

**TEACHER'S GUIDE TO
TREASURES FROM A LOST CIVILIZATION:
ANCIENT CHINESE ART FROM SICHUAN**



**by Tese Wintz Neighbor
2001 Seattle Art Museum**

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Note on Romanization

The pinyin system of romanization is used throughout this guide for the transcription of Chinese names and terms. For example, Yangzi is the pinyin for Yangtze and Dao is the pinyin for Tao.

Resource Materials

Please consult the bibliography of books and web sites located at the end of this packet for further teaching and research aids and for full publication information for all sources and resources cited in the text. A detailed 360-page publication, *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization*, is available for purchase. Much of the background material included here is excerpted from this book.

Introduction

Welcome to the treasures and mysteries of ancient Sichuan art.

In 1986 a spectacular discovery was made in **Sanxingdui**, located in China’s western **Sichuan** province. This excavation uncovered not only exquisite pieces of art, but also a highly developed civilization that was, up to this time, completely unknown. The exhibition *Treasures from a Lost Civilization* heralds the brilliant art unearthed from this previously unknown thirteenth-century B.C. site. Also included in this remarkable exhibition are later artifacts from Sichuan province dating to the third century A.D. In the Zhou dynasty period (11th century–221 B.C.), the Sichuan basin continued to be a highly civilized region with unique cultural and artistic characteristics. And Sichuan in early imperial China (221 B.C.–A.D. 220) was a major center of culture as well as manufacture and trade. Many artifacts from these periods demonstrate sophisticated aesthetics and ingenious craftsmanship. They provide an unprecedented opportunity to explore the art, material culture, and spiritual life of ancient Sichuan.

Teacher’s Guide to Treasures from a Lost Civilization: Ancient Chinese Art from Sichuan introduces teachers and their students to Seattle Art Museum’s exhibition (on view May 10–August 12, 2001). This guide contains transparencies of selected artifacts, background information, maps, looking questions, activity-based projects, a glossary (terms in the glossary are bolded in the text), relevant web sites, a pronunciation guide, a bibliography, and community resources. Each activity is designed with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) in mind.

This collection of reading and teaching ideas is designed for teachers of grades 4–12 who want to:

- § Explore the art of ancient Sichuan
- § Study China by concentrating on ancient Chinese art
- § Study the relationship of people to their physical environment
- § Engage students in the discovery process to answer questions regarding these mysterious Sichuan artifacts

Teachers who have limited time to introduce their students to the exhibition may find the transparencies and corresponding “looking questions” the most helpful. Other activities are designated by one of the following symbols.



Represents a discussion or activity that corresponds directly with the exhibition.



Represents an activity that uses the exhibition as a jumping-off point for further study of China.

A Brief Overview

Treasures from a Lost Civilization: Ancient Chinese Art from Sichuan explores a mysterious civilization lost for 3,000 years. This civilization is unrecorded in historical texts and scholars are at a loss to explain the mysterious artifacts that were first uncovered in 1986. This excavation has surprised not only Chinese archaeologists but also Chinese historians. The traditional view that the middle valley of the **Yellow River** was the birthplace of Chinese civilization (and that ancient Sichuan and other peripheral regions of China were recipients of this birthplace culture) makes this Sichuan basin discovery literally a history-shaking find. According to Museum Director Mimi Gardner Gates:

The Sanxingdui discovery conclusively proved the existence of multiple regional centers that interacted with one another, each with its own distinctive traits. Thus, a more complex sphere of cultural interaction replaced the simpler model of cultural diffusion from a nuclear center. In focusing on Sichuan, this project champions the approach of regional study and seeks to provide a firm foundation for the new model of multiple cultural centers in ancient China.

Visiting the exhibition

We encourage you to use this startling discovery as a tool to engage students in the ongoing search to answer questions about these mysterious artifacts. The exhibition itself provides not only a self-guided audio tour but also other interactive technology that engages students in the discovery process exploring such questions as “What is this object made from?” and “How were the objects used?”

For the first time in SAM’s history, a virtual-reality component will be offered as part of increasingly high-tech educational programming. The virtual-reality simulated archaeological dig in the art studio, interactive multimedia kiosks and random-access audio tours in the galleries, and interactive multimedia Sichuan web site all aim to deepen teacher and student understanding of this newly discovered culture. (These components are available free of charge to special-exhibition ticket holders.)

The exhibition presents 175 recently excavated works—most of which are being shown for the first time outside of China. These spectacular **bronze**, jade, and clay works of art include images of huge human figures and supernatural beings, as well as unique ritual vessels, masks, weapons, and implements. The artifacts include not only the treasures unearthed in Sanxingdui, but also later works from the Zhou dynasty period through the early Imperial period to the third century A.D. *Teacher’s Guide to Treasures from a Lost Civilization: Ancient Chinese Art from Sichuan* highlights six of the 175 ancient pieces on view in the Sichuan exhibition.

The Discoveries at Sanxingdui

On July 18, 1986, an important discovery that would change our understanding of the history of ancient China was accidentally unearthed near Sanxingdui, a small village about twenty miles northeast of Chengdu, in Sichuan. Workers from a local brickyard were digging clay to make bricks at a site near the Yazi River when they suddenly came upon a dozen jade artifacts. Work stopped immediately.

The area was known to archaeologists; in fact, hints that the region around Sanxingdui may have been an ancient Bronze Age site had begun to surface as early as 1929, when a pit containing hundreds of jades was found north of Sanxingdui. Over the years, widely scattered artifacts had been documented throughout the area. From 1980 to 1985, the pace of excavation accelerated and archaeologists found jades, a pottery kiln, and house foundations, indicating a settlement of substantial size. But no one was prepared for the discoveries of 1986.

The brick workers reported their find to the archaeologists, who had finished their season of excavation at a nearby dig two months earlier. That very day the excited archaeologists began excavations at the new site. They soon exposed a rectangular pit, measuring almost 5 feet deep, 10 feet wide, and 13 feet long, brimming with more than 400 spectacular artifacts—13 elephant tusks, 200 bronzes, and 200 stone and jade objects, including more than 60 tools and nearly 40 pottery vessels. All had been sealed underneath a filling of pounded earth.

On August 18, as they were wrapping up work on the pit (designated K1), the brickyard workers again raised a cry: a second, slightly narrower pit had been unearthed. Excavation on this new pit (now known as K2) began on August 20 and lasted until September 17. While similar to K1, it turned out to be even richer. Among the finds were 67 elephant tusks, 4,600 cowry shells, and approximately 1,300 artifacts, including life-sized bronze heads and masks, bronze ritual vessels, a monumental, 13-foot bronze tree alive with birds and other creatures, and, astonishingly, the first and only life-sized statue of a human figure known in China from this period. Collectively, these unusual Bronze Age objects date from the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries B.C., during the time of the Shang dynasty, when the only previously known civilized societies were flourishing far from Sichuan.

No similar find has been made anywhere else, and there are no inscriptions at the Sanxingdui site to shed light on its culture. It seems most likely that the pits represent a ritual ceremony in which offerings were first burned or broken, then buried. The implications are astounding: Sanxingdui was apparently a genuine Bronze Age civilization, unrecorded in historical text and hitherto unknown. Ancient Sichuan was not a primitive backwater, as had previously been believed, but a highly civilized society with unique cultural and artistic characteristics.

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In the years since these extraordinary discoveries, exploration of the Sanxingdui site has been continuous. Nothing as spectacular as K1 and K2 has been discovered, but the plan of the city and the structure of the walls have been mapped out, and as recently as July 1998, a group of twenty-eight small graves was found, yielding a number of stone and jade artifacts.

The city at Sanxingdui appears to have been large and rich, built on the foundations of the local Neolithic (Stone Age) **Baodun culture** that preceded it. The Baodun people dotted the landscape with moderate-sized settlements; by the time of the Bronze Age Sanxingdui culture, the land was dominated by the city, a single center in which wealth and power were concentrated. At present, it appears that the ancient city of Sanxingdui measured approximately four by five miles in area, making it comparable in size to the largest city ever discovered in China from this period.

The layout of the city seems to have been complex. It was divided into quarters by walls and appears to have been a gradually growing settlement. More than fifty building foundations have been found, as well as five more pits containing stone and jade. Pieces of pottery show some similarities with Baodun artifacts; however, later influences can also be traced from outside the Sichuan basin, especially from the north. Nevertheless, no outside source can account for Sanxingdui's most unusual finds.

The three-dimensional bronze sculptures appear to be original artistic forms. While some production techniques may have been acquired from neighboring cultures, Sanxingdui artisans seem to have taken these ideas and created their own novel art, as with the monumental, life-sized human statue and the many masks and heads.

Traditional ideas about ancient China left scholars unprepared for the discoveries at Sanxingdui. Until these finds, it had been assumed that Bronze Age Sichuan was uncivilized territory. It now appears that the Sichuan basin generated one of China's earliest civilizations. The history of Sanxingdui is still being written.

