Lessons from Asian Art:
A Taste for the Three Perfections
Middle School Lesson
Eastern Asia: China, Korea, Japan

## Geography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>CHINA</th>
<th>KOREA</th>
<th>JAPAN</th>
<th>MICHIGAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SQUARE MILES</strong></td>
<td>3.705 million</td>
<td>38,691 (combined)</td>
<td>145,91</td>
<td>96,71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **POPULATION**  | 1.4 billion    | North Korea: 25 million  
                    South Korea: 51 million  | 127 million | 10 million |
| **MILES OF COASTLINE** | 9,010         | North Korea: 1,550  
                    South Korea: 1,499   | 18,486 | 3,288    |
| **CLIMATE**    | Extremely diverse; tropical in south to subarctic in north | Temperate, with rainfall heavier in summer than winter; cold winters, especially in the North | Varies from tropical in south to cool temperate in north | Distinctive summers and winters with a fairly even distribution of precipitation throughout the year |

Sources: CIA World Factbook, Michigan DNR, Michigan NRI. Numbers based on 2019 figures.
# Geography

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<td><strong>TERRAIN</strong></td>
<td>Mostly mountains, high plateaus, deserts in west; plains, deltas, and hills in east</td>
<td>North: mostly hills and mountains with deep, narrow valleys; wide coastal plains in west; South: mostly hills and mountains; wide coastal plains in west and south</td>
<td>Mostly rugged and mountainous</td>
<td>Hilly and rugged in the western parts of the upper peninsula, flatter in the east; hilly in the northern lower peninsula and flatter in the south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATURAL RESOURCES</strong></td>
<td>Iron ore, tin, aluminum, lead, world's largest hydropower potential, arable land</td>
<td>North: iron ore, limestone, graphite, copper, lead, precious metals, hydropower South: graphite, lead, hydropower potential</td>
<td>Fish, timber, and very few mineral resources</td>
<td>Metallic and nonmetallic minerals, fish, forests,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LAND USE</strong></td>
<td>Agricultural land: 55% Forest: 22% Other: 23%</td>
<td>North Korea/South Korea Agricultural: 22%/18% Forest: 46%/64% Other: 32%/18%</td>
<td>Agricultural land: 13% Forest: 69% Other: 19%</td>
<td>Agricultural land: 23% Forest: 47% Other: 30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: CIA World Factbook, Michigan DNR, Michigan NRI. Numbers based on 2019 figures.
Cultural exchange has always been a vital part of the development of the arts in East Asia.

Diplomatic exchanges between various courts in China, Korea, and Japan have helped to facilitate the spread not only of material goods and technology but also religious beliefs, systems of writing, and artistic endeavors.

- How might cultural exchange impact art?
- Consider the subject matter . . .
- Materials needed . . .
- Techniques used to create art . . .
Several formats of art incorporate both writing and pictures.
Japanese Hanging Scroll
Tosa Mitsuoki’s *Portrait of Hojo Ujinaga*

Chinese Album Pages
Shen Shichong’s *Landscapes After Old Masters* series

1

2

3
Plum Blossoms
no. 2000.89
The Four Treasures of a scholar’s desk or artist’s studio:
brush, ink stick, ink stone, paper

The Three Perfections:
calligraphy, poetry, and painting

Fishing in Summer Shade
no. 21.181
How would you “read” these works of art?

Dong Qichang’s
*Copy of Zhang Xu’s Record of Government Officials on a Stone Wall* (detail)

Practice reading a scroll
using the following interactive resource:
http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/songdynasty-module/index.html

Shen Zhou and Wang Ao’s
*Ode to the Pomegranate and Melon Vine*
How would you “read” these two Chinese hanging scrolls?
How would you “read” these two works by Japanese artist Nakabayashi Chikuto who painted in the Chinese tradition?
How might Daoist, Confucian, or Buddhist beliefs influence art?
How do painting and calligraphy provide a record of ongoing exchanges between generations of artists and viewers?

- Role of court painters, academies, royal bureaus
- Talents of master artists
- Importance of education and tradition
How do painting and calligraphy provide a record of ongoing exchanges between generations of artists and viewers?

*Ode to Pomegranate and Melon Vine* is a work that the painter and calligrapher dedicated to a friend.
Do these seals add or distract from the visual qualities of the paintings themselves?

**Script**: sometimes different types are seen on the same scroll

**Colophons**: can be written by the artist, those who admired the work, or those who owned the work. Sometimes they include poems or praise for the work.

**Red seal stamps**: those who owned or contributed to the work leave personal marks
Do the colophons and seals add or distract from the visual qualities of these paintings?
How did technology impact these traditions?

Inventions of Writing
Silk
Paper
Movable Type
Painting Manuals
Multi-Woodblock System for Printing in Multiple Colors
What can you find in the example you selected?

TITLE OF ARTWORK
Share your fishbone diagrams, identifying examples from the works you observed.

