

Institute on China 2016 Lesson Plan

Mogao Cave Art in the Classroom *The Making of a Multi-Class Animation Project*

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Grade
7th and 8th

Subject
Computer Animation

Standards
2.0 Creative Expressions
7th Grade

2.6 Create an original work of art, using film, photography, computer graphics, or video.

8th Grade

2.1 Demonstrate an increased knowledge of technical skills in using more complex two-dimensional art media and processes (e.g., printing press, silk screening, computer graphics software.)

Common Core

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.



Organizing Questions

1. How are other areas, including my classroom, where art is displayed and created similar to the Mogao Caves?
2. What are the similarities between the painted stories on the walls of the Mogao Caves and an animation storyboard?
3. How does the importance of finding the spirit and heart of the artwork that is so important to Chinese artists relate to us as Ralston Middle School animators?

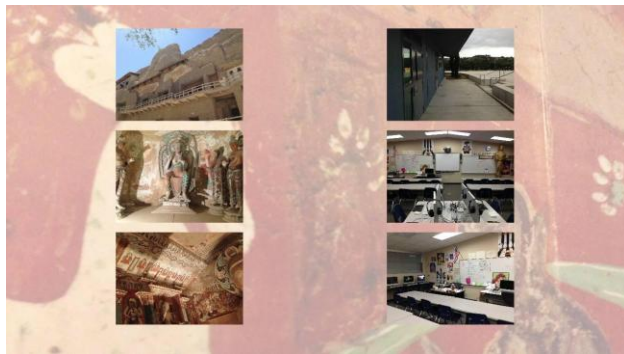


Introduction

The Mogao Caves are located along China's old silk road near the oasis town of Dunhuang in the Gobi desert. The first caves were created in the late 4th century and the last were done in the mid-fourteenth century. During that thousand year span more than one thousand caves were dug in the cliff with about half of them being decorated with amazing examples of Buddhist artwork. Along this ancient trading route the blending of Western and Eastern cultures and artistic styles can be seen in the artwork created in the caves.

While in China I was able to meet a number of artists, including the replica artists for the caves at the Dunhuang Academy. No matter what they painted a common and important theme for all of them was finding the spirit or heart of the piece. The cave replica artists at the Dunhuang Academy couldn't even touch a brush until they spent a year as a tour guide in the caves so that they could find the spirit of the Mogao Caves and Dunhuang first.

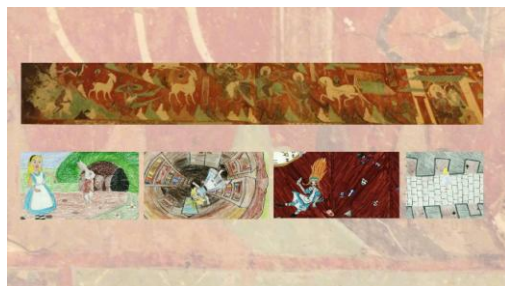
I want to help my students find the spirit of the caves as we turn my classroom into a replica cave. We will look for the meaning and heart of the Nine Colored Deer story as told in a series of paintings in cave 257. The paintings were done during the Northern Wei Dynasty and it was a popular jataka story in



both China and India. We will blend our Western animation techniques with this Eastern artwork and hopefully breath life into it and find the spirit of the story. We will also be working with two classes of guitar students and a student pipa player to create a soundtrack for the video. This story will play on the large screen in the front of the classroom while each of the other 32 computers in my room will play individual images from the caves that we will also try to make come to life through animation. Walking around the room will be like being in a 21st century version of a Mogao Cave as we try to keep the spirit of the artwork and ancient artists alive. Hopefully this Eastern influence will help us find the spirit and heart of everything we do for the rest of the year and beyond too.

Objectives

1. In this lesson students will learn about the Mogao Caves and the amazing artwork that they contain.
2. In this lesson students will gain an appreciation for finding the spirit or heart of the artwork before they begin, like the Chinese artists do and like my former students did in their work.



