls and text and 3d renderings

slide 16-18: students learn to research on the IDP website for text with an overview of search terms and use of search functions. Teacher leads a demo search. They try a search for their group/cave

slide 19: choices for cave texts for students to search

slide 20: fill out analysis worksheet, make a sketch of what will be rendered, start rendering in color/sculpey

### Day 4: 90-100 min **Conserve and Curate**

slide 20: continue to work on and finish renderings

slide 21: when done make label's rough drafts for editing and then final drafts, whole group works on one label for cave, layout of objects and audience feedback questions. teacher collates feedback questions to be ready for the next day

slide 22: label examples for students to learn from

slide 23: preview rubric

### Day 5: 90-100 min **Docent**

final drafts of all labels, final layouts of objects set up exhibit. Preview exhibit by switching groups to lead through each other's cave sections and be able to answer questions. Have 3rd grade buddies visit and possibly another class, give audience feedback questionnaires. Fill out rubrics.

### Day 6: 20 min **Review and Clean up**

review questionnaires answers, take down museum

**Assessment** – review audience survey results

# Making Mogao *Meaningful*

Crafting the Museum  
Experience



# Background Information

In a Western China oasis town along the silk road in the 4th to 14th century intricate, decorated caves were constructed. In the summer of 2018 Ms. Stubben visited the caves for three days with 20 teachers. In the summer of 2024 she visited the collections of the British Library and British Museum where thousands of items from these caves are housed, restored and digitized.



*Dunhuang-*  
desert oasis city on  
the silk roads

*Mogao-*  
the largest of many  
Buddhist cave sites  
along the silk  
roads





Dunhuang is between the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts, between mountain ranges and past the end of the Great Wall of China





**735 Caves** 487 caves are places of pilgrimage and worship. 248 caves were living quarters, meditation chambers, and burial sites for the monks.



In Cave 96, you can find a 116 foot tall statue of the future Buddha built along the cliff. That is every 6th grader standing on each other's heads!

# Introduction

video overview (scroll below game)

<https://dlc.e-dunhuang.com/>

Start to answer the 5 basic questions about the caves on the Mogao Caves General Information Worksheet. Write small and neatly as you will need this information and more for your project.





# On the Walls of the Mogao Caves



Jatakas-  
Tales of the past lives of the Buddha



Buddha in Pure Land (Paradise)



Apsaras- flying dancers



Musicians



Repeated Buddhas with  
different mudras  
(hand positions)



# Cave Patrons/Sponsors

The person paying the artists and laborers to dig out and paint the cave earned merit towards good karma for their next life on Earth. They often got their portraits (or the portraits of whom they chose) to be included on the cave walls.

In Cave 231 “the retired gentleman” Yin Jiazheng paid for a portrait of his parents to be included in the cave.





# 6th Grade Class Play 2019





## Cave 45 Virtual Immersive Experience 5m



Bodhisattva Guanyin, Ananda (young disciple of Buddha), Buddha, Kasappa (old disciple of Buddha), Heavenly King

# Introduction

Cave game

<https://dlc.e-dunhuang.com/>

Try out the game for yourself and  
explore the library 30-45 minutes

Add to the answers on the Mogao Caves  
General Information Worksheet. Write  
small and neatly as you will need this  
information and more for your project.



# *Asian Art Museum Analysis*

## *Which was your favorite exhibit?*

*Jade Room, Bronze Era Room (Rayna the Rhino), Tomb Figures, Buddha and Bodhisattvas, or Korean Celadon*

*Why?*

*Articulate to your group your reasons why one of these stood out above the others?*

# Create a Museum Exhibit

**Exhibition Coordinator-** choose one person to fill out and keep the group tasks paper checking off when jobs are done. They should also hold on to the introductory label paper and make sure everyone is on task.

**Specialize-** learn about your group's cave through 3d virtual tour, image search and short articles. Individually fill out the mogao caves specific information worksheet.