Chinese Periods and Dynasties

Bronze Age

Erlitou period (Xia dynasty)
Shang dynasty
Zhou dynasty
Western Zhou
Eastern Zhou
Spring and Autumn
Warring States

c. 21st century to 3rd century B.C.

c. 21st century - c. 16th century B.C.
c. 16th century - 11th century B.C.
11th century - 256 B.C.
11th century - 771 B.C.
770 - 256 B.C.
770 - 477 B.C.
476 - 221 B.C.

Early Imperial Period

Qin dynasty
Han dynasty
Western Han
Eastern Han
Six dynasties
Three Kingdoms
Western Jin
16 Kingdoms
Southern dynasties
Northern dynasties

221 B.C. - A.D. 581

221 - 206
206 B.C. - A.D. 220
206 B.C. - A.D. 8
25 - 220
220 - 589
220 - 280
265 - 317
304 - 439
317 - 589
386 - 581

Medieval Imperial Period

Sui dynasty
Tang dynasty
Five dynasties
Liao dynasty
Song Dynasty
Northern Song
Southern Song
Xi Xia dynasty
Jin dynasty

581 - 1279

581 - 618
618 - 907
907 - 960
916 - 1125
960 - 1279
960 - 1127
1127 - 1279
1032 - 1227
1115 - 1234

Later Imperial Period

Yuan dynasty
Ming dynasty
Qing dynasty

1279 - 1911

1279 - 1368
1368 - 1644
1644 - 1911

Sichuan Timeline:

C1650 – 1500 BC

Bronze Age China begins with the earliest stage of bronze production at Erlitou, mid-Yellow River Valley, for vessels and other pieces.

C1550-1070 BC

New Kingdom period, Egypt

Temple of Amun at Karnak and Temple at Thebes begun.

C 1500 BC

Shang dynasty begins in China. Large and organized city formed at present-day Zhengzhou.

1420 BC

Amenhotep III begins 'Golden Age' in Egypt.

1361 BC

Accession of (King?) Tutankhamun in Egypt.

C1300 BC

Shang city established at Anyang, earliest evidence of Chinese writing found on inscribed oracle bones and bronze inscriptions.

C1200 BC

Sanxingdui burials in Sichuan: Pit 1 from shortly before 1200 BC, Pit 2 from shortly after 1200 BC.

C 1250-1200 BC

Shang tomb of Fu Hao

The occupant of this tomb, excavated in 1976 was Fu Hao, wife of a Shang king and regarded as the first female general in Chinese history. With a high position, she often presided over sacrificial ceremonies and directed military actions, according to the inscriptions on the bones and tortoise shells found at Anyang. Approximately 2,000 articles were buried with the queen, including 400 bronzeware and 700 jade articles.

1193 BC

City of Troy destroyed by the Greeks.

1100 BC

First Chinese dictionary produced.

1050 BC-771 BC

Western Zhou Dynasty begins with conquest of Shang territory by Zhou people, capital moved to Xian.

950 BC – 450 BC

Chavin de Huantar, Peru

The Incas, a highly developed native American culture evolved in the Andes Mountains. The earliest central state to emerge in the northern highlands was the Kingdom of Chavin. In Chavin de Huantar, a massive temple was considered the center of the world.

800 BC

Composition of Homer's Iliad completed.

c. 800 BC

First distillation of liquor in the world is in China, made from boiled rice beer.

776 BC

First recorded Olympic Games in Greece.

771 BC

Western Zhou dynasty ended after Emperor Yu Wang was killed.

770 - 221 BC

Eastern Zhou dynasty begins in China; after conquest of former capitol at Xian by dissidents, new capital established at Luoyang.

C 604-531 BC

Life of Laozi (Lao Tzu) in China, known as the originator of Daoism (Taoism).

C563 BC

Birth of Prince Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) in India.

551 BC

Birth of Confucius, Chinese philosopher whose sayings are recorded in the *Lunyu*.

509 BC

Foundation of the Roman Republic.

447 BC

In Athens, construction of the Parthenon begins.

c. 433 BC

Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng near the ancient Chinese state of Chu, east of Sichuan
The tomb housed exquisite bronze objects, including 65 ornately detailed bells in its central hall. Numerous large bronze vessels were entombed along with weapons, servants and concubines.

356-323 BC

Alexander the Great rules Macedonia, conquers the Persians and names Babylon as the capital city.

c. 300 BC

Maya civilization in the Yucatan and further south in Central America.

221 BC

End of the Eastern Zhou dynasty.

220 BC

Qin dynasty begins as China is unified through conquest by the Qin people of other areas and Qin Shi Huangdi rules as emperor. Weights and measures, currency and writing script were standardized throughout China for the first time.

214 BC

Several walls are connected to form the Great Wall of China.

c. 210 B.C.

Death of the Qin Emperor and burial in his enormous tomb complex
Qin Shi Huangdi's tomb, widely known for its massive burial of terracotta warriors. Under construction for over a decade, the tomb complex included thousands of life-sized terracotta figures in three pits: 7,000 infantrymen, 116 cavalymen and 96 chariots. All soldiers face east, the direction of the route through which the enemy had to pass.

202 BC

Beginning of Han dynasty. Four years of civil war ends as Liu Bang becomes the 1st Han emperor. Western Han period, capital at Chang'an.

203 BC

Ptolemy V Epiphanes rules Egypt (to 181 BC): Rosetta stone carved, recording his accession with translations of several languages.

140 – 87 BC

Emperor Wudi enlarges territory of China; the "Silk Routes" are opened up.

44BC

Julius Caesar assassinated, Mark Antony and Octavian take power.

23 BC

Augustus Caesar (Octavian) reigns consulship; becomes emperor of Rome after defeating Mark Anthony.

5 BC-30 AD

Life of Jesus Christ.

AD 1-1300

Anasazi culture flourishes among agricultural people in the southwestern U.S. Archaeological findings have revealed remarkable building techniques including underground pit structures, highly skillful pottery, and evidence of trading throughout the region.

AD 9

Wang Mang usurps throne of China and rules until 23 A.D.

AD 25

Eastern Han period: Han dynasty restored, capital moved to Luoyang in north-central China.

AD 65

First mention of Buddhism in China, about a community in a court of the state of Chu.

AD 2nd century

First use of printing process is in China, using ink rubbings and wooden blocks.

AD 220

End of Han dynasty, that falls through popular revolt, and fighting between eunuchs, bureaucrats and consort families.

AD 300-600

Teotihuacan (Early Classic period), Mesoamerica

Location of the famous Sun Pyramid, an ancient city of 13 square miles and population of up to 200,000.

SICHUAN TREASURES

Figure on a Pedestal

Twelfth century B.C. (Late Shang dynasty)

Bronze

Overall height 260.8 cm, height of figure 172 cm, weight 180 kg

Excavated from Sanxingdui Pit 2

overhead #1 (top)

This life-size figure of a gesturing man stands on a pedestal that adds a meter to his height. The greatly oversized hands probably held an object that the man offered in sacrifice, perhaps an elephant tusk. (Sixty-seven elephant tusks were found in the same pit where he was discovered.) His head has the same blocky shape and sharp-cut features as the other heads from the Sanxingdui pits. Massive eyebrows stand in relief above bulging eyes, the eyeballs oddly creased from inner to outer **canthus**. The nose is long and sharp, the mouth a thin horizontal groove, the jaw a sort of horizontal molding that is carried all the way around to the hinge behind the ears.

The ears, like the eyes, are disproportionately large. Their lobes are perforated for ornaments. The head wears a two-part crown; one part is a sort of headband with a flat top, the other a cluster of petalled shapes (feathers?), head within it, now damaged and incomplete.

The figure is so sumptuously dressed that we might wonder whether its bare feet had some ritual significance. (A twelfth-century blade excavated from the same pit depicts figures wearing shoes.) On close examination of the costume, we can distinguish three layers of clothing: a long inner robe that reaches just below the knee in front, to the calf in back, and the ankle at the pronged sides; a short mantle that ends below the waist; and a plainer garment between the two exposed on the shoulders and arms and glimpsed under the right arm between the slightly parted edges of the mantle.

In every respect this statue seems distinctly more ambitious than other Sangxingdui castings. Few have nearly so much surface decoration. Besides its life-like size, it was a technical challenge to cast this bronze object in seven separate pieces.

The statue was found broken in two. The orientation of the two fragments in the pit leaves no doubt that the break occurred before burial. The figure was battered but apparently not burned.

