Introduction to Chinese Art: 
Ceramics, Bronzes, and Sculpture 
from NOMA’s Permanent Collection

Teacher’s Manual

New Orleans Museum of Art
Introduction to the Teacher’s Manual
This learning resource is intended for teachers of students in Grades 1-12 and may be adapted for specific grade levels. We hope that you will use the manual and accompanying disc to help your students gain an in-depth knowledge of the cultural and historical events of China. The objects featured in this workshop are part of NOMA’s permanent collection.

Cover:
*Tripod Ewer (Gui) with Twist Handle*
Neolithic period, Dawenkou culture
late phase, ca. 2800-2400 B.C.
Shandong province
earthenware, height 10 ¾ inches

*Monumental Horse*
Eastern Han dynasty,
circa 25-220
Sichuan province
earthenware, height 47 inches

*Guanyin*
Jin Dynasty circa 1175
wood with gesso and polychrome, 91 inches

*Zun (Ritual Wine Container)*
Western Zhou Dynasty,
1027-771 B.C.
bronze, 11 5/8 inches

*Stemmed Wine Cup,*
Yongzheng mark and period
1723-35 Qing Dynasty
porcelain with underglaze blue decortion, height 3 1/8 inches
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Teacher’s Manual

Written by
Lisa Rotondo-McCord

Auxiliary material written and compiled by
Kathy Alcaine, Curator of Education
Tracy Kennan, Curator of Education for Public Programs
Samantha Langley, intern
Elizabeth Lynch, intern

Edited by
Allison Reid, Assistant Director for Education

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Introduction to Chinese Art

By looking at the arts of China, we can learn much of its history, philosophy and customs. This packet and the accompanying workshop use the Chinese art collection of the New Orleans Museum of Art as a lens through which to introduce students to the long and rich history of China. We focus primarily on ceramics, both earthenwares and porcelains, produced during the five thousand years span from the Neolithic to the Yuan dynasty (c. 2800 B.C. to 1368). Additional information is also provided on Buddhism in China, and comparisons between the burial customs of the Chinese and other cultures.

Chinese Ceramics

The Neolithic era, circa 10,000 B.C.-1600 B.C. The earliest history of China is told through objects made of ceramic, jade and bronze. The calligraphy and painting so closely associated with Chinese aesthetics do not survive in significant numbers until after the ninth century. Therefore, objects tell us the story of the earliest inhabitants of China.

The Neolithic era in China lasted for nearly ten thousand years. Nearly one hundred years have passed since the first Neolithic culture was identified in China (the Yangshao culture, named after the village where the ceramics were uncovered). Since that time, nearly sixty distinct Neolithic cultures have been identified and classified on the basis of their ceramics, dwelling types, tools, jades and stone ornaments. Common to all these separate cultures was the practice of placing objects within graves for use by the deceased in the afterlife. The two most common types of grave goods are food and wine (to insure the deceased has enough nourishment for the afterlife, and to make certain that rituals could be properly conducted), as well as objects that indicate high social status such as jewelry, ornaments, etc. This practice, begun in the Neolithic, continued well into the imperial era.

The oldest surviving Chinese ceramic fragments date from approximately 9000 B.C., and the earliest painted ceramics have been dated to around 6000-5000 B.C. Among the oldest objects in NOMA’s collection is the Tripod Ewer with Twist Handle (no. 1) produced by the Dawenkou culture that flourished along China’s eastern seaboard from circa 4300-2500 B.C. The Dawenkou potters used a fast-turning potter’s wheel, and created some of the most innovative ceramics of the Neolithic era. They excelled in the creation of undecorated, monochrome wares, such as this sculptural Ewer.

The Large Jar with Paired Handles (no. 2) was created by the Majiayao culture, based in the northwestern provinces of Gansu and Qinghai, during 3800-2000 B.C. Majiayao potters used the fine-grained loessic clays of North China to create this coil-built vessel. The decoration on the upper portion of the Jar was created by means of a brush dipped in slip, a diluted form of the
same clay used to make the vessel itself, and a coloring agent. The earliest brush-marks in Chinese art may be found on such painted pots.

**The Shang and Zhou Dynasties, circa 1600-221 B.C.**

The Shang dynasty (c. 1600-1060 B.C.), the first in China for which there are written records, emerged from this rich matrix of Neolithic cultures. While many characteristics of the Shang, including burial practices, ceramic shapes, and design motifs, can be traced, in part, to Neolithic cultures in eastern China, the relationship of the Shang to any specific Neolithic culture remains obscure. The Shang kings relied on divination and ritual, and cast bronzes of remarkable sophistication and complexity were crucial components of their dynastic rituals. The cultural, religious, and political practices of the Shang elites were largely maintained and elaborated upon by the Zhou, who conquered the Shang in about 1045 B.C.

The utilitarian ceramic wares of the Shang and the Zhou are relatively simple vessels, as can be seen in the *Large Tripod Vessel (Li)* (no. 3). The cord-impressed patterning on the tripod’s exterior was a method of decoration that originated in the Neolithic era, and continued to be a popular form of decoration throughout the Shang and Zhou dynasties and well into the Han dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 220). *Li* were used as steamers, their tripod feet resting in the fire, their bodies filled with water, and a perforated plate resting inside, upon which sat a container of the food to be heated. As was often the case, many of the shapes of Shang and Zhou ceramics can also be seen in bronzes.

Bronzes used in the rituals of the Shang and Zhou rulers were the primary art form of this era. NOMA’s *Zun* (Ritual Wine Container) (no. 4), dates to the Western Zhou dynasty (1050-771 B.C.). Like the preceding vessels, the *Zun* was a food or beverage container. This tall, cylindrical *Zun* is decorated with animal masks, known as *taotie* and bird motifs. The mid-section of the vessel is decorated with two of these animal masks (made up of *zoomorphic* and human features) their eyes at either side of the flanges. The lower section, above a rather high foot rim, is decorated with paired birds facing each other across the flanges.

**The Han Dynasty: Western Han (206 B.C. – A.D. 8) and Eastern Han (A.D. 25-220)**

The Han dynasty, lasting more than four hundred years, oversaw a long period of stability and economic prosperity, interrupted by a brief interregnum (9-23) that served to separate the early, or Western Han (206 B.C. A.D. 8), from the later, Eastern Han period (25-220). Geographically, the empire expanded as far west as the rim of the Tarim Basin, allowing for the safe passage of caravans of pilgrims, traders, and adventurers across Central Asia to the Roman Empire. Known as the Silk Road, this land route augmented sea trade in the export of Chinese silk and other...
products to the West and the importation of luxury goods and exotica from the Mediterranean world into China.

Most Han ceramics are mingqi (“spirit objects”), low-fired earthenware surrogates for the actual humans, animals or other objects needed to ensure that a tomb’s inhabitants preserved their social and economic status in the afterlife. These relatively inexpensive ceramic models allowed survivors to provide a full complement of furnishings and provisions for the deceased; dozens and, at times, hundreds of mingqi were interred within a single tomb. Mingqi provide the modern-day viewer a window into the fashions, beliefs, practices and burial customs of the Han elite.