• How do the various formats of paintings differ?
• What are some of the key ingredients you observed in a successful work of art?
• What subject matter did you see in the works you investigated?
• Where in the compositions did you find evidence of imagery, calligraphy, and seals?
• How do these works reflect the people who made them, the people who inspired them, and the people who came after them?
• Is there any specific evidence of key “ingredients” or specific techniques being passed down over time?
• How might this work of art be different if it were to be recreated today?
• What subject matter did you see the most frequently in the works you investigated?
• What ingredients do you feel are most effective in creating a work that will speak to future generations?
How can we compare the sizes of the works of art we examined?

How are the media and possible methods of production for these works similar? In what ways are they different?

What are some of the themes or subject matter in these works?

What are some of the specific items found in these works?

Think about the figures, architecture, geographical features, and weather conditions that you observed.
How are the styles of these albums and scrolls similar to and different from the paintings you see being created where you live today?

Consider the following . . .

• The physical structure of the pieces
• Organization of text
• Types and details of illustrations
• The materials used in the production of the pieces
• Identification of artists (painters, calligraphers)
How does the format of the work (hanging scroll, handscroll, or album) affect your ability to find examples for this activity?

How does the size of the work change the way in which you, as the viewer, interacted with the piece?

How does the variety of subject matter alter your impression of the composition?
Recipe for Success

Using the metaphor of writing a recipe that provides the ingredients and directions for creating a work of art, develop a plan for designing a unique album page or scroll painting.

**Title of Work:** ________________________________

**Format for the Work (circle one):**
- Hanging Scroll
- Handscroll
- Album Page

**Ingredients:**

- ................................................
- ................................................
- ................................................
- ................................................
- ................................................

**Serving Size:** ________________________________

1. ................................................
2. ................................................
3. ................................................
4. ................................................
5. ................................................

**Classification:** ________________________________
NAME: ____________________________

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

DIRECTIONS: Your goal is to develop a unique recipe for a successful work of art that includes both calligraphy and painting. Consider the subject matter and themes you have seen in the works at the museum, and decide what objects you would like to include in your piece.

Title of Work:
Format for the Work: album page, hanging scroll, or handscroll
Ingredients: list elements/objects /features that would be seen in this piece, with specific numbers and sizes
Serving Size: finished size of the artwork

Develop a list of three to five steps explaining how and where to arrange the ingredients in your work. Make sure to describe the objects you are including, providing not only general locations such as foreground, middle ground, background for the placement of each object but also specific details like left/right, in front/behind. Finally, classify your work as either an appetizer, main course, dessert, or just a snack and explain why. Be prepared to defend your recipe as the best tasting in class!
EXAMPLE:

Title of Work: On a Stroll Home
Format for the Work: Hanging Scroll

Ingredients:

3 large coniferous trees
6 smaller deciduous trees
1 mountain peak
1 growing stream
1 small person

1 small house
8 boulders
3 small shrubs
3 small stepping stones
Calligraphy and seal stamp

Serving Size: 10 cm wide x 30 cm high

1. Begin by placing the mountain peak in the upper left hand corner of the background and start the stream coming out from the base of the mountain, working its way diagonally across the paper to the foreground in the lower right hand corner.

2. Add the three large coniferous trees, one on the right-hand side in the background, another just in front of that tree in the middle ground, and the third in the lower left hand corner in the foreground. Fill background and middle ground areas on both sides of the stream with the six smaller deciduous trees, three on each side of the stream. Add the three small shrubs to fill in negative spaces.

3. Finish the painting by setting off the stream with three dark boulders on the right side and two on the left side, starting in the middle ground with the smallest boulders and placing the largest in the foreground near the end of the stream. Put three small stepping stones mid-way up the stream, and place the small person jumping from one stone to the next, from left to right across the page. Finally, nestle a small house in the background to the right of the stream where the person is heading.

4. Finally, in the sky on the right side, add a few lines about traveling home: “In just a few stops I will be where I am meant to be, at home among the mountains and trees.” Finish with a red seal stamp.

Classification: This is a delicious main course because . . .
Thinking metaphorically, would you classify your work as an appetizer, main course, dessert, or just a snack? Why?

Explain why your work “tastes” the best by writing an argumentative essay and have at least two peers comment on your thoughts.
**Credit Lines**


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2. Shen Shichong, (Chinese, active ca. 1607–40). *Painting from an Album of Landscapes After Old Masters*, 1619. Ink and watercolor on paper, 12 × 8 3/4 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, New Endowment Fund and Henry Ford II Fund. 78.46.8

Credit Lines

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Jeong Taekyu (Korean, 19th Century). *Plum Blossoms*, 19th century. 16 1/2 × 30 1/2 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence P. Fisher, by exchange. 2000.89

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Gao You (Chinese, active ca. 1625; designer). *Bird on Flowering Plum Branch, from the Album of Calligraphy and Painting from the Ten Bamboo Studio*, ca. 1775–1879. Ink on paper, 9 5/8 × 11 1/4 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, Mary R. Coyle Fund. 37.84


Wang Wen (Chinese, 1497–1576). *View from the Keyin Pavilion on Baojie Mountain*, 1562. Ink on silk; Overall (scroll): 16 inches × 31 feet 6 3/4 inches, Painting: 15 1/2 inches × 19 feet 4 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Fisher by exchange. 1993.51


Thank you

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