Looking Questions



- What adjectives or descriptive words come to your mind when you look at this artifact?
- How tall do you think he is? What is something that would be of similar height?
- Notice what the man is wearing. How many layers of clothing is he wearing? Does it seem strange that he is wearing a crown and a richly decorated robe yet stands barefoot? How might you explain this?
- Why do you think the man's hands are so large? Why do you think his hands are posed in that way? What type of object do you think he might have been holding? Do other parts of his body seem larger or smaller than normal?
- Does he look like he is participating in some ceremony or ritual? What do you think he might be doing or saying?
- Look at the pedestal. Turn your head and look at it upside down. What do you see? Why do you think the bottom part of the pedestal is plain and undecorated?
- What is this object made from? What do you think it was used for? Does it remind you of anything that you have seen before?

Teaching Ideas

Take More than Just a Look

HISTORY EALR 2.1: Investigate and Research

ARTS EALR 4.4: Recognize the influence of the arts in shaping and reflecting culture and history

Imagine what it was like for the archaeologists in 1986 to find this first and only life-sized statue of a human figure from Bronze Age China. This figure and numerous other Sanxingdui bronzes have no parallel elsewhere in China. There is very sketchy information about the city where they were made and the people who made and used these bronzes. The lack of any written information about Sanxingdui and its culture puts severe limits on what we can hope to understand about these objects. As Chinese curator Jay Xu (pronounced “shoe”) points out: “All that can be hoped for... is to combine the evidence provided by the archaeological context (in other words, the presumed sacrificial purpose of the pits) with the evidence supplied by the objects themselves, and on that evidence to venture a few speculations.” Without any written information to go by, Xu’s job as the art curator, is to “take a very long, hard look” at this life-size figure.



Ask your students to “take a very long, hard look” at the overhead of *Figure on a Pedestal*. Explain to your students that the “looking questions” are examples of the work that art curators must engage in constantly to gather information. Share Curator Xu’s following observation with them: “Assuming that the statue represents a man rather than a god, then its crown, richly decorated robe, and high pedestal surely signify a man of high status. If its arms and hands mimic the attitude taken during an offering ritual, then—recalling the sixty-seven elephant tusks found in the same pit—we might guess that the hands held out a tusk.” Ask them to check out this artifact carefully and draw one of the man’s features (his head, hands, pedestals, clothing, etc.) It is possible that the eyes, eyebrows, and clothes may have originally been painted. They may want to redraw their picture painting in eyes and clothing. How does this change his appearance?



TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER: This bronze was cast in seven separate pieces. See if students can correctly identify these castings. Ask them to draw or point out each of the seven molds. Ask them to hypothesize why these pieces were cast separately. (For more information of the mold-making and bronze casting process, see Chinese Bronze Activity on page 16.)

- 1) The undecorated portion of the pedestal. (Was this left undecorated because it was sunk in the ground?)
- 2) The remainder of the pedestal, including all of the block the figure stands on except the slightly raised plain board immediately beneath the figure’s feet.
- 3) The feet of the statue, including the plain board on which they stand, and the lower part of the robed body.
- 4) The upper part of the body (including the head but excluding the arms and the upper portion of the crown).
- 5&6) The two arms.
- 7) The flowery upper part of the headdress.

Location. Location. Location.

WRITING EALR 2.3: Write in a variety of forms

GEOGRAPHY EALR 3.2: Analyze how the environment and environmental changes affect people

Students may enjoy pondering: where in the world is Sanxingdui and whatever happened to it?



Ask students to find Sanxingdui on a map. It is located approximately twenty miles northeast of Chengdu in Sichuan province. Sanxingdui is marked on the map included in this packet.

Scholars think it is possible that this flooding problem caused Sanxingdui to be abandoned and even revert to a simpler society.



Have students locate possible sources of flooding on the map (do rivers shift course or location over a period of 3,000 years?) Have they studied other ancient civilizations that have disappeared over time? If so, which civilizations and why did they disappear?



TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER: Have students write a water issues article from “a perspective of their choice” (i.e. newspaper writer, editorial columnist, fiction writer, archaeologist, conservationist, National Geographic reporter, weatherperson or cartoonist). You may want to limit their “water issues” article to twelfth-century B.C. Sichuan, China, or open it up to anytime, anywhere in China. Some may enjoy researching the great Dujiang flood prevention project of the third century B.C. (still in use today, located twenty-five miles northwest of Chengdu). Others may want to follow the ongoing story of the Three Gorges Dam project on the Yangzi River (scheduled for completion in 2009). Still others might want to discuss this present Chinese endeavor to build the most powerful dam in the world while the Northwest United States is considering dismantling dams.

See *Down the Yangtze: From Dragon’s Tail to Dragon’s Head* by Tese Neighbor (EARC 1998), as well as the bibliography for more background information. Do a search on Three Gorges Dam at the following websites (addresses list on packet weblis). China Daily, China’s National Environmental Protection Agency, and International Rivers Network.

SICHUAN TREASURES

Mask with Protruding Pupils

Twelfth century B.C. (Late Shang dynasty)

Bronze

Height 66 cm, width 138 cm, depth 73 cm

Excavated from Sanxingdui Pit 2

overhead #1 (bottom)

Its size and the monstrous pupils of its eyes make this one of the most weirdly supernatural of all the Sanxingdui sculptures. (Twenty other masks found in Pit 2 have more human-like features.) The word “mask” is used here to describe a shell of bronze U-shaped in horizontal section, with no top, back, or neck. Perhaps the shells fitted around architectural members, being secured in place through the openings usually seen in their sides or back corners.

Pointed ears raised alertly may mean that the creature’s hearing is as acute as its sight. The facial features are drawn in sweeping curves; the usual ridges on the cheekbones spiral elegantly into the corners of the beak-like nose. Unlike the soberly straight mouths of most of the other heads and masks that were found at Sanxingdui, the mouth here smiles in a long arc that rises almost parallel to the cheekbone ridges. Only two other smaller masks with these more supernatural features were also found. It is possible that additional masks of the same kind but made in a perishable material were destroyed during the sacrifice, for thirty-three telescope-like bronze pupils were found by themselves in a pit. (Alternatively these extra pupils may represent pre-cast parts of masks that were never made. A number of objects in the two pits are incomplete or look unfinished.)

The opening in the forehead, which has particularly heavy scorings visible at its corners, must have held some appendage. (A trunk-like projection was found on another mask from the same pit.) The crack that runs across the mouth and chin may be damage-inflicted intentionally before burial. Elsewhere, for instance on the left pupil, dents are clearly visible.

The mask was made in six pieces, five of which were pre-cast and embedded in the mold for the sixth. The pre-cast parts are the ears, the pupils, and, unexpectedly, the triangular underside of the nose, on which the hollows of the nostrils are indicated. The mold for the main pour required a rear section (or core) and one or at most two sections for the front of the mask.

(Excerpted from *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization*, pp. 102–108)

Looking Questions

- Describe the object you see. What lines, colors, shapes, and textures do you see? Where do you see them?
- Would you describe this mask in terms of human, animal, or supernatural characteristics? Why? What might the oversized ears, smile, and pupils symbolize?
- Imagine this mask without a smile. How would this change the mask?
- Notice the opening in the forehead. Why do you think an opening is located there? Another mask found in the same pit had a tall periscope-like object coming out of a similar opening. Imagine and draw your own projection coming out of the mask's forehead.
- Have you ever seen an object like this one? Does it remind you of anything?
- What is this object made from? What do you think it was used for?



- Take more than just a look...check out this artifact again carefully. Draw a picture of it, highlighting the features that interest you the most and explain why.

Teaching Ideas

Get Smart Investigation

HISTORY EALR 2.1: Investigate and research

ARTS EALR 4.4: Recognize the influence of the arts in shaping and reflecting cultures and history

Part of the mystery surrounding the discovery of artifacts at Sanxingdui has to do with the condition in which these objects were found. The artifacts appear to be intentionally broken and burnt (with the entire assemblage of artifacts being buried at the same time). It is also interesting to note that Sanxingdui burial pits did not contain human remains, unlike the Yellow River valley excavations from roughly the same time period.



Ask students to investigate the mask again. See if they can find the crack that runs across the mouth and chin and the dents in the left pupil of the mask. Archaeologists found a number of other bronzes and jades in the same pit that were deformed or broken before burial. Have students brainstorm what might be the reasons for the deformation of these ancient artifacts. After listing their ideas on the board, they may enjoy hearing the brainstorming ideas of the experts. Jay Xu, Curator of Chinese Art at the SAM, shares the following information:

Perhaps breaking and burning were ways of “killing” artifacts so that they could make the passage from this world to some supernatural realm. Scholars have reviewed a number of other possible interpretations of the pits, suggesting for instance that they are burial graves not yet located (despite careful search of the vicinity); cremation burials (but Pit 1 contained no trace of human bone, Pit 2 no bone at all); hoards buried with the intention of recovery at a later date (but why the breakage and burning?); the discarded furniture of burned or abandoned temples (but why discard valuables such as ivory and recyclable bronze?); or loot discarded (and neatly buried? On two occasions??) by invaders. None of these suggestions seem plausible.