**Design-** as a group discuss and choose what types of artifacts you will have in your exhibit (you must have a 2d image from the wall of your cave, a 3d rendering of part of one of your statues or something 2d turned into a 3d object, a reproduction of part of a text from the library cave from the same time period of the cave and related to the cave), optionally you may add more artifacts with a maximum of one per group member

**Research-** create a precise museum label for your object with information from the websites

**Conserve-** create a reproduction of your chosen piece. It should be no larger than 14" x 14" if on paper and no more than one pound of sculpy and the actual size of the artifact if possible.

**Curate-** create a precise object label for your reproductions for your object from the information in your analysis worksheet, then design the layout cooperatively with group members, create an audience feedback form

# Specialize

Find your cave, scroll down to the 3d virtual cave tour “panorama” and explore <https://www.e-dunhuang.com/index.htm>

Mogao Caves

61  
103  
158  
220  
285

Yulin Cave


3

After a cave walkthrough

- read the text (label and paragraphs)
- look again at the cave
- take notes on the cave specific information worksheet



# Design



discuss which members (1-2) will research and create these reproductions  
there must be one of each

2d image from the wall of your cave in oil pastels  
What looked interesting?

3d rendering of meaningful part of one of your statues  
(hand, face, head, foot, crown, etc.) in sculpey (oven baked modeling clay)  
What are possibilities from your cave?

2d reproduction of part of a text in ink from the library cave  
from the same time period of your cave.

## Optional Bonus Work

Help write the introduction to the whole exhibit and become a docent to give the tour introduction

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Choose something on the wall mural to turn into a 3d object

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Become a statue of one of the mural/statue figures

---

Embody a monk coming to visit the caves- dress like one and learn a chant

# Research



## *International Dunhuang Programme*

<https://idp.bl.uk/>

**Find your group's text and create a precise museum label for it with information from this website**



# How to Research

## Search

Choose collection categories  
Browse by site: Dunhuang  
Mogao, material: manuscripts,  
date: date of your cave

## Choose

Look at a handful of items  
and pick one that it's  
possible to copy a part of

01

*International  
Dunhuang  
Programme*  
<https://idp.bl.uk/>

02

03

*View all objects  
from the  
Collection*

Filter by date (actual date of  
your cave) and subject (one  
of interest)

