

Made in China: The Art of Chinese Calligraphy

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Grades: 2 - 3 (Primary and Upper Elementary)

Time Allotment: Three or four 45 minute sessions

Overview: Chinese Calligraphy. This lesson explores the Chinese method of writing, called “calligraphy”. Students will practice this ancient art, and compare it to other forms of communication included in their required Standards of Learning: Egyptian hieroglyphics and Native American picture writing.

Subject Matter: History, Geography, Math, Art, and Language Arts

Learning Objectives:

The student will be able to:

- Explore an ancient Chinese method of writing and observe its use today.
- Complete a project that uses characters, pictographs or ideographs, found in Chinese calligraphy.
- Use historical analysis skills and organize information to research people and traditions of China.
- Use traditional and alternative forms of measurement.

The student will use the Internet to:

- Conduct research on Chinese method of writing, traditions, geography, and architecture.
- Use a variety of media and technology resources for directed and independent learning activities.
- Use technology resources (e.g. writing tools, drawing tools, mapping tools) for problem solving, communication, and illustration.

Standards:

The objectives listed above may be used to address the following Virginia Standards of Learning available at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/sciencesol.doc>

History 2.1 The student will explain how the contributions of ancient China and Egypt have influenced the present world in terms of written language, architecture, inventions, the calendar, and written language.

Geography 2.4 The student will develop map skills by locating China and Egypt on world maps.

Math 3.14 The student will estimate and then use actual measuring devices with metric and U.S. Customary units to measure length — inches, feet, yards, centimeters, and meters.

C/T K-2.5, 3-5 The student will use technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources - Identify information in various formats; Identify available sources of information.

Media Components:

Video:

- United Streaming Video: <http://www.unitedstreaming.com/index.cfm>
Elementary Video Adventures: Stories from China: Land and People: Write Chinese
Discovery Channel School. 1996.

Computer with Internet access

Internet Web Sites:

- Chinese Names
<http://www.mandarintools.com/chinesename.html> Students will learn how to write their Chinese name based on their English name and characteristics. They will also find out their sign in the Chinese Zodiac
- Chinese Writing Challenge
http://www.ancientchina.co.uk/writing/challenge/cha_set.html After researching and working with a variety of characters found in Chinese calligraphy, have your students visit this website to test their matching skills. Students have to match English words with their Chinese character, with a pictorial hint.
- Chinese Counting
<http://www.fi.edu/fellows/fellow1/apr99/number/index.html> Students learn the symbols or characters for counting from 1 to 11 in Chinese
- Chinese Number Test
<http://www.fi.edu/fellows/fellow1/apr99/quiz/quiz5.htm> Students can test their knowledge of Chinese numbers from one through eleven on this interactive web site.
- The Art of Chinese Engraving
http://www.chinatownconnection.com/chinese_chop_engraving.htm This website explores the importance and use of a Chinese chop, or personal seal. It provides information about how and why they are made.
- The Great Wall of China
http://www.thebeijingguide.com/great_wall_of_china/index.html This website provides a virtual tour of The Great Wall of China. Students see views inside sections of the wall as well as on top of the wall.
- Geography of Ancient China
http://www.ancientchina.co.uk/geography/home_set.html Visit this website to help students understand the geography of China.
- Giant Pandas
<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/GiantPandas/default.cfm> Visit this website to allow students to see giant pandas in their habitat via the live Panda Cam.

- Chinese Calendar (use with Math Extension Activity)
<http://www.fi.edu/fellows/fellow1/apr99/calendar/index.html> to learn more about the Chinese Calendar.

Materials:

Per Class:

- SmartBoard with computer and projector
- computer lab with Internet access, or a computer station that students can rotate through to collect their information
- red tempera paint
- 1 black tempera cake for each group of 4 students
- 1 water container for each group of 4 students

Per Student:

- pencil
- small piece of a Styrofoam meat tray (cut about 1" x 2")
- scrap paper
- 2 – 3 sheets of white drawing paper
- masking tape
- bamboo brush or small paintbrush
- Chinese Calligraphy handout

Prep for Teachers:

- Prior to teaching, have all Internet sites bookmarked for easy access throughout the lesson. The web sites should also be bookmarked on classroom computers for easy access by students during their individual time in the computer center, or on the computers in the lab for whole class use.
- You should preview the video clips and cue them as indicated in the Learning Activities section.
- Familiarize yourself with the lesson format and be sure to have all materials ready as listed in the materials section.
- When using media, provide students with a **FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION**, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video segments, Web sites, or other multimedia elements.

Introductory Activity: Setting the Stage

1. Students will design and create a Chinese chop. Explain that they will be making a very important tool that Chinese people use. It is called a “chop” and we will learn how this tool is used a little later in the lesson.
2. Using the computer lab, have students go to the following website: Chinese Names
<http://www.mandarin tools.com/chinesename.html>
3. Students should type in the information requested on the website, their given

name, family name, a personal characteristic, etc. After they complete this activity, they will print out the Chinese version of their name for example, my Chinese name is Mao Binren, and the characters look

毛 賓 仁

like this:

Example 1

4. To make their chop more authentic, you could have them use a mirror to create a reverse image, or flip the image in a paint program. (This is optional and not recommended for younger students) Students should take their printed “Chinese Names” back to the classroom.