Whatever the exact nature of the offering ritual, it was quite different from sacrifices performed in the same period at the capital of the Shang kings at Anyang. At Anyang as at Sanxingdui, large animals were sacrificed. But Anyang offerings seldom included bronzes or jades, never in the abundance seen at Sanxingdui, and they often included human victims, occasionally as many as several hundred. Perhaps the bronze heads at Sanxingdui were in some sense substitutes for human sacrifice.

(Excerpted from Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization, p. 31–32)



TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER: For more extensive classroom activities that focus on the Sanxingdui bronzes, please see “Ancient Bronzes of Sichuan are Looking at You” by Sarah Loudon, contained in the EARC packet.

Chinese Bronze

ARTS EALR 1.1: Understand and apply arts concepts and vocabulary to communicate ideas

ARTS EALR 3.1: Use image, sound, action, and movement through the arts to express individual ideas for a specific purpose

The Chinese mastered bronze making around mid Second Millennium Bc. This procedure involves copper and tin mixed in equal proportions. After this smelting process, nine parts of copper were then mixed with one part of tin and heated with charcoal. When melted together, they were poured into molds. At Sanxingdui, as elsewhere in ancient China, bronzes were made by casting in clay molds of two or more parts. For example, the mask with protruding pupils was made by the following sequence of steps. The projecting pupils for the eyes were cast first by themselves, and inserted at the appropriate locations in a mold designed to produce all the rest of the mask except its ears (and perhaps the missing appendage); when the mold was filled, the pupils were locked in place. As for the ears, they were precast and embedded in the mold.



Have students design their own bronze mask. Younger students may enjoy making the mask described below, while older students may enjoy spending their time working on a more intricate, supernatural design on paper. The materials for making the mask include: a piece of railroad board (20 x 18 inches), an aluminum baking sheet 20 inches wide, stapler, scissors, dull pencil, toothpick or nail tip, permanent gold or orange markers, glue, newspaper, and a thick piece of cardboard.

- 1) Make a pattern and trace it on a fold of newspaper. Make sure you get all the parts of the mask, trying to keep the basic shape of it.
- 2) Trace the newspaper pattern on the cardboard. Cut a single piece from the cardboard, saving the paper pattern. Lay the pattern on an aluminum sheet. Trace around the pattern onto the aluminum.
- 3) Cut the single piece of aluminum sheet. Color it with the marker to look gold. Make an orange border around the edge of the top section. With the tip of a tool, scratch designs around the shapes. Any design form is appropriate. This technique is called **repousse**. Glue the heavy cardboard to the aluminum.
- 4) Add the eyes, nose, and mouth. Pay close attention to their placement. Staple around the edges of the sculpture to bond the cardboard and the foil.

SICHUAN TREASURES

Lei with Dragon Cover

Late eleventh or early tenth century B.C. (transition from Shang to Western Zhou dynasty)

Bronzetrans

Height 50 cm, diameter of mouth 17.4 cm

Excavated in 1959 at Pengzhou Zhuqajie (about 10 km south of Sanxingdui)

overhead #2 (top)

The most prominent feature of this *lei* is its sculptural cover or lid. It is in the shape of a rearing dragon, whose spindly legs lift its massive head above its coiled body. The crudely executed dragon head is notable for its cross-shaped horns. A flamboyant crest in the shape of linked C's runs down the dragon's spine. Sunken-line spirals indicate musculature, and the skin of the animal is patterned with shield-shaped scales.

The body is entirely covered by decoration, which is accentuated by sunken-line patterning set against a background of fine spirals. Sculptural details include rams' heads on the shoulder and a buffalo head on the lower handle.

This massive dragon-shaped cover seems disproportionately large. It might be the miscalculation of a caster new to such covers; or perhaps the present cover was not original to this particular *lei*. Imperfections in the rendering of the dragon's snout and lower body seem to indicate technical problems in casting that are not in evidence on the body of the vessel. The cover was cast in a mold of several parts. One mold mark coincides with the jagged flange on the dragon's back; others run in the center of the lower belly and on top of the puny legs.

Unlike the cover, the body lacks **flanges**. The mold marks run through the axes of symmetry of the surface decoration and through the handles. On the lower handle, they are prominent enough to suggest misregister of mold sections. The loose circular rings in the handles were probably prefabricated and then included in the mold assemblage when the body was cast.

Looking Questions

- What is the first thing that you notice when you look at this vessel? Why?
- Describe the shapes and different parts of this vessel. What kind of textures do you see?
- How large do you think it is? How would you hold it?
- If you could touch it how would it feel? Do you think it is heavy?
- What is this object made from? What do you think it was used for?
- Does the dragon-shaped cover seem disproportionately large to you? Chinese art specialists speculate that the caster might have been a novice or perhaps the cover is not the original one. What do you think?



- Take more than just a look...check out this artifact again carefully. Choose one of the patterns to draw. Do you notice anything else once you have drawn this section?

Teaching Ideas

Searching for Dragons

ARTS EALR 4.4: Recognize the influence of the arts in shaping and reflecting cultures and history

GEOGRAPHY EALR 3.3: Examine cultural characteristics, transmission, and interaction

A number of the artifacts on display in the SAM exhibition contain dragon motifs. Certainly the dragon lid is the most prominent feature of this vessel. Perhaps the most common visual image associated with China throughout its history has been the dragon.



Send your students out on a mission to find dragons. Explain that this is not always an easy task. Some are hidden within the artwork. And they do not always look like dragons. Take them to the SAM exhibition *Treasures from a Lost Civilization* with sketchbook in hand. Ask them to find and copy all of the artifacts that contain dragon motifs, comparing dates, designs, materials, and techniques. How is the dragon orientated? Is its head looming high or positioned near the ground? Is it pictured diagonally or horizontally? The Chinese dragon has been described as having the head of a camel, horns of a deer, eyes of a rabbit, ears of a cow, neck of a snake, belly of a frog, scales of a carp, claws of a hawk, and palms of a tiger. After the students return with their findings, ask them if they agree with this description. If not, have them write their own description.

Those students who beg for more dragons could venture with their families to the permanent Asian art collection at the Volunteer Park museum. There they will find plenty of dragon motifs scattered throughout the Seattle Asian Art Museum.



Compare dragons in different cultures. Research art books or do an internet search. Students may enjoy collecting images of dragons from artwork around the world. The dragons then could be displayed on poster board, categorized by the country or culture in which they were found.



Students interested in folktales might enjoy collecting dragon folktales from around the world. It is interesting to note that Chinese dragons were customarily associated with water, different from the fire-breathing dragons of European lore. The Chinese believed that dragons controlled rainfall, so they often prayed to dragon deities in times of drought. The dragon later became known as the symbol of the emperor. Imperial robes and other objects made for the emperors often included dragon designs. Have students share the dragon stories that they have found. What do dragons symbolize in other cultures? Older students may enjoy discussing the definition of a symbol. How are symbols used in the world today? What symbols represent their country, their school, their family, and themselves?



TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER: Students of all ages may enjoy writing and illustrating their own dragon myth.

For more “Chinese Dragon” information and teaching ideas, see *Journey Down the Yangtze: From Dragon’s Tail to Dragon’s Head* by Tese Neighbor, (EARC, 1998) pp. 7–10; check the bibliography for related books.

Chinese Writing

HISTORY EALR 2.1: Investigate and Research

Our knowledge of ancient China is drawn from two main sources: archaeological finds and written records. Part of the mystery of the Sanxingdui find is that there are no written records of this Sichuan basin civilization. Before the Han period starting in 206 B.C., the people of the Sichuan basin did not leave a written record—and their neighbors did not even mention them until about the fifth century B.C. Comparatively speaking, our knowledge of the Shang civilization living in the Yellow River Valley (at roughly the same time period as the Sanxingdui civilization) is quite substantial. Studying the written records left behind by the Shang kings in Anyang (ca. 1200 B.C.) tells us much about the Shang civilization at this time.

▶▶▶ If students are unfamiliar with early Chinese writing, you may want to spur their interest by writing these questions on the board. Have them brainstorm for answers. Then compare their answers to the ones in italics below.

1) The earliest surviving Chinese script appears on _____?

Chinese characters appearing on turtle shells or animal bones constitute the earliest examples of the written Chinese language. They were carved for the purpose of divination and were called oracle bones.

2) What was the content of the records that were found?

The Shang rulers were interested in questions such as: Will the harvest be good? Is it an auspicious day to go hunting? The king has a headache—did he offend his ancestors? Will the king’s child be a son? A diviner (or fortuneteller) heated the bones with a metal rod, which produced cracks. The diviner then “read” the cracks in order to give the correct answer.

3) What did early Chinese script look like?

The script was made up of small pictures and patterns of lines representing objects or ideas. Some characters used today can be traced to these earlier writings.

