

THE
BRITISH
MUSEUM



china
now 时代中国

A CHINA NOW
Legacy Project

Handling
Box

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Introduction

These loan boxes have been put together by the Schools and Young Audiences Team at the British Museum with funding from **CHINA NOW!** They are designed to provide a framework for independent investigation into Chinese art, culture and history. The notes that accompany the boxes suggest a number of themes that may be used to encourage further investigation across a range of curriculum subjects that might include History, Geography, Art and Design, English, Science, PSHE and RE. These are:

- Timeline of Chinese history
- The First Emperor
- Materials
- Festivals and celebrations
- Myths and legends
- Ritual, burial and the afterlife
- Silk Road
- Food and drink
- Writing and painting
- Language
- Geography

How to use the box

The objects in these boxes are intended as springboards for developing your own studies of China and Chinese culture. They have been chosen to provide a span of access points across the history of China from the Bronze Age to modern day.

We have included some ideas for activities linked to each of the themes as a framework both for object-centred study and for further exploration. These are not designed to be exhaustive or prescriptive and we hope that you will draw inspiration from them to develop your own paths of study. There are also two outline activity sheets aimed specifically at the use of objects in lessons.

You will find many of the objects mirrored in both local and national museum collections which you can access either through an actual visit or online. We also hope that you will be able to harness the pool of knowledge and experience in your parent group and in local Chinese communities. You could consider holding lessons with the help of a Mandarin teacher for the day, a Chinese artist or calligrapher, a lion dance troop, a martial artist/taiji expert, a Chinese cook, a storyteller...

A great part of the benefit of using objects in your lessons comes from the students having the opportunity actually to handle them, and we hope that you will encourage this. Two of the items – the lacquer vase and the porcelain plate – are of their period. The rest are modern but the replicas of antique items are high-quality, accurate reproductions.

In order to keep the objects in the best possible condition for future users we ask you ensure that the students' hands are clean and that handling is carefully supervised. The painted pottery zodiac figure has been crafted to represent a recently excavated piece, and may shed some earth and dust when handled.

Please check the items in the box carefully against the contents list both on receipt and return and advise us immediately of anything missing or damaged. We ask that you take special care of the jade disk. This is a valuable item and would be very difficult to replace.

Further information

If you wish to explore some of the objects further by comparing them with items in collections of Chinese art from around the world, many museums have websites that will allow you to do this. The complete collections on show in the British Museum's Asia galleries can now be searched on the Museum's website at www.britishmuseum.org/collection

We also recommend you visit the collections on these websites:

www.vam.ac.uk (Victoria and Albert Museum)

www.npm.gov.tw (National Palace Museum, Taiwan)

www.shanghaimuseum.net (Shanghai Museum)

www.lacma.org (Los Angeles County Museum)

www.metmuseum.org (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

You can also visit the British Museum's two Chinese history websites:

www.ancientchina.co.uk

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk

Both these websites have a wealth of interactive resources for students to explore and a Staffroom section with background information for teachers and ideas for lessons using the website. Broadly speaking, Ancient China is aimed at KS2 and Early Imperial China at KS3.

These notes highlight where there is a section of either website or an activity directly related to the suggested themes.

These resources, in PDF format and an annotated Power Point presentation showing objects from the British Museum collections that relate to the Handling Box can be downloaded at www.britishmuseum.org/schools

Background information on objects

Bronze vessel

The Bronze Age in China began around 2000 BC. From its start the most important objects were ritual vessels used in ancestor worship. These were cast in bronze using piece moulds. Later on, many of these vessels carried inscriptions that give us important information about society at the time. These vessels have been excavated both from royal and noble tombs where they were buried so that sacrifices could be continued in the afterlife, and in hoards which were buried at times of war and rebellion to protect them. Both these circumstances illustrate their great value and importance.

This vessel is called a *jue* and it is one of the earliest shapes excavated. It was designed for the heating and pouring of wine in sacrifices. This example is of a style that dates from the Western Zhou Dynasty (11th–8th centuries BC).

