

## **Chinese Calligraphy Unit**

### **Rationale:**

This unit will introduce students to the ancient art of Chinese calligraphy. Students will learn about the history, beauty, and importance of this highly valued art of writing. As writing Chinese calligraphy may seem intimidating, students will be introduced to Xu Bing's Square Word calligraphy. At first glance, his characters look like Chinese calligraphy, but they are not. The characters are Xu Bing's creation of the American alphabet written to look like Chinese characters. Students will use techniques in calligraphy and painting to write their names in Square Word Calligraphy.

### **California Visual and Performing Arts Standards:**

- 2.1 Solve a visual arts problem that involves the effective use of the elements of art and the principles of design.
- 3.1 Identify similarities and differences in the purpose of art, created in selected cultures.
- 3.3 Identify and describe trends in the visual arts and discuss how the issues of time, place, and cultural influence are reflected in selected works of art.
- 3.4 Discuss the purposes of art in selected contemporary cultures.
- 4.1 Articulate how personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and current social, economic, and political contexts influence the interpretation of the meaning or message in a work of art.
- 5.4 Demonstrate an understanding on the various skills of an artist, art critic, art historian, art collector, art gallery owner, and philosopher of art (aesthetician).

### **Common Core English Language Art Standards:**

Key Ideas and Details:

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1

- Small group Reading & Discussion – Second reading: In a group of no more than 4, take turn to read the text paragraph by paragraph. Use the graphic organizer to note details in the text, with what you think about each detail. Discuss with your group the claim of the text with analysis.

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

### **Objectives:**

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the art of Chinese calligraphy.
- Students will identify the five basic Chinese calligraphy scripts.
- Students will identify “The Four Treasures.”
- Students will learn about China’s major contemporary artist, Xu Bing, and how his personal and political contexts influence the message in his art.
- Students will use techniques in calligraphy and painting to write their names in Square Word Calligraphy.

### **Day 1: Introduction to Chinese Calligraphy**

**Essential Question:** What does it say about the Chinese culture that calligraphy, art of writing, is highly valued? Find evidence in the text to support your claim.

### **Lesson Activities:**

- Teacher introduces Chinese calligraphy and play the video “Appreciating Chinese Calligraphy” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEN0CzGv5-Y>.
- Students read “Chinese Calligraphy” by Dawn Delbanco at [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chcl/hd\\_chcl.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chcl/hd_chcl.htm) independently and look up unfamiliar words. Make a note of any passages that needs clarification. With a shoulder partner, discuss the text. Answer essential question and summarize the article.
- Class discussion:
  - What’s Chinese calligraphy?
  - What’s the five basic scripts?
  - What is the central idea of the article?
  - What specific passage stood out to you?
  - What in the text supports the central idea?
  - What phrases most support the author’s main point?

**Assessment:**

Check-out question: Have students share their responses to the essential question. If time permits, ask students to also share one quote from the text that resonates with them and why.

**Day 2: Xu Bing's Square Word Calligraphy**

**Essential Question:** How does Xu Bing's life experience influence the message in his art?

**Lesson Activities:**

- Teacher display slide show of Xu Bing's Square Word calligraphy and ask students if they are able to read the text: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/73325>. Do not start on slide 1 as it shows the Xu Bing's alphabet. Inform students that the characters are not Chinese words.
- Teacher introduces artist Xu Bing and play the Bloomberg video: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2015-11-20/artist-xu-bing-on-brilliant-ideas-> (first 12 minutes of video clip focuses on life, work, and up to Square Word calligraphy)
- Discuss video and ask the essential question.
- Go back to previous slide of Xu Bing's Square Word calligraphy except this time pass out the Square Word calligraphy handout.
- Allow students time to decode the writing.

**Assessment:** Class write their first name using Square Word calligraphy. Collect.

**Day 3: Square Word Calligraphy Workshop**

Materials:

- Ink
- Brush
- Cups
- Newspaper
- Paper
- Water
- Handout of Square Word calligraphy alphabet or project alphabet on screen

**Lesson Activities:**

- Pass out Square Word calligraphy handout.
- Introduce the eight strokes of how to write a Chinese character.

- Square Word calligraphy is written using the styles of conventional Chinese writing. Top to bottom.
- Demonstrate how to hold a brush: <http://education.asianart.org/explore-resources/background-information/introduction-chinese-brushpainting-techniques>.
- Students write their names in Square Word calligraphy.
- Clean up and set ink to dry.

**Assessment:** Gallery walk. Provide students with sticky notes to post comments.

### Works Cited

- “An Introduction to Chinese Brushpainting Techniques.” *Asian Art Museum | Education*, education.asianart.org/explore-resources/background-information/introduction-chinese-brushpainting-techniques. Accessed 3 Sept. 2018.
- AsianArtMuseum. “Appreciating Chinese Calligraphy.” *YouTube*, 20 Dec. 2008, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEN0CzGv5-Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEN0CzGv5-Y).
- “Chinese Calligraphy: From the Neolithic Period (Ca. 4500–2200 BCE) to the Song Dynasty (960–1279).” *Asian Art Museum | Education*, education.asianart.org/explore-resources/background-information/chinese-calligraphy-from-neolithic-period-ca-4500%E2%80%932200-bce. Accessed 3 Sept. 2018.
- Delbanco, Dawn. “Chinese Calligraphy.” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chcl/hd\\_chcl.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chcl/hd_chcl.htm). Accessed 3 Sept. 2018.
- Hunter, Erika. "Calligraphy." *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, 2015. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=100259052&site=eds-live. Accessed 3 Sept. 2018.