

**Lesson Title:** Koryo (12-13th Century) Celadon Pottery and Korean Aesthetics

**Class and Grade level(s):** High School and/or Junior High Art

**Goals and Objectives:**

The student will be able to:

- \*identify Korean Koryo Celadon pottery as an original Korean Art form.
- \*understand that the Korean aesthetic is rooted in nature.
- \*utilize design elements of Koryo pottery in their own ceramic projects.

**Vocabulary:**

Koryo

Korean Celadon: Cheong-ja

Sanggam: Inlaid Design

Open work design

Buddhism

Symbols

Celadon Glaze

Leatherhard clay



12th century Unidentified, Korean, Koryo period Stoneware bowl with celadon glaze. This undecorated ceramic bowl with incurving rim replicates the form of metal alms bowls carried by Buddhist monks for receiving food offerings from devotees. The ceramic version was probably used for the same purpose and would have been a gift to a monastery from a noble patron.

Primary source bibliography:

- Freer collection celadon images:  
[http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/korean\\_highlights.asp](http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/korean_highlights.asp)
- News: Koryo Pottery Was Headed for Kaesong  
[http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2007/10/12/2007101261013.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2007/10/12/2007101261013.html)
- History  
<http://search.freefind.com/find.html?id=70726870&pageid=r&mode=all&n=0&query=korea+history>
- Korean History and Art Sites  
[http://search.freefind.com/find.html?q=korea+art&id=70726870&pageid=r&\\_charset=UTF-8&bcd=%C3%B7&scs=1&query=korea+art&Find=Search&mode=ALL&search=all](http://search.freefind.com/find.html?q=korea+art&id=70726870&pageid=r&_charset=UTF-8&bcd=%C3%B7&scs=1&query=korea+art&Find=Search&mode=ALL&search=all)

Other resources used:

*A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park; Scholastic Inc., copyright 2001  
<http://www.lindasuepark.com/books/singleshard/singleshard.html>

Required materials/supplies:

Clay studio tools, White clay, Celadon glaze, White and black slip

Procedure:

Introduction: Korean Koryo Celadon (*Cheong-ja*) Ceramics

Korean pottery dates back to the Neolithic age. In the middle 10th century, Korean potters went to China to learn ceramic techniques. There they created celadon ceramic techniques of copper glazing. Celadon glazing and *sanggam* (inlaid design) are techniques fully developed by Korean potters and are unique in the history of pottery. Chinese scholars stated that Koryo Celadon ceramics are one of the ten treasures of the world. They are known for a subtle beauty with elegant simplicity. The ceramics were originally used in Buddhist ceremonies and were possessions of the royalty and aristocrats used for daily purposes and as objects of fine art. In the 16th Century Japanese forced Korean artisans to Japan where their work inspired Japanese potters. In the 1950's Korean artists set out to rediscover the lost art of Koryo Celadon.

1. Students will view images of traditional *Cheong-ja* ceramic product and discuss the techniques and design elements: inlaid (*sanggam*), open work design, shapes, sculptural forms (incense burners) and symbolism (handout of symbols below).
2. Students will plan a ceramic work inspired by *Cheong-ja*.
3. Sketches of the form, sculptural nature, and symbols should be explained in their planning/notes.
3. Studio work: hand building, wheel throwing. Teacher will demonstrate *sanggam*, incised line technique.
4. Work bisque fired.
5. Celadon glaze applied to bisque ware.
6. Glaze firing.
7. Student Artist Statement: What aspects of Koryo Celadon ceramics inspired your work? What shapes, symbols, or techniques did you use? Compare and contrast your work with a Koryo period piece.

Assessment/evaluation:

1. Did student participate in discussion about Korean Koryo celadon ceramics?
2. Did student create a ceramic project that utilized design or symbolic elements inspired by Korean Koryo celadon ceramics?
3. Did student write an artist's statement that communicated an understanding of Koryo ceramics as well as an evaluation of the characteristics of their work?

## Korean (Koryo) Celadon Ceramics (handout)

Designs and shapes used in Koryo Celadon Ceramics represent the spiritual beliefs of Korean people fostered by Buddhist beliefs.

Shapes are derived from nature including but not limited to bamboo shoots, melons, animals, and human forms. The lotus flower, an important symbol in Buddhism, is often carved in more sculptural work.

Both the designs and shapes used in Koryo celadon were representations of the spiritual beliefs of the Korean people. These beliefs were fostered by the Buddhist beliefs of the era. Following are the symbols most commonly used on inlaid celadon and their meanings.

	<p>Circle: The circle represents the Sun and worship of the Sun.</p>		<p>Fish: The fish represents a superior realization.</p>
	<p>Lotus: The lotus stands for the Sun and the mercy of Buddha. It is seen as beauty arising from the mud.</p>		<p>Tiger: The tiger symbolizes a guardian, and charm.</p>
	<p>Peony: The peony depicts richness and honors.</p>		<p>Dragon: The dragon stands for might. The dragon was a god of rain.</p>
	<p>Duck: The duck symbolizes the Premier ranking.</p>		<p>Chrysanthemum: The chrysanthemum symbolizes health and well-being.</p>
	<p>Crane: The crane represents Immortality</p>		<p>Pine Tree: The pine tree depicts royalty and fidelity.</p>

## Example Handout



BUDDHIST RITUAL SPRINKLER late 12th-early 13th

century Koryo

This vessel, used for sprinkling sacred water during Buddhist ceremonies, illustrates the effectiveness of inlay for pictorial decoration on ceramics. Black and white inlays within incised motifs portray a tranquil scene in which a willow tree stands alongside a lotus pond. Similar landscapes appear inlaid on bronze ritual sprinklers



WINE BOTTLE mid 12th century Unidentified, Korean, Koryo period Stoneware with celadon glaze

This bottle, probably made for use in the royal court, is embellished with the motif of phoenixes among peony scrolls, which signifies peace and prosperity. Masterful carving of the design caused the glaze to pool in the deeper cuts. Where the glaze is thick, it appears darker, outlining the motifs and emphasizing the incised details.



SCULPTED CELADON INCENSE BURNER

WITH MANDARIN DUCK COVER 12th century, Koryo Dynasty, Korea

The smoke of incense lit within such a burner would waft through the body of the mandarin duck above and then slowly emerge from its beak. This incense burner is not only practical, its form is also extremely well designed, revealing the fine and elegant manner of Koryo celadons. Mandarin duck pairs were symbolic of long and happy marriages.



WINE BOTTLE 12th century Unidentified, Korean, Koryo period  
Stoneware with black and white slips under celadon glaze

Ginseng root, long a famous product of Korea, was consumed for its supposed ability to enhance vitality and longevity. The ginseng-leaf motif on this bottle was believed to transfer its powers to the wine within. The potter scratched the design out of the layer of black slip (liquid clay) and filled it with white slip before coating the bottle with green glaze.