The shapes of the ritual vessels of the Bronze Age continued to be used throughout Chinese history, both in rituals of ancestor worship and as purely decorative items. There are many fine examples made from jade, enamel, lacquer and other materials.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Ritual, burial and the afterlife
- Materials
- Food and drink

Terracotta Warriors

The life-size Terracotta Army of Qin Shihuangdi, the first Emperor of China, was discovered by chance in 1974 by local farmers digging for water. Since then, excavations have continued non-stop and will do so for many years into the future. In addition to more than 7,000 models of soldiers, horses and chariots estimated to be in the three Terracotta Army pits, exploration around the Emperor's tomb mound itself, 1.5 kilometres to the west, have revealed a funeral city on a scale previously unimagined. For the afterlife, Qin Shihuangdi ordered the construction of a full-size imperial palace that would contain everything and everybody that surrounded him in life. As well as terracotta figures of palace officials, models of stable boys, acrobats and musicians have also been excavated. Among the most remarkable discoveries have been a group of life-size bronze models of ducks, swans and geese arranged on the banks of an artificial river, and a room full of suits of armour made from stone tiles.

Qin Shihuangdi is now considered one of the greatest rulers in world history. In 221 BC he succeeded in unifying China into one empire after many centuries of division, and he invented the title *huangdi* which we now translate as Emperor. This title was taken by all the rulers of China who followed him. He also enacted many measures to cement his control of the empire that



played a vital role in ensuring the continuity of Chinese civilisation. He built the first true Great Wall of China; he constructed many thousands of miles of roads and canals; he imposed a standard system of weights and measures and a standard currency – his design of coin, round with a square hole, remained in use until the 20th century and is now the symbol of the Bank of China. Most importantly of all, he standardised the writing system for the first time.

From the time of Qin Shihuangdi onwards it became the practice for emperors and other important figures to have pottery models of all kinds buried with them to take into the afterlife. These later figures were all on a smaller scale, not life-size like the Terracotta Army. This tomb pottery, particularly of the Han and Tang dynasties, is a wonderful source of information about life at those times.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- The First Emperor
- Ritual, burial and the afterlife
- Materials

Pottery zodiac figure (one only in box)

There are 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Ram, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Pig.

There are many stories about how this group came about and why they are in this particular order. In the traditional Chinese lunar calendar each year is represented by one of the animals in continuous 12-year cycle. Each animal has its own characteristics which affect both the year and anyone born during it.

These figures are copies of pottery models from a zodiac group made during the Tang dynasty (AD 618–907). You may have either a Rat or a Monkey. The group was made for burial in an important tomb: the Tang dynasty is famous for its magnificent tomb pottery. Although historical records of these animals date from the third century BC, the earliest surviving examples of their representation are from the early sixth century BC, when they were depicted in wall paintings. Pottery figures with human bodies and animal heads were particularly popular in subsequent periods, but gradually went out of style after the Tang dynasty. The Tang was one of the golden ages of Chinese history. Its capital city Chang'an (modern-day Xi'an) was the largest city in the world at the time and the beginning of the Silk Road which stretched to India and the shores of the Mediterranean.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Festivals and celebrations
- Myths and legends
- Ritual, burial and the afterlife
- Silk Road
- Materials



Bronze dragon

This model is a reproduction of a very famous gilt bronze statue of a dragon from the Tang dynasty (AD 618–907). It was discovered in the city of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, site of the Tang capital of Chang'an. It was probably buried in the foundations of an important mansion to act as a guardian over the household. The dragon character MuShu voiced by Eddie Murphy in the Disney film *Mulan* is just such a guardian dragon.