Animal-form mingqi portrayed the real and supernatural creatures that served as guardians for the deceased or as indicators of their social and economic status. Horses, such as the Monumental Horse, (no. 6) were particularly prized by the Han military elite, and mingqi of these animals embodied the status of power of their owners. During the Han dynasty, China’s military strength depended, in large part, upon its mounted cavalry. Because native Chinese horses were less desirable for mounted warfare, suitable breeds were obtained through tribute, trade, and even battle.

The amusements and entertainments enjoyed by the Han elite are illuminated in a number of mingqi. The Tower (no. 5), in addition to providing information regarding architectural styles and methods of construction, also adds to our understanding of the leisure-time activities of the Han elite. Although similar structures have been identified as watchtowers--components of the Han military defenses--others, such as this example, are thought to be pavilions where the wealthy could engage in hunting and other forms of relaxation.

The Period of Disunion, 220-581
The fall of the Han dynasty in the first quarter of the third century was followed by the division of China into numerous kingdoms and states. During the third century, the rival states of Wei, Shu, and Wu vied for power in the area that had once been the Han empire. In 265, the Western Jin dynasty (265-316) was established in the north, and by 280 the north and south were reunited. This brief period of unity was followed by almost four centuries of division: the north of China was governed by non-Chinese dynasties, while the south was ruled by a succession of Chinese dynasties, all with their capital at Jiankang (present-day Nanjing). In the late sixth century, the non-Chinese Northern Zhou state conquered all other states and reunited China under what came to be known as the Sui dynasty (581-618).

The Han tradition of creating low-fired earthenware mingqi continued in the north throughout the third through sixth centuries, even though the ruling houses of these kingdoms and dynasties were not Chinese themselves. The nomadic origins of these rulers and the importance of
military power during this period is reflected in the elaborately caparisoned Horse (no. 7). Horses, as mentioned previously, were regarded as symbols of military prowess and might, and the distinctive parade tack the horse wears indicates the esteem with which it was regarded by its owner, as well as the influence of Central Asian design.

The Silk Road, established during the Han dynasty, continued to be an important trading route during this tumultuous era. Ceramic representations of camels (no. 8) begin to appear in tombs in the sixth century, indicating the importance of trade. NOMA’s Camel, with its highly mounded pack, would have represented both the importance of trade and economic prosperity in the earthly life, as well as the wish for continued prosperity in the afterlife for the deceased.

**The Sui (581-618) and Tang Dynasties (618-906)**
The rulers of the short-lived Sui dynasty (581-618) reunified China. Although unable to sustain their rule, they ushered in the stable and prosperous Tang dynasty, considered to be one of the most important eras in the history of Chinese art. Significant aspects of the cosmopolitan tenor of Tang life are conveyed through mingqi, or funerary wares.

Among the most celebrated of Tang ceramics are the low-fired earthenwares with sancai glaze, produced by a number of kilns in north China. The basic lead-fluxed glaze, whose name literally means “three colors,” appeared cream-colored when applied over light-bodied earthenware; the addition of copper oxide produced a green glaze, and the addition of iron oxide resulted in a range of browns. Most commonly sancai glazes appear in combination—green, amber and cream being the usual grouping. Despite the name, other colors, such as black and blue, other combinations of colors, or the use of just a single color appeared quite frequently.

These glazes were used to great effect in the abstract decoration of large tomb figures created during the late seventh to mid-eighth centuries. Groups of figures, their number and size regulated according to the rank of the deceased, were created for the tombs of high-ranking officials. These groups typically included pairs of officials, earth spirits (no. 9), heavenly guardians (no. 10) and as well as horses, camels and grooms. During funeral processions, these figures would have been borne on carts that preceded the coffin, proclaiming to all in attendance the status and wealth of the deceased, and by extension, the survivors. At the grave, the figures were arrayed at the tomb’s entrance, attending the deceased during interment. Later the figures were placed within the tomb, where they assumed their function as servants and protectors of the deceased in the afterlife.

As was the case with Han mingqi, many Tang funerary figures functioned as guardians. Two of the most dramatic types are the *Earth Spirit* (no. 9) and the *Heavenly Guardian (Lokapala)* (no. 10). Known in China as *tianwang*, Lokapalas were originally Buddhist deities, guardians of the four cardinal directions. Absorbed into Chinese funerary traditions in the late sixth century, by the eighth century these figures assumed the form seen here: an armored, grimacing warrior,
subjugating a bull (or in some cases, a demon). Rendered precisely, the armor accurately documents the contemporary style. The earth spirit is a hybrid creatures whose ferocious appearance results from the combining of features from both real and supernatural creatures. Remnants of the elaborate cold-painted decoration that embellished the unglazed Earth Spirit are still visible.

The Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1279-1368) Dynasties
The weakened Tang dynasty collapsed in the early tenth century, ushering in a fifty-year period during which China was fragmented into five northern dynasties and ten southern kingdoms (907-960). Far to the north, the Qidan (Khitan) established the Liao dynasty (907-1125), which co-existed with the first of three distinct, but related eras of the Song dynasty: the Northern Song (960-1127), the Jin (1115-1279), and the Southern Song (1115-1234). The Northern Song emperors ruled the whole of China—except the areas in the north controlled by the Liao—until their overthrow by the Jin Tatars in 1127. The imperial court fled to the south, establishing the Southern Song dynasty, where it presided over a much diminished empire for a little more than one hundred years. The Mongols overthrew the Jin in 1234 and the Southern Song in 1279, establishing the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368).

Song and Yuan period ceramics contrast markedly—in size, form, and decoration—with the exuberant tomb figures of the Tang. Military might and strength were celebrated during the Tang, whereas the Song emperors emphasized scholarly accomplishments. Low-fired tomb ceramics continued to be made during the Song and Yuan dynasties, however, the significant achievements in the area of ceramics in these eras were made in the realm of refined, high-fired stonewares created for use by the literati elite. Some of these dishes, bowls and vases, were later buried in tombs as indicators of status, but their primary use was in the earthly life.

During the Song, a number of kilns flourished, each producing a specialized product. For convenience these wares have been named for the geographic site most closely identified with their place of manufacture. Many Song and Yuan wares functioned as objects a scholar might use on his desk—pots to hold brushes, or to hold the water used to rinse out the brush, for example. NOMA’s collection features a variety of wares from these periods, among them a Bulb Bowl (no. 13), made at the Jun kilns in Henan province during the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). This bowl was created using a mold, and then the thick, opalescent blue glaze was applied. A light dusting of copper filings were added to the glaze prior to its being fired, resulting in a slight purplish cast to the glaze. Bulb bowls were used as containers for flower bulbs, such as narcissus. Narcissus blooms were particularly popular around the time of the lunar New Year (late January - February) when Chinese celebrate the coming of spring.