3. In this lesson students will learn how to creatively, almost magically, make the storyboard paintings of the Nine Colored Deer story and other individual paintings from the Mogao Caves come alive on the computer using Adobe Animate techniques.
4. In this lesson students will use what they learned to create animated scenes based on the artwork in the Mogao Caves.
5. In this lesson students will collaborate with two other animation classes, two guitar classes, and a student pipa player in the creation of The Nine Colored Deer animated video.

Materials

Past animation projects on the Ralston Middle School Animation website

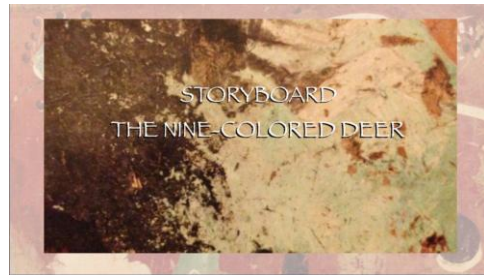
https://ral-brssd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1368521838322

Scanned images of the Nine Colored Deer story from the Mogao Caves and scanned images of other Mogao Cave artwork

The Public Exhibition of Dunhuang Mural Art Treasure in University, ISBN 978-7-5149-1371-2

(The scanned images used came from this book)

First draft teacher created storyboard based on the Nine Colored Deer artwork for students to learn from and modify



Two teacher created scenes based on the Nine Colored Deer artwork to use as examples

One teacher created animated slide show or PowerPoint to use as an example showing how to break apart an image onto separate layers in order to animate it based on the Nine Colored Deer artwork

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Fan, Jinshi, and Yongzen Liu. Appreciation of Dunhuang Grottoes: A Selection of 50 Caves. Nanjing: Jiangsu Fine Arts Publishing House, 2007. Print.

Du, Doucheng, qnd Shuqing Wang. Dunhuang & Silk Road. Shenzhen: Sea Sky Publishing House, 2005. Print.

(Contains a nice version of the Nine Colored Deer story)

Whitfield, Roderick, Susan Whitfield and Neville Agnew. Cave Temples of Mogao at Dunhuang. Art and History on the Silk Road. 2nd, Rev. Ed. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2015. Print.

Equipment

32 computers

(Fewer computers will work but one per student is ideal.)

Adobe Animate software on each computer
(Any software that you use to animate artwork can work.)



Adobe Premiere software on at least one computer to put all the animated scenes from three animation classes and the soundtrack from the guitar classes into one Nine Colored Deer video (Any video editing software can be used)

Large projector screen, SmartBoard or TV
connected to a computer with internet access

Computer drawing tablets for each computer
(They are not essential but are recommended.)

Teacher Preparation

1. The teacher and students should already know the basics of animating with Adobe Animate or whatever animation program is going to be used.
2. The teacher and students should also already know the importance of close-ups and different points of view in creating an interesting visual story.
3. The teacher should put together a video or PowerPoint presentation on China, the Mogao Caves and Chinese Artists to provide an initial introduction and background for the lesson.

- The teacher should become familiar with the video projects on the Ralston Middle School Animation website, https://ral-brssd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1368521838322. China – Music Art Life (2008) is a good example of breathing life into Chinese artwork. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (2016) and The Hobbit (2015) are good examples of animating the artwork created by other student artists, not the animators. This technique will be used in animating the artwork of the Mogao Cave artists. Sleeping Beauty Waltz is a good example of finding the spirit of a piece.



Our interpretation of the music was to make Yosemite National Park the sleeping beauty. She falls asleep in the fall and winter and wakes up in the spring. Students chose images to animate that captured the spirit of this interpretation and added life and heart to them through their animation efforts.

- The teacher should create a first draft storyboard based on the Nine Colored Deer artwork for students to learn the story from and to modify as they search for a way to present the spirit of the story.
- The teacher should create two different scenes based on the Nine Colored Deer artwork to use as examples to the students.
- The teacher should create a making of an animated scene slide show or PowerPoint to use as an example that shows how to break apart an image on separate layers in order to animate it based on the Nine Colored Deer artwork. This is meant to point students in the right direction and to get their creative thinking on this process started.
- The teacher should make sure that the scanned images of the Mogao Caves are accessible to every student on every computer.
- The teacher should create an organized system for turning in the finished animated artwork from three classes of students.
- The teacher should become familiar with the Nine Colored Deer story.



