

TOMB GUARDIANS

ASKING THE DEAD FOR DIRECTIONS

Introduction

Along with paper, printing, gunpowder and the compass, the Chinese created a unique burial culture. While students are sure to know the lengths to which Egyptian Pharaohs went to both guarantee immortality and protect their tomb riches, they will truly enjoy exploring the tombs and traditions of the ancient Chinese. The first item that a visitor to an Emperor's tomb might encounter would be the "Tomb Guardians," figures that were thought to keep away both evil spirits and tomb robbers. These guardians were placed strategically at the North, South, East and West entrances to tombs. In addition to giving a glimpse of ancient China, tomb guardians offer an exciting opportunity to teach third graders their cardinal directions.

Grade Level

This lesson was created for a 3rd grade classroom. It can be adapted for 2nd and 4th grades.

Objectives

- Students will learn how to use a compass and identify both cardinal points and intermediate directions.
- Students will create tomb guardians and correctly place them according to specific directions within the classroom.
- Students will gain a deeper understanding of the Chinese burial culture.
- Students will compare and contrast art from several different Chinese dynasties and identify the correct dynasty in which the CMA tomb guardians were made.

Concepts

- Directions: the line or course along which someone or something can move.
- Cardinal directions: the four principal compass points of north, south, east, and west.
- Intermediate directions – compass points of northeast, southeast, northwest, southwest.
- Tomb guardian: figures that were stationed at the different compass points to protect the dead from evil spirits.

Key Ideas

- Chinese emperors, nobles, and other wealthy individuals went to extraordinary lengths to protect both bodies and their riches after death.
- Immortality is an essential idea in Chinese culture, and it was very important to protect gravesites from tomb robbers as well as from evil spirits.
- Tomb guardians served to protect the Chinese dead from evil spirits.
- The magnet or needle of a compass is always attracted to the North Pole.
- Cardinal and intermediate directions play a crucial role in everyday life.

Materials

Tomb Guardian with Human Face, late 7th-early 8th century, CMA 2000.118.2

Tomb Guardian with Animal Head, late 7th-early 8th century, CMA 2000.118.1

Phoenix-Headed Ewer (Qingbai ware), 10th-11th century, CMA 1965.468

Bowl with Peonies, 1682-1722, CMA 1964.198

Horse, late 7th-early 8th century, CMA 1955.295

Stele with Shakyamuni and Maitreya, 550-577, CMA 1993.108

Cup with Boys in a Garden, 1465-1487, CMA 1957.61

Tomb Guardian Creature, Lead-glazed earthenware, China, Ca. 700 -740 A.D. (Tang dynasty)
Smithsonian Institution --

www.marymount.k12.ny.us/marynet/stwbwk03/03vm/Guardians/2kmguardian.html

Tomb Guardian Warrior Mid-late Qing Dynasty, circa: 18-19th century,

www.buddhamuseum.com/tomb-guardian-warrior.html

Debaine-Francfort, Corinne. *The Search for Ancient China*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999.

Compasses, masking tape, 3 x 3 white construction paper

Procedure: Two-day Lesson

Day 1

1. Ask students what the word, “directions” means to them. Establish a working definition for directions, then ask what the phrase, “cardinal directions,” means, and what the phrase “intermediate directions” means. Ask students how directions are important or relevant to their lives.
2. Ask students who invented the compass and briefly discuss Chinese invention of the compass and magnets. Draw a compass on the board and have students label cardinal and intermediate directions.
3. Ask students why dead people might need directions. Anticipate interesting responses and introduce the burial culture of the Chinese. Discuss the importance of “dying right” and the impact that had on how the Chinese lived. Compare with Native American and Egyptians traditions.
4. Use *The Search for Ancient China* to show terra-cotta soldiers, buried boats, chariots, and other riches. Ask for student hypotheses about why dead people would include these things in their tombs. Discuss the quest for immortality and its importance in the Chinese culture.
5. Have students brainstorm of list of five items that they would put in a time capsule for future archaeologists to find. Make it clear that these items should reflect how students want others to view their lives.
6. Begin showing CMA and other images of Tomb Guardians. Ask students what emotions these figure engender. Ask students to describe the physical attributes of these figures and how these emotions are sparked.
7. Pass out compasses. Explain the features, emphasizing that the magnet or needle always pulls toward the North Pole. Have students mark the cardinal directions on the edges of their desks with masking tape.

- Using the CMA images as a guide, have students sketch their own tomb or time capsule guardians on 3 x 3 inch white construction paper. Students can then tape the sketches to their desks.

Day 2

- Review the CMA tomb guardian images. Ask students when in time they think these images were created. Write down guesses on blackboard.
- Show CMA images from Six dynasties through Qing dynasty. Ask students what similarities or differences they notice between the different images. Discuss what materials students think may have been used to make the different art.

Evaluation

- Student location of directions on their desks.
- Sketches of tomb guardians and lists of time capsule items.
- Student input during discussion.

Enrichment

Students can visit the Indianapolis Museum of Art web page and create their own on-line tomb guardian. They also will write a short description of this creature. The web page is http://www.ima-art.org/education/creatures/db_initobjects.asp

State of Ohio Standards

Social Studies:

- Compare the cultural practices and products of the local community with those of other communities in Ohio, the United States and countries of the world.
- Use a compass rose and cardinal directions to describe the relative location of places.
- Identify the location of the equator, Arctic Circle, Antarctic Circle, North Pole, South Pole, Prime Meridian, the tropics, and the hemispheres on maps and globes.

Art:

- Identify and compare similar themes, subject matter and images in artworks from historical and contemporary eras.
- Connect various art forms and artistic styles to their cultural traditions.
- Demonstrate skill and expression in the use of art techniques and processes.
- Create two- and three-dimensional works that demonstrate awareness of space and composition (e.g., relate art elements to one another and to the space as a whole).
- Recognize and identify a purpose or intent for creating an original work of art.
- Create an original work of art that illustrates a story or interprets a theme.
- Use feedback and self-assessment to improve the quality of artworks.
- Use details to describe the characteristics of subject matter in artworks (e.g., subtle facial expressions, distinctive clothing or stormy weather).
- Discuss different responses to, and interpretations of, the same artwork.
- Identify successful characteristics that contribute to the quality of their own artwork and the works of others.

Language Arts:

- Apply knowledge of individual words in unknown compound words to determine their meanings

2. Apply knowledge of prefixes, including un-, re-, pre- and suffixes, including -er, -est, -ful and -less to determine meaning of words

This lesson plan was developed by Jim Sweeney, 3rd grade teacher, Shaker Heights City Schools, Shaker Heights, Ohio.