



Year 5 Spring B Chinese Painting and Ceramics

Lesson Series:

1. Introduction to Chinese painting— Brushwork and materials
2. Chinese Calligraphy
3. Chinese Painting
4. Porcelain—Ming ware
5. Europe and Chinese Porcelain

Name: _____

Class: _____



1. Introduction to Chinese painting— Brushwork and materials

Chinese Brush Painting dates back to 4000 BC, with techniques being handed down from master to student. In contrast to what most of us are taught about art today, copying and the perfection of technique were more important and more highly valued than self-expression. Chinese Brush Painting uses simple strokes of a paintbrush to capture a single object or an entire scene.

The same materials are used to make Chinese paintings and calligraphy. They are traditionally painted on rice paper or silk with brushes made of animal hair and solid ink which is ground on a stone. Chinese paintings are rolled into scrolls and displayed either horizontally (hand) or vertically (hanging). You will often discover that they contain seals and Chinese writing.

In Chinese brush painting, asymmetry is the number one rule. The painter may use one, three, five or seven objects. When painting an orchid for example, the artist will use one bud and two flowers, or three flowers and five or seven leaves.



You may also notice the open space left in Chinese paintings. This has been carefully considered by the artist and traditionally at least one open space has been left. It adds to the simplicity of the artwork and creates a calm mood.

2. Chinese Calligraphy

Chinese calligraphy (means beautiful writing) was thought of as an important art long before painting. Chinese painting and calligraphy use the same materials. The art of calligraphy in China emphasises practise and control. In ancient China students had to memorise many characters each week – it was thought that the brush was like an extension of the arm, the characters showing something about the person who painted them.

There are many spoken Chinese languages, but only one written language. Written Chinese symbols are called characters and writing is done in columns, from the right-hand side of the page. Chinese calligraphy takes many hours of practise and control and is known to show the writer's mood and personality. It was also considered to be the sign of an educated person.



In China, calligraphy is considered to be the highest form of art and some characters (whole words) in themselves are very beautiful. Brush painted characters are often framed or made into hanging scrolls and hung on the wall.

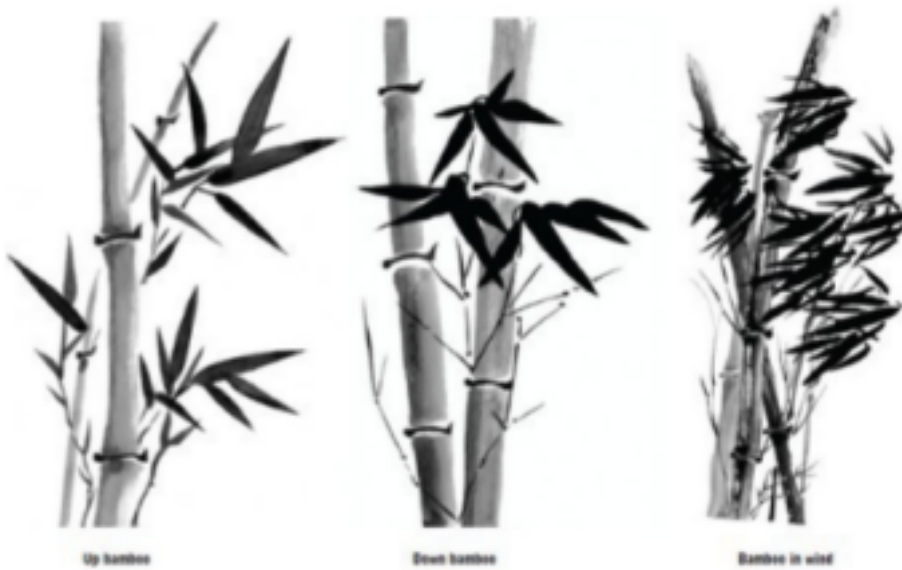
3. Chinese Painting

Traditional Chinese painting has defined features such as,

- Often only using black ink or limited colour as colour is seen as a distraction, paintings are usually of nature
- Nothing in the background, creating the illusion of lots of space
- The design is often asymmetrical
- Paintings are often supposed to look ideal and simplified rather than real

One of the key elements of Chinese painting are the clear and simple brushstrokes applied with careful intention on the paper. This is a very mindful practice where the flow of energy from the artist transfers onto the page. Traditional artwork will feature landscape, flower, bird paintings and bamboo.

Bamboo is often a feature in Chinese culture and art because it expresses the will to survive. Its stalks can survive strong winds; they bend but they never break. The wind whistling through the bamboo is also called the music of the gods.



4. Porcelain—Ming ware

Porcelain was first made in China about 2000 years ago. It was first made in China because they had the raw materials to make it. Production of it increased when tea became drunk more, and more tea cups were needed.

The imperial porcelain factory was established at Jingdezhen at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), and became the centre of porcelain production. It is a white, translucent ceramic fired at a high temperature, often decorated with cobalt blue. All imperial wares that were specially manufactured for use at court, were made particularly exquisitely and were marked with the reign mark of the emperor himself. This resulted in Ming porcelain being highly sought as the etiquette of drinking tea became popular within rich societies across the globe. Drinking from a porcelain tea cup was the elegant way to enjoy the drinking of tea.

From 1573, Jingdezhen became the main production centre for large-scale porcelain exports to Europe. By this time kaolin and pottery stone were mixed in about equal proportions. Kaolin produced wares of great strength when added to the paste; it also enhanced the whiteness of the body – a trait that became a much sought after property, especially when blue-and-white wares grew in popularity.



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5. Europe and Chinese Porcelain

During the Ming dynasty the Chinese traded porcelain with Europe. Chinese porcelains were regarded as objects of great rarity and luxury. The examples that appeared in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were often mounted in gilt silver, which emphasised their preciousness and transformed them into entirely different objects. By the early sixteenth century, after Portugal began commercial trade with Asia, Chinese potters began to produce objects specifically for export to the West, and porcelains began to arrive in some quantity.

Porcelains were only a small part of the trade. The cargos were full of tea, silks, paintings, lacquerware, metalwork, and ivory. The porcelains were often stored at the lowest level of the ships, both to provide stability for the ship and because they were impervious to water, in contrast to the even more expensive tea stored above. The blue-and-white dishes that comprised such a significant proportion of the export porcelain trade became known as *kraak* porcelain, the term deriving from the Dutch name for *caracca*, the Portuguese merchant ship.

Trade routes to Asia would have been very long and dangerous with many boats being shipwrecked, so porcelain factories soon became established throughout Europe. In the early eighteenth century, the demand for Chinese export porcelain began to diminish, and by the second half of the century the trade was in serious decline.

In the 1980s, the recovery of porcelain from a Dutch trading ship (The Nanking Cargo) which sank in the South China Sea in 1752, has been able to

provide historians with significant details of porcelain exports as well as complete examples of Chinese porcelain produced during the Ming Dynasty.