The dragon is one of the most ancient symbols in Chinese art. Dragons in China can be fearsome creatures but they are also benign guardians, not evil as in many western cultures. Chinese dragons are associated with water, particularly rivers and lakes. They appear in every medium and period of Chinese art. The dragon also became associated with the emperors of China and with high officials.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Myths and legends
- Materials
- Ritual, burial and the afterlife

Lacquer vase

Lacquer is a Chinese discovery that goes back at least 6,000 years to Neolithic times. It is made using the sap collected from the lacquer tree. Although toxic in its original state, once the sap has been heat-treated and then air-dried it becomes a harmless, smooth, highly attractive 'varnish' that is waterproof, and heat- and acid-resistant. From the earliest times it was used to provide a decorative finish to eating utensils, ritual vessels, buildings, coffins and weapons. Later the technique developed of building up hundreds of thin layers of lacquer over a wooden form or base so that the item appears to be made entirely of lacquer. By the Song dynasty (AD 960–1279) craftsmen were carving back through the layers of lacquer to produce relief decoration, sometimes using different colours of lacquer at different layers.

The vase in Loan Box 1 shows two Daoist immortals with their attendants in a mythical landscape of rocks and trees. It is a popular decorative motif which can also be seen on blue and white porcelain.

The covered jar in Loan Box 2 has two panels, one showing pomegranates and the other melons. Melons symbolise family unity and pomegranates stand for fertility, so the vase may have been made as a wedding gift.

Both items date from the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), late 19th century.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Materials
- Myths and legends
- Festivals and celebrations



Brush-rack and brushes

Traditional Chinese paintings and calligraphy are created by using many different variations of a standard type of animal-hair brush to achieve different effects. Brushes vary in size, shape, and choice of animal hair because some bristles have a firm texture and some are soft. The two most common families of brushes are referred to as goat-hair brushes and wolf-hair brushes. In this set, the white brushes are goat-hair brushes and the brown ones are wolf-hair brushes, although the latter are actually made of horse hair or rabbit hair. The most important features of a good brush are sharpness of the tip, evenness of the length of hair, and resilience of the whole that allows the brush to react to the artist's hand and return to its original shape. There are different ways of writing Chinese characters in calligraphy, called scripts, and each requires different types of brush and different techniques. The five principal scripts are *kai shu*, *xing shu*, *cao shu*, *li shu* and *zhuan shu* – regular script, running script, grass script, clerical script and seal script. In Chinese art, calligraphy and painting go hand in hand, and a beautifully written poem or inscription is as much a part of a painting as the subject matter itself.

To learn more about the different calligraphy scripts, visit these websites:
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_character
afe.easia.columbia.edu/china/language/callig.htm
home.flash.net/~cameron/calligraphy/scripts/script_styles.htm

The lacquered wood brush-stand is a traditional way of storing brushes. Gravity helps preserve the shape of the brush and the evenly spaced pegs keep the brushes apart from each other. The construction reflects traditional Chinese architecture, and the dragon-head finials or ends on the ridge pole are a common feature from very early periods.

Themes for investigation

- Materials
- Painting and writing
- Language

Jade disc

Jade is perhaps the most magical and mystical of Chinese materials. Even today it is valued more highly than gold. It is given in different forms at birth, coming-of-age and marriage, and a jade bracelet is often the most prized family heirloom. The Chinese themselves use the word 玉 'yu' (pronounced like the English word 'you') to describe a wide variety of different coloured hardstones, but true jade comes only in two forms, jadeite and nephrite. Jadeite is the bright emerald-green stone that most people think of when they hear the word jade. In fact this jewellery jade came to China quite late, mainly in the Qing dynasty, from Burma, and is sometimes called imperial jade because the Qing emperors valued it so highly. Nephrite has a much more ancient history. It comes in colours ranging from creamy white through yellows, greens and browns to black.



From Neolithic times, around 5000 BC, nephrite was prized for its extreme hardness, its mysterious cloudy colours and its supposedly magical properties. Two shapes in particular, a flat disc with a hole in the middle, called a 璧 'bi' (pronounced 'bee'), and a squared-off cylinder with a circular hole called a 琮 'cong' (pronounced 'tsoong') were buried in large numbers in important tombs. The *bi* continued to be made firstly for ritual reasons and then purely as decoration over the following thousands of years up until the end of Imperial China. Jade was believed to protect the body from decay and some of the most spectacular artefacts made from it are the royal burial suits from the Han dynasty. These were made from hundreds of individually worked tiles bound together with gold, silver or bronze wire, or silk. Jade working was one of the highest art forms throughout Chinese history and the most skilled artists took the inspiration for the forms they created from what they could see in the jade itself.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Materials
- Festivals and celebrations
- Myths and legends