- ■ ■ ➔ Ask your students to come up with other questions that are perhaps generated from these questions and answers. Add the students' questions to the blackboard list. These might include the following: What would have been the advantages/limitations of writing on shells/bones? Did they write on anything else? What do the Shang rulers' questions tell us about their way of life, occupation, and government? You may want to divide the students into small groups. Have them make two lists under the following categories: 1) What I already know, and 2) What questions remain unanswered. Have students do further research on any unanswered questions. See the bibliography and web sites for more information.

- ■ ■ ➔ Older students may want to do further research on these or other related topics (evolution of Chinese characters, language reform in the P.R.C., and Chinese language and the computer) by using the Internet, the library, or other resources. Perhaps some of them will uncover one of the most exciting archaeological detective stories of the last century—when oracle bones found in a medicinal shop were traced to their source (leading to the excavation of the famous Yinxu archaeological site at Anyang). See the bibliography and web sites for more background information.

- ■ ■ ➔ **TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER:** Learn to write Chinese characters. For a lesson plan on Chinese writing, see “A Search for the Traditional Character in Contemporary China: A Lesson on Chinese Writing” by Patricia Ward located in the EARC packet. Check out the following web sites (and those listed in this packet):
Chinese Pronunciation: www.ocrat.com/ocrat/chargif/compfram.html
Fun with Chinese: ns4.swl.net/radiochina/chinese/fun-3.html

SICHUAN TREASURES

Chime of Fourteen *Niuzhong*

Fourth century B.C. (Zhou dynasty)

Bronze with gold inlay

Height of largest bell 27.5 cm, height of smallest bell 14.6 cm

Excavated in 1972 from tomb 1 at Fuling Xiaotianxi

overhead #2 (bottom)

Within the Shang and Zhou culture area, bell chimes formed part of musical ensembles that performed during ancestral rituals and state banquets. Together with the ritual vessels, they constituted the most prestigious possessions of aristocratic lineages. *Niuzhong*, characterized by their inverted U-shaped suspension devices, was one of several types of chime-bell in use during the first millennium B.C. This set of fourteen is the largest continuous chime of *niuzhong* known, as well as the most elaborately decorated. Areas of agitated relieved décor, now covered with green patina but originally dark and shiny, contrast with flat areas inlaid with gold lines. These stand out from the dark red polished bronze surface, to dazzling effect. On other bells from pre-imperial China, such decorative metal inlay is otherwise unknown.

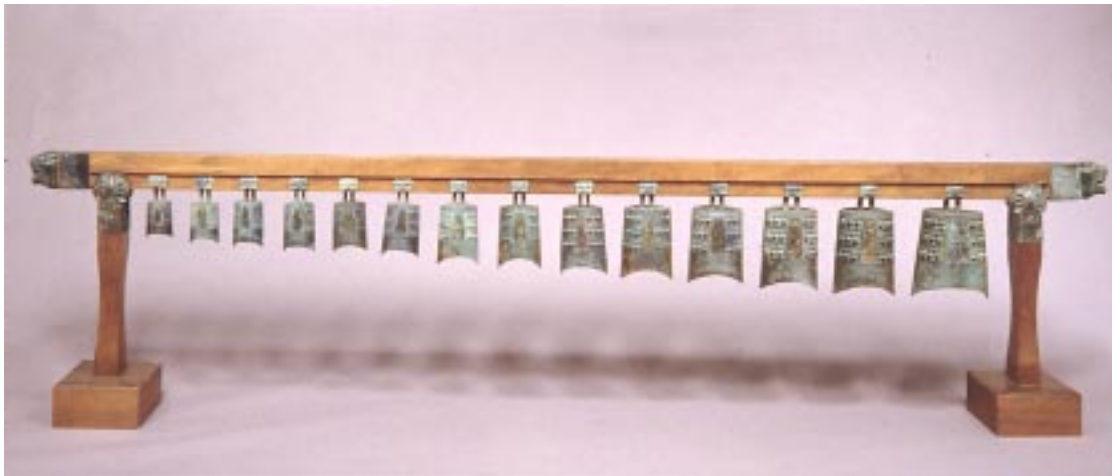
Produced by the pattern-block technique, the relieved decoration covers the center of the striking area (*gu*), most of the upper two-thirds of the bell face, and the flat top (*wu*). It consists of curved hooks and curls with jagged raised ends, all covered by fine spirals. Disconnected body parts such as beaks, eyes, eyebrows, and feathers bespeak its derivation from **zoomorphic** motifs. The inlaid décor is much calmer and entirely abstract. Its elegant scrolls are distributed over the lateral portions of the striking area, the trapezoidal central panel above, and the loop.

The bells were found along with the pegs that held them in slots in a wooden bell rack. Each peg is adorned with a relieved animal face. The present rack is a reconstruction, but its ornamental bronze fittings, featuring sculptural animal faces, are original.

The largest bell of the chime differs from the others in its proportions and appears to lack inlay. It may have been taken from another chime to enlarge a chime that originally had thirteen bells or to replace a lost bell. Archaeological discoveries suggest that ad hoc combinations of bells from different chimes were common.

Looking Questions

- Look at the chime, then close your eyes and describe what you remember most about the chime.
- This *niuzhong* is not only the largest continuous chime known, but it is also the most elaborately decorated. What kinds of lines, curves, colors, shapes, body parts, and textures do you see?
- How large do you think this instrument is?
- Close your eyes and imagine the sounds that this instrument would make? How do you think it was played? Do you think it would have been played by a single musician? When do you think it was played?
- How does the first and largest bell of the chime differ from the others?
- How were the bells made to produce different sounds?



- Take more than just a look...check out this artifact again carefully. Imagine a fourth-century B.C. scene where this bell might have been played. Compose a poem or song capturing this magical musical moment.

Teaching Ideas

The Sound of Chinese Music

ARTS EALR 4.4: Recognize the influence of the arts in shaping and reflecting cultures and history

HISTORY EALR 2.1: Investigate and research

GEOGRAPHY EALR 3.3: Examine cultural characteristics, transmission, diffusion, and interaction

There are many questions that arise with the discovery of ancient artifacts. For example, when UCLA Art Historian Lothar Von Falkenhausen investigated *The Chime of Fourteen Niuchang*, he discovered that the layout and décor of these fourteen bells were virtually identical to those seen on some mid-fourth-century bells from the Chu Kingdom (an ancient kingdom located to the east of where these were unearthed). He also noticed that the metal inlay patterns on the bells were similar to Chu Kingdom bronzes made during the Warring States period.



Have the students discuss this information. What does this similarity imply?

Falkenhausen believes it was manufactured by at a Chu workshop. Discuss with students that often in archaeology an answer may lead to yet another question.

That is, if the chime was made in the Chu Kingdom, how did it end up being excavated in the Sichuan basin? Falkenhausen, who has studied the Chu custom of presenting bells to allied rulers, believes that chime may have been a diplomatic gift from the Chu king to a ruler of the Ba (located in the Sichuan basin). Discuss with your students the use of gifts as a diplomatic gesture and the use of gifts as a way of transmitting culture. How were gifts used in other ancient cultures (Egyptian, Greek, Hindu, etc.)? How are gifts used today as a diplomatic gesture and/or a way of transmitting culture?



TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER: Older students may want to do further research on the following topics: **China's Tribute System**, the **Silk Road**, and the assimilation and transmission of art, music, spices, silk, and porcelain.



Those students interested in traditional Chinese instruments might enjoy finding information about: the *erhu* (two-stringed Chinese violin), the *pipa* (four-stringed lute), the *gu zheng* (twenty-one-stringed zither), the *qin* (seven-stringed lute), the *sheng* (bamboo mouth pipe), the *xiao* (flute played like a recorder), and the *xun* (a type of flute). Students who are unfamiliar with China's rich and long musical tradition may enjoy listening to the sounds of traditional Chinese music on CD: *Anthology of World Music: China* (Various Artists, Rounder); *China: Music of the Pipa* (Lui Pui-yuen, Elektra/Nonesuch); *Our Homeland* (The Guo Brothers, Stern's/Bamboo Mountain), and *Time to Listen* (Various artists, Ellipsis Arts).

Teachers interested in the general theme of trade and cross-cultural exchange, see SAM's publication *Trade, Technology, and Teapots: A Teacher's Guide to the Exhibition Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe*.

Picture Yourself in Third-Century Sichuan

HISTORY EALR 2.1: Investigate and research

COMMUNICATIONS EALR 1.2: Listen and observe to gain and interpret information

Soaring snow-capped peaks and turbulent rivers have, for many millenniums, cut off Sichuan from the rest of China. In fact, parts of the province are still inaccessible today. Perhaps students can imagine what it was like in third-century Sichuan by listening to a few lines of a longer poem written by Li Bai (also called Li Po and Li T'ai-po) in the eighth century.

