

UNDERSTANDING CONFUCIANISM THROUGH KOREAN ART

GRADES: Middle and High School

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SUBJECT: World History, Art

TIME REQUIRED: Two class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand the basic concepts of Confucianism.
2. To identify and discuss the impact Confucianism has had on the development of Korean culture and art.
3. To apply knowledge of Confucian artistic heritage by identifying its elements in Korean art from the Choson kingdom.
4. To use the internet to locate information.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Handout 1: Art Selections
- Handout 2: Understanding Confucianism
- Handout 3: Art Analysis
- Handout 4: Confucianism Web Quest (all handouts attached)
- Computers with internet access
- Overhead projector and transparency of Handout 2 (or whiteboard and markers)
- Four large sheets of butcher paper
- Colored markers

BACKGROUND:

Confucianism has played a significant role in the development of Korean culture and the ideas it espouses are still prevalent in Korea today. Therefore, in order to understand Korea it is essential to understand Confucianism. The basic concepts of Confucianism originate from the Chinese scholar Confucius (551–479 BCE). During the Three Kingdoms period in Korea (53 BCE–668 CE), Koreans adopted many aspects of Chinese culture, including Confucianism. During the Unified Silla period (660–935 CE) Confucianism continued to influence Korean culture, coming to rival Buddhism and the traditional bone-rank order as a social force. With the emergence of the Choson kingdom, Confucianism played an even greater role in the development of politics and social structures. The Choson kingdom structured itself according to Confucian values and concepts, as evidenced in the creation of a Yangban social order. Confucianism greatly influenced artistic expression and cultural achievements in the Choson kingdom, as seen in various examples of artwork, literature and music. Today Confucian values are very much ingrained in Korean society and Confucian concepts can be seen underlying the country's recent economic progress.

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce students to Confucius and the basic concepts he taught by having them complete Handout 4: Confucianism Web Quest. Allow them to explore the sites provided on the Web Quest sheet in order to answer the questions.
2. When students have completed the Web quest have them share and discuss their information with a partner. This person will be their partner for the duration of the lesson.
3. Ask students to share their responses aloud to generate discussion and questions.
4. Pass out Handout 2: Understanding Confucianism. (It may be efficient and helpful to print it on the back of the Web quest handout.)
5. Have students copy and complete the chart as you lecture and comment on Confucianism.
6. Pass out Handout 3: Art Analysis to students. Each student should complete his/her own worksheet even though they are working in pairs.
7. Pass out one set of the selected art pieces to each pair of partners.
8. Instruct them to study each piece of art carefully and complete the analysis worksheet. While students are working, hang four large pieces of butcher paper in front of the classroom and label each of them with the title of one of the four art pieces.
9. When students have completed their analyses, ask them to each go to the front of the room and write the Confucian elements they found in two of their four paintings on the butcher paper. Each student must write on the butcher paper, so pairs should divide the art pieces, taking two artworks apiece.
10. Conclude the lesson discussing the various responses students wrote on the butcher paper.

EVALUATION:

Students will be assessed on their completion of the Confucianism Web quest activity as well as their participation while working with their partner and during class discussion. They will reflect their understanding of the lesson content through the examples they choose to include on the butcher paper.

ENRICHMENT:

Allow the students to further demonstrate their knowledge of Confucianism and Korean culture by writing a creative story about one of the art pieces. Ask them to select a piece of art that is particularly interesting to them and have them write a story about that piece of art.

Discuss with students what they need to include in their stories and what the format for the story should be. They need to include specific historical facts or persons. Additional research on the Choson kingdom might be useful as well. Students may choose to write a story about the creation of the art from the perspective of the artist, or the perspective of the owner of the art. Perhaps students can even relate the art piece with the life of a historical figure or an important historical event.

RESOURCES:

Asia Info: Confucianism in Korea

<http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/korea/rel/confucianism.htm>

Comparative Religion

<http://www.comparative-religion.com/confucianism/>

Eckert, Carter J., Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson, Edward W.

Wagner. *Korea Old and New: A History*. Seoul: Ilchokak Publishers, 1990, pp. 30, 51-52, 64, 108-109, 125, 408.