Scroll painting

This painting is a modern copy based on a work by the famous artist Tang Yin (also called Tang Bohu) who lived from 1470 to 1524 in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). The painting is traditionally displayed as a hanging scroll with silk mounts. It shows two old friends swapping reminiscences in a hut surrounded by rocks and trees. This is a typical subject for a scholar's painting and the poem inscribed at the top is as much a part of the painting as the rest of it. In this case it is a poem composed by the artist himself, now in ill health looking back on 50 years of wild living. It begins 'Fifty years of drunken dancing and wild singing...'

A Chinese painting is appreciated in many ways – for the skill of the brushwork, the choice of subject, the skilful use of suggestion rather than detail, the matching of poetry and painting, the style of calligraphy, even the choice of mount. Several of the red seals on this painting are those of the Qing dynasty emperors Qianlong, Jiaqing and Xuantong, marking their appreciation of the painting. A traditional Chinese painting is never completed in the way we think of a Western painting being finished by the artist. It is quite permissible for connoisseurs to add not only their seals to a painting but also further poems that they think enhance the mood, or comments showing their appreciation. The skilful use of empty space in traditional Chinese painting, symbolism and suggestion mean that the viewer of the painting also becomes involved in its realisation.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Materials
- Writing and painting
- Language



Chinese coins

These are replicas of coins of the Qing dynasty – the last dynasty of imperial China (1644–1911). The round bronze (and later brass) coin with a square hole was the standard form of Chinese coinage from the time of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuangdi (3rd century BC) onwards. Before the First Emperor the different Warring States made coins in a variety of shapes, including spades and knives. When the First Emperor united the Warring States he also unified the currency. The shape of traditional Chinese coins, with the square hole in the middle, is therefore a powerful symbol of money, and for this reason has been adopted as the logo for the People's Bank of China and other financial organisations.

The Chinese inscription on the front of each replica coin here names the emperor under whose authority the coin was issued. The inscription on the back is in the Manchu script and names one of the many mints which produced coins. In this way, the coins reflect that the Qing dynasty emperors were not native Chinese, but had come from the then separate country of Manchuria.

Replica bronze coins like these are used as 'lucky money' in the practice of *feng shui*.

Also included in the box are a modern 1 Yuan coin and a modern banknote. The Chinese invented paper money in the 8th–9th centuries AD.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Materials
- The First Emperor
- Festivals and celebrations
- Language

Chopsticks

Chopsticks have a history of about 5,000 years in China, going back to Neolithic times. They are mentioned in some of the earliest historical literature. The first chopsticks were probably made out of wood or bamboo but many other different materials were also used, often depending on the status of the owner: bone, ivory, bronze, silver, lacquer and jade, for example.

The rests are used for hygienic reasons to prevent the tips of the chopsticks resting on the table. These chopsticks are decorated with scenes from a very famous painting *Qingming Shanghe Tu* (Spring Festival on the River) painted in the 12th century, which is one of the most prized treasures in the Palace Museum in Beijing.



The Chinese word for chopsticks is *kuai zi* 筷子. Pairs of chopsticks are given as a symbolic gift to newlyweds as, when spoken, *kuai zi* sounds like a phrase meaning 'May you quickly have a son'. As well as practising using chopsticks, you should also investigate the etiquette of using them as there are several important dos and don'ts!

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Materials
- Food and drink
- Festivals and celebrations

Porcelain plate

China has a continuous history of making pottery from the earliest Neolithic times, and in the context of Chinese ceramics the term porcelain lacks a universally accepted definition. However, the material in the West which we commonly know as porcelain was probably not discovered until around AD 600. Porcelain has always been prized for its strength and beauty – it can be very white and can also be translucent when thin. It is made of a combination of two ingredients: kaolin, a fine white clay, and petuntse, a form of degraded granite. This mixture is fired in kilns at between 1250 and 1450°C when the kaolin hardens to hold the shape of the vessel and the petuntse vitrifies (becomes glass) to give the porcelain its beauty and translucence.