*Peak upon peak less than a foot from the sky,
Where withered pines hang inverted from sheer cliffs,
Where cataracts and roaring torrents make noisy clamor,
Dashing upon rocks, a thunderclap from ten thousand glens.
An impregnable place like this
I sigh and ask why should anyone come here from far away?*

(Translated by Irving Lo; see entire poem in *Journey Down the Yangtze: From Dragon's Tail to Dragon's Head* by Tese Neighbor, (EARC, 1998) p. 14. For more background information on Sichuan geography, see this EARC curriculum.)

▶▶▶ Divide students into groups. Explain to them that other Zhou **Dynasty** bells have been excavated in Sichuan. Two other types are on exhibition at the SAM. One is a handbell (zheng) and the other is a larger bell (chunyu) The former was handheld and struck with a mallet; the latter was suspended by a loop on the top and struck with a mallet. But unlike the fourteen chimes, neither of these single bells was used in musical performances. Have the students discuss what they might have been used for. According to inscriptions and historical texts, these bells were used for signal giving in warfare.

▶▶▶ **TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER:** Ask students to picture themselves in third-century Sichuan. Have them discuss and list the type of military information that they would need and want to convey by bell. They may want to try their hand at devising their own signals. Perhaps each student would like to design a symbol or motif for his or her own bell. (Motifs on the SAM exhibition bells include: a tiger with its tongue outstretched, a four-petaled flower, and a tiger with a long, curved tail.) Discuss the irony of some bells being used as diplomatic gifts while others were used for signal giving in warfare.

SICHUAN TREASURES

Horse and Groom

First or second century A.D. (Eastern Han)

Bronze

Height of horse 135 cm, height of groom 67 cm

*Excavated in 1990 from Mianyang Hejiashan tomb 2
overhead #3 (left)*

Attended by a bronze groom, this very large horse was made in nine separate pieces—two for the head and neck, two for the body, four for the legs, and one for the tail. Assembly from parts made separately had the advantage of bypassing the technological problems of a large one piece casting, but it might also reflect the influence of joinery, for it seems to have been suggested by horses made of wood. Pottery horses that once had wooden legs, now decayed away, are known, as well as pottery horses in which head and body are separate parts even though the parts could easily have been joined before firing. Actual wooden horses (some carved in one piece) have been found in Sichuan, though they are less common and usually less preserved than the pottery ones. The persistence of an assembly method derived from wood suggests that, regardless of material, all these horses belong to an older tradition of wooden tomb figurines associated particularly with the Warring States Chu. Bronze examples would simply have been especially fine and costly versions.

All members of the Han elite needed good horses to draw their carriages, and horses are frequently depicted in tombs. Such depictions are especially prominent in western China, perhaps because of proximity to the region from which the best horses came.

Horse breeding in China did not produce the finest horses, nor was it even able to meet the demand of Han armies for cavalry horses. Fine stock had to be imported from the western and northern borderlands. According to ancient Chinese records, procuring horses from Central Asia was one objective of Emperor Han Wudi's Central Asian campaign. (See Burton Watson's translation from *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, listed in the bibliography, for more information.)

Looking Questions

- What adjectives would you use to describe this horse? Imagine you are sitting on the horse. How does it feel?
- What do you think are the most distinguishing features of this horse? What do you see that tells you that horses symbolized status and military power?
- How large do you think the horse is? How many bronze castings were used to make this horse?
- How would you describe the groom? What is he wearing?
- What is the relationship between the groom and the horse? Why do you think the groom is much smaller than the horse? What emotion comes to your mind when you look at the horse? The groom?
- Why do you think figures of horses were often found in tombs? Why were horses important to the people who lived during this era?



- Take more than just a look...check out this artifact again carefully. Write a shortstory about these two figures. Where do you think they came from and where are they going?

Teaching Ideas

Where in the World?

GEOGRAPHY EALR 1.1: Use and construct maps, charts, and other resources

GEOGRAPHY EALR 2.1: Describe the natural characteristics of places and regions

COMMUNICATION EALR 2.2: Develop content and ideas

➡ Archaeologists have discovered that horses were depicted more prominently in tombs found in western China as compared to tombs found in other areas of China. Ask students why they think this might be. Researchers who have pondered this question believe it has to do with proximity. For example, western China (including Sichuan) is closer to the prized horses of Central Asia than the Han capital of Chang'an (Xian). Have students find Chengdu (Sichuan province) and Xian (Shaanxi province) on a map of China. Then ask them to locate **Kashi** or **Kashgar** (Xinjiang Autonomous Region) in what was traditionally called Central Asia. Give the students an "Imperial Assignment." They must figure out the best route to procure the prized Central Asian horses. According to ancient Chinese records, procuring these horses from Central Asia was one objective of Emperor Han Wudi's Central Asian campaign. And now **Emperor Wudi** has sent your students off to find the best horses that Central Asia has to offer. What physical obstacles might they encounter? Have them individually or in small groups draw a map and figure out the best route to get to Central Asia. This map should be illustrated. The mountains, deserts, rivers, vegetation, animals, weather, and people should be indicated on the map. What foods might they expect to eat? What time of year might be best for making this expedition? What should they pack? Besides working on an illustrated map, students may enjoy keeping a journal/travelogue of the great adventures they had during their imperial assignment.

➡ **TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER:** Students may want to go to the library or go on the Internet to research the **Silk Roads**. (There were several routes between China and the West. The main route, that sometimes split in two, ran for almost 7,000 miles leading from the Western Han capital of Chang'an (modern Xian) through Dunhuang and Kashi (Kashgar) to Persia and the Mediterranean Sea. Emperor Wudi's imperial expansion had far reaching consequences, opening the trade routes between the Han capital and the West. Discuss how these early routes diffused not only horses and silk, but also people, religion, languages, technologies, food, and art forms.

The Art of Chinese Horses

HISTORY EALR 2.1: Investigate and research

ARTS EALR 4.4: Recognize the influence of the arts in shaping and reflecting cultures and history

➡ No more wild horse chases. This time ask your students to search for some of the most-prized collectors items—horses in Chinese art. From the spirited Tang horse to the “flying” horse with its hoof touching a passing swallow, from life-size terracotta horses to exquisite miniature horses drawing chariots, Chinese horses are found throughout the great tombs of China and the great museums of the world. Ask students to search these museums by going online or by paging through Chinese art books. Ask them to photocopy and post them chronologically on the board. Note that horses are depicted in every conceivable way: saddled or unsaddled, grazing, galloping, the head down, up, or turned to catch a bug or scratch a leg. Horse and rider (male and female) are even found playing polo, a game introduced from Persia. Have students list not only the different ways that horses are depicted but also the art form in which they were crafted (glazed pottery, stone relief, repousse gilt on silver, stone statues, and carved wood). Discuss the artistic changes these horses have gone through over the ages. Why were horses depicted so often? Why were they held in such high esteem? What characteristics of the horse would have been valuable? What do you think the Chinese find valuable or hold in high esteem today? What do Americans today find valuable or hold in high esteem?

➡ **TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER:** Students may want to supplement this horse discussion by finding and reading myriad poems written about horses in Chinese literature. Perhaps the poems they find and/or the ones quoted below will inspire the students to write their own poems about horses or another animal or a person that they hold in high esteem. (See the bibliography for Chinese poetry texts.)

Emperor Wudi (157–87 B.C.) not only sent his Han armies off to bring back Central Asian horses, he supposedly even took the time to write the following poem about a “heavenly” horse.

*The horse of Heaven has come
Open the far gates
Raise up my body
I go to Kunlun*

*The horse of Heaven has come
Mediator for the dragon
He travels to the gates of Heaven
And looks on the Terrace of Jade*

(Excerpted from Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization, p. 269)

Du Fu (712–770 A.D.), an eighth-century Sichuan poet, is famous for writing about many things, including falling off his horse. Below is an excerpt from one of his poems:

*River villages, wilderness lodges
all showed themselves to my eyes,
riding whip dangling and bit hanging loose,
I sped over purple lanes.*

*In an instant this white-haired old man
Shocked people in the thousands,
But I trusted in my youthful skills
to ride a horse and shoot.*

*How could I know of such spirit set free
in those hooves that chased the wind?—
its bloody sweat and headlong gallop
like spurting flecks of jade.*

*Unexpectedly it stumbled at last,
and I ended up hurt—
when you do what you want in human life,
humiliation follows . . .*

(Excerpted from “Having Fallen Off My Horse Drunk, Various Gentlemen Come to Visit Me Bringing Wine,” translated by Steven Owens.)

Figure of a Squatting Drummer

First or second century A.D. (Eastern Han)

Ceramic

Height 48 cm

*Excavated in 1982 from Xindu Sanhexiang Majiashan
overhead #3 (left)*

This forty-eight-centimeter-high ceramic figure exudes merriment and joy. This drummer specialized in a kind of part-spoken, part-sung storytelling. He sings merrily, his brows wrinkled with laughter, his right leg in the air, his outflung right arm (which held a now lost drumstick) striking the drum, cradled in his left hand. He wears an armlet high on his left arm and a headband or cap. His heavy body, perhaps that of a dwarf, is bare except for trousers covering his legs. Performers with the same heavy build appear on excavated bricks in scenes of juggling and sword balancing. Comical, almost caricatured, figures of performers were especially popular in Sichuan, though they are found elsewhere as well.