Time

Two 54 minute class periods

Day 1 will be the introductory lesson

Day 2 will be for working on the final storyboard and organizing the students. Twelve 54 minute class periods to create the animation.

Procedure

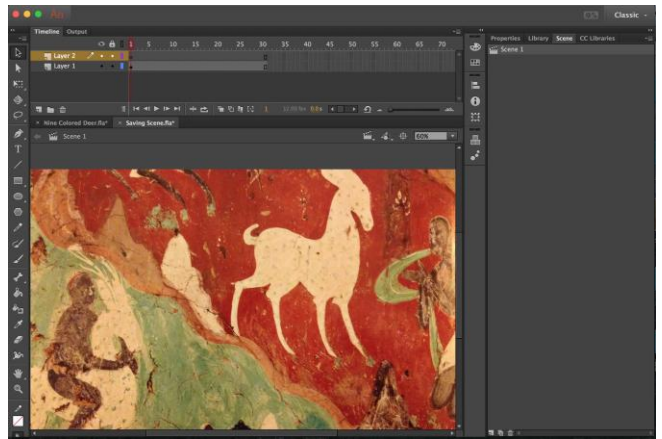
Day 1

1. Show images of the Mogao Cave replicas at the Getty Museum.
2. Compare the caves to other areas where artwork is created and displayed, including my classroom.
3. Compare the Mogao Caves directly to my classroom.
4. Compare the sequence of drawings in Cave 257 depicting the Nine Colored Deer jataka story to storyboard sketches created by Ralston Middle School students for our animated projects.
5. Explain the plan for turning my classroom, room A2, into a 21st century Mogao Cave replica using the computers and Western animation techniques.
6. Play three minutes of The Hobbit (2015) video found on Ralston Middle School's website. It is animated in a way similar to the way we will animate the Nine Colored Deer story from Cave 257.
7. Talk about the importance in Chinese art of visualizing the artwork before you create it.
8. Discuss the importance of finding the heart of the image.
9. Explain that the new replica artists at the Dunhuang Academy have to work as tour guides at the Mogao Caves for a year in order to understand the stories of the artwork and the spirit of the Mogao Caves. Even after that time they are only allowed to observe other replica artists until they are ready.
10. Discuss the importance of yin and yang and the blending of Western and Eastern art techniques to local artists that I met in Dunhuang and Beijing.
11. Show that with the Nine Color Deer story on the wall of Cave 257 has the beginning on the left, the middle on the right and the ending in the middle.
12. Analyze with the students why the artist might have done this.
13. Explain that other stories found on the cave walls were done in a number of different ways other than left to right.
14. Go over the basic story of the Nine Colored Deer with the students.



15. Show an example animated scene of the Nine Colored Deer saving the drowning person.
16. Show another example scene of mountains in the background in a way that implies the person was walking towards them and also demonstrates a feeling of depth.
17. Explain how a sense of depth can be achieved by zooming in on the different layers of an animated scene at different speeds. Examples of this can also be seen in the Sleeping Beauty Waltz animation on Ralston Middle School's website.
18. The teacher will demonstrate how achieving the animated illusion of making a cave painting come alive can be done. Do this by showing the making of an animated scene slide show that was prepared in advance.

1. First talk about how the initial image is a symbol and must be broken apart.
2. Discuss how the image that you want to move must then be selected, cut from the initial image and pasted on a separate layer.
3. Point out that the cut image must then be cleaned up.
4. Show the hole left behind on the initial layer by the cut image.
5. Explain how the hole can be filled in by cutting some similar looking areas surrounding the hole and then pasting them in the hole.
6. Other parts of the cave art can be selected and moved a similar way.



