

## Chinese Funerary Ceramics

### ***Large Painted Jar (hu)***

China

Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)

Earthenware with pigment

15 3/16 x 11 1/8 in.

Harn Museum Collection, 1996.23, Museum purchase, gift of Dr. and Mrs. David A. Cofrin



Ceramics have been an integral part of Chinese culture throughout its history. How they were fashioned, decorated and used reflected functional needs, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. High quality ceramic vessels were created as early as the Neolithic period. By the time of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E. - 220 C.E.), ceramics took many forms, from various types of vessels to figurative work. Surface decoration could take the form of relief, incision, painting, or glazing. Vessels were wheel-thrown, indicating high technical achievement. Many ceramic forms, it seems evident, were modeled on costlier metal prototypes.

While ceramics undoubtedly served utilitarian functions, they were also used as funerary objects. During the Han dynasty, the Chinese often buried their dead with objects they would need in the afterlife. This ceramic jar was made for that purpose. Its painted design is intended to resemble lacquer, an extremely valuable material that was considered a sign of high status. Because it was prohibitively expensive for most families to bury the dead with actual lacquer vessels, ceramic replicas were used instead as a way of conserving financial resources for the living.

The form and decoration of this jar are perfectly balanced. The painted decoration is intricate and expertly applied. The major theme, seen in the central band, is that of a dragon and a phoenix. By the Han dynasty, the image of the dragon had become associated with the emperor, that of the phoenix with the empress. The meaning of such imagery, then, could represent cosmic and natural balance—the female and the male—the yin and the yang.

## Discussion Theme: Symbolism

- This jar shows a painted representation of dragons.
- Within Asian culture, dragons are believed to bring good luck. Some people believe they may bring rain, which helps crops grow.
- The dragon also represents the Chinese emperor, whom, people believed, could fly between heaven and earth.
- However, in other cultures dragons symbolize other concepts. In Mexico, the dragon is a symbol for wisdom and strength.

1. What do dragons represent to you?
2. Can you think of a story you know where dragons are represented in a different way?

## Extension Activities

Language Arts (suggested lesson included in this packet):

- Write a story about your dragon.
- Share your story with a primary grade.

Visual Arts:

- Discuss the jar with the class.
- Lead discussion into dragons.
- Have students draw a dragon to illustrate their own story.

1. Is your dragon scary, kind, or does it bring good luck?
2. What is it about your dragon that makes it look scary, kind, or like it brings good luck?

China

**Model of a Watchtower**

Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)

Glazed earthenware

54 x 16 1/2 x 19 1/4 in.

Harn Museum Collection, 1998.8, Museum purchase, funds provided by the Kathleen M. Axline Acquisition Endowment

During the Han dynasty, China's upper classes often lived on vast agricultural estates. To protect these estates, wealthy landowners sometimes erected multi-storied towers that could be used to defend against attacks by bandits or other hostile forces. In times of peace, the towers also offered convenient spots for hunting ducks, geese, and other wild birds that nested on the estates.

This ceramic model of a Han watchtower would originally have been placed in a tomb to represent the type of grand property the tomb's occupant hoped to enjoy in the next life.



The model is constructed with four levels. The ground level consists of a walled courtyard enclosing what appear to be fowl, a goat, and a horse and rider. Human figures can be seen standing in the second and third levels of the tower, gazing outward with their hands clasped in front of their bodies. One of these may represent the owner of the tomb. Archers occupy the fourth level of the tower.

The model watchtower is made of earthenware covered in a lead-based glaze. Coarse wet clay was rolled out into sheets, cut into shapes, and the parts assembled while the clay was still damp. Each section was then fired at a low temperature. The outer back wall of the tower model has been left unglazed suggesting that this wall was intended to face a wall of the tomb.

**Extension Activities**

Language Arts:

- Write a memoir about a “ritual” your family does together, such as birthday party celebrations or holiday gatherings.

Visual Arts (suggested lesson included in this packet):

- This tower is an example of the burial goods known as mingqi. Mingqi were buried with the dead.

1. Think of something that one might be buried with today.
2. Research Egyptian burial practices and hieroglyphics.
3. This tower is an example of a tower built to protect a household. Research Northwest Native American totem poles as a comparison.

