

Asian Odyssey

A National K-12 Interdisciplinary Curriculum Model

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ANCIENT CHINESE TOMB BUILDING AND TOMB ART

Grade Level

This lesson was created for a 6th grade Language Arts class. It can be modified to meet the needs of any middle-school grade.

Objectives

- Through research and note-taking students will compare and contrast the monuments erected for George Washington, the first president of the United States, and Qin Shi Huangdi (r. 221- 210 BCE), the first emperor of China.
- Students will study the main objectives of tomb building and tomb art.
- Students will become familiar with Chinese tomb art, its significance, and its placement at a tomb site.

Concepts

- Visual and written analysis and comparison
- Death has different meanings in different cultures, and the memorials built to honor the dead reflect these differences.
- Specific attitudes toward death and dying are passed from generation to generation in each culture.
- Through tomb construction and art we can learn about important characteristics of both ancient civilizations and modern societies and about social classes in different places and at different times in history.
- Both Western and Eastern cultures build funeral monuments to commemorate their leaders. Of particular note in this country are the Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson Memorials in Washington, D.C.

Key Ideas

- Chinese tomb design and placement is an important part of "ancestor worship," a practice in which a family or clan makes offerings and pays their respects to the ancestors.
- Yin and yang are the fundamental complementary principles that control everything in the universe.
- Feng shui ("wind and water") is a system of geomancy that originated in China. It is important in determining the position of a tomb because it is believed that if a tomb's placement is auspicious, the good influences (yang) of the landscape (feng shui) will be transmitted through the ancestor's bones (yin) to his descendants.

- Chinese tombs contain numerous burial offerings, many of which constitute valuable art finds today.
- Tomb offerings originally consisted of all a ruler's or nobleman's personal possessions--weapons, horses and chariots, objects he used in daily life, as well as wives, concubines, and the people who served him. Starting in the Han dynasty, (206 BCE – CE 220) clay and porcelain figures, designed to perform the same functions, were substituted for the living individuals and animals.
- Chinese tomb art, as well as the figurines of servants, entertainers, and animals placed in the tomb, was designed so that the deceased would have everything he or she needed in the afterlife.
- It is important to note that tomb offerings were both beautiful and functional.

Materials

Funerary Object (Mingqi), CE 25-220, CMA 1983.1

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

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

Female Attendant (Tomb Figurine), c. 2nd century BCE, CMA 1983.6

Incense Burner (po-shan hsiang-lu), 2nd century BCE, CMA 1986.46a

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

Chariot Handle Bar Cap, 475-221 BCE, CMA 1985.128

Zhang (Ceremonial Blade), c. 2500-1500 BCE, CMA 1915.673

Mat Weight in Form of Bear, 206 BCE- CE 24 AD, CMA 1994.203

Resource Books:

Cotterel, Arthur. *Eyewitness: Ancient China*. London; DK CHILDREN, 2000.

Cluna, Craig. *Art in China (Oxford History of Art Series)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

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

O'Connor, Jane. *The Emperor's Silent Army : Terracotta Warriors of Ancient China*. New York: Viking Juvenile, 2002.

Sullivan, Michael. *The Arts of China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Tregear, Mary. *Chinese Art (World of Art)*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1997.

Yang, Xiaoneng (Editor). *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology*. Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1999

Teague, Ken. *Growing Up In Ancient China (Growing Up In series)*. New York, Troll Communications, 1993.

Handouts

Paper, pencils, and art supplies for drawing

Internet Connection

Procedure

1. Have students compare/contrast the Washington Monument with the terra-cotta warrior army of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi. Refer students to handouts that follow the lesson as well as the resource book.
2. Ask students to report their findings in several paragraphs and determine the level of writing you wish the students to produce.

3. Take the students to the library or the computer center. Have the class divide into three groups and have each group research and take notes on one of the following topics: Tomb art, tomb construction and design, and the specific details of the Xiaoling Tomb in Nanjing.
4. When students are finished, have a representative member of each group form a new group and share their information while continuing to take notes (jigsaw exercise).
5. View the suggested CMA images of tomb art and discuss the use and significance of each piece.
6. The final project will be a class bulletin board in which the plan of the Xiaoling tomb is recreated. Students will divide into groups and each group will be assigned a different section of the tomb, including: Spirit Way, Main and Inner Gates, Sacrificial Halls, and the Soul Tower. They can use the internet or the resource books as a resource. Redraw the plan from the web site as background for the bulletin board. Assign each group one piece of art from the CMA to recreate for their specific section of the tomb. Have them include an artistic depiction, accompanied by a brief description of to the piece, its function, and the motivation behind its design.

Evaluation

- A. Students will compare and contrast tombs from Western and Eastern cultures.
- B. Students will organize and record information to use for discussion.
- C. Students will produce artwork of their own based on the ancient Chinese beliefs and customs of tomb art.

Enrichment

- A. Use descriptive language to write about the detailed funerary objects viewed in class and extend this writing to the pieces created by the class for the bulletin board.
- B. Have each student create a personal tomb design and a list of objects he or she might chose to include in the tomb.
- C. Write a personal eulogy describing the accomplishments of an influential person from history.

Ohio State Standards Language Arts (6th grade)

1. Locate and summarize important information from multiple sources.
2. Communicate findings orally, visually, and in writing or through multimedia.
3. Use effective listening strategies, summarize major ideas and draw logical inferences from presentations and visual media.
4. Give presentations using a variety of delivery methods, visual materials, and technology.
5. Use text features and graphics to organize, analyze and draw inferences from content and to gain additional information.
6. Determine the extent to which a summary accurately reflects the main idea, critical details and underlying meaning of original text.

**This lesson plan was developed by Brad Zeissler, Westerville School System,
Westerville, Ohio.**