04

# IDP Research Subjects Meanings

From the International Dunhuang Programme Website Search

**Sponsored** a person or family paid to have the cave painted to earn good karma

**Colophons** information about the publication

**Divination** fortune telling

**Avalokitesvara** bodhisattva of compassion- also known as Quan Yin in China and Kannon in Japan

**Seal** a stamp

**Club circular** Buddhist lay (non-monk/nun) associations directions for festivals

**Apocryphal sutra:** texts not accepted by all groups of buddhists

**Donor** a person or family that pays others make Buddhist paintings, sculptures or texts to earn merit

**Manichaeism** 3-13 Century religion combining Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Paganism

**Pothi a** style of book binding, pages are landscape and sewn together through one or two holes in the middle

**Dash** 1907 Archaeologist Aural Stein's 7 dogs

**Ksitigarbha** monk bodhisattva of children and travelers, Jizo in Japan

**Sakyamuni** another name for the historical Buddha, Indian Prince Siddhartha from 3-4 Century BCE

# Text Possibilities

Cave	Time Period			
Mogao 61	907-979 CE Five Dynasties	Or.8210/P.20 Woodblock Printed Diamond Sutra	Or.8210/S.253 Book of Buddha's Names	IOL Khot S 46 Incantations, sutras, confessions
Mogao 103	705-780 CE High Tang Dynasty	IOL San 1492 Perfection of Wisdom Sutra		
Mogao 158	781–848 CE Middle Tang (Mogao area ruled by Tibetan Empire)	IOL Tib J 401 Tibetan Book of Spells	Or.8210/S.6983 Illustrated Lotus Sutra	Or.8210/S.5720A Lotus Sutra in gold
Mogao 220	642 CE Early Tang Dynasty	Or.8210/S.3326 Star Chart	Or.8210/S.6261 Divination scroll with horse/dragon	
Mogao 285	535-557 CE Western Wei Dynasty	Or.8210/S.3877 Directions for building a tomb	Or.8210/S.2872 List of sutras translated from Sanskrit to Chinese	
Yulin 3	1038–1227 CE Western Xia Regime (ruled by Tangut Empire)	Or.12380/3621 <i>The Dragon King of the Sea</i>	Tang.334/134 <i>Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra</i>	Thousand Names of the Buddhas of the Present Kalpa-Wikipedia list of tangut books



# Conserve



## *Analysis Worksheet*

Fill out all parts of the worksheet. Ask for help if you need it- first from your group, then from the teacher.



## *Sketch*

Decide on an actual size sketch or a close up and sketch your part of the project



## *Create Replica*

2d: on toned paper use pencil (possibly carbon paper) for initial drawing of text or wall image then go over with oil pastels or ink.  
3d: sculpt and optionally paint

# Curate



## Labels

Fill out all parts of your analysis worksheet and turn it into an original narrative paragraph for your object label. Write everything in your own words explaining it to the level of your third grade buddies and write the source(s) in parentheses at the end of the writing. Write your draft on the black and white copy and put it in the inbox for editing. When edited write your final draft on the colored paper.



## Audience Feedback

Submit 1-2 questions that could be a part of an exit card for museumgoers so we can find out their response to and understanding of this exhibit.



## Layout of all Work

Work together as a group to assemble all of your items and labels including your one introductory panel for the cave. Put all of the museum labels in the same orientation to your object replicas (for example all at the bottom left)  
Using tape loops on the black peg Board so it can be used again.

# Label Examples

## Museum Label

**Title:** Avalokiteśvara as Saviour from Perils

**Date:** 975 CE

**Size:** 35 x 23 in.

**Materials:** Paint and ink on Silk

**Language / Script:** Chinese

**Institution:** Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



## Object Label

This is a painting on silk of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. She is the woman in Buddhism that people can pray to to help them when traveling or with childbirth. This painting is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and dated to 975. The image recreated is the donor figures identified by the inscriptions as the nuns Jiejing and Mingjie of Lingxiu Monastery. Not reproduced is the main image of the goddess Avalokiteśvara, and behind her are scenes of dangers from which she was believed to grant salvation, such as 'falling from the Diamond Mountains' and 'Drifting in Vast Seas.'

This artifact shows that Chinese women and their problems were valued in Buddhism during the 10th century since they had their own goddess figure to aid them when in need. The two named nuns must have saved their money for a long time in order to pay for this beautiful art work to be made. It was for their good karma towards their next incarnation. (<https://idp.bl.uk/newsletters/autumn-2018/>, IDP News Issue No. 49/50)

# Rubric- How did you do?

As an individual underline the parts that are true about your portions of the project.

## Making Mogao Meaningful Rubric



	<b>4 Excellent</b>	<b>3 Good</b>	<b>2 Okay</b>	<b>1 incomplete</b>
<b>Attractive- ness</b>	Makes excellent use of font, color, graphics, lighting, positioning etc. to enhance the presentation.	Makes good use of font, color, graphics, lighting, positioning, etc. to enhance to presentation.	Makes use of font, color, graphics, lighting, positioning, etc. but occasionally these detract from the content.	Use of font, color, graphics, lighting, positioning, etc. but these often distract from the presentation content.
<b>Sources</b>	Source information collected for all graphics, facts and quotes.	Source information collected for all graphics, facts and quotes.	Source information collected for some graphics, facts and quotes.	Source information not collected for graphics, facts and quotes.
<b>Content</b>	Covers topic in-depth with details and examples. Subject knowledge is excellent.	Includes essential knowledge about the topic. Subject knowledge appears to be good.	Includes essential information about the topic but there are 1-2 factual errors.	Content is minimal OR there are several factual errors.
<b>Mechanics</b>	No misspellings or grammatical errors. All teacher edits used for final drafts.	Three or fewer misspellings and/or mechanical errors. Most teacher edits used for final drafts.	Four misspellings and/or grammatical errors. Few teacher edits used for final drafts.	More than 4 errors in spelling or grammar. None or few teacher edits used for final drafts.