There are many different shapes in Chinese porcelain, some deriving from the earliest forms of pottery and bronze, and different forms of decoration which are characteristic of different periods and dynasties. Porcelain is finished with either a clear or coloured glaze, and may be decorated either under the glaze or over the glaze with enamel paints. Chinese porcelain was greatly admired all over the world and vast quantities were made for export both to the Middle East and Europe. In Europe it was common for plain undecorated plates and vases to be imported and then painted in the Chinese or European style. The plate in the loan box was made in China in the Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty (1735–1796) and were intended for the European market. It is painted with a floral motif showing auspicious flowers such as lotus, chrysanthemum, peony and lily.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Materials

Child's silk dress

Silk has been one of the great treasures of China since Neolithic times, when we have the earliest evidence of silk production. It is a natural fibre produced by the larvae of the silk moth (*Bombyx mori*). For many centuries the secret of the production of silk was closely guarded in China, but the finished product was traded all across central Asia and into Europe. The Romans believed it grew on trees. The Silk Road is the name given to the trade routes that linked China to the shores of the Mediterranean and to India from the 2nd century AD.

Originally silk was reserved for the emperor and his court but its use gradually spread through society. It was not just used for clothes and fabrics, but because of its amazing properties of lightness and strength even nets and fishing lines were made out of it. This child's dress is in the shape called a *qipao* in Mandarin or *cheongsam* in Cantonese. It originated in the Qing dynasty but is still now the most popular form of formal or semi-formal lady's dress. This one is embroidered with a traditional lucky pattern of dragons and phoenixes which were originally the symbols of the emperor and empress.

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Materials
- Festivals and celebrations
- Silk Road

Dictionary

This is the most recent edition of the Concise English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary published jointly by the Commercial Press in China and the Oxford University Press in the UK. The characters are the standard simplified form used throughout the People's Republic of China (PRC) – the characters in brackets are the traditional/full form still used in Taiwan and other countries where Chinese language is spoken. The pronunciations are Mandarin which is the official language of the PRC. Pronunciations are shown in the Romanization called pinyin and the accents on these are the tone marks denoting the four tones of Mandarin.

The BBC Chinese language website has some very useful and enjoyable resources: www.bbc.co.uk/languages/chinese

Themes for investigation

- Language
- Writing and painting



Map and Atlas

The Chinese call China 中国 (*Zhongguo* – pronounced 'joong gwor') and its official title is Zhonghua Renmin Gonghe Guo (pronounced 'joong hwar ren min goong her gwor') – The People's Republic of China. It is the third largest country in the world and has the largest population, currently estimated at around 1.3 billion or 20% of the total world population.

The map shows its divisions into provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities and special administrative regions. There are 23 provinces, 5 autonomous zones, 4 municipalities and 2 special administrative regions. It also shows the principal towns, cities and river system.

The atlas provides a detailed breakdown of economic and other statistics reflecting the country's status in 2005.

Themes for investigation

- Geography

DVD – Not One Less

This is one of the lesser-known films of the famous Chinese director Zhang Yimou (*Raise the Red Lantern*, *Hero*, *House of Flying Daggers*). Made in 1999, it is a beautifully told and beautifully filmed story that shows the reality of life in poor rural north China. It follows the trials and tribulations of a 14-year-old girl left in charge of a village school with the only instruction that she must not lose a single pupil. It was awarded a U certificate on release in the UK.

If you are showing this film to students who are learning Mandarin, please warn them that the actors have VERY thick north Chinese accents and that they should not be discouraged if they have trouble understanding!

Themes for investigation

- Timeline of Chinese history
- Language
- Geography

Themes and related activities

Timeline of Chinese history

Work with the students to draw up your own timeline of Chinese history from Neolithic to modern day. How are periods of Chinese history identified? (Dynasties)

Add in significant dates from other cultures that you have studied.

Throughout history the Chinese have made many important inventions and discoveries such as paper, gunpowder, the compass and printing. Investigate some of these and when they were made.

