

UNIT 2 TOPIC 6 CHINESE FOLK ART AND PORCELAIN

Pre-knowledge

Before class, students should read Unit 2 Topic 6 and watch some videos on Chinese folk art and porcelain to gain some basic understanding.

Aim and Objectives

Topic 6 aims to provide students with some knowledge of various forms of Chinese folk art and porcelain. It will also equip them with basic knowledge of the origins and development of Chinese folk art and porcelain, and the impact they have had on the modern world.

Teaching and Learning Activities

Activity 1

Have your students read the section on kites in the Textbook carefully. Then have them research Beijing kites and prepare a presentation for the class.

Activity 2

Find and share with your students information on how some traditional Chinese crafts have been lost in the passage of time. Then have a class discussion on whether they should have been protected and how.

Activity 3

Ask your students to research online the link between the word “China”, as a country name, and the word “china”, a type of clay.

Activity 4

Bring a porcelain bowl or teapot to class and show it to your students. Analyse the design and patterns seen on the bowl or teapot. Then have a class discussion on how the Chinese culture has been represented in the item.

Activity 5

Compare two pieces of porcelain ware, one from the West and one from China. Then have a class discussion on how the two cultures are reflected in each piece respectively.

You may show your class these images:



Wmpearl, commons.wikimedia.org



Ellen26, Pixabay

Activity 6

Have your students do Exercise 6 of the Workbook according to your teaching needs and progress.

Resources/Materials

Apart from those listed in the activities, you may also consult these resources/materials:

1. Kee, Ming-Yuet (2009), *Peranakan Chinese Porcelain: Vibrant Festive Ware of the Straits Chinese*. Tuttle Publishing.
2. Zeng, N. B. (1989), *Chinese Folk Art: The Small Skills of Carving Insects*. Little, Brown and Company.

Assessment

1. Collect the notes taken by your students during all group and class discussions.
2. Students are required to write an article of about 300 words in English discussing the impact of folk art on the daily lives of the Chinese.
3. Students are required to research a particular type of folk art and then prepare a PowerPoint presentation.
4. Do a research on the internet to find out why porcelain was also called 'China'.
5. Students are required to study the history of how Chinese porcelain was introduced to the West and then prepare an oral presentation.

Workbook Answer Key

1. What is Chinese folk art? Explain briefly its key features. What is its most definitive characteristic?

Students should consider these points:

- Folk art is amateur, non-specialised art. It is straightforward, natural, vivid and intimate.
- While some works of folk art may seem crudely made, they exhibit great originality, simplicity and purity. This arises from the artist's understanding of life in its wholeness and his attempt to depict life's melodies.
- Folk art is a culmination of the traditions of literature and art that had been developed throughout each period in history. It reflects the world views and ideologies of the community and their emotions and psyche.
- Folk art is distinctively characterised by geographical localities, with each region having its own special folk art.
- Folk art is created with commonplace tools and raw materials. It was at times characterised by the prevalent type of rural economy of the region. As communal art, folk art was created alongside tools and other basic appliances.

2. Internet Search + Pair Work

With a partner, find and watch a video clip on Chinese folk art on YouTube or any other video sharing website. List five types of folk art and their respective place of origin and cultural significance in the table below.

Folk Art	Place of Origin	Cultural Significance
Paper-cutting (剪纸)	广东佛山、山西	喜庆和教化作用
Shadow Puppetry Play (皮影戏)	河南、陕西	传承地方戏剧
Clay Figurine Zhang (泥人张)	天津	传承本地工艺和文化
New Year Paintings (年画)	开封、杭州	保持中国过年的习俗
Chinese Knot (中国结)	西安	吉祥符号

Suggested videos: *Hello China* series on paper-cutting, shadow puppetry play and other folk arts

Published by GBTIMES

Available for search at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/radio86channel/featured>

- Look at the Chinese paper cut-out below. What do you think the different elements in it signify? Why?

Students should consider these points:

- 蝙蝠: 福 (good fortune)
- 寿桃: 长寿 (longevity)
- 牡丹: 花中之王, 象征富贵吉祥与纯洁的爱情 (Queen of Flowers, signifying wealth and good fortune, as well as pure love)

- Internet Search

Read up on 年画 (nián huà, New Year painting). Identify and analyse one such painting. Put an image of the painting into a PowerPoint presentation and list the items in it and their respective symbolism. Present it to your classmates.

Below are some common symbols in a 年画:

- A child lying on a leaf: fertility and progeny, which also stands for happiness
- Peach: longevity
- Bat: happiness, as the Chinese character for bat, 蝠, has the same pronunciation as that for felicity, 福
- Pomegranate: fertility and progeny, as it is full of seeds, which shares the same Chinese character, 子, with “child”
- Fingered citron or “Buddha hand” (佛手瓜、佛手柑): happiness
- Crane: longevity

The child's red garment, which has no special significance, is a kind of apron, usually called a stomacher. It was used to cover the front of a toddler so that he would not be affected by “bad winds” getting into his body through the navel. The child's bottom remained uncovered so that he could pass motion conveniently. Today, stomachers appear outside of art largely as symbols of spirit mediums, the “children” of their possessing gods.

- Internet Search

You have read about some of the motifs commonly used in China Blue and their symbolism. Find five images of different designs of China Blue that contain some of these motifs. Describe the images to the class.

You may show your students these images:



1.

Daderot, commons.wikimedia.org



2.

Xanthomelanoussprog, commons.wikimedia.org, CC BY-SA 4.0



3.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, commons.wikimedia.org



4.

