

Lesson Title : Clay Tomb Figures

Class and Grade level(s) : 6th-12th grade

Goals and Objectives

The student will be able to:

- 1) identify a Chinese tomb figure from primary sources
- 2) understand the use and function of tomb figures as part of ancient Chinese culture
- 3) translate the concept of ancient Chinese tomb figures into a piece of personal, contemporary art
- 4) successfully utilize a variety of modeling techniques to create a 3-dimensional figure

Time required/class periods needed :

4 days for intro and clay building; 2 days for painting

Primary source bibliography :

<http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/archaeology/emperor-qin/>

<http://sites.asiasociety.org/arts/courtcaravan/>

<http://www.albertomanuelcheung.com>

<http://www.bmy.com.cn/> Official Chinese site for terra cotta soldiers: in Chinese

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/worldhistory/tang_tomb_figures/

Tang tomb figures

Other resources used :

There are several tomb figures in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City, 4525 Oak), in the Chinese Ceramics and Jade Room, #229. These images will be available online through the Nelson website after June, 2006

Required materials/supplies :

- 1) copy of attached plan/assessment
- 2) approx. 2.5 lb. of terra cotta earthenware clay per student
- 3) clay tools, water bowls
- 4) paintbrushes (size #2 and #6 if possible), watercolors
- 5) Modge Podge, or other clear acrylic sealer

Vocabulary

sculpture-in-the-round

slip & score

modeling

dynasty

pinch pot

Procedure :

1) Begin lesson by sharing the important bits of information below, along with viewing the tomb figures in the primary sources listed above. You can also search Chinese Tomb Figures, Tang and Han Tomb Figures and Terra Cotta Army for more info and images

- During the Shang Dynasty (1600 to 110 B.C.), humans and animals were sacrificed and buried in the tombs of important deceased.
- By the time of the Han Dynasty, these figures were replaced with ceramic images (c. 206 B.C. to 220A.D)
- Tomb sculptures were buried with the elite to serve the occupants in the afterlife. Sculptures included food offerings and a variety of human and animal figures.
- The earliest ceramic tomb sculptures generally represent military figures – the terracotta army of the First Emperor of Qin (r. 221-210 B.C.E.) is the grandest example
- Tomb figures included many different subjects—court attendants, entertainers, cooks, storytellers, wives and children as well as farmyard animals—that reflect the social, religious, cultural, and economic life of the deceased.
- They were placed in large numbers, usually in pairs
- Tomb figures had two main purposes :
 - to provide for the deceased in the afterlife
 - to guard the tomb against robbery

TANG DYNASTY (618-907)

- The first half of this period represents the peak of ceramic tomb sculpture, with huge amounts of resources devoted to its production.
- Although destined for the grave, tomb sculptures were prestige items, inspected and admired by mourners at funerals of the elite.
- Princes, princesses, wealthy ministers and distinguished nobles would have hundreds of sculptures in their tomb in order to enjoy all of the extravagances in life, in death
- Writings from the period bemoan the extravagance of the burials, and the Tang court tried to impose regulations on the size and number of tomb figures.
- Sometimes the depictions of foreigners were like caricatures. Horse grooms, for example, could have had wildly curly hair, bushy beards, big noses or bulging eyes.
- Most pottery was *sancai* (三彩 : three-colored) glazed earthenware in the colors of straw and amber (made from iron oxide) and green (from copper oxide). *Sancai* usually also includes blue glaze, which is rarer and was made with oxides from imported cobalt.

2) Teacher will review the criteria listed on the assessment, then students will fill out their plan, create their sketch, and write their paragraph.

3) Teacher will demonstrate a variety of clay hand building techniques, including pinch, modeling, and coil, that can be used to construct a tomb figure. Emphasize that this will be a sculpture-in-the-round, and must look good from all sides (360 degrees). In addition, there will be a review of the slip & score technique used to attach pieces of clay together

4) Teacher will offer input as to what will work best is a clay structure, for example, it is easier to make a kneeling or sitting figure than a standing one; long thin pieces of clay have the greatest tendency to break off, etc.

5) Students will complete their tomb figures, allow them to dry then be bisque-fired.

6) Teacher will demonstrate how to use watercolors to paint the figures. The figure does not have to be covered completely with paint; in fact, they look better if some of the natural terra cotta clay is exposed. Students should try to mix colors, and a different number of coats of paint to different areas to achieve different values.

7) When watercolor has completely dried, students will be paint over the entire figure with Modge Podge, or another acrylic sealer.

8) After assessment, display the figures with accompanying descriptive paragraphs.

Assessment/evaluation :

See attached

LEARNING STATEMENT: Students looked at Chinese tomb figures from the Han and Tang dynasties in ancient China. They learned about the purpose and value of these figures to the people of those cultures.

Using their imagination and creativity, students modeled a figure for their own tomb. Thinking in contemporary terms, their figure represents who or what they would like to have guard their tomb, and what they think they might need in the afterlife.

A variety of hand built clay techniques were used in this lesson, including pinch pots, slabs, and modeling. After the bisque firing, watercolors and a clear acrylic sealer were used to complete the surface decoration of the figure.

“Who’s At My Tomb?”

Name _____

List three things you learned about Chinese tomb figures :

1.

2.

3.

Sketch your figure here:

Write a paragraph (no fewer than five (5) sentences) about your figure below. Be sure to include the following:

- Why you chose this particular animal/person/creature
- Why you want it at or in your tomb (to guard you, to provide for the afterlife, etc)
- A description of its physical characteristics, and how those characteristics give it purpose

ASSESSMENT - Rate your work on the following using the range of points below :

(12-15) unacceptable (16-17) needs work (18-21) mediocre (22-24) well done
(25) outstanding

Project Criteria : _____ /25

Includes a minimum of 2 arms, 2 legs, head and facial features
Does not represent a character from popular culture
Uses a whole piece of clay
Watercolor shows mixed colors and a variety of values
Story has been typed and mounted

Effort : _____ /25

I stayed on task during all of my work time
I talked only when necessary in a low voice
I completed the plan and assessment in full
I cleaned up my area and supplies every day

Aesthetic Quality / Creativity : _____ /25

My work is special and unique because : (refer to 2 art elements or principles)
All features and details work well together to create representation of chosen figure

Craftsmanship : _____ /25

All pieces attached; none fall off
Figure can sit or stand stably
Watercolor applied neatly (no drips)

If you could do this project again, what would you do differently?

Student : _____ /100 Teacher : _____ / 100