Invite the students to choose one dynasty or period to investigate more thoroughly. How long did it last? Was it famous for anything in particular? What happened to it? How does it compare with similar periods in other world cultures?

Curriculum links: History

Websites

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

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk/room

(click on the scroll on the side of the cupboard)

www.sacu.org/histchart.html

www.computersmiths.com/chineseinvention

The First Emperor

Qin Shihuangdi, the First Emperor of China, is most famous for the Terracotta Army he had made and buried to guard him after death. Use books and the internet to investigate the Terracotta Army. How was it discovered? How many figures are there? How many different types?

Using modelling clay or other materials get the students to make their own terracotta warrior.

The First Emperor is also famous for many other achievements that helped build Chinese civilisation. Investigate his life and what he did. Why is he sometimes viewed as a cruel tyrant and sometimes as a great hero?

Curriculum links: History, PSHE, Citizenship, Art and Design

Websites

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk/staff/main.html

www.bmy.com.cn (website of Terracotta Army Museum in China)

Materials

Discuss the different materials the students can see in the box. Are there any that are new to them? Investigate their different properties, where they come from, how they are made.

Choose one object in particular to investigate more thoroughly. Why is it made of that particular material? How was it used? Are such objects still made today? How are they different?

Investigate how similar materials were used in other cultures and civilisations. Are there any that are unique to China?

Curriculum links: Science, History

Websites

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

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk

Festivals and celebrations

Investigate the different Chinese festivals throughout the year. What are they called? When do they happen? What is a lunar calendar?

Identify the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac and the stories about how they came about. How is the Chinese New Year celebrated?

Chinese festivals are celebrated not just in China, but by Chinese communities throughout the world. Investigate Chinese communities and celebrations in your area. See if there are any community groups that could come in to your school to help with this topic.

Curriculum links: RE, English, PSHE

Websites

www.sacu.org/festivals.html

www.topmarks.co.uk/chinesenewyear/ChineseNewYear.aspx

Myths and legends

Incorporate Chinese stories in your Literacy lessons when looking at myths and fables.

See if you can find parallels between Chinese myths and those of other cultures.

Ask the pupils to construct their own myth or story using some of the objects in the loan box as inspiration.

Curriculum links: English, RE

Websites

www.sacu.org/festivals.html

www.topmarks.co.uk/chinesenewyear/ChineseNewYear.aspx

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_mythology

www.pitt.edu/~dash/china.html

Ritual, burial and the afterlife

Identify which of the objects were made for burial, or might have been placed in a tomb. Why do people put objects and models of objects in tombs?

Look at the activities on the Ancient China website and then design your own tomb. What kind of objects would you put in a tomb like that now?

Think of other civilisations you have studied that also buried objects in tombs. What do we learn about a civilisation from excavating its burial sites?

Curriculum links: History, RE, PSHE, English

Websites

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

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk/room

(click on the projector screen and on the green relief model on the shelf)

Silk Road

What is silk? Investigate where silk comes from, how it is made and why it has always been so highly valued.

Find out what is meant by the name 'The Silk Road'. Was it really a road? Where did it start and where did it finish? What kind of people and things travelled along the Silk Road?

The Silk Road didn't just carry goods for trade, it also carried ideas. Investigate how Buddhism came to China.

Curriculum links: History, Geography

Websites

www.ancientchina.co.uk/crafts/challenge/cha_set.html

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk/room

(click on the camel and the two red notebooks)

Food and drink

Learn how to use chopsticks properly. Why is it more difficult to eat Western food with chopsticks than it is Chinese food?

Investigate the different types of food and special dishes that come from different parts of China.

Food and drink are very important in China at any time but especially at festivals. Investigate the special foods that are eaten at the different festivals and what they symbolise.

Websites

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk/room (click on the chest of drawers)

www.sacu.org/food.html

www.sacu.org/tea.html

china.mrdonn.org/chopsticks.html

Writing and painting

Look closely at the Chinese scroll painting. Make a list of the ways it is different from a Western painting.

