

Asian Art Museum At-a-Glance:

The Money Tree

Money trees offer a fascinating glimpse into regional and metropolitan Chinese Han dynasty beliefs. Most of these rare sculptures were probably made in Sichuan province and other parts of western China. The replicas of coins that hang from their limbs symbolize wishes for good fortune in the afterlife. A money tree was placed in a tomb so the occupant's soul might have wealth while residing in the paradise of the Queen Mother of the West, Xiwang Mu.

A Queen Mother figure was placed near the top of this money tree. She sits on a throne supported by a dragon and a tiger. Further down the tree is a seated Buddha. Early Buddha images are found in some objects associated with Xiwang Mu perhaps because Buddhism was considered a religion of the Western direction, where the Queen Mother resided. A number of winged immortals (*Xianxian*), the residents of the Queen Mother's paradise, can also be seen on this tree.

The casting of the many individual pieces that make up this ensemble is remarkable. Each piece is very thin and bears the same decoration on both sides; X-ray analysis shows that the patterns line up exactly. This was made possible by precise control of the lost-wax casting process. Take a close look at the glazed pottery base, where you will see lively scenes of a type rarely found in Chinese art.



Story: "The Money Tree"

One folktale from China tells of a farmer who has a tree with two legs and two arms. This tree works every day to bring him endless money, food, and clothing. The farmer's greedy brother and stepmother become jealous and steal the tree. When the tree fails to produce money, the farmer reveals that the two legs and arms were actually his own, and that his hard work was what earned him wealth. The farmer's brother woke up to reality, and from then on worked hard, creating another money tree.

Lesson: Artful Storytelling

Objective:

Students gain an appreciation and understanding of art and culture, and build language skills by reading; developing scripts; making choices about gesture, voice, and expression; and performing traditional stories alongside art objects in the Asian Art Museum's collection galleries.

Materials:

- Internet access to asianart.org to view storytelling videos and artwork
- Pencils and paper
- Props to enhance storytelling

Procedure:

1. Contact the Asian Art Museum's Education department at resources@asianart.org, visit our online educator resources at asianart.org/educatorresources.htm, or go to your local library to gather traditional stories from the culture you are studying.
2. Students read traditional stories, note the key events, and write a summary of a story in their own words.
 - Divide the story (in English) into 4 or 5 sections.
 - Have students form groups of 4 or 5. Each student of each group gets a section of the story.
 - Students read their sections, and the group organizes the sections into their proper sequence.
 - Students write a summary of the story in their own words.
 - Optional: Students translate the story into Mandarin or another language.
3. Groups choose an art object from the Asian Art Museum's eMuseum web resource (at www.asianart.org or <http://67.52.109.59:8080/emuseum>) that relates to their story.
4. Students write one sentence describing the artwork and one sentence explaining how the artwork relates to the story.
5. Students practice telling their stories to their peers. (Before they do so, emphasize the importance of

storytellers using descriptive language, relevant gestures, and eye contact to make a connection with their audience.)

6. Students gather feedback and revise their stories and performance.
7. Students perform their stories at the Asian Art Museum or another local museum, to a partner class, or to other students in their own class.

Tips for Teaching and Differentiating Instruction

- Provide key words and phrases in the target language.
- Conduct class discussions to break down and identify meanings of key phrases.
- Share stories many times to make them clear, exciting, and easy to understand when presented.
- Provide different versions of each story in the target language. Compare and contrast the versions.

Standards:

ELA

- 3.3.2 Comprehend basic plots of classic fairy tales, folktales, legends, and fables from around the world.
- 3.3.3 Determine what characters are like by what they say or do and by how the author or illustrator portrays them.
- 6.2.1 Writing: Include sensory details and concrete language to develop plot and character.
- 7.3.3 Analyze characterization as delineated through a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator's description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

VAPA

- 3.3.3.4 Identify and describe objects of art from different parts of the world observed in visits to a museum or gallery (e.g., puppets, masks, containers).
- 4.3.3.2 Identify and discuss the content of works of art in the past and present, focusing on the different cultures that have contributed to California's history and art heritage.
- 6.5.5.3 Create artwork containing visual metaphors that express the traditions and myths of selected cultures.

Partners in Education: Mandarin Storytelling Project

This lesson was developed as part of the Mandarin Storytelling Project. The World Languages department of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and the Asian Art Museum designed and piloted the Mandarin Storytelling Project. Participating students learned traditional stories from China, translated their stories into Mandarin, and performed their stories to other students alongside artwork at the museum.

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