

Trade, Technology and Teapots

A Teacher's Guide to the Exhibition:

Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe

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Porcelain Teacher Packet

This packet introduces you to the exhibition *Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe* and provides information, tools, and a format for curriculum design. The lesson ideas range from sixth- to twelfth-grade levels. Some of the activities are short introductory exercises and others could span several weeks. Feel free to use the ideas presented as a starting point to build upon, taking them in whatever direction works best for your classroom. Feel free to share curriculum ideas with other educators.

Inquiry-Based Teaching

Often when we approach a work of art from a different culture or an ancient time we have more questions than answers. We may ask ourselves: Why was this made and for what purpose? Who used this? What or who does it represent? What more can this object tell us about the culture in which it was created? As many educators know, asking questions is an important part of learning. In this Teacher Packet, we embrace the questions we might have when we approach the objects and use these questions as starting points in further investigation of the work. These are generative questions—in other words, questions that generate more questions and encourage active learning. Guidelines for generating questions when learning from works of art could include:

- Centering questions on your initial response to the work of art.
- Using questions to make connections to a broader perspective of the object by considering its social, political, historical, and cultural contexts.
- Asking questions that look for meaning in the work and further reveal the who, what, where, when, and why of the work.

EALRs

Although the lesson ideas in this unit are interdisciplinary, we have cited the Essential Academic Learning Requirements corresponding to each activity. In this way, we hope these lessons will integrate well with your teaching requirements.

What the Packet Includes

1. **List of Objects**—Titles and background information on the objects presented.
2. **Introduction to the exhibition *Porcelain Stories***—A brief discussion of the major themes presented in the exhibition.
3. **Introduction to the Packet Curriculum**—Brief overview of the themes and format of the packet.
4. **Background Information**—In this packet, we focus on three main themes of *Porcelain Stories* that are particularly relevant to student learning. They are: 1) Trade and Cross-Cultural Exchange, 2) Cultural Context and Use, and 3) Process and Techniques. Two or three themes that are most appropriate to the object's history are explored in short paragraphs accompanying and relating to each object presented in this packet.
5. **Looking Questions**—The questions are designed to begin an inquiry-based approach to learning about the objects and themes presented in this packet. They will help lead students through their own discovery process. Asking the questions when the objects are first introduced to the students, before background information about the objects is given, works best.
6. **Lesson Ideas**—Ideas for classroom projects are presented with each object. They are designed to engage students in various experiences relating to the themes of this packet. Different lessons are appropriate for different skill levels. You can modify or develop the activities further according to the skills and needs of your students.
7. **Glossary**—Definition of terms printed in bold throughout the packet.
8. **Overhead Transparencies**—Eight images on overhead transparencies provide you with visual aids for your lessons. The transparencies can help introduce students to the objects and prepare the class for viewing the works of art at the museum.
9. **Porcelain Timeline**
10. **Resource List**—Books, videos, web sites, and other resources for teachers and students relating to the packet. Many are available for loan, free of charge, from the Teacher Resource Center at (206) 654-3186, or online at www.seattleartmuseum.org/trc.

List of Objects

1. Jar

Chinese, Tang dynasty, 9th century
Xing ware
Porcelain with white glaze and *ying*
mark on the bottom
H. 8 3/4 in. (22.2 cm)
Silver Anniversary Fund, 59.121

Chinese, Southern Song dynasty (1127–
1279)

Jingdezhen *qingbai* ware
Porcelain with light bluish-toned glaze,
appliqué, and carved decoration
H. 14 1/4 in. (36.2 cm)
Loan from the Jiurutang Collection,
L97.2.135

2. Hexagonal tea caddies

German, Meissen factory
Unmarked
Gifts of Martha and Henry Isaacson,
69.177, 69.178, 69.183
from left: Unglazed Böttger stoneware
(Böttgersteinzeug), ca. 1710–15, H. 5
in. (14.0 cm); Böttger stoneware with
black glaze, unfired enamel colors, and
gilding, ca. 1710–15, H. 5 in. (12.7 cm);
Böttger porcelain, ca. 1715–20, H. 4 3/4
in. (12.1 cm)

5. Kendi

Chinese, Ming dynasty, Hongwu period
(1368–98)
Jingdezhen ware
Porcelain painted in underglaze red
H. 6 1/2 in. (16.5 cm)
Loan from the Jinglexuan Collection,
L97.1.35

3. Dish

Chinese, Yuan dynasty, 14th century
Diam. 18 1/2 in. (47 cm)
Jingdezhen ware, porcelain painted in
underglaze cobalt blue
Purchased in memory of Elizabeth M.
Fuller with funds from the Elizabeth M.
Fuller Memorial Fund and the Edwin
and Catherine M. Davis Foundation,
76.7