## Discussion Theme: Rituals

- In early Chinese culture, watchtowers, such as this one, were created as part of the burial ritual.
- One way beliefs are passed along within a culture is through rituals and related objects.
- These are traditions that are repeated many times.
- Examples of ritual objects you may know are wedding rings, birthday cakes and flowers at funerals.

1. Look closely at this watchtower to find animals and people.
2. It was believed they provided protection. A family would create a watchtower while their loved one was alive. Upon the death of the family member, the tower would be placed in his or her tomb.
3. This ritual is similar to Egyptian burial tradition.
4. Discuss ritual objects from our culture.
5. If you were designing a watchtower, which objects would you place in it to protect you?

China

**Horse Head**

Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD)

Earthenware

5 3/4 x 3 1/8 x 7 1/4 in.

Gift of Ruth P. Phillips



Representations of horses, like this finely carved head, were placed in the tombs of important people. Horse head figurines made for funerary purposes have been excavated from tombs dated to the Warring States period (475-220 B.C.E) and throughout the Han period. Horses were highly prized in China after being introduced from the West. Chinese legend tells of a breed of horse called *tianma* that could run 300 miles a day and sweat blood at the end of the journey. Traces of unfired red paint visible in the folds and textured areas of the figurine indicate that it was once painted red, like other horse figurines produced at the time, to illustrate this story.

**Pair of Horses**

China

Tang Dynasty (618-906)

Glazed earthenware

11 3/4 x 3 3/4 x 12 1/2 in. each

Harn Museum Collection, 1994.4.1,

Museum purchase, gift of Dr. and Mrs.

David A. Cofrin



Funerary sculpture and vessels continued to be produced in great quantity and variety during the Tang dynasty (618-907), including attendants, musicians, grooms, horses, camels, and spirit guardians. The particular forms as well as the scale of the objects reflected the position and rank of the deceased.

During the Han and Tang dynasties, Chinese ceramic tomb figurines were often mass produced using molds, but they could be given individual personality through glazing and painting. The most distinctive decorative technique of the period was the use of *sancai*, or three-color glazing - cream, amber and green glaze. Blue would sometimes appear on such works, but was apparently rare and sparingly used.

Each horse has a well-detailed head, black pigmented eyes, and an open mouth exposing the teeth. Both are standing foursquare, each with an unglazed saddle and cloth. The glaze decoration on each is reversed – one in chestnut-brown with a white blaze on its face and the other in white glaze with a chestnut-brown blaze.

The Chinese court encouraged cultural contact with other peoples and lands far and near during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.).

This was the heyday of the famous Silk Road, a series of land and sea trade routes that connected the Far East with the West, extending as far as Rome.

These sculptures of horses may well show the spirit of mobility and multi-culturalism that characterized the Tang Dynasty. Horses and camels were essential for travel and the transportation of goods. In fact, the breed of horse represented in these models is one that was imported into China from the territory that bordered it to the northwest.

Sculptures like these were made specifically for use in burials and are known in Chinese as *mingqi*. In addition to horses, popular forms of *mingqi* included camels, court ladies, grooms and guardian figures.

### **Discussion Theme: Ritual/ Symbol**

- This horse represents the Chinese value of travel and their desire to know other cultures.
- The broad shoulders, the sturdy legs, and the defined muscles would carry a traveler far and wide.
  1. What would be a symbol of travel in our culture?
  2. How do you think people will travel in the future?

### **Extension Activities**

Language Arts (suggested activity included in this packet):

- Use the transparency to encourage discussion about the horses.
- Horses were important in the Chinese culture because they helped people learn about and explore new worlds.
- Write about a futuristic vehicle.
  1. What would it look like?
  2. How would you travel?
  3. Where would you go?

Visual Arts:

- Have students create a futuristic vehicle with found objects.
  1. Where would you go in your new futuristic vehicle?
  2. What would you see?
  3. What might you learn?

China

### **Pair of Tomb Attendants**

Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), 15th-16th Century

Glazed earthenware

15 1/4 x 5 1/2 x 5 1/2 in., each

Harn Museum of Art Collection, 2004.26.3, Museum purchase, funds provided by friends of the Harn Museum

This pair of Ming tomb figurines depicts a male and female servant standing at attention ready to serve their master with a wash basin and towel. The servants are dressed in typical Ming dynasty costumes. The man wears a simple round cap, full-length gown, and black boots. The woman wears a knee-length gown and skirt and has her hair drawn into a bun. The green and amber glazes used to decorate the figures are also typical for the genre and period.