Jens Mohr, Hallwyl Museum, commons.wikimedia.org

1. Flower patterns; 2. Human figures; 3. Dragon; 4. Landscape.

6. Internet Search

虎头鞋 (hǔ tóu xié, tiger's head shoes) and 老虎枕 (lǎo hǔ zhěn, tiger pillow) are very popular in China, especially in Northern China. Find and watch a video clip on how to make them on YouTube or any other video sharing website. Write down the instructions for making either one of them. Why are they so popular?

Suggested video: 优酷中国民间工艺品制作系列民间布艺虎头鞋老虎枕 1

Published by vcstudy on 26 April, 2007

Available at: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMzcxNTI1Ng==.html

Tiger's head shoes are popular because they are practical, easy to make and symbolise good luck.

7. Internet Search + Pair Work

中国结 (Zhōngguó jié, Chinese knot) is a traditional folk art. What is a Chinese knot? Where can we see Chinese knots and what do they represent? With a partner, find and watch a video clip on how to tie a Chinese knot on YouTube or any other video sharing website. Draw the pattern of the Chinese knot taught in the video clip in the box below.

Suggested video: *How to Tie a Decorative Chinese Good Luck Knot with Paracord*

Published by WhyKnot on 5 June, 2015

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmrNWbTvqNk>

Students should consider these points:

- A Chinese knot is often made with thick threads or ropes and jade or porcelain beads. It usually has a symmetrical structure and vibrant colours, which enhance the atmosphere of any festival.
- In the beginning, people wore Chinese knots as an accessory. Later, people started using them to decorate their houses.
- Chinese knots have been a popular gift for thousands of years as they symbolise vigour, harmony, reunion, good luck and love, and thus embody the best wishes of the gifter.

8. Internet Search

Find out more about Jingde Zhen (景德镇, Jǐngdé Zhèn). Write down a brief history of how it became the porcelain capital of China. What were some of the most famous pieces of porcelain that were made there?

Suggested video: *Jingdezhen Porcelain Capital*

Published by yangyangwu on 30 June, 2015

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKhFGfV5k1Q>

Students should consider these points:

- Jingde Zhen is situated in a mountainous area. Most areas to its north-east and north-west are dominated by mountains, while the areas in its south-east and south-west are dominated by hills of up to only 200 metres tall. The Chang River (昌江) and Le'an River (乐安河) cross the region from north to south.
- Known as the "porcelain city" since the Song Dynasty, Jingde Zhen has had a long history of porcelain making. During the Spring and Autumn Period, it was originally situated to the east of the State of Chu. It became a town under the administration of Jiujiang County (九江县) during the Qin Dynasty, and then became known as Poyang County (彭阳县) during the Han Dynasty.
- Jingde Zhen got its present name from the Song Dynasty, when blue and white porcelain was produced in this area.
- Jingde Zhen's specialties include Jingde Zhen Blue and White Porcelain, Thin Embryo Porcelain and the Sculpture Porcelain.

You may use these as references:

- 青花瓷:
创始于元代, 是以色料在坯胎上描绘纹样, 施釉后经高温烧成, 釉色晶莹、透彻、素静、雅致。青料溶于胎釉之间, 发色青翠, 虽色相单一, 但感觉丰富。青花瓷经久耐用, 瓷不碎, 色不褪。
- 玲珑瓷:
在明宣德年间镂空工艺的基础上创造和发展起来, 已有五百多年历史。在细薄的坯胎上, 雕成米粒状的通花洞, 然后施釉多次, 填平通花洞, 再入窑烧制而成。在清代, 瓷工把青花和玲珑巧妙地结合一体, 形成了人人喜爱的青花玲珑瓷。碧绿透明的玲珑和色呈翠兰的青花互为衬托, 相映生辉, 给人以一种特殊的美感。
- 粉彩瓷:
亦称软彩, 是瓷器的釉上装饰, 自清康熙晚期开始, 到雍正、乾隆年代, 益臻完善。先在白胎瓷器上勾出图案轮廓, 再堆填色料, 在摄氏七百多度的温度下烘烤而成, 颜色柔和, 画工细腻工整, 有国画风味。又有浮雕感, 画面充满着浓郁的民族特色, 有以中国历史故事和神话为主的人物, 有秀丽多彩的山水, 有栩栩如生的花鸟翎毛, 有工整对称的几何图案等。
- 颜色釉瓷
把氧化金属加入釉料里, 经焙烧后, 显现出某种固有的色泽, 即颜色釉。影响色釉呈色的主要是起着着色剂作用的金属氧化物, 此外还与釉料组成、粒度大小、烧制温度与气氛有着密切的关系。人说: 自然界有什么颜色, 就可以烧制出什么颜色的瓷器, 参观景德镇的颜色釉瓷, 即会信之。有许多颜色釉的配料和烧制是十分困难的, 如“祭红釉”, 就有千窑一宝之说。

9. Internet Search + Pair Work

There are many symbols of luck in Chinese culture, such as Chinese knots. With a partner, find 10 symbols of luck and write down their respective cultural meaning in the table below.

Symbol of Luck	Cultural Meaning
Mandarin duck	A long and happy marriage
Gold fish	Wealth
Lucky golden cat	Depicting a smiling cat with a raised paw, it symbolises good fortune and luck, and is thus used to attract wealth.
Cabbage	Wealth and prosperity
Bamboo	Youth, longevity, strength, suppleness, flexibility, adaptability, endurance, good luck, prosperity, and traditional virtues and values.
Crane	Longevity
Bat	Happiness
Peach	Longevity
Deer	Wealth, peace and longevity
Pomegranate	Because of its many seeds, it represents fertility, having many offspring and descendants.

Note: All URLs listed herein were ascertained to be accessible on 8 September, 2020.