6. Hob in the Well Bowl

English, Chelsea factory, ca. 1755
Soft-paste porcelain with enamel colors
Unmarked
Diam. 9 in. (22.9 cm)
Gift of Martha and Henry Isaacson,
69.165

4. Mortuary jar

7. Father Time

German, Meissen Factory, ca. 1745
Model by Johann Fredrich Eberlein
(1695–1749)
Hard-paste porcelain with enamel
colors and gilt
Mark: crossed swords in blue
H. 14 1/2 in. (36.8 cm)
Gift of Martha and Henry Isaacson,
91.103



Introduction to the Exhibition Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe

The most ambitious decorative arts exhibition ever organized by the Seattle Art Museum, *Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe* spotlights more than two hundred exquisite ceramics that trace the worldwide evolution of porcelain. Combined for the first time in a decorative arts exhibition, SAM's strong holdings of Asian and European porcelain are on view in the downtown Special Exhibition Galleries from February to May, 2000. *Porcelain Stories* is organized by intertwining narratives about porcelain's history around the world. The show explores the global impact of porcelain from sixth-century China to eighteenth-century Europe, offering a wealth of information about East Asian and Western European porcelain traditions.

There are some intriguing questions to be answered when looking at the history of porcelain. Why was the material of today's toilet bowls once considered "white gold"—more valuable than gold itself? Why did it take Europe over one thousand years longer than China to learn how to make porcelain? Most importantly, how is looking at tea caddies, vases, and plates relevant to the learning, skill development, interests, and lives of students today? These questions and more will be discussed in this packet.

Introduction to the Packet Curriculum

There are three main themes in the history and development of porcelain that are particularly relevant to classroom learning. The first theme is trade and cross-cultural exchange. Along with spices and silks, porcelain precipitated the beginnings of global commerce and exchange of culture. Porcelain was the principal natural vehicle for the assimilation and transmission of artistic symbols, themes, and designs across vast distances. Cross-pollination between Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe took place as porcelain goods traveled and exchanged hands.

The next main theme is cultural context and use. In the Middle East, Islamic families prized the large porcelain plates for communal eating. In Europe, porcelain was a social signifier; before the 1800s, it was only available to the upper echelons of society. Owning porcelain was a symbol of wealth and luxury, more prestigious than gold or silver. In China, fine porcelain pieces were on the list of Imperial wares and gifts as well as being readily available to a general populace. The history of porcelain in China is directly tied to the rise and fall of empires and political and ideological shifts.

The last theme is process and techniques. What exactly is porcelain? The word is derived from the Italian term *porcellana*, used to describe cowry shells with the same white luster. Porcelain is produced when a unique mixture of stone and clay is fired at high temperatures and turns white. This thin, white, translucent ceramic ware resonates when tapped. Its hardness, durability, and functionality balance its delicate beauty. For thousands of years, China had the unique combination of technology and natural resources to produce porcelain. Europe's search for the secret porcelain formula was equated with alchemy and magic.

Many parallels can be drawn to the exchange of goods and ideas in our world today by looking at the history of porcelain. The stories, questions, and activities presented in this packet bring the objects and the history alive.