Kids Philosophy Slam: Philosopher of the Week, Confucius

<http://www.philosophyslam.org/confucius05.html>

Metropolitan Museum of Art

<http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/publications/pdfs/korea/divided/History-Religions.pdf>

Peabody Essex Museum: A Teacher's Sourcebook for Korean Art and Culture

<http://www.pem.org/visit/asia-pdf/korea-tsb.pdf>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/confucius/>

HANDOUT 1: ART SELECTIONS

Selection A

Celebrations for the Governor of Pyŏng-an



19th century
Ink and colors on silk

<http://www.pem.org/visit/asia-pdf/korea-tsb.pdf>

Selection B

Wild Geese Descending to Sandbar



Unidentified Artist (late 15th–16th century)
Choson kingdom (1392–1910)
Hanging scroll, ink on silk

<http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/Korea/koreaonline/large85.html>

Selection C

Kammoyōjaedo (Spirit House)



18th century
Ink and color on paper

<http://www.pem.org/visit/asia-pdf/korea-tsb.pdf>

Selection D

Hwajo (birds and flowers)



19th century
Ink and color on paper (Screen)

<http://www.pem.org/visit/asia-pdf/korea-tsb.pdf>

HANDOUT 2: UNDERSTANDING CONFUCIANISM

- I. Development of Confucianism
 - A. Confucianism is a philosophical doctrine developed in China based on the teaching of Confucius (551-479 BCE)
 - B. Confucianism developed in response to the collapse of social values under the Zhou dynasty.
- II. Key Concepts of Confucianism
 - A. Confucianism was a code of social conduct emphasizing virtue and order reflected in ritual.
 - B. Filial Piety: respect and care for parents
 - C. Five (5) Relationships
 - a. Ruler/Subject
 - b. Father/Son
 - c. Husband/Wife
 - d. Elder Brother / Younger Brother
 - e. Friend/Friend
 - D. Neo-Confucianism emphasized strict ancestral rites and interpersonal relationships.
- III. Confucianism and Art
 - A. Confucian influenced art focused on restraint, modesty, naturalness through muted colors, subtle decoration and organic materials.
 - B. Confucian art valued the appreciation of ancestors and teachers.
 - C. It also emphasized rituals such as weddings, funerals, exams and family shrines.
- IV. Symbolism in Art

| COLOR/ ELEMENTS | PLANTS | ANIMALS | LONGEVITIES | SCHOLARS |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Blue/green = East/wood | Pomegranate = fertility/sons | Rabbit = fertility | Rocks | Bamboo = integrity |
| White = West/ metal | Peaches = long life | Tiger = courage /protection | Mountains | Orchids = loyalty |
| Red = South/ fire | Grapes = fertility | Fish = success/ diligence | Clouds | Plum Blossoms = courage |
| Black = North/ water | Pine = integrity /longevity | Peacock = authority | Water | Chrysanthemums = constancy |
| Yellow/brown = center/earth | Vines = longevity | Rooster = intelligence | Crane | |
| | Melon = fertility | Crane = nobility | Deer | |
| | | Deer = friendship | Tortoises | |
| | | Pheasant = nobility | Pine Tree | |
| | | Goose = loyalty | Sun | |

HANDOUT 3: ART ANALYSIS

Directions: Complete the following chart as you study the (4) four pieces of art.

| | |
|---|--|
| <u>Selection A</u> <i>Celebrations for the Governor of Pyŏng-an</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. List specific things and colors you see in this art piece.2. What do these things symbolize?3. Does this art piece represent Confucianism? How? |
| <u>Selection B</u> <i>Wild Geese Descending to Sandbar</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. List specific things and colors you see in this art piece.2. What do these things symbolize?3. Does this art piece represent Confucianism? How? |
| <u>Selection C</u> <i>Kammoyŏjaedo (Spirit House)</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. List specific things and colors you see in this art piece.2. What do these things symbolize?3. Does this art piece represent Confucianism? How? |
| <u>Selection D</u> <i>Hwajo (birds and flowers)</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. List specific things and colors you see in this art piece.2. What do these things symbolize?3. Does this art piece represent Confucianism? How? |

HANDOUT 4: CONFUCIANISM WEBQUEST

Directions: Complete the chart using the following websites.

<http://www.philosophyslam.org/confucius05.html>

<http://www.comparative-religion.com/confucianism/>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/confucius/>

<http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/korea/rel/confucianism.htm>

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. When and where was Confucius born? | |
| 2. Describe his early life and the events and people that influenced him. | |
| 3. What were the five (5) relationships? What was his overall message? Give examples. | |
| 4. List the five Confucian thinkers and what impact each had on the development of Confucianism in Korea. | A. B. C. D. E. |