Example 2

5. Give each student a 1 ½” x 2 ½” piece of Styrofoam (cut from clean Styrofoam meat trays or egg carton lids.)

6. Students will use a pencil to emboss the Chinese version of their name onto the Styrofoam, as well as a rectangular frame to define the edge. (See 2nd example)

7. Students should carefully paint the surface of their “chop” and print it on scrap paper. If it does not make a legible print, they should go over the lines on their chop again with their pencil until it prints clearly.

8. Students should save their “chop” for use in future activities.

Learning Activities:

1. **CUE** the video, *Elementary Video Adventures: Stories from China: Land and People: Write Chinese* at the title screen “Write Chinese”. (00:01 on video streaming counter) Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “Now we are going to learn more about Chinese writing. In this part of the video, listen for the special name given to Chinese writing.” **Play** and **Pause** when the narrator says “...It’s called calligraphy”. There will be another picture of the words “Write Chinese”. (00:26) **Ask**: “What do you call Chinese writing?” (calligraphy) **Ask**: “Has anyone heard of this word before?” (a typical answer might be “fancy writing”)

2. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “The language we use in America is based on the alphabet. In China they use something else as the basis for their language. Listen carefully to find out what that is.” **Resume** and **Pause** when the narrator says “...the Chinese language is based on pictures.” (00:38) **Ask**: “Can you tell me what the Chinese language is based on?” (pictures) **Ask**: “Can anyone tell me what other cultures and places we have studied that also use pictures in their language?” (Native Americans and the Egyptians)

3. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “Does anyone know how many letters are in the alphabet we use?” (26) “Now listen carefully to this next video segment. I want you to be able to tell me how many pictures there are in the Chinese language.” **Resume** and **Pause** when the narrator says “...but it wasn’t always so complicated.” (00:54) **Ask**: “How many pictures are in the Chinese language?” (5000.) **Ask**: “Is that more than the letters on which our language is based?” (Yes, 4974 more.)

4. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “Now let’s listen to how the Chinese language began and how it has changed over time.” **Resume** and **Pause** when the narrator says “...today this is how it looks.” (01:46) **Ask**: “In China, before there was a written language, how did the people record their stories or history?” (by drawing pictures) **Ask**: “Were those original pictures easier to read than they are today?” (Yes, the sun symbol was round like the sun, and the stream was pictured in flowing lines.) **Ask**: “What people had pictures similar to those original Chinese picture symbols?” (Native American picture writing was very much like that.)

5. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “In this next segment I want you to be able to tell me what the Chinese used to write on before paper was invented.” **Resume** and **Pause** when the narrator says, “...They would record the fortune directly on the bones.” A picture of a cracked bone will be on the screen. (02:19) **Ask**: “What surface was used to write on before paper was invented in China?” (bones and shells) **Ask**: “Does anyone remember what surface the ancient Egyptians used to write on?” (papyrus leaves or they would carve into stone) **Ask**: “What surface did the Native Americans write on?” (leather)

6. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “Now let’s listen for information about who invented paper and when was it invented.” **Resume** and **Pause** when the narrator says: “Chinese calligraphy is practiced in much the same way.” when the video shows John Wong preparing his paper. (02:33) **Ask**: “What people were the first to use paper?” (The Chinese) **Ask**: “When was it invented?” (They invented paper in 104 AD.)

7. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “Listen carefully and be able to name the five basic principles of Chinese calligraphy.” **Resume** and **Stop** after the narrator says: “...making sure all the lines are in the right place”. (04:21) **Ask**: “Let’s see if you can remember the five basic principles of calligraphy” (take as many answers as the students can remember – posture, a good knowledge of your tools, control of the brush, finding a rhythm in your calligraphy, and drawing the characters in a balanced way.) **Say**: “Let’s rewind and review those five principles more slowly and carefully. **Rewind** to 02:41 and **Resume** and **Pause** to review and discuss all five principles until students understand them. **Ask**: “Can these principles also be important when we write our words and paragraphs?” (yes.) **Ask**: “Can you give me some reasons why?” (You have to have good posture so you don’t get tired, know how to use a pencil or pen, be able to form the letters carefully so others can read them, etc.)

8. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “During our introductory activity we made a tool that is very important to a Chinese person, both now and in ancient times in China. Who remembers the name for this tool?” (A chop) “When we watch the final part of this video, I want you to be able to tell me why this tool is so important.” **Resume** and **Pause** when the narrator says: “He hand carves each chop out of a soapstone.” (04:51) **Ask**: “What is a chop used for?” (Whenever a Chinese person signs their name, they also must “put their chop on it”. A Chinese person uses a chop the way an American signs their name on legal documents, greeting cards, artwork and more.) **Ask**: “How could you use your chop?” (To sign artwork, and to print in the corner of papers, near name.)

9. **Say:** “Through the technique of carving, name chops combine the beauty of written Chinese characters with line drawing. When you try Chinese calligraphy, you will see how writing this way feels very much like you are creating art. It really is an ancient art form.”