1. Jar

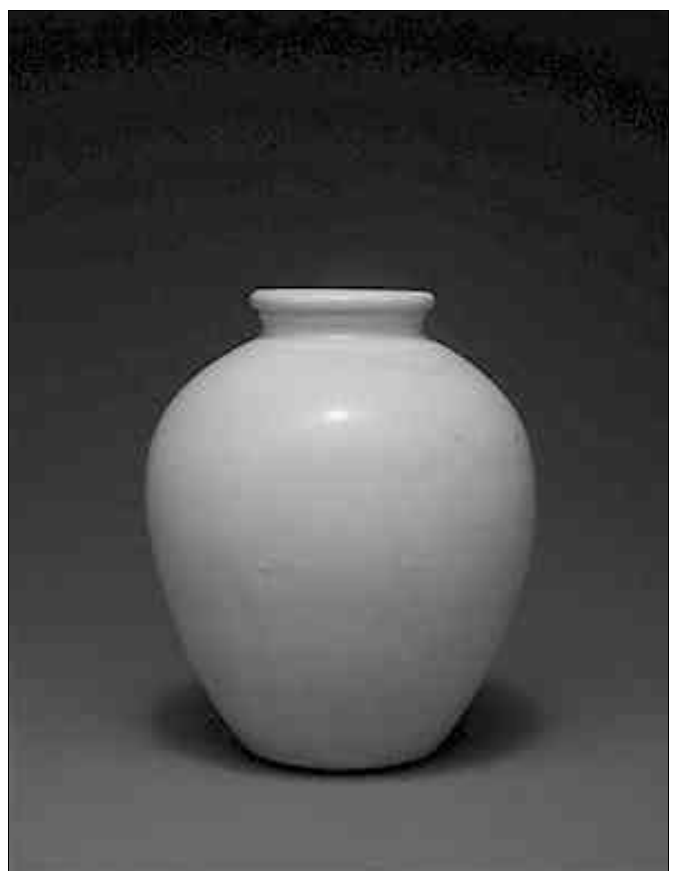
Chinese, Tang dynasty, 9th century

Cultural Context and Use

‘The white *ci* [porcelain] tea bowls... were popular among all the folks under heaven, rich or poor’ (Li Zhao). This jar is a compelling example of **Xing ware**, the earliest white porcelain in the world. It was produced in China beginning in the sixth century and lasted through the mid-tenth century. As the quote above suggests, porcelain was the material of choice for everything from utensils used by peasants to bowls on the emperor’s table. Both durability and aesthetic appeal made **Xing ware** desirable. This jar was imperial property, used for court banquets or gifts.

Process and Techniques

Producing white porcelain was a major development both in the history of China and in the history of the world. For thousands of years the Chinese had been producing **stoneware**. Both raw materials in the form of white-firing clays and the technology to produce high temperatures for kiln firing existed only in China. By A.D. 600, the fine grained, smooth, white **Xing ware** emerged as the first true porcelain.



Looking Questions

- Describe the object you see here. What kinds of lines, colors, shapes, and textures do you see?
- If you could touch the jar, how would it feel?
- What does this plate have in common with a soap dish, a bathroom sink, or a dinner plate? Does anyone know the name of the material that they are made out of? (porcelain)
- This jar is one of the first objects in the world made from porcelain. Why would someone want to own this jar? What properties would make it valuable (color, function, uniqueness, design)? Why might porcelain have been called “white gold” at one time?

Lesson Ideas

1. History EALR 2.3 **synthesize information and reflect on findings**

Here is a two-part introductory exercise to help students begin thinking about porcelain today, both in terms of its form and its function. This activity is designed to make the study of porcelain objects, like the Chinese jar, relevant to the lives and experiences of students:

A) Work with the class to make a list of porcelain objects that we use today (toilets, soap dishes, fine dinnerware, figurines, etc.). Then list the properties of porcelain (white, shiny, smooth, etc.). Why are these objects made of porcelain? Make a chart connecting their use (function) to why they are made from porcelain (form).

B) Have student groups pick an object from the porcelain list and create a circle diagram. In the center is a circle with the name of the object. Students will draw a ring around the object for each of the following facts relating to it: description of the object, who made the object, where it was produced, what the function of the object is, why porcelain is the material of choice for the object, how the object would work if it was made from another material, why we need the object in our society. Feel free to add more categories and rings. You can supply information to students in the form of a handout to help with this assignment. Or you can omit the questions requiring research (i.e., who made the object, where it was produced) and stick to information about the object's function and use.

2. Geography EALR 3.1 **identify and examine people's interaction with and impact on the environment**

History EALR 1.1 **understand historical time, chronology, and causation**

Porcelain objects like this jar would not have been produced in China were it not for a wealth of the necessary natural resources. Have each student create his or her own mind map about a region of the world and its natural resources. Students will pick a region of the world and write it in the center of the paper. Then research the natural resources in that region and connect them to the center (for example, salmon and timber in the Pacific Northwest). Next, add the effects of the resources on the region in terms of trade, goods produced, goods needed, culture, customs, politics and economics (exporting salmon to Asia, economic ties with Asian markets, etc.). You might want to start by creating a mind map of the Pacific Northwest together as a class. Or, have all of the student focus their mind map on the Pacific Northwest and then compare and discuss the results.

2. HEXAGONAL TEA CADDIES

German, Meissen factory, 18th century

Trade and Cross-Cultural Exchange

While these three objects were made in Europe for a European market, Asian objects and design were the inspiration. The hexagonal shape of these **tea caddies** mimics a traditional Japanese ceramic mold. The red of the first piece was partially inspired by similarly colored Chinese **stoneware**. The black glaze of the second is reminiscent of Asian **lacquerware** (shiny painted wood). The flowering trees and phoenix **motif** on all three tea caddies were also inspired by Asian designs.