Use books and the internet to find different types of Chinese painting. Make your own scroll painting with paper and different types of material. What subject will you choose for your painting – landscape, flowers, birds and animals?

Choose one subject (e.g. dragons, landscapes, flowers) and try to find examples from different periods of Chinese history. Look at how they change and develop.

Curriculum links: English, Art, History

Websites

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

www.britishmuseum.org/explore/online_tours/asia/chinese_landscape_painting/mountains_and_water_chinese_l.aspx

Language

Explore aspects of written and spoken Mandarin on the BBC website and the Chinese Tools website (below).

Invite a Chinese teacher into your school for the day.

Curriculum links: English, MFL

Websites

www.ancientchina.co.uk/writing

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk/staff/topics/language.html

www.bbc.co.uk/languages/chinese

www.chinese-tools.com/learn/chinese

Geography

Find China on a world map and investigate its borders and its size compared to other countries.

Use the map to explore the different provinces of China and its major geographical features – mountains, rivers, deserts etc.

Investigate the difference between a province and an Autonomous Region (Tibet, Xinjiang, Guangxi etc). Explore the different ethnic groups that live in China.

Curriculum links: Geography, PSHE

Websites

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

www.earlyimperialchina.co.uk (click on the bookcase)

chinadatacenter.org/chinageography

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People's_Republic_of_China

Using objects in your lessons

Using objects in lessons or during a trip to a museum enables a different form of learning to take place. An object can be the focus for an investigation, the source of inspiration or a tangible link with the past. When studying China, Chinese objects can bring the culture to life and provide the context for learning. For ideas on how to use objects in your lessons, please see the two contrasting examples below.

Why use objects?

- Motivation ('need to know', creative and emotional stimulus, accessible)
- Skills (observing, handling, discussing, experimenting, recording, explaining)
- Extending knowledge (materials, symbolism, historical and cultural context) – different kind of knowledge
- Developing concepts (chronology, change, design as a function of use, fashion, heritage, original and reproduction)

Why are objects better than photographs?

- Detail
- Exact colouring
- Senses
- Size, scale, weight, mass
- Tactile evidence of textures, shape, manufacture, temperatures
- Three dimensions
- Feeling of age