Culminating Activity:

Now that students have more information, give them a chance to try the Chinese method of writing.

1. Hand out the Calligraphy Example sheet.
2. Place a black tempera cake and container of water in the middle of each group of 3 or 4 students. Give each student a brush and a piece of drawing paper. Students should place a piece of masking tape at the top of the paper to hold it securely on the table.
3. Remind students about the five principles of writing Chinese calligraphy. Demonstrate each step as the students follow along:
 - Good posture – Be sure you are sitting up straight as you practice the art of Chinese calligraphy.
 - Knowledge of your tools – Wet the brush, pull and turn the brush as it glides over the tempera cake so it holds a point. You may have to do this several times until the brush is full of “ink”. Hold the brush perpendicular to the paper as you practice each stroke. Use the Calligraphy example sheet to copy the characters.
 - Find a rhythm in your calligraphy – Pick up more paint as you need it and try to keep it flowing evenly so the characters will not be rough, but flowing.
 - Draw the characters in a balanced way – Refer to the example sheet as you try each character. Try to make them balanced and even.
4. Explain to students that the Chinese write in a different direction than we do here in America. We write our letters from left to right across the page. The Chinese write their characters from top to bottom, starting on the right side of the paper. Have them do this as they practice their Chinese calligraphy.
5. When they have filled each column of their paper with calligraphy, they should ink the chop they created earlier and print it at the bottom of the paper as their signature. You can also have them write their name so everyone will know who created each calligraphy project.

Assessment:

1. To test students’ knowledge of Chinese number characters (ideographs), have them visit the following website:

Chinese Number Test

<http://www.fi.edu/fellows/fellow1/apr99/quiz/quiz5.htm> This website provides a visual and interactive test of students’ knowledge of Chinese number characters

2. To test students' knowledge of pictograph characters used in Chinese calligraphy, have them visit the following website:

Chinese Writing Challenge

http://www.ancientchina.co.uk/writing/challenge/cha_set.html

Cross-Curricular Extensions:

Language Arts:

1. Have students read trade books on their reading level about Chinese culture.
2. Collect information about the Great Wall of China, such as its length, its width, how long it took to build, etc. Have students write a paragraph describing the Great Wall of China.

Math:

1. Have students use chalk to mark out the width of the Great Wall of China on the school playground. Line up students across its width. How many students could walk hand-in-hand on the wall at the same time?
2. Have students look at the website that shows the Chinese calendar. Have them figure out which animal in the Chinese calendar aligns with the year of their birth.
3. Use the tempera cakes and brushes to create a Chinese pattern with characters they used in their calligraphy activity above.

Art:

1. Look at pictures of Chinese artwork and landscapes. Have students use the bamboo brushes and tempera cakes to create a landscape painting in the Chinese style.
2. Have students sign all their artwork using the "chop" they made in the Introductory Activity.
3. To further explain the history of the "chop" have students go to this website when they have access to a computer: The Art of Chinese Engraving
http://www.chinatownconnection.com/chinese_chop_engraving.htm

Movement Education:

Read the story Lion Dancer by Kate Walters to the class. Have them form lines and create their own lion dances as they listen to Chinese music.

Technology:

Have students visit the following websites to further explore the study of Chinese art, architecture and culture:

- Virtual Tour of the Great Wall of China:

http://www.thebeijingguide.com/great_wall_of_china/index.html Students can navigate the Great Wall, traveling over, under and through it by taking this virtual tour. If you can project a view of this tour on the classroom wall, you can allow students to "walk" on the wall.

- Geography of China

http://www.ancientchina.co.uk/geography/home_set.html Visit this site with your students to help them understand the geography of China.

- Panda Cam

<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/GiantPandas/default.cfm> Students will love visiting this site to view the giant pandas in their habitat.

Community Connections:

1. Have a local calligrapher visit the class to show his or her craft. Have students compare traditional calligraphy to the characters used in Chinese calligraphy.
2. Bring in a visitor from the Chinese community to share their culture, foods, clothing, and art, with the class.

Calligraphy Examples - Types of Chinese Characters

Pictographs

女 子 口 日 月 山 川 豕 目 心 雨 田 木 龜
 woman child mouth sun moon mountain river pig eye heart rain field tree turtle

好 安 明 家 思 牢 雷 男
 good peaceful bright home/family thought prison thunder man/male
 (woman + child) (woman under a roof) (sun + moon) (pig under a roof) (heart + field) (cow under a roof) (rain cloud over a field) (field + strength)

Ideographs

一 二 三 上 下 中 力 凸 凹
 one two three above below middle strength convex concave

More Ideographs (Numbers)

Simple	一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十	百	千	万
Complex	壹	貳	參	肆	伍	陸	柒	捌	玖	拾	佰	仟	萬
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	100	1000	10000

Basic Strokes in Chinese Calligraphy

	dot	horizontal	vertical	left-falling	right-falling	rising	hooks	turning
strokes	丶	一	丨	ノ	㇏	㇑	丿 ㇔ ㇕ ㇖	㇗ ㇘
examples	心	丁	中	乃	人	洗	別 晨 亂	代 口 冠