Lessons from Asian Art: *Cultural Diplomacy Through Ceramics*

High School Lesson
Eastern Asia: China, Korea, Japan

SOURCE: https://www.mapofworld.com/asia/regions/eastern-asia-map.html
# Geography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CHINA</th>
<th>KOREA</th>
<th>JAPAN</th>
<th>MICHIGAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SQUARE MILES</strong></td>
<td>3.7 million</td>
<td>39 thousand (combined)</td>
<td>145 thousand</td>
<td>97 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POPULATION</strong></td>
<td>1.4 billion</td>
<td>North Korea: 25 million</td>
<td>127 million</td>
<td>10 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South Korea: 51 million</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MILES OF COASTLINE</strong></td>
<td>9,010</td>
<td>North Korea: 1,550</td>
<td>18,486</td>
<td>3,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South Korea: 1,499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLIMATE</strong></td>
<td>Extremely diverse; tropical in south to subarctic in north</td>
<td>Temperate, with rainfall heavier in summer than winter; cold winters, especially in the North</td>
<td>Varies from tropical in south to cool temperate in north</td>
<td>Distinctive summers and winters with a fairly even distribution of precipitation throughout the year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CHINA</th>
<th>KOREA</th>
<th>JAPAN</th>
<th>MICHIGAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<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>
</tbody>
</table>
| **LAND USE** | Agricultural land: 55%  
Forest: 22%  
Other: 23% | North Korea/South Korea  
Agricultural: 22%/18%  
Forest: 46%/64%  
Other: 32%/18% | Agricultural land: 13%  
Forest: 69%  
Other: 19% | Agricultural land: 23%  
Forest: 47%  
Other: 30% |

Sources: CIA World Factbook, Michigan DNR, Michigan NRI. Numbers based on 2019 figures.
Similarities and differences between Chinese, Japanese, & Korean ceramics
Chinese Ceramics

1. Ox and Cart

2. Lion-headed Earth Spirit

3. Lady with Phoenix Headdress
Chinese Ceramics

1. Porcelain Jar with Celadon Glaze
2. Zun Vessel
Chinese Export Ceramics

1. Beaker Vase (Gu)
2. Bowl
3. Plate
Korean Ceramics

1. Jar with Pedestal Base
2. Jar with Designs of Plum and Bamboo
3. Porcelain Bottle
4. Buncheong Bowl
Japanese Ceramics

Tea Storage Jar

Tea Bowl
Ceramics vary based on the regional characteristics of the clay and glazes used as well as building and firing techniques.
18th century
*Moon Jar*
Korea
Celadon

1. China

2. Thailand

3. China

4. Korea
Comparisons

Japan

China

Japan

China

Japan

China

China
Beyond China’s Borders

What do objects such as these suggest about the development of trade following the Age of Exploration?

Consider the stereotypes and misunderstandings of Chinese people that are embedded in objects such as these.

How do such objects exoticize non-white ethnic groups?

Why is this problematic?
National Treasures?
Select four Korean ceramic pieces in the wall display to compare & contrast in media & form using this Venn:

Examine the collection of ceramics used as part of the Japanese tea practice, making note of the special qualities of three pieces:

Select two Chinese ceramic pieces with different functions, identifying some of the similarities and differences in the Venn diagram boxes:

Make sure to include the title of each work you analyze in the diagram shape provided.
Artwork Review

- Which ceramics stood out the most? Why?
- Thinking abstractly, what “power” do certain ceramic pieces have? Were there any pieces that you felt to have more power than others?
- What made you decide to select a specific object for your research--what attracted you and why?
- How did those works compare to the others you did not choose to examine more closely?
Through Time and Place

Stretching from Xi’an in the east to Constantinople and Rome in the west, “the Silk Road” was an overland network of trade routes that developed in the centuries before the common era and lasted until the decline of the Mongol Empire in the fourteenth century C.E. Along with these overland trade routes, sea routes played a role of growing importance during the Age of Exploration in the fifteenth century. Commodities traded along the Silk Road routes included textiles, ceramics, glass, metalwork, sculpture, silk, and porcelain from China, sandalwood from present-day India, lapis lazuli and rock crystal from present-day Uzbekistan, wool carpets and tapestries from present-day Iran, and glassware from present-day Italy.

Today’s One-Belt, One-Road Initiative expands this network to include new regions of Eurasia and parts of eastern Africa. The map at right notes major cities along both the Silk Road (marked with yellow stars) and the One Belt, One Road Initiative (marked with green flags). Using the graphic organizer on the other side of this page and the DIA’s website, see if you can find examples of ceramic works in the DIA’s collection from any of these areas.

For an added challenge, can you identify each of the following locations marked on the map? Create a number key starting with 1 for Xi’an, China (which is noted in red as it was a site along both the Silk Road and today’s belt) and mark each tag with the correct number.
**Silk Road**
Marked with yellow stars
Xi’an, present-day China (in red)
Chang’an, present-day China
Dunhuang, present-day China
Bamiyan, present-day Afghanistan
Ferghana, present-day Uzbekistan
Samarkand, present-day Uzbekistan
Shush, present-day Iran
Constantinople (Istanbul), present-day Turkey
Rome, present-day Italy

**One-belt, One-road Initiative**
Marked with green flags
Jiangxi, China  Venice, Italy
Fuzhou, China  Rotterdam,
Jakarta, Indonesia  Netherlands
Colombo, Sri Lanka  Moscow, Russia
Kolkata, India  Dushanbe,
Nairobi, Kenya  Kazakhstan
Athens, Greece  Xi’an, China
Through Time and Place

Find at least five examples of ceramics from the countries on the trade routes. Sketch and label each example.
Using specific evidence from this investigation, let’s answer the following questions:

What common ceramic forms (shapes of vessels), motifs (repeated designs or colors), or uses (function) did you see in your ceramic works?

What evidence might these pieces show that demonstrate an exchange of materials, techniques, technology, or ideas over time and place?
What makes a ceramic work of art a significant cultural symbol? How are contemporary ceramic objects being used as examples of cultural diplomacy?

After reading about one Korean’s view on contemporary art and national treasures, https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20170512009100315, ask students to respond in a reflective essay to the question Yi Young-hoon poses at the end of the article by explaining how our own culture might be evaluated by our descendants.
Credit Lines

SLIDE 7

SLIDE 8

SLIDE 9

SLIDE 10
Credit Lines

SLIDE 11

SLIDE 12

SLIDE 13

SLIDE 14
2. Thai. *Stem Bowl with Incised Lotus and Concentric Bands*, 14th century. Stoneware, celadon glaze, 6 1/2 × 9 1/8 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of the Honorable and Mrs. G. Mennen Williams. 73.308
4. Korean. *Dish with Incised Lotus Designs*, 12th–14th Century. Stoneware, celadon glaze, 1 1/2 × 5 1/2 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Irving F. Burton. 65.368

SLIDE 15
2. Korean. *Bowl with Inlaid Clouds and Cranes*, 12th–13th century. Stoneware, slip, celadon glaze, 3 3/8 × 8 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Leo S. Figiel and Dr. and Mrs. Steven J. Figiel. 74.87
Credit Lines

SLIDE 16

2. Chinese. *Bowl*, 13th century. Stoneware, glaze, 3 × 10 9/16 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of the Honorable and Mrs. G. Mennen Williams. 73.309


SLIDE 18


SLIDE 25

Thank you

This educational resource was developed by Art teacher Angie Stokes in collaboration with the DIA Education Programs team.

Lessons From Asian Art learning resources are supported by The Freeman Foundation Asian Arts & Culture Educational Funding Initiative.