High-fired stonewares featuring a grayish-green/blue glaze are commonly known as celadons. These wares became very popular during the Song, and have continued to be a major type of decoration for stonewares. The Longquan covered Jar with Appliquéd Dragon, (no. 12) dating from the 13th century, features a dragon coiled around the neck of the jar. Unlike many Song wares, this vessel was made especially for use in a tomb where it would have held grain.
In China, pillows were often made of ceramic or wood. Although westerners may find the idea of resting one’s head on a hard surface difficult to believe, it is a relatively common practice in Asia and Africa. NOMA’s *Painted Pillow* (no. 13), dating to the thirteenth century, was made at one of the Cizhou kilns that stretched across northern China. The pillow is decorated with scenes of a scholar by a river, and panels of flowers and plants.

During the fourteenth century, potters in southern China began to produce porcelains with *underglaze* blue decoration. Porcelain itself, with its snowy white body and clear glaze, had been produced in China as early as the ninth century. It was not until the first quarter of the fourteenth, however, that potters were able to successfully embellish porcelain vessels with another pigment *under* the clear glaze. The Yuan imperial taste favored these blue-and-white wares, which continued to be popular throughout the imperial era. NOMA’s *Meiping Vase* (no. 17) showcases this type of decoration on a later, Qing dynasty (1644–1911) piece. The body of the *Vase* is decorated with sprays of peaches, lychees, and pomegranates, each rising from sprigs of *lingzhi*. *Lingzhi*, the “fungus [or “mushroom”] of immortality,” symbolizes longevity and the fulfillment of wishes. The peach is one of the most popular motifs denoting longevity. It recalls the legend of Xiwangmu, the Queen Mother of the West, whose magical peach trees bloom every three thousand years and the fruit takes another three thousand years to ripen. At their harvest, a “Peach Banquet” is held and the immortals are invited to partake of this fruit of immortality. The many seeds of the pomegranate are symbolic of fertility. Lychees are one of the objects scattered on the marriage bed to assure a fruitful union.
Buddhism in China

Buddhism, first introduced into China in the first century A.D., gradually grew in popularity and became the dominant ideology by the fifth century. Since it had been introduced by Indian missionaries, the influence that Buddhism had on Chinese art included religious symbolism as well as the Indian aesthetic. Central to Buddhism is the belief in *karma*, a concept of destiny based on reincarnation and behavior in past lives. The goal is to overcome earthly suffering and attain enlightenment, a state of being that would allow a person to enter *nirvana*, or nothingness. Once Chinese Buddhists began to travel to Central Asia and India, they began to return with sacred texts and images. These influenced the future depictions of Chinese deities, and increased trade and travel solidified the religious and artistic ties between India and China. Buddhism remained, with the Chinese philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism, a great influence on Chinese culture and art for centuries.

At NOMA, an early example of Chinese Buddhist art is the stone *Buddhist Stele* from the Eastern Wei Dynasty (534-550 AD). It shows the central figure, the Amitabha Buddha of Infinite Light, sitting under a canopy. He is surrounded by images such as women with lotus flowers, which were the Buddhist symbol of purity and reincarnation. The stele would have been carved for a temple at the request of family members who wished to honor their ancestors. The calligraphic inscription at either side of the Buddha provides us not only with the date the object was made, but also the family who commissioned the object.

The *Seated Buddha* (no. 15), from the mid-13th century, shows the historical Buddha, Siddhartha (563-483 B.C.) seated in meditation. Meditation, where one clears one's mind of everyday matters and attempts to penetrate the true meaning of things, forms one of the central practices of Buddhism. The Buddha is clearly identified by his “snail curl” hair, elongated earlobes (recalling his life as a prince), and his seamless garment, or monk’s robe. The pedestal upon which the Buddha sits is in the form of a lotus, a flower that symbolizes rebirth in Buddhism.

From the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234), the large, wooden Guanyin (circa 1175) (no. 14), represents a *Bodhisattva*, an enlightened being worshipped and emulated as a deity. Bodhisattvas are beings who have reached a state of enlightenment that entitles them to enter *nirvana*, but they have chosen to remain outside of that realm until all other beings have also reached the same state. Thus, Buddhists may petition Bodhisattvas for aid in time of difficulty. One of the most popular Bodhisattvas is Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. This figure, like the Buddha, has elongated earlobes, but wears elaborate jewelry and ornaments -- symbols of the bodhisattvas connection to the earthly life.
The *Stemcup*, (no. 16), from about 1723-35 AD in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), is a piece of blue and white porcelain decorated around the cup with the eight sacred symbols of Buddhism: a bowl, a conch shell, an endless knot, a lotus flower, a parasol, a treasure vase, a wheel, and a victory banner. These symbols comprise the qualities that a Buddhist tried to possess and reminders that would encourage living in the correct way. By the time this piece was made, these Buddhist symbols were used primarily as decorative motifs, and had lost much of their religious associations.

**Burial Customs in Ancient Cultures**

During the Neolithic era (circa 10,000 - 1600 B.C.) peoples who inhabited the landmass we now call China buried their dead with objects—primarily ceramic food and wine containers, jade, and tools. It is through the examination of these objects that we learn of these early inhabitants. Archaeologists believe the dead “needed” these objects in order to have a peaceful afterlife. The presence of objects within a tomb implies that the deceased was one of high status within the community, and also the belief that the deceased required concrete indicators of status and nourishment (for either the soul or for the conducting of rituals) in the afterlife. In China’s early dynastic era - the Shang, Zhou, and Qin dynasties (c. 1600-106 B.C.) there is evidence of both human and animal sacrifice in the tombs of kings and other high ranking individuals.

The burial customs of the Chinese have parallels with the practices of peoples in distant lands. Like the Chinese, the ancient Egyptians believed that a person’s life force lived on in the afterlife and the deceased needed earthly things in the underworld. Both Chinese and Egyptian funerary goods tended to include decorated pottery, animals or animal forms and ritual objects. It was commonplace to find household objects, ritual objects and other items from the “real world” in Egyptian and Chinese tombs. The Egyptians, however, believed that the deceased needed the body in the afterlife, leading to elaborate embalming procedures, a practice not seen in significant numbers in China.

Ancient Chinese and Egyptian burials also included sacrificial offerings, including both human and animal sacrifice. This practice was most prevalent in China during the Shang (1600 - 1060 B.C.) and Zhou (1060 - 256 B.C.) dynasties and in Egypt during the Pre-dynastic (prior to 3000 B.C.) and Early Dynastic (3000 - 2800 B.C.) periods. In both cultures the practice was reserved for the uppermost echelon of society - pharaohs, kings, or emperors.