Han tomb figures like this one were mass-produced and found in many parts of China. Entertainers of all kinds (dancers, acrobats, musicians, tightrope walkers, and singers) are also found not only in three-dimensional clay like this drummer but also pictured in relief on bricks. (An Eastern Han ceramic entitled *Brick with scene of acrobatic performance* is also part of the SAM exhibition.)

These entertainments—by Eastern Han times called “the hundred amusements” or *baixi*—may well have been a feature not only of banquets but also of ceremonial occasions, perhaps even funerals. The most elaborate forms were of course to be found at court; the First Emperor of Qin and the Han emperor Wudi are said to have employed entertainers by the thousand. Poems of the day describe a carnival atmosphere:

*They assembled the show wagon,
From which they hoisted a tall banner on a pole.
Young lads displayed their skill.
Up and down doing glides and flips.
Suddenly, they threw themselves upside down, catching themselves with their
heels;
Seemingly they were cut asunder and connected again.
One hundred horses under the same bridle,
Raced side by side as fast as their feet could go.
As for the tricks performed at the top of the pole -
There was no end to their numerous postures.
Drawing their bows, archers shot at a Western Qiang;
Looking again, they fired at a Xianbei.*

(From “Selections of Refined Literature. Volume 1: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals.” David Knechtges 1982, p. 235)

(Excerpted from *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization*, pp. 285–300)

Looking Questions

- Describe the physical features of the figure and how they affect you emotionally.
- What do you think are the emotions of this figure? How does that make you feel?
- Have you ever seen a figure like this one? What does it remind you of?
- What do you think this figure is made out of? How heavy do you think it is?
- Figures like this were mass-produced during Han times. What do you think they were used for?
- Compare the figure and pose of the squatting drummer with the *Figure on a Pedestal*, cast more than 1,000 years earlier. List the similarities and differences.




- Take more than just a look...check out this artifact again carefully. Compose a song that reflects his mood.


Teaching Ideas

Capturing the Moment

COMMUNICATION EALR 2.2: Develop content and ideas

WRITING EALR 2.2: Writing for different purposes


 Viewing art (like the statue of the squatting drummer) can evoke much feeling. If students have a chance to view the SAM exhibition, ask them to jot down a few sentences that capture the feelings they have after viewing the drummer (or any of the Sichuan treasures.) Otherwise, have them view the drummer on the overhead projector and then ask them to jot down their feelings. Ask students to read the first paragraph on page X describing the squatting drummer. How does the artist use pose and gestures to capture the moment? Ask students to compare the horse and groom with the squatting drummer. Are the horse and groom static—or do they capture the moment?

 Now compare this to how a poet can capture a moment. Read aloud the poem found on page X. Discuss how certain words and the particular way words are used can convey such vivid images in such a short poem. Ask students to read their favorite line and discuss why that line “works for them.” What kind of picture does the poem draw/evoke in their minds? What do poets use to capture the moment? Ask students to try to capture their own feelings about this squatting drummer by writing a short poem.

Who in the World was Qin Shihuangdi?

HISTORY EALR 2.1: Investigate and research

WRITING EALR 2.3: Write in a variety of forms

 As mentioned on the previous page, the first emperor of China enjoyed storytellers and other court entertainers. But just who was **Qin Shihuangdi** (259–210 B.C.)? Some say he was a great yet cruel leader. Students may enjoy doing some research and putting the many pieces together that make up this “larger-than-life” emperor. Here are a few pieces of his life to get them going:

In 221 B.C. as King of the Qin state he defeated his powerful adversaries, unified China, and took the title of the first sovereign emperor of China. Qin Shihuangdi standardized weights and measures, imposed a single currency, decreed laws, and simplified the language. He mobilized the population to work on gigantic projects such as the building of the **Great Wall**. The suffering caused by its construction is remembered in countless poems, songs, and legends. He also mobilized (conscripted) nearly three-quarters of one million men to build his palace and tomb. (Thousands of terra-cotta warriors were discovered in 1974 protecting his yet unexcavated mausoleum.) The Qin emperor even tried to standardize thought! He ordered Confucian books to be burned and destroyed his opponents by burying them alive.

Ask students to put together this collected information and do one of the following assignments: write a poem about the first emperor's life; write a letter that the first emperor might have written before he died; illustrate a poster or make a puzzle capturing the many aspects of his life (and death); or write a popular story from the Qin emperor's life that a Han storyteller/drummer might have told to the delight of the Han citizens.

- ➔ **TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER:** Qin Shihuangdi created a strong, centralized administration based on the Legalist belief. The Legalists, like the Confucianists and Daoists, were interested in bringing peace and order to a chaotic time. Although these three currents of thought in ancient China stressed the importance of harmony and order, they each had very different prescriptions. Have your students work individually or in groups finding information on these three important currents of thought. They could do written or oral reports. Students may enjoy debating current issues or situations from the perspectives of a Legalist, Daoist, and Confucianist. For example, a student knows that a younger brother or sister is cheating on a test. How should the student act according to these different perspectives?

Exchanging Shoes

HISTORY EALR 2.1: Investigate and research

COMMUNICATION EALR 2.2: Develop content and ideas

- ➔ As noted earlier, this humorous drummer symbolized a Han entertainer who specialized in a kind of part-spoken, part-sung storytelling. Have students put themselves in this drummer's shoes (or bare feet) and have them write a story or folktale that an entertainer like him may have conveyed. Students may want to go to the library or look on the Internet to find out more about the events that took place during the Qin dynasty (221–207 B.C.) and the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). Discuss how a story about the Qin emperor might be told differently by a storyteller during the Qin dynasty than a storyteller living during the Han dynasty. How could the framing of events or the interpretation of history change over the years? Note how history of the same period can be told differently, depending on who is in power.
- ➔ For students who enjoy poetry, ask them to take an ancient story or theme and change it into a poem. For example, Han Poet Chen Lin (d. 217 A.D.) imagined the following exchange between a conscript laborer working on the Great Wall and his wife, and wrote this poem:

I Watered my Horse at a Spring by the Wall

*I watered my horse at a spring by the Wall
with water so cold my horse hurt in its bones.*

*They went to the boss-man beside the Great Wall,
Saying, “Don’t keep us Tai-yuan lads long past our time,”*

*“Let’s keep the state work on schedule, boys,
so lift your mallets to the rhythm of the sound.”*

*“Better for a man to die fighting
than bear pounding earth to build the Great Wall.”*

*And the Great Wall keeps stretching on and on,
on and on three thousand miles.*

*There’s many a stout lad on the frontier,
and many a wife alone at home.*

I wrote a letter to my wife:


*“Better find another man,
don’t wait for me;
be good to your new man’s family,
just now and then remember me.”*

*A letter came back to the frontier land,
said, “What’s this foolishness you’re telling me?”*

*“Since I’ve got troubles, why should I
try to hold down a woman no blood-kin of mine?
If you have a boy, don’t raise him,
if you have a girl, feed her well.
If you could only see how it is by the Wall,
with the bones of dead men stacked in a pile...”*

*“They dressed my hair as a woman
and I went to be your wife,
now my heart knots with misery;
I see well how you suffer on the frontier,
and I don’t think I will be long for life.”*

(Translated by Steven Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp. 236–237.)

 **TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER:** Have students create shadow puppets to act out their stories or poems. For a lesson plan on making shadow puppets (one of the entertainments that is said to have originated during the Han dynasty), see “Chinese Shadow Puppets” by Terry Lindquist located in the EARC packet.

Pronunciation Guide

Chinese words in this teacher's guide are written in **pinyin**. Pinyin is the romanization system used to transcribe Mandarin Chinese, the national language of China, into an alphabetic system. In the past, Chinese names were often written in the Wade-Giles romanization system. For example, the Chou dynasty is now written as the Zhou dynasty; Mao Tse-t'ung is now written Mao Zedong.

Most pinyin symbols are pronounced more or less as English speakers would expect, with the exception of:

- c is pronounced like the **ts** in its
- q is pronounced like the **ch** in cheap
- x is pronounced like the **sh** in sheen
- zh is pronounced like the **j** in jump
- z is pronounced like the **ds** in lids

- e is pronounced like the **e** in talent or the **uh** in huh
- e (before ng) is pronounced like the **u** in rung
- o is pronounced like the **aw** in law
- ou is pronounced like the **o** in go

Chinese is a tonal language, with the standard Beijing dialect or Mandarin using four tones. Using the “ma” as an example, the tones are:

- mā first tone: relatively high-pitched, does not rise or fall
- má second tone: mid-range, rises rapidly
- mǎ third tone: starts mid-range, dips to a low pitch and then rises
- mà fourth tone: starts high and falls rapidly

Pronounced with different tones, each of these conveys a different meaning. For example, the “ma” pronounced with the first tone means “mother;” “ma” pronounced with the fourth tone means “to scold.”