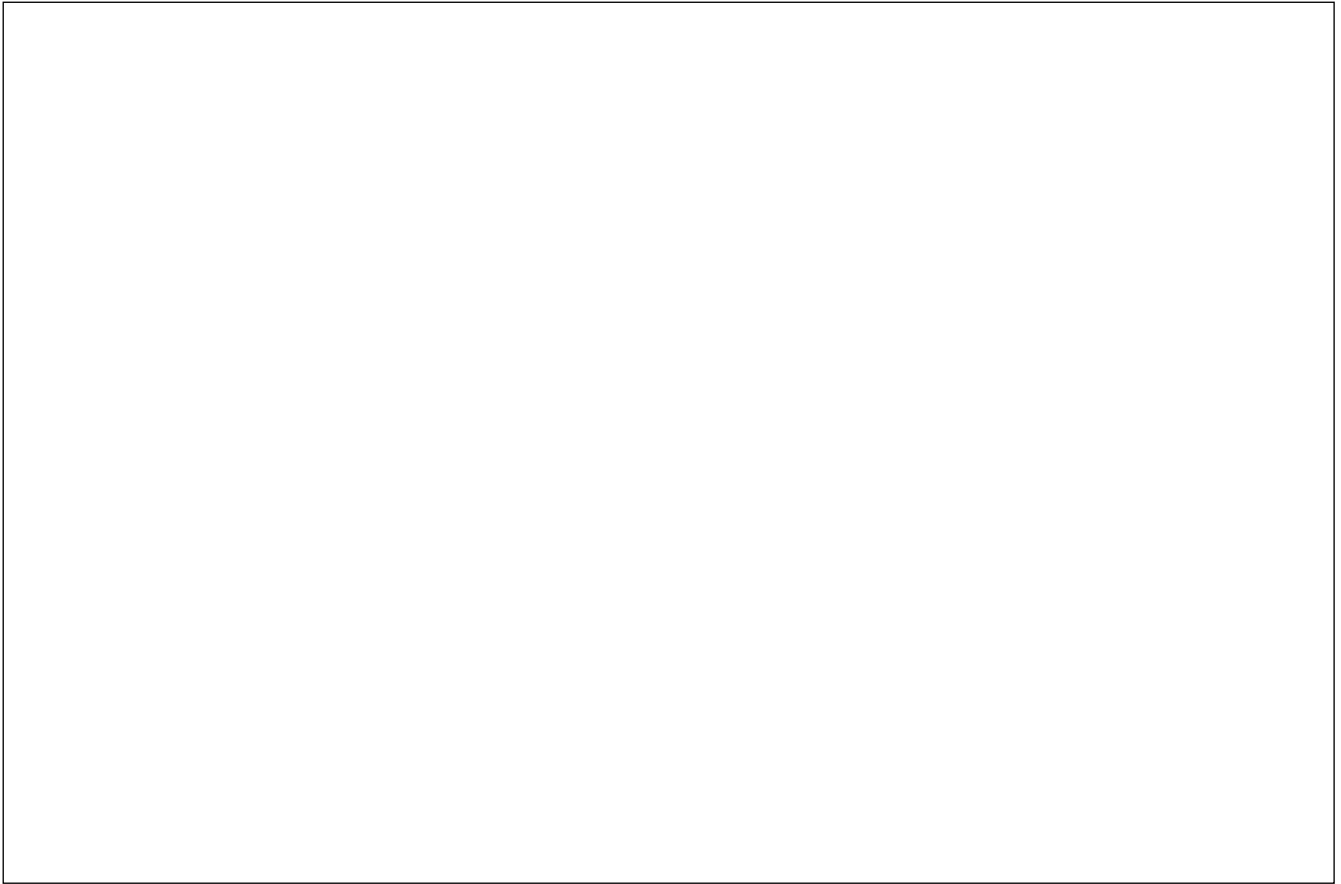
Looking at an object 1

The main things to think about	Some further questions to ask
Physical features What does it look and feel like?	What is it made of? What colour is it? What does it sound like? Is it a natural or manufactured substance? Is the object complete? Is it worn?
Construction How was it made?	Is it hand-made or machine made? Was it made in a mould or in pieces? How has it been fixed together?
Function What was it made for?	How was the object used? Is it still used today?
Design Is it well designed?	Does it do the job it was designed for well? Were the best materials used? Is it decorated/ Do you like the way it looks? Would other people like it?
Value What is it/was it worth?	To the people who made it? To the people who used it? To you? To a museum?

Things found out through looking	Things to be researched

Looking at an object 2

Choose one of the objects and draw a picture of it



Imagine a point in this object's history. Who owned it?

How did the owner feel about the object?

Why do you like this object?

(Think about its colour, shape, decoration, function – does it prompt any memories?)

If the object could talk, what would it tell you?

Further reading

Books for students

Harrison-Hall, Jessica, *Pocket Timeline of China*, British Museum Press, 2007.
Birrell, Anne, *Chinese Myths*, British Museum Press, 2000.
Wang Tao, *China (Exploring History)*, Chrysalis Children's Books, 2003.
Cotterell, Arthur, *Ancient China (Eyewitness Guides)*, Dorling Kindersley, 2005.

Books for teachers

Birch, Cyril, *Tales from China*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
Qu Lei Lei, *Chinese Calligraphy: standard script for beginners*, British Museum Press, 2004.
Wang Jianwei (ed.), *Ancient Civilisation of China*, Mason Crest Publishers, 2006.
Naden, Corinne and Ball, Jacqueline, *Ancient China: Archaeology Unlocks the Secrets of China's Past*, National Geographic Society, 2006.

Websites

There are many Chinese educational websites on the internet. These three are suggested as starting points for your own further exploration.

[www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk/specialismsandvocational/specialisms/
languages/chinese/default.aspx](http://www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk/specialismsandvocational/specialisms/languages/chinese/default.aspx)
china.mrdonn.org/index.html
www.chinapage.com/china.html