Similarities also occur between Chinese and Egyptian burials (as well as other cultures like the Maya) in the mound structures over the tombs. In the third century B.C., Qin Shihuangdi, “the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty” was buried in an enormous tomb. The still unexcavated tomb
appears to be a large hill. The famous complex of thousands of terracotta soldiers that accompanied China’s first emperor into the afterlife is located several miles from the tomb mound itself. The Egyptians also built elaborate tomb complexes and some pharaohs constructed huge pyramids over and around their tomb structures. The first stepped pyramidal structures are from the Early Dynastic Period, 3000 - 2600 B.C.

In other parts of the world, burial customs were entirely different. The ancient Greeks and the Hindus in India cremated their dead, just as many cultures do today. Peoples in the South Pacific and Western Europe performed water burials.

This timeline illustrates some parallels between some burial customs of ancient cultures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>China</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2800-2400 B.C.:</strong> Neolithic burials include storage jars filled with grain, pitchers for wine, jades and other ornaments.</td>
<td><strong>pre-3000- B.C.:</strong> There is some evidence of human sacrifice in the Pre-dynastic period.</td>
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<td><strong>1600-1060 B.C.:</strong> Shang Dynasty. Human and animal sacrifices appear in some of the tombs of kings and other elites.</td>
<td><strong>3000-2800 B.C.:</strong> In the Early Dynastic burials, wives and servants were buried with the kings in order to continue the king’s status into the afterlife.</td>
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<td><strong>1060-221 B.C.:</strong> Zhou Dynasty kings were buried in elaborate tombs, with objects made of bronze and jade, and occasionally with sacrificed servants and wives.</td>
<td><strong>2800-2650 B.C. (Dynasty II):</strong> The practice of burying servants along with royalty was abandoned early in this period.</td>
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<td><strong>3rd century B.C.:</strong> Qin Shihuangdi (“the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty”) tomb is best known for the vast terra-cotta army. At this point, the practice of burying actual humans appears to be dying out, although the remains of several individuals (tomb designers? generals?) and horses have been recovered.</td>
<td><strong>2600-2150 B.C. Old Kingdom:</strong> During this period statues representing servants were included in tombs to symbolize the earlier custom.</td>
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<td><strong>206 B.C.-220 AD:</strong> Han Dynasty During the Han it became commonplace for <em>mingqi</em> - ceramic objects that served as substitutes for real items, animals, and people—to be placed in tombs. The influence of Confucianism, which condemned human sacrifice may have been influential.</td>
<td><strong>2600-2500 B.C.:</strong> Kings of Dynasty IV built the pyramids at Giza.</td>
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<td><strong>1570-1070 B.C.:</strong> Because tomb robbery was a problem, New Kingdom burials were often hidden underground. Many were located close to one another in the Valley of the Kings. Tomb artifacts included jewelry, household goods and furniture, and precious ceremonial objects.</td>
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Neolithic Period (circa 10,000 – 206 B.C.)
Ceramics provided the richest, and at times, the only, source of information about the cultural groups that inhabited China in pre-historic times beginning around 10,000 B.C. until circa 1600 B.C., the date for China’s first historical dynasty, the Shang (c. 1600 - 1060 B.C.) The Shang kings, and the subsequent rulers of the Zhou dynasty (1060-220 B.C.), relied upon divination and ritual to effect their rule, and remarkably complex and sophisticated cast bronzes were crucial components of these rituals. The technical requirements for casting these ritual bronzes depended, in large part, upon sophisticated ceramic technology. Innovations in the field of ceramics during the Shang and Zhou periods include the widespread use of the fast potter’s wheel, the creation of specialized areas for the production of ceramics, the first use of glaze and the creation of new types of high-fired wares.

1. Tripod Ewer (Gui) with Twist Handle, Neolithic period, Dawenkou culture, late phase, ca. 2800-2400 B.C., Shandong province, earthenware, height 10 ¾ inches.

Three hollow pointed legs unite to form the bulbous body of this pouring vessel, known as a gui. Thin walled and handmade of fine grained, buff-colored earthenware, this vessel was created by the Dawenkou culture. They produced some of the most innovative and technically advanced ceramics of the Neolithic period. This is the earliest piece of Chinese ceramics in NOMA’s collection.

Did You Know: Historically, the Chinese call their country Zhongguo, meaning “Middle Kingdom” or Central Country”.

China is known today as the Peoples Republic of China. The capital is Beijing.
2. *Large Jar with Paired Handles* (cat. no. 5), Neolithic period, Majiayao culture, Machang phase, ca. 2200-2000 B.C., Gansu or Qinghai province, Earthenware with slip-painted decoration, height 17 inches.

China’s now remote northwestern provinces of Gansu and Qinghai were once home to rich and vibrant Neolithic cultures. It is in this region that China’s first painted pottery appears. Jars from the Banshan and Machang phases of the Majiayao culture (ca. 3800-2000) were decorated by means of a brush, the marks of which are still visible.

Pots such as this one functioned as storage jars. Used in daily life as well as in tombs, these jars were used to store quantities of grain. In a number of excavations, small grains have been recovered from the jars.

*Did You Know:* The Majiayao culture flourished around the Yellow River, historically known as the “Mother River”. It is the second longest river in China and today supports 12% of the population.
3. **Large Tripod Vessel (Li)**, Late Shang to early Western Zhou period, circa 1400-1100 B.C., Earthenware with cord-impressed decoration, height 8 5/8 inches.

This impressively sized *li*, or tripod vessel, is constructed with thin walls. Formed of buff earthenware, the body of the vessel is comprised of three hollow, mammiform legs that taper to thin, pointed ends. The outer surface of the vessel from the rim to the feet is cord-marked. This vessel is coil built, smoothed with a cord-wrapped pad or beater and then finished on slow-turning wheel, the *li* was then fired in a reducing atmosphere, which produced its gray color.

Ceramic *li* were used in the preparation of food from the Neolithic period into the Han dynasty. Filled with water and placed in the fire, the *li* supported a perforated vessel that held food for steaming. *Li* were staple products of Shang and Zhou potters who produced them in great numbers and with great variation in the regions where China’s first empires had their centers of power. The *li* shape is also seen in Shang and Zhou bronzes.

4. **Zun (Ritual Wine Container)**, Western Zhou Dynasty, China, 1027-771 B.C., bronze, 11 5/8 inches.

An indigenous bronze culture flourished during the Shang and Zhou dynasties in China and created works of great technical and aesthetic brilliance. Most bronzes appear to have been made for rituals performed by Shang and Zhou kings. Vessels held food, wine or water. Within each type there is a great variety of individual shapes, which are seldom exactly duplicated. This *Zun*, a broadly flared vessel, was a wine container used during court rituals.

