

## 6. KOREAN PAGODAS

GRADES: K-3

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SUBJECT: Art, Social Studies

TIME REQUIRED: Two to four class periods

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Demonstrate visual and verbal recognition of the pagoda form.
2. Introduce the basic meaning, parts and materials used in pagodas.
3. Create a drawing and/or sculpture of a pagoda.

### MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Photographs of stone pagodas: (1) Tabo-t'ap, the Pagoda of Many Treasures in Pulguksa; (2) Sokka-t'ap, the Sakyamuni Pagoda in Pulguksa; (3) ten-story marble pagoda from Kyongch'onsa in Kyongbok Palace; (4) three-story stone pagoda with four lions and Buddhist monk figure in Hwaomsa
- Picture of traditional Korean sculptures and paintings of tigers
- Sample pieces of granite for students to view and touch
- Buddhist folktales (e.g., "The End of the World" in *Twenty Jataka Tales*)

### BACKGROUND:

The purpose of these lessons is to familiarize students with the different structural forms of pagodas, which are one form of stupas. The stone pagodas of Korea can be used to introduce Korean history, culture, and religion.

Stupas are symbols of the Buddha. Followers of the Buddha, or Buddhists, believe that when an enlightened being (such as the historic Buddha) dies and is cremated, *sarira* (jewels, relics) are found in his or her ashes. In the fifth century BCE, the historic Buddha Sakyamuni died and was cremated, and the *sarira* found in his ashes were divided into eight portions. Stupas, which are dome-like structures similar to pre-Buddhist burial mounds in northern India, were built over these relics.

King Asoka, who ruled in India 268 to 232 BCE and who converted to Buddhism, excavated the original stupas and further divided the relics into hundreds of portions, and many more stupas were built throughout his kingdom. These and later stupas contained relics of the historic Buddha and other enlightened beings, and sacred scrolls or texts. Stupas are considered as symbols of enlightenment, as diagrams of the cosmos. The central spire or pillar symbolizes the axis of the universe, the tree of life, a mythical mountain. Walking clockwise around a stupa demonstrates respect for what the stupa contains and represents.

The shape of the stupa changed as Buddhism spread throughout Asia. Monuments derived from the stupa include the bell-shaped *dagoba* of Sri Lanka, and then, with the addition of square bases, the *chorten* of Tibet and the terraced temple of Borobodur in Indonesia. In China, Korea, and Japan the shape changed to multistoried towers. The stories of the towers, or pagodas, become smaller in size with each story, and represent the branches of the tree of life and the terraces of the mythical mountain.

After Buddhism reached Korea from China in the fourth century CE, the first pagodas were wooden, like Chinese pagodas. After the sixth century, Koreans mostly built stone pagodas, using the granite found widely in Korea's mountains. Today Korea is home to more than 1,000 stone pagodas. Most of Korea's pagodas are square and have three stories or levels, although some are round or have six or eight sides.

#### PROCEDURE:

##### Class period 1

1. Show the children photographs of pagodas. Ask the children: Does anyone know what this is? (Respond supportively to all answers. Explain what a pagoda is.) Can you go inside? What is inside?
2. Explain the history of pagodas, using information provided in *Pagodas for Young Learners*. Use a globe to show the location of countries discussed. Use visual aids and/or the blackboard to show the various shapes of stupas, including pagodas.
3. Have students view and touch samples of granite.

Vocabulary words for period 1: Buddha, cremation, *sarira*, stupa, excavate, monument, pagoda, scroll

##### Class period 2

1. Review concepts discussed in the first lesson. Display photos of pagodas and lions.
2. Teacher demonstration: Draw a pagoda. Ask the children for help in deciding how many stories the pagoda should have. Ask the children: I would like to add lions to my pagoda. Where could I put a lion? (Point out where the lions are placed in the photographic examples of pagodas.)
3. Studio activity: Have students draw their own pagodas. Their pagodas can have three stories or five stories or even twelve stories. Remind them that the levels get smaller as the pagoda gets taller. When they have finished drawing their pagodas, they may want to add four lions pointing in the four directions at the bottom of the pagodas.
4. Distribute 12" x 18" drawing paper and pencils. Remind children to orient the paper vertically if they are going to draw their pagodas very tall.

