

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

Partnership with the British Library

Name, School, Grade Level

Steve Pomeroy, Ralston Middle School, 7th and 8th grade computer animation elective

Title of Unit/Lesson

The Silk Roads - Cross-Cultural Art, Poetry and Inspiration

Organizing/Essential/Guiding Questions

1. How can poetry, art and animation be used in creative ways to inspire others and ourselves with the making of a film based on the Silk Roads?
2. What are the similarities between painted stories on the walls of the caves along the Silk Roads and an animation storyboard?
3. How does the importance of finding the spirit or heart of artwork, that is so important to Chinese artists, relate to us as Ralston Middle School animators?

Introduction/ Overview

Students will create a multi-class animated film based on experiences that I have had learning about the Silk Roads while traveling in China and London as well as their own research about the Silk Roads. The students will individually create an animated scene that reflects the heart or spirit of some artwork or image from the Silk Roads. They will also write a poem inspired by the artwork or image and include it in their animated scene in a way similar to how text is incorporated into some Chinese artwork. Migrating butterflies from the countries along to Silk Roads will also be animated within the scenes. The scenes from multiple classes will be edited together along with a soundtrack created in GarageBand with Chinese instruments. The end result will hopefully inspire those who watch it along with those who created it.

Content Standards

Media Arts - Producing - Anchor Standard 4: Select, Analyze, and Interpret Artistic Work for Presentation - 8.MA:Pr4 Integrate multiple contents and forms into unified media arts productions, such as interdisciplinary projects that convey specific themes or ideas.

Media Arts - Connecting - Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and Relate Knowledge and Personal Experiences to Make Art - 7.MA:Cn10 a. Access evaluate and use internal and external resources, such as experiences, research, and exemplary works, to inform the creation of media artworks.

Objectives

1. In this unit students will learn about the Silk Roads, especially the Mogao Caves and the amazing artwork that they contain.
2. In this unit students will gain an appreciation for finding the spirit or heart of artwork like artists in China do and like my former students did in their work.
3. In this unit students will choose an image that relates to the Silk Roads and create a storyboard sketch of it that contains their interpretation of the heart or spirit of the image.
4. In this unit students will create a computer animated scene that makes their storyboard sketch come alive.
5. In this unit students will write a poem inspired by the storyboard sketch that they created.
6. In this unit students will write their poem in a way similar to how Chinese text is written. It will be written vertically and read from left to right.
7. In this unit students will add the poem that they wrote to their animated scene in a way similar to that found in some Chinese artwork that also includes text.
8. In this unit students will research one of the countries that are along the Silk Roads. They will find three facts about their chosen country. One of those facts must be a butterfly that is found in that country.
9. In this unit students will animate at least one butterfly from their chosen country in their animated scene.
10. In this unit students will collaborate with other animation classes by having their animated scenes added to the scenes from other classes in the creation of a multi-class animated film. The soundtrack that will be used for the film will be an original composition that is created using Chinese instruments in GarageBand.

Materials/Resources

Past animation projects on the Ralston Middle School Animation website

<https://sites.google.com/brssd.org/silk-roads-animation-archive-c/home>

The British Library - The International Dunhuang Programme website

<https://idp.bl.uk/blog/tag/silk-roads/>

Edited by Jane Portal. The British Museum Chinese Love Poetry. The British Museum Press, 2023. Print.

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

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

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.

Special 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 each animation class and the soundtrack together. (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 create a sample animated scene that demonstrates the project expectations.
4. The teacher should create an organized system for turning in the finished animated artwork from all of the classes working on the project.

Time/Timeline

Students will work on the project during 54 minute class periods, 4 days a week, for 4 weeks.

Introduction (1 day)

Research (1 day)

Storyboard and poem (2 days)

Animation (3 weeks)

Procedures

Day 1 - Introduction

1. Present an overview of the project.
2. Show the parts of the Ralston Middle School website that relate to projects about China.
3. Play the Nine-Colored Deer film from the website.
4. Show images and tell some of the stories from my trips to China and London.
5. Focus on stories about Chinese artists who feel they must find the heart or spirit of what they want to create before they can start working on it.

6. Discuss the relationship between stories painted on the Mogao Cave walls and animation storyboards.
7. Discuss how the travelers along the Silk Roads helped blend the art and other cultural aspects of various people and regions.
8. Explain how we hope to blend a little bit our Ralston Middle School culture and animated art with the art and images of the Mogao Caves and Silk Roads in general.

Day 2 - Research

9. Show the film *The Beautiful Yangtze* from the Ralston Middle School website.
10. Discuss how we hope to capture the spirit of what the students did in the creation of this film but the emphasis of our film is on the art from the Mogao Caves and other images of the Silk Roads in general.
11. Have students search through pictures that I took on my trips, reference books that I have and the internet for art and images from the Mogao Caves and the Silk Roads.
12. Emphasize that they are looking for an image that they feel they can show the heart or spirit of through their animation.
13. Explain that students will also research one of the countries that are along the Silk Roads.
14. Explain that students will find three facts about their chosen country. One of those facts must be a butterfly that is found in that country.
15. Have the students turn the original chosen image that they want to animate and the three facts about their chosen country into Google Classroom.

Days 3-4 - Storyboard and poem

16. Show the film *The Beautiful Yangtze* again. This time the students should pay special attention to the poems that each student is saying during the film.
17. Explain that students should write a poem inspired by the image that they have chosen to animate. The poem should try to capture the heart and spirit of the chosen image.
18. Explain that students should write their final poem in a way similar to how Chinese text is written. It will be written vertically and read from left to right.
19. Explain that students will create a storyboard sketch of their interpretation of the spirit or heart of the art or image that they chose.
20. Explain how the poem that they wrote should be added to their storyboard sketch in a way similar to that found in some Chinese artwork that also includes text.
21. Have the students turn the finished storyboard sketch with the poem into Google Classroom.

Weeks 2-4 Animation

22. Show the film *The Jataka Tales* from the Ralston Middle School website.
23. Explain that students will spend the next few weeks creating a computer animated scene that makes their storyboard sketch and poem come alive.
24. Explain that students will also have to animate at least one butterfly from their chosen country in their animated scene.

25. Spend the remainder of each period wandering the classroom to work individually with each student. Basically act as a coach trying to inspire, guide and help. Give students individual encouragement and also try to keep them focused on the overall objectives.
26. When a student feels that they have met the project objectives and gave their best effort they then ask to meet with me. When we both agree that they accomplished this they will record their voice reading their poem, add the recording to their scene and turn their finished scene into Google Classroom.
27. When all of the scenes are turned in they will be put together along with the music soundtrack to form the final film. The music soundtrack that will be used for the film is an original composition that was created using Chinese instruments in GarageBand by a former student of mine.

Assessment – Performance Standards, Rubric, Project

With large multi-class projects like this, students work as creatively as they can and give their best effort to meet the project objectives. I meet with them individually throughout the project and they work on it until we both agree that they have met the project objectives and gave their best effort. It often takes a few revisions to get there but I support them as best as I can until they do. In animation class, when everyone gives their best effort magic happens and students take great pride in their final film.