### **Tomb Models of Domestic Furnishings**

*Funerary Models, Offerings*

China

Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), 15th-16th Century

Glazed earthenware

Harn Museum Collection, 2000.6, Museum purchase, gift of Ruth Pruitt Phillips



The use of ceramic tomb figurines declined in China between the 10th and 14th centuries, but revived again during the 15th and 16th centuries. These models depicting a suite of household furnishings are typical of later-style Chinese tomb sculptures. One particularly interesting piece in this set is the servant carrying a table on his back. During the Ming dynasty, most wealthy homeowners did not arrange their furniture in fixed formations, but had their servants move it around as their daily lives required.

There are nineteen separate components of this particular set, which give a glimpse, in miniature, of the dress and furnishings of the Ming period. It includes two chairs of the style *quanyi*. The miniatures were made and painted in detail, representing the cane seats, foot rests and decorated backs. Other furnishings include a washstand and washbasin, a two-door cabinet, a storage chest, a clothes rack, and a large rectangular altar table with a ceremonial tablecloth. The food offerings that have been definitely identified include a pig's head, plucked whole chicken, and bowl of persimmons. Other bowls hold what may be sugar cane, gourd or squash, and dumplings.



## Horse & Camel - 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reproductions (Harn Museum's Education Collection)

This ceramic horse and camel are reproductions of Tang *sancai* ware. *Sancai*, which means tri-colored, represents the peak of Chinese ceramics. This pottery was developed during the Tang dynasty (618-906), a time when the Chinese court was expanding its borders, projecting its power and encouraging commercial and cultural exchange with Europe and the Byzantine Empire. Inspired by the multi-colored European style ceramics, Tang artisans began using a tri-colored glazing technique, instead of traditional one color glaze application, which has changed the face of Chinese ceramic making.



The lead glazes were produced by melting lead with clay, then finely grinding the resulting glassy material before mixing it with water for application to the already fired earthenware. Using a transparent glaze as a base, the craftsman added iron oxide to produce tones ranging from straw to amber to dark brown. Copper oxide imparted rich green. Cobalt oxide provided dark, vibrant blues. After the glazes of different colors were applied, they dripped naturally when the earthenware was put into the kiln for firing. As a result, colors mingled naturally with each other to form smooth tones. Depending on the mineral content, the earthenware was fired in kilns at temperatures between 600 and 1100 degrees centigrade.

Being considered as one of the most distinguishing artistic developments during the Tang, *Sancai* wares has been collected and shown in all the major museums throughout the world.

Originally they were created as funerary pieces, known in Chinese as *mingqi*, which means "items for the next world." This funeral tradition has been carried on for thousands of years and continues even today. Modern Chinese funerals use paper objects made of papier-mâché or paper drawings depicting horses, cars, and airplanes. In each case, luxury items are made available for the afterlife.

These sculptures of horses may well exemplify the spirit of mobility and multi-culturalism that characterized the Tang dynasty. Horses and camels were essential for travel and the transportation of goods. In fact, the breed of horse represented in these models is one that was imported into China from the territory that bordered it to the northwest.



## Language Arts Lesson Plan

### *Large Jar (Hu)*



#### Goal:

Students will use the dragons in the Asian art works to write a comparison poem using similes and metaphors through exaggeration.

#### Objectives:

Students will incorporate an exaggeration with each line of the poem.

Students will write a comparison poem describing an Asian dragon with a Western dragon.

Students will add similes and/or metaphors in their poems.