The animal mask, or *taotie*, is a prominent decorative motif on many Shang and Zhou bronzes. Created of zoomorphic and human features, the meaning of the design is still open to question.
Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 220)

The Han dynasty, lasting more than four hundred years, oversaw a long period of stability and economic prosperity, interrupted by a brief interregnum (9-23) that demarcates the early, or Western Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 8), from the later, Eastern Han period (25-220). Geographically, the empire expanded as far west as the rim of the Tarim Basin, allowing for the safe passage of caravans of pilgrims, traders, and adventurers across Central Asia to the Roman Empire. Known as the Silk Road, this land route augmented sea trade in the export of Chinese silk and other products to the West and the importation of luxury goods and exotica from the Mediterranean world into China.

Most of the Han ceramics are mingqi (“spirit objects”), low-fired earthenware surrogates for the actual humans, animals or other objects needed to ensure that a tomb’s inhabitants preserved their social and economic status in the afterlife. These relatively inexpensive ceramic models allowed survivors to provide a full complement of furnishings and provisions for the deceased; dozens and, at times, hundreds of mingqi were interred within a single tomb. Specialized storage containers for food and wine are among the principal grave goods of the Han, reflecting the survivors’ concern for the fundamental need for nourishment and ritual offerings.

5. Tower with Animals and Hunter, Eastern Han Dynasty, 2nd century, Earthenware with green glaze, height 37 inches.

During the late Han period, towers frequently appear in the tombs of the upper classes. While some may have represented the defensive structures present in many Han towns and cities, others, such as this example, more likely served to represent the pleasure pavilions where the wealthy engaged in outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing.

Han tombs often included ceramic architectural models of houses, courtyards, towers and other buildings. It is from these models that historians can determine Han architectural style, as no wooden structures have survived from this era.
6. Monumental Horse, Eastern Han Dynasty, circa 25-220, Sichuan province, earthenware, height 47 inches.

This very large unglazed earthenware horse stands upon its crisply modeled legs, caught in mid-stride. The cylindrical body features a rounded rear end, culminating in a bobbed tail, and a swelling chest that leads to a gently curved neck topped by a sharply defined face. The pricked ears, bulging eyes and open mouth reveal the horse’s teeth, giving an overall impression of alertness. The saddle resting upon the back was fired separately.

Large pottery figures of horses have been found in a number of tombs datable to the Eastern Han dynasty in what is now Sichuan province. Horses were highly prized in China during the Han, primarily for their role in assuring China’s supremacy over border tribes. The Han mounted cavalry was famed for its strength, agility and mobility. Military leaders preferred spirited breeds from Central Asia and Arabia to the small, native Chinese horse.

Did You Know: The Han Dynasty developed the fire cracker by roasting bamboo that would crack in the fire. The loud sound known as “bian pao” was said to frighten evil spirits.

The Chinese depended heavily on horses, leading to the invention of the stirrup in approximately A.D. 400, which made it easier for cavalrmen to fight. The Chinese also invented the breast strap harnessing system, which wouldn’t appear in Europe for another millennium.
Period of Disunion (220-618)

The fall of the Han dynasty in the first quarter of the third century was followed by the division of China into numerous kingdoms and states. For over four centuries China was divided; the north was governed by non-Chinese dynasties, while the south was ruled by a succession of Chinese dynasties, all with their capital at Jiankang (present-day Nanjing). In the late sixth century, the non-Chinese Northern Zhou state conquered all other states and reunited China under what came to be known as the Sui dynasty (581-618).

The Han tradition of creating low-fired earthenware mingqi continued in the north throughout the third through sixth centuries. The nomadic origins of the ruling houses that governed these regions and the importance of military power during this period is reflected in the elaborately caparisoned horses and camels that comprise a large portion of their grave goods.


This painted pottery model of a horse, standing four-square upon a rectangular base, is presented in full parade tack, consisting of a braided, tasseled cord tied behind the head, a half-martingale across the chest suspending shell-shaped bells, an elaborate bridle with studded and palmate decoration, and layered saddle blankets. Originally, the gray pottery body of the horse was covered in white slip, over which was added brown pigment. The ornamental tack was further embellished, and traces of the original pigmentation can still be seen: bright green on the bridle and saddle blankets, and white and red on the saddle blanket, the chest strap and braided cord.

Elaborately caparisoned ceramic horses reflect the nomadic heritage and martial character of the Eastern Wei ruling house which ruled a sector of northern China during the sixth century.

Standing upon impossibly thin legs, this camel bears a full load of blankets and goods. A black-painted rough curly mane extends a short way down the back of the head and down the front of the long slender neck to the camel’s belly. Its twin humps are covered by the neatly organized tent rolls that are in turn covered by larger blankets and textiles. The resulting mound is surmounted by a perforated center ring, from a folding tent, or yurt, the whole secured by two cords. The earthenware body of the camel was covered overall by an ochre yellow, with the lower half of the legs displaying a purplish-brown and the hooves a contrasting white. Red, blue, white and black pigments embellish the tent rolls.

Much of the original pigmentation has survived on the camel, a surprisingly frequent occurrence in Northern Qi tomb figures. Whether this is due to technical advances in either the formulation or type of materials used by Northern Qi potters, or in archaeological techniques has yet to be determined.

**Did You Know:** The Silk Road was the major transportation route from approximately 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500. It extended almost 4000 miles, connecting China to Europe, the Near East and India.

Camels made travel on the Silk Road possible due to their capacity for carrying heavy loads and extended travel in an arid environment.
Tang Dynasty (618-906)
The rulers of the short-lived Sui dynasty (581-618) reunified China. Although unable to sustain their rule, they ushered in the stable and prosperous Tang dynasty, considered to be one of the most important eras in the history of Chinese art.

9. Earth Spirit, Tang Dynasty, 7th century, Earthenware with cold-painted pigments
This unglazed earthenware model is an earth spirit seated upon its haunches. Its straight front legs end in cloven feet planted firmly upon an unglazed rectangular base. The leonine face features a furrowed brow over bulging eyes, prominent canine teeth, long horns extending above and behind the head, and protruding dorsal spine with flames. Remnants of the polychrome that once embellished the figure are visible on the face.

This ferocious figure formed one half of a pair of *zhengmushou*, or tomb guardian figures, that are found in the tombs of the Tang elite. The figures’ strange physical forms and fierce expressions manifest their role as protectors of the deceased from evil spirits. This figure would have been accompanied by another, of similar size, with an almost human face topped by a long plume of hair or a single spiraled horn and with large ears at either side of the head.

**Did You Know:** In Daoism, all natural forms such as mountains and streams and natural elements such as earth and water have a life force. It was common to find an Earth Spirit representing the natural force.

The native philosophical tradition of Daoism was founded by Lao-Tse in 604 B.C. and was adopted as the state religion in 440 B.C.

Standing atop a bull lying upon a rock-work base, this guardian figure is clad in armor with monster-mask epaulets and foliate pendant at the waist. The unglazed head reveals a face molded with a fierce expression beneath elaborately styled hair. The hands, also unglazed, are positioned to hold a spear or staff. The remainder of the figure is covered in *sancai* glaze. The unglazed portions of the figure would have been decorated with pigments after firing.

