HORSES

Purpose
The horse was an important cultural icon in ancient China and there are many depictions of them in Chinese art. The horse was a symbol of wealth and power to emperors, noblemen, and warriors. In addition to warfare, horses were used for hunting.

Grade Level
This lesson is written for a 3rd grade class, but it can be adapted for grades 1-4.

Purpose
This lesson should follow previous lessons that give students some background of China.

Concepts
- Emperor: the supreme ruler of China
- Imperial Court: the governing group of ministers and scholars who carried out the emperor's commands
- Court painter: an artist that worked for the emperor, usually depicting the emperor's rule as wise and kind
- Symbolism: the use of animals or characters to represent such concepts as wisdom, courage, power, beauty, and happiness
- Compare and contrast: finding similarities and differences in text or art
- Daoism: Sometimes referred to as the "way" or "path"; a philosophy revering the changes and cycles of animals, plants and the seasons that represent the power of nature and natural forces.

Key Ideas
- The horse has many mythological associations and was considered to be allied with the dragon.
- The ancient ancestors of the horse were small multi-toed animals. These toes eventually evolved into the hoof. This adaptation made the horse a sturdier runner and more useful as a pack animal.
- Horses were not domesticated until sometime around 5,000 or 6,000 years ago, and this was a process that began at different stages all over the world.
- In China, domestication of the horse began around 2300 BCE. During the Shang dynasty (1600-1100 BCE), war chariots drawn by horses were introduced into China, probably around 1450.
- The increasingly important role that the horse and chariot played in the constant conflicts between warring states is made evident in the entombment of real horses and chariots in royal tombs, together with everything else the tomb's inhabitants would need in the afterlife.
Some of the most famous ceramic horses are those found in the tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi (reigned 221-208 BCE). In three separate pits, more than 7,000 pottery soldiers, horses, and chariots and tens of thousands of bronze weapons (swords, daggers, spears, crossbow triggers, and arrowheads) were excavated. They would have been brightly painted, though much of the color is now lost. In the center of the chariot, a chariot driver holds the reins in both hands. On either side of him are two chariot soldiers. Standing with their feet placed to balance their weight while the chariot is in motion, one hand holds the side-rail of the chariot the other a weapon. Since the charioteer has both hands on the reins, he cannot protect himself. He wears a special uniform with long-sleeved armor to protect his arms and hands and a high collar to protect his neck.

By the Western Zhou dynasty (c.1100-771 BCE) a kingdom’s power was determined by the number of horses and war chariots it possessed.

Horses were not only important for building an empire, they also played an important role in creating a communication network between the various parts of the empire as well as serving to transport people and goods.

During the Han dynasty (206 BCE-CE 220) the emperor imported the larger, long-legged horses from Central Asia. These horses became more prized than the smaller Chinese horses.

In the Tang dynasty (618-907), the emperor laid down strict rules. Riding was reserved for the nobility and scholars—it was forbidden to artisans and merchants. This period would come to be the height of horse breeding in China. Horses were also used for recreation. The emperor and the nobility enjoyed watching dressage competitions, and polo was played by both the men and women of the court.

During the Tang dynasty, ceramic images of horses were buried in royal tombs, replacing the real horses that had been buried previously. These horses were glazed in a three-color technique (sancai) with glazes of tannish yellow, green, and white. Most of these horses would be equipped with tack, bridle, bit, reins, and an elaborate saddle. The mane is usually highly stylized and appears to have been combed; the tail is short and turns upwards.

Also during the Tang dynasty, the horse symbolized status and military power. As northerners, the Tang understood the military importance of the cavalry. Horses enjoyed a special position, and each horse was assigned to a herd of 120 and branded as a "flying," "dragon," or "wind" class (war, post, royal mount).