#### Sunshine State Standards:

LA.B.2.2.6; LA.A.2.2.7; LA.E. 1.2.1; LA.E.1.2.5; LA.B.1.2.1;

LA.D.1.2.1

#### Materials:

Pencil or pen

Paper

Selections of vases from the Asian art collection depicting dragons

#### Procedure:

1. To stimulate student thinking, have students write a few lines proving that someone they know is the best, nicest, smartest, fastest, strongest or most beautiful person.
2. Have copies of poems on overhead and read the poems by Bruce Lansky: *My Mom is Better than Your Mom* and *My Dad is Better than Your Dad*.
3. Discuss Lansky's poem: it did not state that the mother is a beauty contest winner; it proved she has inner beauty rather than outer beauty. Because she is such a good cook, she makes kid-hated foods delicious. Point out similarities with the "Dad" poem.
4. Discuss the value of dragons in Asian art and compare it to how dragons are seen in Western culture. In Asia, dragons have the specific purpose of helping people. In the West, dragons are a symbol of evil and danger.
5. Have students write a poem comparing and exaggerating their own dragon to that of a friend's.
6. Share stories. Encourage changing voice to show exaggeration when speaking.

#### Discussion Suggestions:

- Review definitions of similes and metaphors; give common examples: it's raining cats and dogs; as strong as an ox, as fit as a fiddle; she has a green thumb; she's a walking encyclopedia.

- Review definition of exaggerations: such as, “I’ve told you a thousand times not to do that!” Or, “if you keep digging, you could make your way to China.”
- Compare the purpose of dragons in Asian art and the way dragons are viewed in Western art.

Important Vocabulary:

Exaggeration, similes, and metaphors

Assessment Strategies:

- Each student’s poem will have one exaggeration per line.
- Poem will compare two contrasting cultural concepts of a dragon and include at least one simile or metaphor.

## Visual Art Lesson Plan

### *Watchtower*



#### Goal:

Students will gain an understanding of *mingqi* (Chinese burial goods).

#### Objectives:

Students will learn about *mingqi*.

Students will construct a watchtower using good craftsmanship.

#### Sunshine State Standards:

VA.A.1.2.1; VA.A.1.2.2; VA.A.1.2.4; VA.B.1.2.1; VA.C.1.2.2;  
VA.E.1.2.1

#### Materials:

File folders (new or used)

Scissors

Pencils

Plastic rulers

Masking tape

Transparency of the *Watchtower*

#### Procedure:

##### Part One

1. There are four sections of the watchtower. Attached you'll find a page for each building supervisor to read aloud to his group.
2. Divide the entire class into four groups.
3. Select a supervisor or have the group select a supervisor to read the directions as the supervisor also makes one (the supervisor demonstrates).
4. Pass out directions to each group supervisor.
5. Pass out scissors, masking tape, pencils, and file folders to each group.
6. Have students fold under all tabs on folders making sure students understand at no time will these tabs be considered in measuring. Disregard tabs once they are folded under.
7. Group two needs one whole folder and one half folder. Pre-cut folders in half for group two.
8. Have students keep all scraps. They may later wish to use them for the roof.
9. Pass out directions to each group and have supervisors begin reading and demonstrating.
10. Have students put their name and teacher's name on their work.

##### Part Two

1. After students have completed their section in their group have them number off student one, two, three, and so on.

2. Have all the ones come to table one; twos come to table two, and so on until each table has all four parts of a watchtower at it.
3. Have students put their watchtower parts together without tape just to get an idea what it looks like so they know how to decorate it. Each tower will be different with ideas of protective people or animals each student feels would be helpful in the protection of their tower.
4. Take the parts back out and have each student decorate their tower with markers.
5. When they are finished decorating, have students tape the shapes closed and combine them to complete their finished watchtowers.

Discussion Suggestions:

- The watchtower is an example of the burial goods known as *mingqi*. *Mingqi* were objects buried with the dead that they believed they might need in the afterlife. Ask students to think of something that one might be buried with today.
- This tower is an example of a tower built to protect a household. Ask students what kinds of things they might need in their structure that might help protect the inhabitant today.

Show students other examples of *mingqi* from the Asian art collection at the Harn Museum. The horses in this curriculum are also examples of *mingqi* as they were believed to be strong steeds to carry the dead into the afterlife.

Important Vocabulary:

*Mingqi, vertical, horizontal, watchtower*

Assessment Strategies:

- Students are able to successfully construct a watchtower using good craftsmanship.
- Students will identify two characteristics of *mingqi*.