Known in Chinese as *tianwang*, this figure type is derived from the four *Lokapalas*, Buddhist deities who served to guard the four cardinal directions. Absorbed into Chinese funerary traditions beginning in the late sixth century, pairs of *lokapala* appear in many late seventh to early eighth-century tombs. Accompanied by pairs of *zhenmushou*, these four figures guarding the deceased and the burial site from any evil spirits emanating from any and all directions. The armor worn by this heavenly guardian reflects the style of armor worn by generals during the Tang.

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**Did You Know:** The compass was first developed in China with its earliest record in 4th century B.C. The Ancient Chinese used the compass as a divination tool or as a spectacle.
Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1279-1368) Dynasties
The weakened Tang dynasty collapsed in the early tenth century, ushering in a fifty-year period during which China was fragmented into five northern dynasties and ten southern kingdoms (907-960). Far to the north, the Qidan (Khitan) established the Liao dynasty (907-1125), which co-existed with the first of three distinct, but related eras of the Song dynasty: the Northern Song (960-1127), the Jin (1115-1279), and the Southern Song (1115-1234). The Northern Song emperors ruled the whole of China—except the areas in the north controlled by the Liao—until their overthrow by the Jin Tatars in 1127. The imperial court fled to the south, establishing the Southern Song dynasty, where it presided over a much diminished empire for a little more than one hundred years. The Mongols overthrew the Jin in 1234 and the Southern Song in 1279, establishing the Yuan dynasty (1279-1364).


Resting upon three cloud-scroll feet, this molded vessel features a relatively flat base from which emanates slightly rounded walls. Rows of bosses surround the vessel beneath the rim and around the lower portion of the exterior. A thick, milky blue glaze covers the interior and exterior of the vessel. The base is covered with a freely applied brownish-glaze.

Bowls of this distinctive form are generally referred to as “bulb bowls” due to their presumed function as containers for bulbs, such as narcissus. Many are marked on the base with Chinese numerals, from one to ten (and are thus termed “numbered Jun”), this vessel is marked with the number 2 on its base.

Did You Know: The narcissus and amaryllis flowers are of the same family. Both are bulbous plants; other bulbous plants are the onion, garlic and lily.
12. Longquan Covered Jar with Appliquéd Dragon, Southern Song dynasty, 13th century, Longquan kilns, Zhejiang province, Pale gray porcelaneous stoneware with carved and high-relief decoration under a celadon glaze, height 10 inches.

Rising from a circular foot, the columnar body of this vessel swells gently and then contracts slightly to form two tiered rolls that comprise the lower portion of the neck that is then topped by a straight, inward sloping neck. The body of a dragon encircles the neck of the jar, its chin resting upon the uppermost roll. The vessel is capped by a flat-rimmed lid topped by a seated bird. The head of the bird has been repaired with gold lacquer. A thick, lustrous, blue glaze covers the vessel except for the foot, which is burned a reddish brown.

Intended to hold grain for the deceased, this jar originally would have formed half of a pair, its counterpart bearing the decoration of a tiger. The decoration signified the dragon of the East and the tiger of the West, two of the four cardinal directions.

**Did You Know:** The dragon is considered an auspicious power in Chinese culture. According to legend they dwell in the ocean in the winter and in rise to the skies in the spring, bringing with them the spring rain.

The dragon is a symbol of the Emperor and the phoenix is the symbol of the Empress. Dragon with five toes is associated with the Emperor.
13. **Cizhou Pillow with Painted Decoration, Late Northern Song to Jin dynasty, 12th- 13th century, Cizhou kilns, Henan province, Stoneware, white slip with black-slip decoration and transparent glaze, length 12¾ inches.**

The upper surface of this pillow features a painting of a scholar at the river’s edge, apparently viewing a floating double-gourd vessel. On the sides are panels of flowers. All are surrounded by foliate designs and painted in brown on a white slip under a clear glaze. The unglazed base of the pillow is stamped with the three-character maker’s mark, Zhangji zao (“produced by the Zhang family”) in a rectangular cartouche with a lotus leaf above and a blossom below.

The Zhang family produced ceramic pillows of rectangular form and decorated with black-slip brushwork beginning in the late eleventh to the early twelfth century. The planar surfaces of these pillows were well-suited for pictorial representations from popular literature and drama. Daoism, alluded to here by the double-gourd (a traditional vessel for the Daoist elixir of immortality), also was a popular source for decorative motifs, and considered particularly appropriate for funerary objects.

17. **Meiping Vase, Qing Dynasty, 1644-1911, Qianlong period, 1736-1795, Qianlong seal mark on base, blue-and-white porcelain, 13 in. (33 cm.)**

First produced during the 14th century, blue-and-white porcelain retained a special place in the Qing imperial aesthetic, despite the increasing popularity of overglaze enamels and a resurgence in monochrome glazes. Of special interest in the 18th century was a revival of Ming (1368-1644) styles and forms in blue-and-white porcelain, particularly that of the Xuande (1426-35) and Chenghua (1465-87) periods, long considered to be the peak of Chinese porcelain production.

The Meiping Vase recalls these earlier periods both in its shape and decoration. The shape, characterized by its broad shoulders in relation to a narrow foot, can be traced to the Tang dynasty (618-907). It was established as a major ceramic form during the Song dynasty (960-1279), and may be found in many vessels dating to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. Meiping literally means “prunus vase,” indicating its presumed function as a jar to hold branches of the flowering plum tree. In fact, jars of this shape were typically used as containers for wine or other liquids.
Buddhism in China

Buddhism entered China in the first century A.D., brought into the country by pilgrims and missionaries from India who traveled along the Silk Road with traders and merchants. First understood as a variant of Daoism, the native mystical belief system of China, Buddhism came to be adopted as the state religion during the fourth and fifth centuries. Throughout the centuries, the role of Buddhism in China depended largely on political events, however it had, and continues to have, a significant impact on the cultural life of China.

14. Guanyin, Jin Dynasty, circa 1175, wood with gesso and polychrome, 91 inches.

In the 12th century, the native Chinese Song dynasty (960-1279) ruled central and south China. While the Jurchen tribe controlled North China. Ruling under the dynastic title of Jin, the Jurchen fostered a powerful resurgence of Buddhism in which architecture, painting, sculpture, and printing flourished.

This Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of compassion, is one of the few extant wooden Buddhist sculptures from the Jin. Evidently the victim of a fire in the 1930s, the statue is considerably restored and much of the surviving polychrome and gilding are the result of later repainting. Radiocarbon dating of the wood has revealed a date entirely consistent with the Jin period.

Upon its donation to NOMA, five documents were discovered in the Guanyin’s hidden relic chamber: three 12th century woodblock-printed sutras, fragments of a history of the transmission of Buddhism from India to China, and the original inventory list of objects placed in the statue. Two of the sutras are illustrated and inscribed as to date, place of origin, and donor. The earliest of the sutras is the Foshuo Shengtian qing dated to 1155. The text was dedicated by “The Buddhist disciple Liu Zhi of Changmin cun and his wife Zhang...” A judgment scene from one of the Buddhist Hells illustrates the text in this scene. The Arbiter of Hell stands in front of a fortress accompanied by four beings of the netherworld, as he passes judgment on the suffering soul cowering before him.

