

China: journey to the East

After your visit classroom activities

- Make a list of all the materials used to make things in the 21st century. Make a list of the different materials used to make objects in the China exhibition. Do students think the list represents all the different materials used in Ancient China? Use *Explore* to identify further ancient materials and add them to the list. Compare the two lists. Which materials are the same on each list and which materials are different? What are the sources (mineral, animal, plant) for materials in ancient and modern times? Do the students think materials are local or imported?
- Discuss the decorated pots seen during the visit. Ask the students which images and patterns they recollect. Draw comparisons between the images and activities that took place in China. Reiterate the link between the images on the pots and the everyday life of the Chinese. Ask the students to think about an everyday activity that they do, for example travelling to school. What would they see on the way? How would they travel? The students can then use these ideas to draw or craft their own designs for a modern decorated pot using motifs based on Chinese pots. Alternatively, students can use the designs they collected in the gallery and undertake further research on *Explore* in order to design their own ancient Chinese pot.
- Discuss the difference between domestic and imported goods. Why do some goods have to be imported? Make a collection of food labels which identify which country the food was produced in. Plot these labels against a world map

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and look at how far some goods used in Britain have travelled from their original country of production. Consider the environmental issues involved in world trade.

- Choose an object from the exhibition and discuss what skills and processes might have been used in its manufacture. For example a piece of porcelain would need clay to be dug, shaped, decorated, and fired to make the finished vessel while a silk garment would need raw silk to be gathered, spun, woven and then dyed to make the silk fabric and then cutting and sewing to fashion the garment from the fabric. Create a flow diagram to chart the processes and stages in the manufacture of particular objects seen in the exhibition or on Explore. This notion could be extended to larger projects such as building an imperial palace which might involve different specialist skills and a wider range of raw materials to be processed. You might like to begin by thinking about the process nowadays so that the students can draw on their experience of local building or observation of modern construction work to help establish a working model before they research the process as it might have occurred in the past.
- Ask the students to think about the skills and processes which are needed to produce a piece of craftwork. Set a simple making task and after the students have completed it ask them to record the information needed for somebody else to complete the same task. What equipment, raw materials and skills will be needed and in what order does one have to do things? Ask the students to reflect on the skills and processes which they use in their own learning, and consider the skills used by people nowadays in various jobs.

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- Compare a Chinese and British festival. Create a comparison chart to show what the festival celebrates, what is eaten, what activities occur etc. What things are the same and what are different? Do any of the activities have the same function (e.g. gathering the family together) even if they happen in different ways at each festival?

Online activities

- Use the Ancient China website at www.ancientchina.co.uk and in particular the following sections which directly support some of the exhibition themes.

Crafts and artisans – covers bronze, silk, jade and ceramics

www.ancientchina.co.uk/crafts/home_set.html

Maps of ancient China showing the extend of rule under different dynasties

www.ancientchina.co.uk/geography/explore/exp_set.html

Timeline of ancient China

www.ancientchina.co.uk/time/explore/exp_set.html

Tombs and ancestors – the importance of ancestors and tomb contents

www.ancientchina.co.uk/tombs/home_set.html

Writing – development of writing in ancient China

www.ancientchina.co.uk/writing/home_set.html

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- Use the Early Imperial China website at www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk

This website operates through a virtual study room on the homepage offering visual and textual resources: paintings, coins, weapons, jewellery and models from the British Museum's collections. Students are invited to use these resources to research an area they are interested in. Certain staples are provided within each room. The timelines on the wall provide a basic chronological framework for the period. An atlas on the bookshelf provides the geographical information. The filing cabinets provide primary sources which can be used to deepen the student's understanding of the period. Using the other resources in the room students can build up their knowledge of early imperial China. Topics covered include defence, religion, food and drink, art and architecture, geography, trade, language and writing, women and transport. The room is built in such a way as to encourage students to cross-refer to other relevant areas of the website.

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