

Lesson Title: Chinese Brush Painting

Class and Grade level(s) Art 9-12

Goals and Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Discuss the origins of Chinese Brush Painting.
2. Explore the three styles of Chinese Brush Painting and discuss the differences (see vocabulary)
 - a) Po Mo
 - b) Mo Ku
 - c) Ku Fa
3. Discuss the Six Canons of Chinese Brush Painting applied to master artist, their own work and/or the work of their peers. (see vocabulary)
4. Identify and use materials to create Chinese brush painting. Use the Four Treasures of Ancient China: Ink, slate, brush, and paper to create a Chinese brush painting.
5. Practice basic strokes "The Four Gentlemen" or "Four Seasons" (Plum, Orchid, Bamboo, Chrysanthemum) (see vocabulary for symbolism)
6. Tell why a red seal was placed on Chinese brush paintings.
7. Create a Chinese brush painting based on the work of a master using appropriate brush methods and techniques.
8. Differentiate the principal forms of traditional Chinese painting (hanging scroll, albums of paintings, fan surface and long horizontal handscrolls.)

Time required/class periods needed

10-15 50-minute class periods.

Primary source bibliography

<http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/painting/4ptgintr.htm>

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hi/te_index.asp?i=9

<http://www.chinastyle.cn/painting-calligraphy/painting/index.htm>

Other sources used

Mittler, Gene A. *Art in Focus*. New York: Glencoe, McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Evans, Jane. *An Introduction to Chinese Brush Painting* (Video, Whitestar) John Henson Associates, 1989

Rae, Nan. *The Ch'i of the Brush*. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 2003.

Cherrett, Pauline. *A Beginners Guide, Chinese Brush Painting*. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.200

http://www.asia-art.net/chinese_tech_brush.html

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/arts/chinese-painting.htm>

<http://www.nanrae.com/lesson-pg3.html>

Required materials/supplies

Water containers
Water
Paper towels
Ink and Ink Stone or Watercolors
Chinese Brushes
Paper (type of paper depends on budget)
Adhesive to mount paintings

Vocabulary

Zhi – The word for paper in Chinese
Bi – the word for brush in Chinese
Mo – the word for ink in Chinese
Yan – the word for inkstone in Chinese
Wen fang si bao – The Four Treasures in Chinese

Vocabulary and Notes

I. The three styles of Chinese Brush Painting

- A. **Po Mo-** 'Throw Ink' style uses no drafting lines and makes no corrections, making what we have painted as an expression of our inner self. Our goal is a spontaneous and free spirited effect.
- B. **Mo Ku-** meaning 'Boneless' mode. Free-spirited and spontaneous execution of brush strokes without first sketching or outlining. One of the most important elements of this approach is that the artist not go over or make any attempt to 'correct' a stroke. Correction would take away the element of spontaneity and would make it impossible to read the original brush strokes of the artist which is highly desired.
- C. **Ku Fa-** outline/contour style

II. Six Canons of Chinese Brush Painting (5th Century A.D., Hsieh Ho)

In the 5th Century A.D., *Xie He* wrote the "Six Canons of Painting" which form the basis of all Chinese Brush Painting to this very day (web resource above). They are:

- A. "**Circulation of the Ch'i**": (Breath, Spirit, Vital Force of Heaven) - producing "movement of life". This is in the heart of the artist.
- B. "**Brush Stroke Creates Structure**": This is referred to as the bone structure of the painting. The stronger the brush work, the stronger the painting. Character is produced by a combination of strong and lighter strokes, thick and thin, wet and dry. Bone work is a linear movement of the brush tip and suffuses the brush painting with strength and muscle.
- C. "**According to the Object, Draw its Form**": Draw the object as you see it! In order to do this, it is very important first to understand the form of the object! This will produce a work that is not necessarily totally realistic but as you "see" it. Thus, the more you study the object to be painted, the better you will paint it.

Procedure

After studying unit about the Art of India, China and Japan student will proceed with this unit on Chinese brush painting.

1. Visual presentation and lecture on goals 1-4.
2. Discussion to check for understanding of goals 1-4
3. Students will watch video. Evans, Jane. An Introduction to Chinese Brush Painting (Video, Whitestar) John Henson Associates, 1989.
4. Teacher demonstration and review of materials and techniques.
5. Guided practice exercises including “The Four Gentleman” or the “Four Seasons.” Students will also practice fish and peonies. (1-2 days for each) **(A teacher with a limited background in Chinese brush painting can use the video to teach however I would recommend that the teacher first practice with the video before attempting to work with the students. A document scanner hooked to a TV when doing demonstrations will allow you to control the speed of the lesson.)**
6. Students will select a master Chinese brush painting to use as a point of departure for their “master project”. Students will use the text and internet sites provided to gather their resource materials.
7. Students will practice their “master project” on inexpensive paper prior to beginning the completed “master project”
8. Students will critique their practice master work in small groups with teacher guidance using the Six Canons of Chinese Brush Painting as a guide.
9. Each student will create two finished Chinese paintings in a “master project” The master project can be created on quality paper. The paper (zhi) that is used for Chinese brush painting can have many specifications. For best results the teacher should experiment with the papers before handing any out so that paper there is less waste.
10. Students will prepare work for display by mounting their works on black paper.
Students will follow this unit by taking a docent-led tour of the Asian art collection of a nearby museum. This should include Japan, China and India.

Assessment/evaluation

During the lecture and guided practice portion of this lesson, students will be informally evaluated on their work ethic. Students may be given a written or oral quiz on the new vocabulary and terminology. Students will receive a grade on their final “master project”. The production evaluation should depend on the skill level of the class however evaluation should in part be based on how well the student adhered to and expressed the Six Canons of Chinese Brush Painting.