Name:

Date:

# Analysis Worksheet

Use the spaces below to analyze your chosen image/object/text from your cave. One page per item.

## Artwork

Title:

Source (cave #, which wall):

Year Made:

## Describe

- Describe or sketch what you see in the artwork (choose one small part).

## Examine

- Choose a small part of the artwork to focus on and describe or sketch
- What questions do you have about this item?

## Interpret

- What does this reveal about the \_\_\_\_\_ culture(s) represented?
- What does this object reveal about Buddhism?

## Critique

- What do you like about the artwork?
- Why is this object/image important?





Name:

**Title:**

**Date:**

**Size:**

**Materials:**

**Language / Script:**

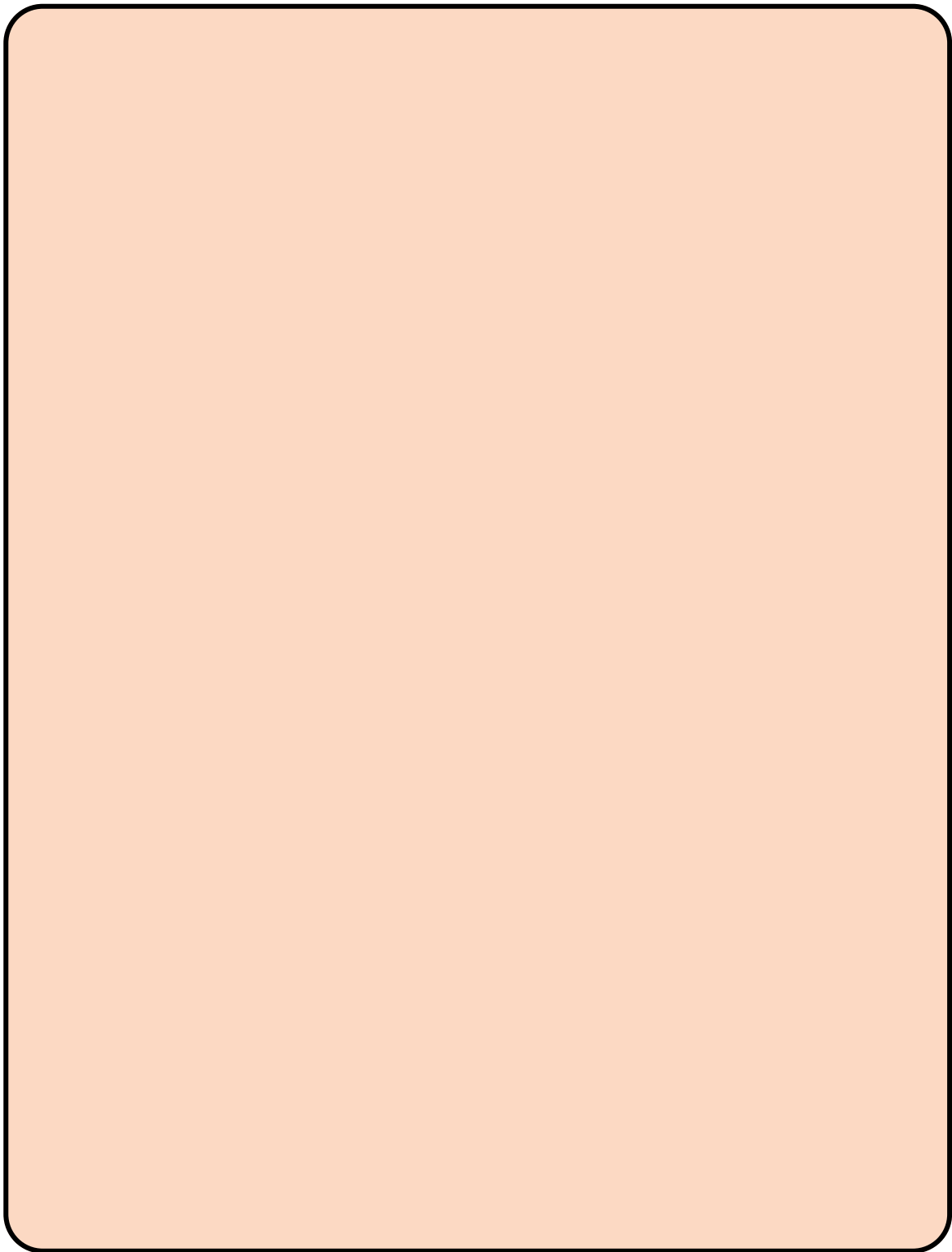
**Institution:**

# Museum Label

one per item

information from institution's website

Name:



# Object Label

using your description, examination, interpretation, critique and answers to your questions create a descriptive paragraph that informs your audience about the object in 1-2 paragraphs (one per item)

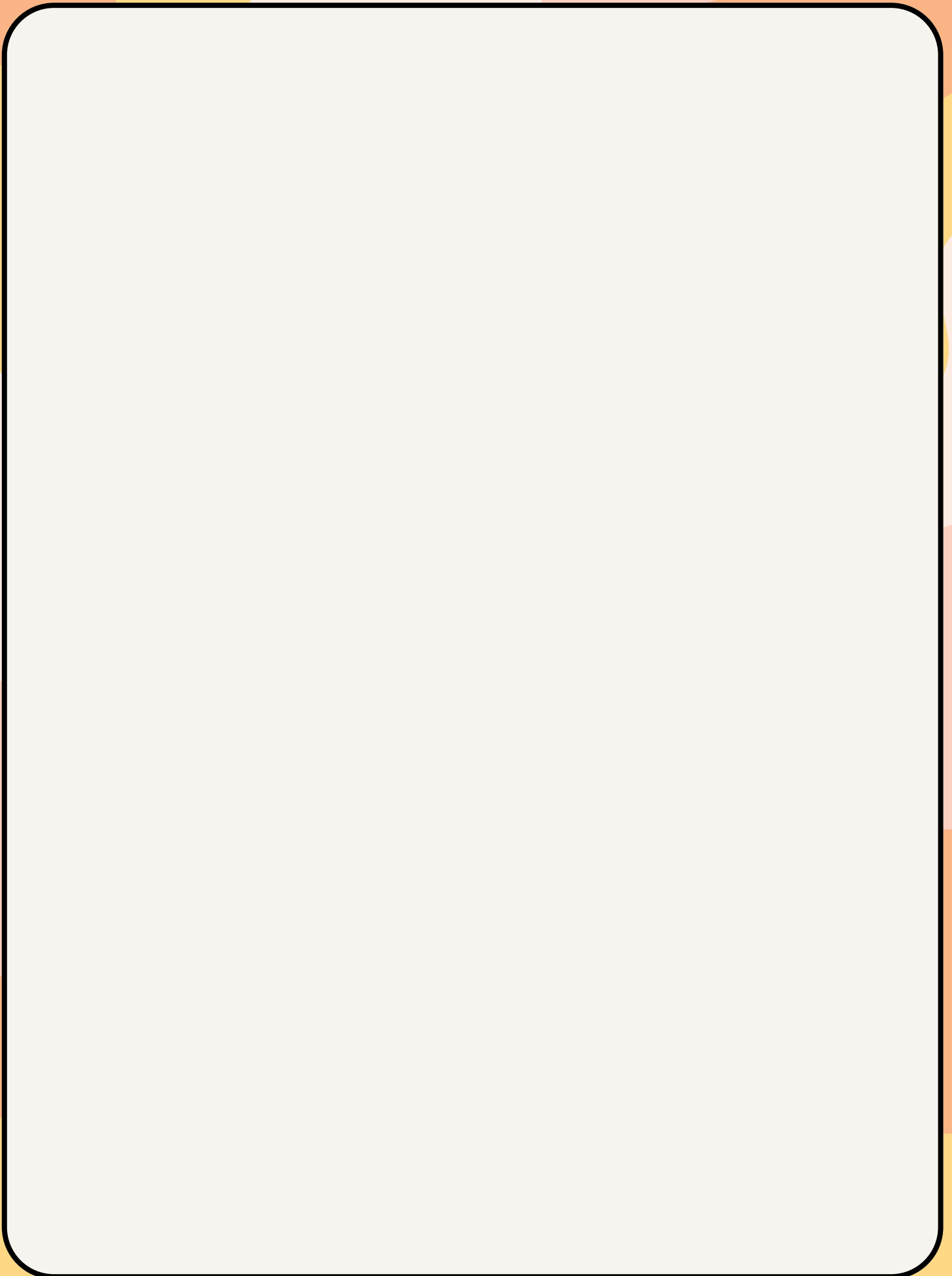
Name:

**Cave #** \_\_\_\_\_

# Introductory Panel

using your who, what, where, when, and how about your specific cave to  
create 1-3 descriptive paragraphs that informs your audience about your  
specific cave (one per group)

Name:



detailed object sketch from website or printed image

# Making Mogao Meaningful Rubric



**4**  
**Excellent**

**3**  
**Good**

**2**  
**Okay**

**1**  
**incomplete**

## Attractive-ness

Makes excellent use of font, color, graphics, lighting, positioning etc. to enhance the presentation.

Makes good use of font, color, graphics, lighting, positioning, etc. to enhance to presentation.

Makes use of font, color, graphics, lighting, positioning, etc. but occasionally these detract from the content.

Use of font, color, graphics, lighting, positioning, etc. but these often distract from the presentation content.

## Sources

Source information collected for all graphics, facts and quotes.

Source information collected for all graphics, facts and quotes.

Source information collected for some graphics, facts and quotes.

Source information not collected for graphics, facts and quotes.

## Content

Covers topic in-depth with details and examples. Subject knowledge is excellent.

Includes essential knowledge about the topic. Subject knowledge appears to be good.

Includes essential information about the topic but there are 1-2 factual errors.

Content is minimal OR there are several factual errors.

## Mechanics

No misspellings or grammatical errors. All teacher edits used for final drafts.

Three or fewer misspellings and/or mechanical errors. Most teacher edits used for final drafts.

Four misspellings and/or grammatical errors. Few teacher edits used for final drafts.

More than 4 errors in spelling or grammar. None or few teacher edits used for final drafts.

name

# WHO - WHAT - WHERE WHEN - WHY - HOW MOGAO CAVES IN GENERAL

<b>WHO</b> Who built the caves? Who is depicted on the walls?	<b>WHAT</b> What are the figures on the walls doing?	<b>WHERE</b> Where precisely are the caves?
<b>WHEN</b> When were the caves painted?	<b>WHY</b> Why were they built?	<b>HOW</b> How were they made? How are they being preserved?



name

<b>WHO</b> Who funded this specific cave? Who is depicted on the walls?	<b>WHAT</b> What are the figures on the walls of your cave doing?	<b>WHERE</b> Where are the people in your cave from? How do you know?
<b>WHEN</b> When were the caves painted? What was happening at that time in the area?	<b>WHY</b> Why did you choose your text /image and what does it reveal about your time period?	<b>FEELS</b> What do you want your audience to feel when they visit your display?

**WHO - WHAT - WHERE**  
**WHEN - WHY - HOW**  
**CAVE # \_ \_ \_**