In the year 2000, according to United Nation's statistics, almost 16% of all the world's horses lived in China. According to statistics compiled by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for the year 2000, the world horse population was 56,864,305, and the horse population in China was 8,916,154. Therefore, in the year 2000, China had approximately 15.8% of the world's total horse population. (The sources of the FAOSTAT data are detailed and described at http://faostat.fao.org)

Materials
Polo Player, late 7th-early 8th century, Tang Dynasty (618-907), CMA 1964.181
Horse, late 7th- 8th century, CMA 1955.295
Horse’s Head, 206BCE-220CE, CMA 1997.115
Three Horses and Four Grooms, 13th century, CMA 1960.181
Album of Landscape Paintings Illustrating Old Poems: A Man and a Horse by a Stream, 1700s, CMA 1982.68.8

Brown paper, scissors, green and white colored pencils

**Procedure: Two-day Lesson**

**Day 1: Introduction of sculpture and painting of horses**
1. Use the artworks as a point of departure for a discussion that asks students to describe each object. Then ask them to conjecture what each object tells us about the culture that made it. Ask students to describe the different media used in creating these artworks. Put a timeline on the board, and plot each object as you talk about it.
2. For *Horse’s Head*: Discuss where horses were domesticated. Ask the students if this looks like a modern horse. Explain that a few thousand years earlier horses were much smaller.
3. For the *Horse*: Ask students to describe the horse's physical features (mane, tail, and forelock) as well as its saddle and bridle. What do they tell you about the horse's importance and value? Ask the students, "Who might have owned this horse?" Discuss ancient Chinese tombs and ask why he have been placed in a tomb?
4. For the *Polo Player*: Ask the students to describe the horse. Who may have owned this horse? Explain. What sport is the person playing? Is that sport still played? Discuss with the students that the ancient Chinese thought that horses flew. Ask them if they have seen a horse run so fast (as in this sculpture) that it looked like it could fly.
5. For *Three Horses and Four Grooms*: Ask the students to describe the horse. Who may have owned this horse? Are the men who are caring for the horses the ones who own the horse? Explain.
6. Show students a map of Asia and ask them to research areas where the horse was first domesticated.

**Day 2: Read *The Emperor’s Silent Army***
1. Read aloud the first chapter of the book.
2. Explain to students what an archeologist is and why it’s important to be trained to research such an amazing project.
3. Discuss with students the size and immensity of the terra-cotta soldiers. Ask. "How long and how many resources would it take to create the soldiers, horses, and weapons?"
4. Discussion questions:
   A. What does the terra-cotta army of the Qin Shi Huangdi tell us about life in the Qin dynasty?
   B. What did the emperor expect in his afterlife? How do you know?
   C. Did the Qin value horses? How do you know?
   D. Who do you think sculpted all the figures? How long do you think it took?
5. Have students draw their own Tang horses, using brown butcher paper and green and white or silver colored pencils.
6. Post their horses in the classroom so that you have an army almost as large as that of Qin Shi Huangdi.
Enrichment

A. Have students read *China’s Bravest Girl - The Legend of Hua Mu Lan* by Charlie Chin (Emeryville, CA: Children’s Book Press, 1993) and write a description of the honor and importance of the horse in the story.

B. There are great possibilities in comparing the birth of our nation with the birth of China especially the roles that horses played to our early pioneers and western expansion. Many good lessons and projects could be created from the subject of the horse!

Ohio State Standards

*Reading Process:*
1. Establish a purpose for reading (to be informed and to learn something new).
2. Compare and contrast information between texts and across subject areas.
3. Answer literal and evaluative questions to demonstrate comprehension of text.

*Reading Applications:*
1. List questions about essential elements from informational text and identify answers.

*Writing Processes:*
1. Generate writing ideas through discussions with others and from printed material.
2. Develop a purpose and audience for writing.
3. Organize writing by providing a simple introduction, body and a clear sense of closure.

*Writing Applications:*
1. Write informational reports that include the main ideas and significant details from the text.

Social Studies Benchmarks

*Geography*
1. Use political maps to ask and answer questions about the community.
2. Identify systems of transportation used to move people and products and systems of communication used to move ideas from place to place.

*People in Societies*
1. Compare the cultural practices and products of the local community with those of other communities in the United States and countries of the world.

*History*
1. Construct time lines to demonstrate an understanding of units of time and chronological order.

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