

# *The Chinese Art of Calligraphy*

## Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** 3-4

**Curriculum Focus:** Visual Arts

**Lesson Duration:** One class period

### ***Student Objectives***

- Demonstrate an understanding that calligraphy is an ancient Chinese tradition.
- Describe the principles of Chinese calligraphy.
- Identify specific characters and symbols.
- Create a work of art using Chinese calligraphy.

### ***Materials***

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: China: People and Places*  
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Write Chinese: The Principles of Calligraphy
  - A Chinese Calligrapher: Preserving the Ancient Chinese Art
  - The Five Principles of Chinese Calligraphy
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- Newspaper to cover desks
  - Butcher paper, one large sheet per student
  - Computer with Internet access (optional)
  - Examples of Chinese symbols and characters (Web sites are listed in the Procedures below.)
  - Black paint (tempera or watercolor paint)
  - Calligraphy brushes, one per student (or substitute watercolor or tempera paintbrushes)
  - White construction paper, 2 sheets per student

## **Procedures**

1. Introduce the concept of Chinese calligraphy to the class. Show Segment 2 (*Write Chinese*) of *China: People and Places*, and describe the ancient tradition.

2. Tell students they will create their own works of art using Chinese calligraphy. Have them cover their desks with newspaper and distribute the paintbrushes. Discuss the five principles of Chinese calligraphy:

- Posture: It is important to sit up straight.
- Good knowledge of the tools: Demonstrate with the same the brushes students will use.
- Control: You must know how to control the brush.
- Rhythm: The characters should flow smoothly down the page.
- Balance: Make sure all the lines are the right thickness and length.

Make sure students have a good understanding of each principle and they feel comfortable using them while they work.

3. Give students the examples of Chinese characters, words, and symbols, and tell them to choose two to reproduce on white construction paper. The following Web sites have examples:

- <http://www.ocrat.com/ocrat/chargif/>
- [http://www.omniglot.com/writing/chinese\\_evolution.htm](http://www.omniglot.com/writing/chinese_evolution.htm)
- [http://www.omniglot.com/writing/chinese\\_types.htm#types](http://www.omniglot.com/writing/chinese_types.htm#types)
- <http://www.chinapage.org/word/chineseword.html>

4. Distribute the black paint and butcher paper so students can practice calligraphy. Once they're comfortable, give them the construction paper for their final works of art. While students are working, walk around the classroom reminding them to incorporate the five principles of Chinese calligraphy. Assess students' understanding of these principles during this time.

5. Beneath their finished calligraphy, students should write the English translation of the symbols, words, or characters. Allow students to share their work with the class. Discuss difficulties the students may have had and what they enjoyed in this activity. Then talk about the history and styles of Chinese calligraphy.

6. Display the finished art in the classroom so that students have a chance to view the similarities and differences in their peers' work.

## **Assessment**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students participated fully in class discussions; used art materials wisely; were able to identify the English meaning of the chosen Chinese characters, words, or symbols; and used all five principles of Chinese calligraphy to complete two unique pieces of art.
- 2 points: Students somewhat participated in class discussions; used art materials with little help; were able to identify the English meaning of at least one of the chosen Chinese characters,

words, or symbols; and used at least three of the five principles of Chinese calligraphy to complete at least one finished piece of art.

- 1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; were unable to use art materials without direction; did not identify the English meanings of the chosen Chinese characters, words, or symbols; and used one or none of the five principles of Chinese calligraphy, but could not complete a finished piece of art.

## ***Vocabulary***

### **art**

Definition: The expression of creative skills in a visual form such as painting or sculpture

Context: Chinese calligraphy is a form of art, like painting.

### **balance**

Definition: A state in which weight, proportions, or position are evenly distributed

Context: The fifth principle of Chinese calligraphy is balance, which is making sure all lines are the right thickness and length.

### **calligraphy**

Definition: Stylized or artistic handwriting

Context: Calligraphy may be used in official documents, traditional artwork, and formal invitations.

### **principle**

Definition: A rules or belief governing behavior

Context: Creating Chinese calligraphy requires following five principles.

### **tradition**

Definition: A long established custom or belief

Context: The Chinese people practice many ancient traditions.

## ***Academic Standards***

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Arts: Art Connections
- Arts: Visual Arts
- Arts: Foreign Language
- History: K-4 History Standards -- Topic 4
- History: World History Standards – Era 2, Era 3, Era 4



### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
  - People, Places, and Environment
  - Time, Continuity, and Change
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### **Support Materials**

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [Discoveryschool.com](http://www.discoveryschool.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>