



SLIDE 2

ACTIVITY 4

Say It in Chinese, Please

Calligraphy Scrolls/Painting

Chinese painting, poetry, and calligraphy are endlessly bound together in one harmonious art form—the scroll. Asian scrolls most often appear as vertical, horizontal, or “album leaf,” which is shaped much like a fan. Art and nature are inseparable, which may explain the popularity of Chinese landscape painting. Animals, birds, flowers, and human subjects in their natural settings are the favored themes for scrolls, whether paper or silk!

The harmonious combination of pictures and calligraphic words exemplifies the ideals of Asian art. In fact, Chinese painting has been called “the voiceless poem.” Calligraphy—which literally translates as *beautiful writing*—is just as important as the ink painting it accompanies.

What better subject to portray China than the panda and its beloved bamboo! Pandas live in the misty mountains where bamboo—which signifies strength and endurance—is plentiful. As a matter of fact, Chinese artists use brushes with bamboo handles.

To serve the range of Chinese artistic and literary expression, there are more than 3,000 characters that you can select when the poems begin to flow. Perhaps the best way to understand the art of China can be told in this simple way:

How to Paint Bamboo

1. Observe bamboo.
2. Study bamboo.
3. Become bamboo.

Now you are ready to paint bamboo!!



▲ Figure 1-14. Student-created panda scrolls with days of the week . . . and signed by the artist!

MATERIALS

- any black non-toxic water-based paint, such as tempera or water color blocks
- pencils
- 18" × 24" white paper
- copies of the accompanying reproducible page “Chinese Numbers” and “Chinese Days of Week”

TEACHER PREPARATION

Obtain additional photographs of pandas and related reference materials. Photocopies of Chinese calligraphy and Sumi brush painting are also helpful. Optional: Precut scroll lengths or cut white paper from 18" × 24" to 12" × 24". Prepare your classroom for painting lessons with water cups, paper towels, and so on. Cover student desks, if desired.



DIRECTIONS

1. Introduce the love of nature as Chinese painting expresses it, using pandas and other reference materials you may have gathered as your guide. Discuss with students their ideas for Chinese scroll subjects. Remind students that they will be using calligraphy (or calligraphic brush strokes) as part of their scroll design.
2. Point out to students that “simplicity” of idea and line are essential. Students should think about scroll-page design that will convey the feeling of their poetic subject, whether it is pandas munching bamboo or birds on a branch.
3. Distribute painting materials. Encourage students to adjust density of black paint with their water as needed. References to Chinese days of the week and numbers will enhance pictorial design. (Teacher may want to make these reproducible pages available.)
4. This is a Chinese painting experience. It is more valuable for students to learn to trust the “ink” and their instincts than it is for them to produce a perfect representation. Chinese painters believed that black ink is all you need to express complex ideas simply! Some even felt that color was unnecessary.
5. Dry paintings should be displayed in the “home”—the home is where the heart is! Note that scrolls are viewed from many points of view and are a common form of ornamentation throughout Asia. Scrolls are intended to provide continued happiness and prosperity—we wish this to you.

Figure 1-15. Drawing is traditionally taught in the same manner as writing (calligraphy) and does have very specific rules, yet it is the essential feeling of the art itself that is of greatest value. Students seem to have a natural affinity for these ancient arts and are not at all intimidated by unfamiliar alphabets. Improvisation is supported!

Left to right, please note “Danny’s” scroll uses a top and bottom bracket device to frame his calligraphy (wallpaper samples may be used here). Right scroll offers another view of bamboo. ►



Chinese Numbers

| | |
|---|---|
| 一 | 1 |
| 二 | 2 |
| 三 | 3 |
| 四 | 4 |
| 五 | 5 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 六 | 6 |
| 七 | 7 |
| 八 | 8 |
| 九 | 9 |
| 十 | 10 |

Chinese Days of the Week

| | |
|-----|-----------|
| 星期一 | Monday |
| 星期二 | Tuesday |
| 星期三 | Wednesday |
| 星期四 | Thursday |
| 星期五 | Friday |
| 星期六 | Saturday |
| 星期天 | Sunday |

Compare the numbers 1-7 with the days of the week. What do you notice?