Glossary

Anyang (Ān-yāng)

Famous Shang dynasty archaeological site located in northern China near the Yellow River.

Archaeology

The scientific study of fossils, relics, artifacts, and monuments of past human life and activities.

Baodun Culture (Bough)

Neolithic or Stone Age culture that lived in the Sichuan basin.

Bronze

A metal-making process that was mastered by the Chinese during the Shang dynasty. It involved melting copper and tin and then firing them together to make objects such as ceremonial pots, statues, bells, tools, and weapons.

Canthus

The corner at either side of the eye, formed by the meeting of the upper and lower eyelids.

Ceramics

Broad term for all objects made of fired clay.

Character

Symbol in the Chinese writing system that represents an object, idea, concept, or sound.

Chinese Tribute System

System of giving gifts to the emperor in tribute to him and in recognition of one's lower status.

Dynasty

A succession of rulers of the same line of descent. China's imperial or dynastic system started with the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.) and lasted until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911.

Emperor Wudi (157–87 B.C.) (Woo-dee)

Wudi, who had one of the longest reigns in imperial history, expanded the Chinese empire, opening up trade routes along the Silk Roads.

Flange

A protruding rim, edge, rib, or collar used to strengthen an object, hold it in place, or attach it to another object.

Great Wall

China's most famous landmark, this wall stretches for more than 1,500 miles across northern China.

Hoards

Hidden supply of artifacts.

Kashi (Kashgar) (ka-she)

Formerly a key Central Asian city along the ancient Silk Road; today a city in China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

Kunlun (kun-lun)

Mountain ranges in western China, located on the north end of the Tibetan Plateau extending from the Pamirs and Karakoram Range into Qinghai province.

Lei (lay)

A vessel with a large oval body, narrow cylindrical neck, and two handles that rise almost to the level of the mouth.

Niuzhong (neo-jong)

A chime-bell that was in use during the first millennium B.C., characterized by an inverted U-shaped suspension device.

Oracle Bones

Animal bones or turtle shells used for divination in China. Earliest existing Chinese writing has been found on Shang dynasty **oracle bones**.

People's Republic of China (PRC)

Established on October 1, 1949, by the Chinese Communists under the leadership of Mao Zedong after defeating Chiang Kaishek (who fled to Taiwan).

Pinyin

The romanization system used to transcribe Mandarin Chinese, the national language of China, into an alphabetic system.

Qin Shihuangdi (259–210 B.C.) (Chin-sure-wong-dee)

In 221 B.C. he unified China and became the first emperor of China.

Repoussé

Relief patterns made by hammering on the reverse side of the metal.

Sanxingdui

Ancient Bronze Age site dating back to the second millennium B.C. It was discovered in 1986 about twenty miles northeast of Chengdu, Sichuan.

Sanxingdui (san-shing-dway)

Ancient Bronze Age site dating back to the second millennium B.C. It was discovered in 1986 about twenty miles northeast of Chengdu, Sichuan.

Sichuan (se chwan)

Located in south central China, Sichuan is one of the most populous provinces of China with approximately ninety million people.

Silk Road(s)

It was not one but a series of trade routes that connected China with India, the Middle East, Persia, and the Roman Empire.

Three Gorges Dam

When completed in 2009, this dam will be the most powerful dam in the world. It is located several hundred miles downstream from Chongqing.

Yangzi (Yangtze) River (yāng-tse)

China's longest river travels nearly 4,000 miles from its source in the mountains of Tibet to its mouth just north of Shanghai.

Yellow River

Famous river in north China; Chinese civilization was thought to have been born in the Yellow River valley and then to have gradually spread outward.

Zoomorphic

The use of animal forms in symbolism, literature, or graphic representation.

Community Resources

Asia Society (Seattle Representative Office)

2200 Alaskan Way, Suite 465

Seattle, WA 98121

Tel: (206) 443-5698

Fax: (206) 443-6917

<http://www.AsiaSociety.org>

<http://www.asiasource.org>

Founded in 1956, the Asia Society (headquartered in New York City) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, public organization dedicated to deepening American understanding of Asia and fostering communication between Americans and Asians.

East Asia Resource Center (EARC)

Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington

Box 353650

Seattle, WA 98195-3650

Tel: (206) 543-1921

Fax: (206) 685-0668

E-mail: earc@u.washington.edu

The EARC presents summer institutes and various workshops for K-12 educators. The Center also publishes a free quarterly newsletter that publicizes workshops, study tours, and curriculum materials. Call the EARC to be placed on the mailing list.

Seattle Art Museum (SAM)

100 University Street

Seattle, WA 98122

Information: (206) 654-3100

<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org>

The highlights of the Asian art collections at SAM downtown include a recreated 17th-century Chinese scholar's studio, Buddhist art, ancient bronzes, screens, handscrolls, and textiles. There is also an authentic Japanese tea house, at which tea ceremony demonstrations are regularly held.

Seattle Asian Art Museum (SAAM)

1400 E. Prospect Street

Volunteer Park

Seattle, WA 98112

Information Desk: (206) 654-3100

Wyckoff Teacher Resource Center: (206) 654-3186 or TRC@seattleartmuseum.org

The Wyckoff Teacher Resource Center is a lending library for educators and parents. The TRC offers interdisciplinary, classroom-ready materials to help you integrate art into the classroom.

Seattle-Chongqing Sister City Association (SCSCA)

10002 Aurora Ave N, Suite 4423

Seattle, WA 98133

Tel: (206) 527-8532

Fax: (206) 524-828X

Email: mcraig@certech.net

web page: www.scsca@oz.net

The SCSCA is a non-profit, volunteer citizens organization that promotes friendship and exchange programs (including educational exchanges) between Seattle and Chongqing. The SCSCA is one of 21 sister city associations officially recognized and endorsed by the city of Seattle. Volunteers are available to present slide shows on Chongqing, and the Yangtze River Basin region. Contact the association to receive additional information.

Seattle Chinese Garden Society

2040 Westlake Avenue North, Suite 306

Seattle, WA 98109

Tel: (206) 282-8040

mail@seattle-chinese-garden.org

<http://www.seattle-chinese-garden.org>

The Seattle Chinese Garden Society is a nonprofit organization engaged in planning and building the Seattle Chinese Garden: Xi Hua Yuan at South Seattle Community College. Contact the office to be placed on the mailing list; volunteers are also available to visit classrooms and present slide shows on traditional Chinese gardens.

Seattle Public Library

1000 4th Avenue

Seattle, WA 98104

Children's Reference: (206) 386-4620

Education: (206) 386-4620

History Reference: (206) 386-4625

Humanities: (206) 386-4640

<http://www.spl.lib.wa.us/>

Seattle Symphony

P.O. Box 21906

Seattle, WA 98111-3906

Tel: (206) 336-6650

May 2001 Seattle Symphony presents a Pacific Rim music festival. Education activities include Meet the Beat concerts for secondary-school students and noon-time concerts, lectures, and presentations at the new Learning Center at Benaroya Hall.

Washington State China Relations Council

2200 Alaskan Way, Suite 440

Seattle, WA 98121

Tel: (206) 441-4419

Fax: (206) 443-3828

<http://www.wsrc.org>

The Washington State China Relations Council, founded in 1979 following the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, is a private and nonprofit trade organization dedicated to promoting stronger commercial, educational, and cultural relations between the state of Washington and the People's Republic of China. The Council is the oldest nongovernmental statewide trade association dealing specifically with China.

Wing Luke Asian Museum

407 Seventh Avenue South

Seattle, WA 98104

(206) 623-5124

Education and Tour Information: (206) 623-5190

Email: folks@wingluke.org

Web Site: www.wingluke.org

A pan-Asian Pacific American Museum devoted to the collection, preservation, and display of Asian Pacific American culture, history, and art, the Wing Luke's programs are inspired and created by the combined efforts of museum professionals and grassroots community members. The Wing Luke Asian Museum is a multidisciplinary cultural center that presents arts and heritage exhibitions, public programs, school tours, publications, and films and maintains a permanent collection and research center.

World Affairs Council (Global Classroom)

2200 Alaskan Way, Suite 450

Seattle, WA 98121

Tel: (206) 441-5910

Fax: (206) 441-5908

E-mail: nbacon@world-affairs.org

<http://www.world-affairs.org>

The Global Classroom program brings the world into classrooms by offering teacher training programs on international topics as well as bringing international visitors into the classroom. The World Affairs Council publishes a free monthly Global Classroom Newsletter for educators posting workshops, study tours, local international events and useful web sites. Contact the WAC to be placed on the mailing list for teachers.