Extensions:

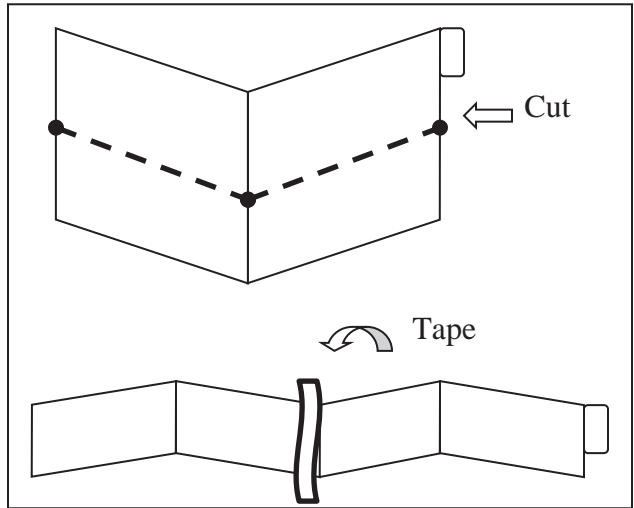
Have students make a watchtower from clay using slab technique.

FCAT Connection:

Using rulers is an FCAT skill.

**Supervisor One Directions**

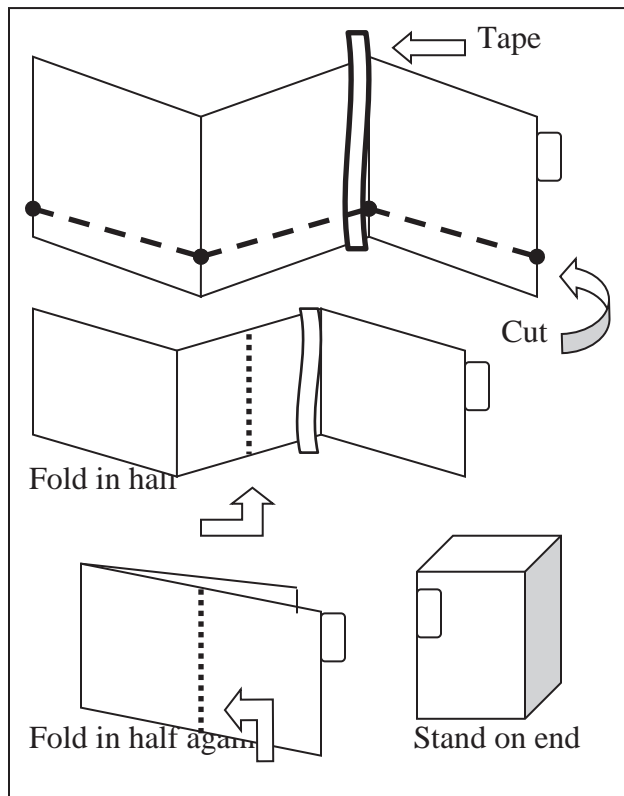
- Give each student one file folder.
- Open the file folder like a book.
- Measure how long the folder is top to bottom
- Divide this number in half.
- Draw a dot on this new number.
- Slide ruler all the way to left exactly parallel to the fold and another dot there too.
- Now slide ruler all the way to the edge exactly parallel to the fold make another dot.
- Draw a line across entire folder connecting all dots using a ruler to make a straight line.
- Cut on this line making two long pieces.
- Tape these two long pieces together end to end.



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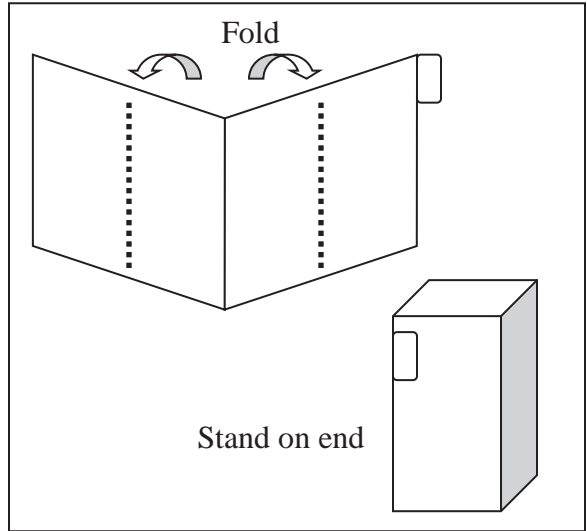
**Supervisor Two Directions**

- Give each student one and one half file folders.
- Tape the half-folder to end of the whole-folder.
- Measure 8" from bottom and make a dot on fold.
- Draw a dot 8" from bottom on every fold and every edge.
- Draw a straight line connecting dots with a ruler.
- Cut on this line.
- Fold this new larger sheet in half like a book.
- Fold in half again.
- Stand on end to see a boxlike structure.
- Do not tape closed.



