

Lesson Title: The Importance of Paper in China

Class and Grade: 4th - 6th Grade collaborating with the Art Department

Lesson overview: The students will gain a better understanding of the importance of paper in early Chinese culture.

Goals and Objectives:

The students will:

- Learn what was used before the invention of paper.
- Learn about the many innovative types of paper.
- Compare Chinese paper with that of Egypt and Europe.
- Create their own paper in art class.

Time required/class periods needed:

- 2 one-hour art classes
- Ten 45-minute class periods for the students to gather information, work on posters, and present/discuss their findings with the class.

Primary source bibliography:

Click on “Oracle Bones/Writing and Divination here:

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/tps/4000bce.htm>

Invention of paper (You might have to copy and paste this into the browser)

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/song/readings/inventions_gifts.htm#paper

Other resources used:

- Chinese Invention of paper and papermaking
<https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/focus/inventions.htm>
- History of Paper
<http://www.hqpapermaker.com/paper-history/>
 - Biography of Cai Lun, inventor of paper in China
<http://www.biographyonline.net/business/cai-lun.html>
 - Images of Chinese Paper Cuts
<https://www.google.com/search?q=Chinese+Paper+Cuts&tbm=isch&bo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiEp8vIxPXLAhUovYMKHVORDWwQsAQIKQ&biw=1173&bih=826>

Required materials/supplies:

- Art department supplies - they will get these instructions in art class
- Computer/internet access
- Any world history textbook that includes “Ancient China and “China”.
- Library books/articles for the students to read
- Poster board/scissors/markers/glue

Vocabulary:

- Block printing
- Currency
- Divination
- Oracle bones
- Shang Dynasty
- Cai Lun
- Silk Road
- Han Dynasty
- Tang and Song Dynasties

Procedure:

Days 1 and 2 - Introducing the lesson: Split the students into 5 groups. Give them 5 minutes to make a list of all the items in the classroom that are made from paper. Discuss lists with the entire class.

Class Discussion Questions:

1. What would they (students) use if they couldn't write on paper?
2. What do they think people in ancient civilizations used?

Research Questions:

3. What did the ancient Chinese use before paper?
4. How important was the development of paper to the advancement of China?
5. Who invented paper?
6. How was paper made?
7. What were some of the innovations of paper?
8. What other civilizations besides China used paper, and was it made from the same materials?

- The students will stay in their groups. Each group will be responsible for finding the answer to one of questions 3 through 8 above and presenting the information to the class in a creative way: Poster, drawings, pictures, etc. at the end of the unit.
- Students will read about Ancient China in their textbooks to get a general background, taking notes and discussing what they learned in their groups.
- Give students time to work on their projects.

Days 3 and 4 - In their groups, students will read about contemporary China in their textbooks taking notes and discussing what they learned in their groups.

- Give students time to work on their project.

Days 5 and 6 – Give students computer and library time to explore the internet and to check out books and articles that will inform their posters.

- Give students time to work on their project.

Days 7 and 8 – Present any other material on the topic.

- Give students time to work on their project.

Days 9 and 10 - Each group will present their project.

Assessment/evaluation:

The assessment will be conducted throughout the lesson by the teacher through discussion, observation, and presentation. Rubric: Was the question about paper answered? Was the group prepared and ready to present?

Extension: The students will work with the art teacher to make paper during art class.

Chinese Writing and Paper Facts:

- The first dynasty for which we have clear evidence of writing is the Shang, which was firmly established by the 1500s BC.

- Shang writing has been found on thousands of cattle bones and turtle shells. Priests carved questions about the future on bones or shells, which were then thrown into a fire, causing them to crack. The priests believed these cracks and the way they interacted with the characters enabled them to predict the future. The bones were called oracle bones because an oracle is a prophecy.
- Paper was probably invented during the Han Dynasty around 105, paper was one of the greatest of all Chinese inventions. It gave the Chinese a cheap and easy way of keeping records and made printing possible.
- Woodblock printing was invented by the Chinese during the Tang Dynasty, centuries before it was known in Europe. Printers could copy drawings or texts quickly, much faster than they could be copied by hand.
- Inventors of the Song Dynasty created movable type, which made printing even faster. Carved letters could be rearranged and reused to print many different messages.
- The world's first paper money was invented during the Song Dynasty. Lighter and easier to handle than coins, paper money helped the Chinese manage their growing wealth.
- The dollar bill in your pocket may be crisp and new, but paper money has been around a long time. Paper money was printed for the first time in China in the AD 900s and was in use for about 700 years, through the Ming Dynasty. However, so much money was printed that it lost value. The Chinese stopped using paper money for centuries. Its use caught on in Europe and eventually became common. The Chinese also gave us the word "cash" used for silver and gold and other metal currency.
- Ancient Chinese scribes wrote on strips of wood and bamboo. The wooden blocks and flattened bamboo took up much space and were difficult to store. Ts'ai Lun [Cai Lun] conceived the idea of making paper from the bark of trees, hemp waste, old rags, and fish nets. The craft of papermaking spread throughout the empire and was put to many uses, including ornamental use in houses and temples. The craft of papermaking was developed to keep up with the written language. The

written language furthered the advancement of Chinese society.

- The earliest materials known for making paper were hemp and mulberry tree bark. The most popular material for paper-making in southeast China was rattan. Chinese also used bamboo, rice, wheat straw, the bark of the sandal wood and other trees, stalks of hibiscus, seaweed, and other vegetation. The materials used to make the paper usually determined its value. The most valuable paper was made from cotton and sometimes even silk. The notion that all of the earliest paper was made from papyrus is only true in Egypt.
- The making of paper in large sheets allowed the seller to broker the paper in many different sizes instead of just one generic size. The paper could be bound into books or turned into paintings the size of posters to hang in households.
- The main material for making paper in Egypt was the papyrus plant. All parts of the plant can be used. The thin, wispy ends of the plant were easily broken down into individual fibers. The tougher stalk provided longer fibers and lent strength to the paper. The primary style of paper was scrolls.
- The main material for making paper in Europe was cotton.
- The Chinese made clothes, blankets, and even shoes out of the heavy paper from mulberry trees. Soldiers wore paper armor. The generals said paper was better than metal because it didn't rust when the soldiers got rained on. They made playing cards and paper money by stamping pictures and words onto paper. Paper money was called "flying money" because it was so light compared with metal coins that it could blow away in the wind. They spread oil on paper and made waterproof umbrellas. They glued it to the walls and invented wallpaper. The Chinese even made toilet paper.
- The people in northern China began cutting the paper into beautiful designs. Today, the Chinese use paper cuttings for celebrations, festivals, and home decoration. Often, paper cuttings are used to bring luck. Lucky paper cuttings are made of red paper. Paper cuts are used as decorations

especially on holidays. Paper cuts were once used as stencils for pottery and as guides for wood carvers. Paper cutting was also one step in the process of embroidery.