Did You Know: Guanyin’s name in Chinese means “he who hears the cries of the world.”

In Buddhist temples, Guanyin’s birthday is celebrated, usually occurring in late March or early April.
15. **Seated Buddha**, Sung or Yuan Dynasty, mid 13th century, wood with gesso and polychrome, 32 x 21 inches.

The historical Buddha (known as Siddhartha) lived from 563 to 483 B.C., the son of a king and queen. Due to a prediction that he would become either a great religious or secular leader, Siddhartha was protected from the outside world in an effort to insure he would become a great king. At the age of 29 he encountered old age, illness, and death for the first time. He then saw a wandering holy man whose asceticism inspired Siddhartha to follow a similar path in search of freedom from the suffering caused by the infinite cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Completely abandoning his luxurious existence, he spent six years as an ascetic, attempting to conquer the innate appetites for food, sex, and comfort by engaging in various yogic disciplines. He came to believe that physical austerities were not the means to achieve spiritual liberation. At a place now known as Bodh Gaya ("enlightenment place"), he sat and meditated all night beneath a pipal tree. After defeating the forces of the demon Mara, Siddhartha reached enlightenment and became a Buddha ("enlightened one") at the age of thirty-five.

Here the Buddha is shown seated upon a lotus throne (the lotus is symbolic of rebirth in Buddhism), his legs crossed, as if in a pose of meditation. His long earlobes indicate his previous life as a prince, and his simple monk’s robe, his renunciation of wealth.
16. Stemmed Wine Cup, Yongzheng mark and period, 1723-35 Qing Dynasty, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, height 3 1/8 inches.

This small cup has around its exterior eight Buddhist symbols: a bowl, a conch shell, an endless knot, a lotus flower, a parasol, a treasure vase, a wheel, and a victory banner. These symbols recall the qualities that a Buddhist tried to possess and served as reminders to encourage living in the correct way. By the Qing dynasty, the date for this cup, these symbols lost much of their religious meaning and functioned more as decorative motifs.

Additional Images

18. Map of China. (see page 25)


This grave shows the way in which the body was placed in the tomb, with the vessels and other articles arrayed to the side.
### Chinese Inventions
(from www.computersmiths.com)

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<td>Parachute</td>
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<td>Movable type printing</td>
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Chronology of China 5,000 B.C.-1911

NEOLITHIC PERIOD  c. 10,000 B.C. - c. 1600 B.C.
- Yangshao Culture  c. 5000 - 3000 B.C.
- Dawenkou Culture  c. 4300 - 2500 B.C.
- Majiayao Culture  c. 3300 - 2050 B.C.

SHANG  c. 1600 B.C. - c. 1050 B.C.
- Western Zhou  c. 1050 - 771 B.C.
- Eastern Zhou
    - Spring and Autumn Period  770 - 476 B.C.
    - Warring States Period  475 - 221 B.C.

ZOU  206 B.C. - A.D. 220
- Western Han  206 B.C. - A.D. 9
- Wang Mang interregnum (Xin dynasty)  9 - 24
- Eastern Han  25 - 220

PERIOD OF DISUNION  220 - 589
- Three Kingdoms Period
  - Wei  220 - 265
  - Shu  221 - 263
  - Wu  222 - 280
- Western Jin  265 - 316
- Eastern Jin  317 - 420

PERIOD OF NORTHERN KINGDOMS AND SOUTHERN DYNASTIES:

SOUTHERN DYNASTIES
- Liu Song  420 - 479
- Southern Qi  479 - 502
- Liang  502 - 557
- Chen  557 - 589

NORTHERN KINGDOMS
- Northern Wei  386 - 534
- Eastern Wei  534 - 550
- Northern Qi  550 - 577
- Western Wei  535 - 557
- Northern Zhou  557 - 581
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<td><strong>FIVE DYNASTIES PERIOD</strong></td>
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Curriculum Objectives and Suggested Activities

Geography
- Create a map of China. Draw in the various bodies of water, geographic formations and major cities. G-1A-E3, G-1A-M2, G-1A-H1, G-1B-E1, G-1B-E4, G-1B-M1.

- Research the Yangtze River and the Three Gorges Dam. What are the ramifications, benefits and controversies that surround the building of the dam? G-1B-E1, G-1B-E4, G-1B-M1, G-1B-H1, G-1D-E2, G-1D-E4, G-1D-M1, G-1D-M4, G-1D-H2, G-ED-H3.

- Map the Silk Road through China. Describe a merchant’s route from Antioch, Syria to Chang’an, China. What climates and geographic formations would merchants encounter? G-1A-E3, G-1B-E1, G-1B-E4, G-1B-M1, G-1B-M4, G-1D-M2, G-1A-H1.

- Map the spread of Buddhism from India through China. G-1A-E3, G-1B-E1, G-1A-H1, G-1C-M4.

Science
- Study the various burial rituals and methods of the Ancient Chinese, Ancient Egyptians and the Maya. What are the similarities and differences in the burial practices? What variety of objects are included in the burials and for what reasons? S-E-A1, S-H-A1, PS-E-B1, and Social Studies: G-1B-E2, G-1B-E3, G-1C-E3, G-1C-E4, G-1B-H4, G-1D-H1.

- Be an archaeologist and create a map of a fictitious burial site. Map and list the locations of all of the objects in the tomb.

- Discuss the properties of papermaking. When was it first created in China? Using the internet, research how to make paper and create some in the classroom. PS-E-A4, SE-E-A6, SE-H-B1.


Mathematics
- A horse is measured by the width of a hand, approximately 4 inches. Measure yourself and objects found in the classroom with the same unit of measurement. Estimate the height of two classmates then measure them with your hand. Create a chart to show your estimations and your actual findings. M-2-E, M-2-M, M-2-H, M-4-E, M-5-M, M-5- H, D-2-E, D-5-M, P-2-M, PS-E-A2.
• Research and create a map of the Silk Road. Measure the distance of the Silk Road and the distance between major cities from the East to the West. M-1-E, M-2-E, G-1A-E3, G-1B-E4, G-1B-M1, G-1B-M4, G-1D-M2, G-1A-H1.

• Calculate the ratios of an actual horse to the clay horses in the Image List found in the packet. Draw a table to show your results. M-1-E, M-2-E, D-5-M, P-2-M.

Social Studies
• Find out when horses were brought to North America. How did the arrival of horses change the lives of people living on the continent? How does it compare to the horse trade and development of specific breeds of horses in China? ELA-5-E2, G-1B-E3, G-1C-E2, G-1C-E4, G-1D-H3, H-1A-M6, H-1A-H3, H-1C-M6, H-1C-M7.