**Supervisor Three Directions**

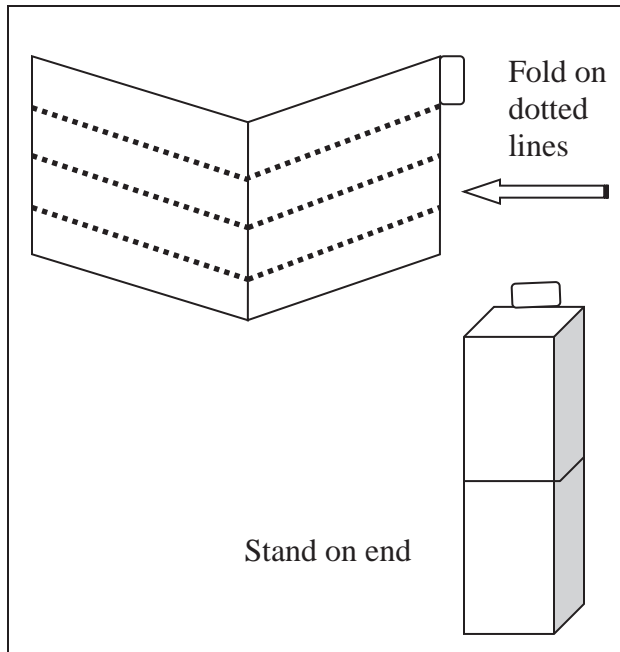
- Give each student one file folder.
- Open the file folder like a book.
- Measure from the center fold to the edge.
- Divide that number in half.
- Measure from the center out and dot there.
- Make one at the top and one at the bottom.
- Draw line-connecting dots with a ruler.
- Repeat on the other half of the folder from the center out.
- Fold on those lines.
- Stand on end to create a tall boxlike structure.
- Do not tape closed.



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**Supervisor Four Directions**

- Give each student one file folder.
- Open the file folder like a book.
- Measure how long the folder is top to bottom.
- Divide this number in half.
- Draw a dot on this new number.
- Slide ruler all the way to left exactly parallel to fold and draw another dot there too.
- Now slide ruler all the way to the edge exactly parallel to the fold make another dot.
- Draw a line across the entire folder connecting all dots using a ruler to make a straight line.
- Find the center from this new line to the edge of the folder.
- Make a dot every so often.
- Draw a line from dot to dot with a ruler.
- Repeat on the other half.
- Fold on lines.
- Do not tape closed.



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## Language Arts Lesson Plan

### *Tang Horses*



**Goal:**  
Students will know there are a variety of writing styles.

**Objectives:**  
Students will know that a Venn diagram is a graphic organizer to organize their thinking.  
Students will know that there are different cultural roles of horses throughout the world.  
Students will write a compare and contrast essay in

cursive sighting the different uses of horses between Western and Asian cultures.

Sunshine State Standards:

LA.A.1.2.4; LA.A. 2.2.1; LA.A 2.2.7; LA.B.1.2.1; LA.B.1.2.2; LA.B.1.2.3

**Materials:**

Transparency of *Tang Horses*

Writing paper

Pens

**Procedure:**

1. Establish that this writing will go through the writing process.
2. Brainstorm the use of horses in our culture versus horses used in Asia.
3. Using that information, compose a compare and contrast essay.
4. Conference with at least one student for clarity of content.
5. Peer-edit essay for grammar conventions: spelling, periods, run-on sentences, etc.
6. Revise and make corrections as needed.
7. Write final copy in cursive.
8. Share with class.



Discussion Suggestions:

- Discuss the traits of a compare and contrast writing piece: it shows the differences as well as similarities to the object.
- Brainstorm where and when we see horses in our own culture: farms, circuses, horse shows, etc.
- In the Asian culture, horses were used for transportation and for funerary purposes.

Important Vocabulary:

Funerary

Assessment Strategies:

- Students can effectively use a Venn diagram to organize information.
- Compose a compare and contrast essay written in cursive.

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