##### Class period 3

1. Display the demonstration drawing of a pagoda again. Ask the students what is missing. (The *sarira*, the treasures inside, are missing.) Remind the class that a pagoda contains relics or something special to represent the Buddha's teachings, such as a scroll with the words of the Buddha. At this point, you might want to tell a short folktale that explores the teachings of the Buddha. Sample words include *love*, *wisdom*, *compassion*, and *light*. Depending on the age of the students, you may choose simpler words. For example, instead of *compassion*, mention the word *kindness*. Write the words on the board and discuss the meanings with the class.
2. Ask the students how we could make the secret place for the treasure teachings inside the pagoda. Discuss students' ideas. Suggest one possible solution: students choose one of the words listed on the board. They can decide where the treasure teaching will go on their paper. They draw a box for the treasure on the back of the paper. Inside the box, they can write the word they have chosen and/or make a symbol.
3. Have students share their drawings with the class.

Vocabulary words for period 3: wisdom, compassion, peace, happiness, love, light, kindness

#### EVALUATION:

After students share their drawings, lead a group discussion reviewing the meaning and history of pagodas. Note students' recollection and comprehension of concepts.

#### ENRICHMENT:

- Create the pagoda drawing on the front of a folded paper to produce a greeting card. The students can draw the secret treasure box on the inside of the card, which will then be the card's message. This card is a nice project to mark the Korean New Year.
- Tell several Buddhist folktales to explore the teaching of the Buddha.
- Learn how to write words conveying the Buddha's teachings in Chinese and Korean.
- Create a hanging scroll with a quote from a Buddhist scripture or with a poem written by the students on a theme such as compassion or wisdom.
- Create a cardboard model of a pagoda with a secret place for the treasure inside.
- Compare monuments from other cultures (e.g., Pyramids, Lincoln Memorial).

#### PAGODAS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS:

Long ago and far away, there was a very great teacher. His name was the Buddha. When the Buddha died, his body was cremated in a special ceremony. Does anyone know what cremation is? Cremation is when the body of a person who has died is burned. In some religions, people prefer cremation to burial. When we bury someone, we visit their grave to remember them. After the Buddha was cremated, jewels were found in the ashes and called *saríra*. The *saríra* were divided into eight parts, and stupas were built for each part.

A stupa is a special place like a grave, except it has the shape of a dome or mound. The Buddha's students wanted to remember their teacher, so they visited the stupas. After a long time, the king decided there were not enough stupas for everyone to visit. Some people lived too far away. So he ordered the eight stupas to be excavated, and the *saríra* to be divided into hundreds of portions. Then stupas were built all over his kingdom, so everyone could visit a stupa and remember the Buddha.

Then a long time passed and many many people in many countries heard about the great teacher Buddha, and they all wanted to remember him. So monuments were built in all these different lands. In each place, they looked different. In Korea instead of building stupas, the people built pagodas. Pagodas have many stories, like tall buildings. Now, do you think there were enough of the *saríra* to put in all the thousands of monuments in all the countries? Probably not. So instead, people put in other things to remember the Buddha. For instance, they put in scrolls with the teachings of the Buddha written on them.

In Korea, most of the pagodas are built of a stone called granite. These pagodas have lasted for hundreds and hundreds of years. There are about a thousand pagodas in Korea. People still visit them to remember the Buddha. Most pagodas have three stories, but some pagodas have ten stories. The pagoda is like a magic, make-believe mountain. At the top of the mountain is heaven, and at the bottom of the mountain is earth. The pagoda at Hwaomsa has four lions at the bottom. Why do you think they are there? The lions are protecting the pagoda.