• Discuss the impact of the Silk Road in China. How long had it been in use? How many different “roads” were there? What major cities were the end points of the routes? What types of goods were brought through the Silk Road? G-1B-E2, G-1B-M4, G-1C-E2, G-1C-E4, G-1D-M2, G-1A-H1, E-1A-H2, G-1A-E6, H-1C-M10, H-1C-H5.

• What inventions and developments were created in China before they were developed in the West? How did these inventions help to advance their civilization? G-1C-M4, G-1D-E1, G-1C-M5, G-1C-H4, G-1C-H6, G-1D-H1, H-1D-E2, H-1D-E3, H-1C-M6.

• Research the Great Wall of China. Discuss the building of the Great Wall. Under whose direction was each section built and for what purpose? How was it constructed and with what materials? ELA 2, ELA 5, G-1B-E3, G-EB-M2, G-1B-M3, G-1B-H2, H-1A-M3, H-1A-M6, H-1A-H5, H-1D-E1.

Language Arts
• Write a journal as if you were viewing the burial of a king or high official in Ancient China. Describe what you see and what types (and how many) objects are in the funerary procession. ELA 5, ELA 4.

• Research the symbolism found in depictions of the Buddha and Buddhist objects. What does each item mean and how is it depicted in Chinese art? ELA 5, H-IC-M8, H-IC-H3.

• Research the written language of the Chinese. Compare it to Japanese and English. ELA 5.
**Visual Arts**

- Study various styles of calligraphy. Choose a style and write a poem in that calligraphy style. HP-3-VA.

- Study the different styles of clay building. Create bowls in the coil, slab and potter’s wheel methods. Research the various methods and find a comparable ancient work from NOMA’s collection. CE-1-VA, HP-3-VA.

- Create a personal character and practice writing it with pen and ink. Using rice paper, create a painting which describes a favorite event from your life. Sign the painting with your personal character. HP-3-VA.

- Find five objects in NOMA’s collection that are from different countries/regions (one country being China) but from the same century. Create a presentation to the class on the objects. G-1C-E2, G-1C-E4, G-1B-M4, G-IC-H4, AP-2-VA, HP-3-VA, CA-4-VA, ELA 4.
Vocabulary

celadon  A ceramic glaze containing iron. It must be fired by the reduction method, with its red iron oxide (ferric) reduced to black (ferroso-ferric). The final color of the glaze is either olive green, gray-green, or gray. Celadon ware was developed and perfected during the Song dynasty (960-1279). It was valued by the Chinese largely because of its resemblance to jade.

ceramics  Pottery or hollow clay sculpture fired at high temperature in a kiln or oven to make them harder and stronger. Types include earthenware, porcelain, stoneware and terracotta.

coil built  The coil method of making pottery involves building the walls of a pot with a series of snake-like coils into the required shape. Once the desired height has been reached the surface can either remain coil textured or it can be smoothed.

earthenware  Pottery or other objects made from fired clay which is porous and permeable. Earthenware is fired at relatively low temperatures, may be glazed or unglazed, and is usually (but not always) buff, red, or brown in color.

enamel  A vitreous, either transparent or opaque, protective or decorative coating made from silica (a kind of glass) heated in a kiln or furnace, fused onto metal (copper or gold), glass, or ceramic ware. It is often applied as a paste which solidifies in firing as areas of color.

glaze  A term used in ceramics to describe a thin coating of minerals which produces a glassy transparent or colored coat on bisque ware. Typically applied either by brushing, dipping, or spraying, it is fixed by firing the bisque ware in a kiln. This makes bisque ware smooth, shiny, and waterproof.

high-fired wares  Refers to the temperature at which heat is applied to make hard ceramics in either an oven or a kiln. Clays which can withstand a higher firing temperature are referred to as high-fired. These wares are generally less porous than low-fired wares.

karma  In Buddhist and Hindu belief systems, the ethical consequences of a person's life, which determine his or her fate.

lacquer  Used as a varnish, it gives any surface it covers a hard, highly polished finish. Oriental lacquer is produced from the resin (sap) of certain trees in the Far East (in China and Japan this tree is a sumac, Rhus vernicifera, a.k.a. Rhus verniciflua), and can be used on many different materials. Lacquer can carry several pigments, but red, black, or a combination, were used most frequently.

loessic  A fine-grained clay typical of North China.

lokapalas  In the Buddhist religion, these are deities who served to guard the four corners of the world.
**low-fired wares**  Refers to the temperature at which heat is applied to make hard ceramics in either an oven or a kiln. Low-fired wares are generally more porous than high-fired wares.

**mingqi**  Ceramic objects found in the graves of the Han Dynasty. Literally “spirit objects,” these representations of humans, animals and other objects were meant to ensure that the tomb’s occupants would maintain their social status in the afterlife.

**monochrome**  Having one color.

**nirvana**  In Buddhism and Hinduism, a blissful state brought about by absorption of the individual soul or consciousness into the supreme spirit.

**polychrome**  Having many colors; multicolored.

**porcelain**  A hard, white, translucent, impervious, resonant ceramic body invented in China between A.D. 600 and 900. This clay is primarily made of kaolin, a fine white clay.

**potter’s wheel**  A revolving horizontal disk on which clay is shaped manually into pottery vessels. The simplest form of wheel is the kickwheel. To operate it, the potter kicks or propels some form of disk, crank, or treadle in order to keep the turntable spinning. Also commonly used today are power-driven wheels whose speed can be regulated by the potter as he or she works.

**radiocarbon dating**  A method of dating an object based on the rate of decay of the radioactive or unstable carbon isotope 14 (14C), which is found in all living matter. Any matter which was living at one time can be dated by the rate of the decay of 14C.

**sancai glaze**  Chinese for three-colored, and almost invariably refers to lead-glazed earthenware fired at low temperature. The height of sancai pottery was achieved during the Tang dynasty, 618-906. Its colors were most typically yellow, white, green, brown and blue.

**slip**  An opaque creamy liquid made by mixing clay with water. Slip is an inevitable byproduct of working on a potter’s wheel. It is also used in the making of pottery to cement together parts that have been formed separately.

**stele**  A carved stone block, slab, or pillar, generally decorated with decorative relief on one face.

**underglaze**  A pigment found below the clear glaze of porcelain.

**zhenmushou**  Ferocious tomb guardian figures found in the tombs of elites of the Tang Dynasty (618 - 906).

**zoomorphic**  In the shape of or having the characteristics of an animal.
Bibliography and Suggested Reading


Webography

www.afe.easia.columbia.edu/ A website called “Asia for Educators” including a variety of activities and lesson plans for the classroom

www.artlex.com/ Dictionary of art terms

www.askasia.org A K-12 resource for the Asia society featuring resources, activities and maps

www.computersmiths.com Contains a section on inventions and developments in Ancient China

www.kidskonnect.com A kid friendly website with information on all subjects