19. Show some other individual images of artwork from the Mogao Caves.
20. Show some scenes of individual pieces or modern Chinese art that were made to come alive in the video China – Music Art Life (2008) found on Ralston Middle School's website.
21. Explain that the students of Mr. Means' two guitar classes and a student pipa player will be creating the soundtrack for the Nine Colored Deer animation.



22. The goal is to take the spirit of the Mogao Caves and blend it with the spirit of Ralston Middle School as seen in the individual animation that we create and the Nine Colored Deer animation that we will put on the school's animation webpage for the world to see.

23. Ask students what they think about turning our classroom in to a replica of a Mogao Cave and if they have any comments, ideas, or questions relating to the project.

24. Inform the students that tomorrow we will work on creating the final storyboard for the Nine Colored Deer story. We will break the storyboard up and organize ourselves like an animation studio consisting of three different classes, ninety students total. We will then create a storyboard that captures the spirit of the story and start animating.



Day 2

1. Remind students of the importance of finding the spirit of the artwork by Chinese artists.
2. Show the first draft storyboard created earlier and go over the Nine Colored Deer Story again.
3. Ask the students to look for the spirit of the story as they watch it.
4. Discuss how the storyboard can be improved to visually capture the spirit of the story.
5. Remind students that when the story was painted it was a well known story. Brief scenes were enough to get the meaning across. Most of our viewers aren't going to know the story, which provides an additional challenge.
6. Remind the students that we are also doing it in pantomime, so the visuals need to tell the whole story.
7. Separate the story into thirds. Three classes will be working on the story so each class will be responsible for one-third of the story. Tell the class which third is theirs.
8. Separate each classes third of the story into thirds. Separate the class into thirds and let them know which part of the story is theirs.
9. Let the students elect their own director for each group. This person will be responsible for story continuity within the group and with the previous and following group.
10. Inform students that as a group they need to create a storyboard so that each person is responsible for a scene. It must also tell their part of the story in a way that is understandable to someone not familiar with the story, is visually interesting to watch and captures the spirit of the story.
11. Meet with each group to make sure that they accomplished the above goals.

12. Ask each director to make sure they keep meeting with the groups that precede or follow theirs to make sure the story flows from one to another until all the storyboards are approved.



13. Tell the class that they will be

animating their approved storyboard scene until they meet with me and we both agree that it is their best effort and captures the intended spirit of the scene. This will take several days.

14. Discuss with the class that when the animated storyboard scene is approved they can then animate a Mogao Cave image of their choice that will be played on their computer during our replica cave walk through.

15. Tell students that with the individual art they need to give their own interpretation to it first. They must explain to me what they think the heart of the piece is. Once they do that they can animate it, trying to show that heart. This should take several days.

Days 3 to 14

Once students understand what to do I spent the remainder of each period wandering the classroom to work individually with each student. I basically act as a coach trying to inspire, guide and help. I give them individual encouragement and also try to keep them focused on the overall goals.

Assessment

Individual Nine Colored Deer animated scene
Individual Mogao Art animated image

With large multi-class projects like this, students work to meet the requirements of the class rubric that we create. I meet with them individually throughout the project and they work on it until we both agree that they met the requirements and gave their best effort. It often takes a few revisions to get there but once we both agree then it is an A and they are finished. Three classes of students, ninety students, will work on this. When that many students give their best effort on a single project, magical things always seem to happen and everyone takes great pride in the final project.



The Soundtrack and Final Product

Once everything is finished I will have my student aide put the individual scenes together using Adobe Premiere. I will give the movie to Mr. Means and his two guitar classes. They, along with a student pipa player, will use this as inspiration for creating a soundtrack to match the animation. The music, like the animation, will be a blending of Eastern and Western styles. Once this is finished we will have our replica cave walk through and invite the guitar students to join us. The final Nine Colored Deer animation will also be placed on the Ralston Middle School Animation website for all to see. Look for it by June 2017.

<https://ral-brssd->

[ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1368521838322](https://ral-brssd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1368521838322)