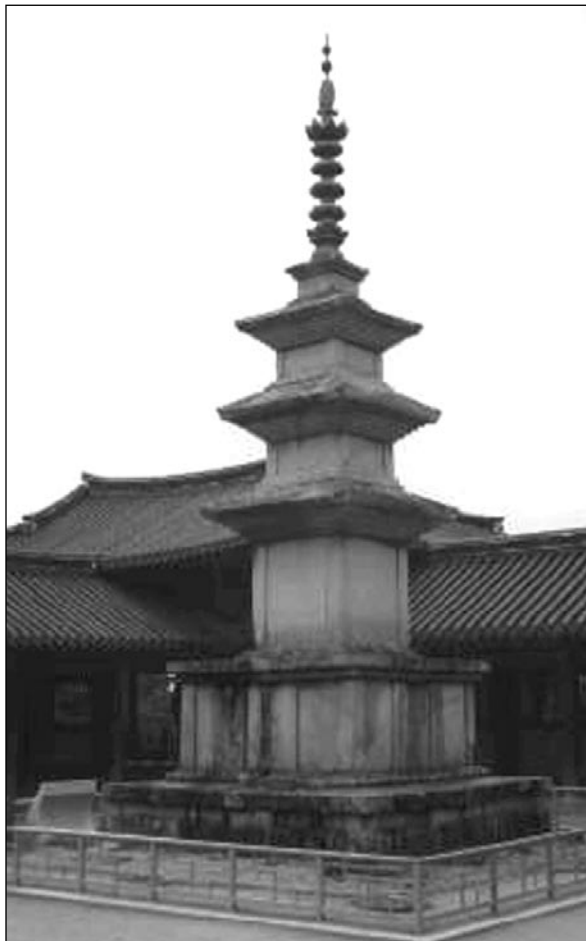
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## KOREAN PAGODAS



Main courtyard at Pulguksa in Kyongju, with Sokkat'ap, the Sakyamuni Pagoda, at the left (and bottom left) and Tabot'ap, the Pagoda of Many Treasures, at the right (and bottom right)



## KOREAN PAGODAS (continued)



Stone pagoda with four lions at Hwaomsa on Mt. Chiri (upper left)

Gilt bronze pagoda in Hoam Museum of Art (upper right)



Ten-story marble pagoda at Kyongch'onsa in Kyongbok Palace (lower left). Note: This pagoda is presently located inside the new National Museum of Korea in Seoul.

## BUDDHIST FOLKTALE FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

Adapted from "The End of the World" in *Twenty Jataka Tales*

*The Buddha was a great teacher. And while the Buddha sat, and all around him listened, these are the stories he told. "My children," he said, "I have not come now among you as your teacher for the first time; I have come many times before, sometimes as a child among children, sometimes among the animals, sometimes among the flowers."*

*In this story, who is the teacher and what can we learn?*

One day a little rabbit sat under a fruit tree and thought and thought and thought. What did the little rabbit think about under the tree?

"What will happen to me when the earth comes to an end?" he thought, and at that very moment a fruit fell from the tree. Off ran little rabbit as fast as his legs could carry him, so sure he was that the noise of the fruit falling to the ground was that of the earth breaking into pieces. And he ran and ran, not daring to look behind him.

"Brother, brother," called another little rabbit who saw him running, "tell me what has happened?"

But the little rabbit ran past and did not even turn to answer. The other rabbit ran after him, calling louder and louder, "What has happened, little brother, what has happened?"

At last the little rabbit stopped a moment and said, "The earth is breaking to pieces!" At this the other rabbit started running still faster, and a third rabbit joined them, and a fourth, and a fifth, until a hundred thousand rabbits were racing through the fields. And they raced through the forest and the deep jungles, and the deer, the pigs, the tigers, the elephants, hearing that the earth was coming to an end, all ran wildly with them.

But among those living in the jungle was a wise lion who knew everything that took place in the world. And when it became known to him that so many hundreds and thousands of animals were running away because they believed that the earth was breaking to pieces, he thought, "This earth of ours is far from coming to an end, but my poor fellow animals will die if I do not save them, for in their fright they will run into the sea." And he ran at such a pace that he reached a certain mountain which lay in their path before they came to it. And as they passed by the mountain he roared three times with such a mighty roar that they stopped in their mad flight and stood still, close to each other, trembling.

The great lion descended from the mountain and approached them. "Why are you running at such a pace?" he asked.

"The earth is breaking to pieces," they replied.

"Who saw it breaking to pieces?" he asked.

"The elephants," they replied.