Looking Questions

- Describe the visual elements of these objects (colors used, types of line and pattern, form and shape of the objects, etc.).
- What descriptive words/adjectives do you think of when you look at these three objects?
- From the appearance of these objects, do you think they were made to be used or looked at? What do you see that makes you think that?
- In fact, these objects are both decorative and useful. Where do you think they would be used and by whom?

Cultural Context and Use

Tea was imported as a luxury good from China by Portuguese and Dutch sailors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the eighteenth century, tea was consumed daily by the wealthy in Europe. The European penchant for things foreign and “exotic” drove the market. Tea was also hailed for its medicinal qualities, as a remedy for gout among other things. When coffee, tea, and chocolate entered Europe

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were no proper serving or storage **vessels**. **Earthenware** jugs and mugs used for beer and wine didn’t suit the costly new beverages served in small quantities. Delicate, petite, yet heat resistant porcelain **vessels** were much more suited for consuming and containing these precious commodities. Storage containers, such as these **tea caddies**, tended to imitate Asian

Process and Techniques

These three **tea caddies** were all made in the Meissen factory in Germany and they represent three steps in the development of European porcelain. They are products of early German experimentation mixing stone with clay. Over one thousand years after the first Chinese porcelain, alchemist Johann Friedrich Böttger and physicist Count Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus created a method for producing porcelain in Europe. Böttger used his knowledge of chemistry to aid in the discovery of the formula. Tschirnhaus developed a **double burning lens apparatus** that allowed for the production of high enough temperatures to fire the wares. The piece on the left is red **stoneware**, a predecessor of the first creamy white European porcelain. The second piece represents an early glaze with its shiny black color and gold painted gilding. The last piece is true porcelain. All three caddies are from the same mold.



Lesson Ideas

1. History EALR 3.3 **understand how ideas and technological developments influence people, resources, and culture**

The European inventors Böttger and Tschirnhaus cracked the mysterious porcelain formula. It was so desirable and elusive at the time that it had been linked to magic and alchemy. Porcelain wares combine a unique beauty and delicacy with great durability and strength, topping earthenware and stoneware. Have students imagine themselves as inventors creating a superior product or material and then write a progress journal about their invention. Each student should pick an existing object—a sneaker, stapler, vehicle, game, etc. The first journal entry examines the object—what it is made of, how the form fits the function, how it is used, etc. The second entry is a brainstorm about what could be improved in terms of design, material, shape, size, etc. to make the object work better. Subsequent entries could include a drawing of the new object, notes about field testing, design changes made along the way, stumbling blocks, presenting the object to others in writing, etc.

2. History EALR 1.3 **examine the influence of culture on U.S., world, and Washington State history**

When new items are introduced into a culture (like tea in sixteenth-century Europe), there is a need to create other objects to accommodate the new things. Often, new **customs** and rules for using the objects also emerge. Can students think of other examples of this?

What kind of containers do we use today for drinking coffee, tea, and chocolate? Do we have any **rituals** or **customs** associated with each beverage (hot chocolate with marshmallows in the winter, drinking coffee at cafés, having tea with breakfast, etc.)? What objects are necessary for storing and consuming these beverages? Who usually consumes each type of beverage in our society? As a class, make fact lists about each item after discussing these questions.

3. DISH

Chinese, Yuan dynasty, 14th century

Trade and Cross- Cultural Exchange

During the early fourteenth century the **Mongols** ruled China. Their empire was vast, encouraging trade and interaction between peoples from Russia to the pacific shores of China. The **Mongols** also had ties with Islamic traders of the Middle East. It was this relationship that produced the first market for **blue-and-white wares**.

The Islamic penchant for bold designs is evident in the lush garden with two mythic phoenix on this dish. The brilliant **cobalt** pigment mined in Persia (modern-day Iran) was favored in that region of the world. **Cobalt** was exported to China and used to decorate porcelain goods sold to Islamic traders. This new aesthetic slowly caught on in the Chinese domestic market as well, replacing the traditional cool-colored, mono-chrome wares. **Blue-and-white** design had such a great impact on the porcelain trade that it dominated the international market for some three hundred years.



Looking Questions

- Name everything that you see painted on this dish (flowers, birds, circular lines, etc.).
- The leaves and flowers on the outer rim of the plate form a pattern, or series of shapes that repeat. What other patterns do you see on this plate? Can you find the large white flower that is different from all of the others in its pattern?
- The scene in the center is a place. What kind of place is it? (garden) What features do you see that tell you about the place?
- Do you think it would be quiet or noisy in this garden? What sounds would you hear? What do you see that makes you think that?
- This plate is large—about the size of a small pizza. What do you think it was used for? Do you have any large plates like this one in your home? What do you use them for?

Cultural Context and Use

In the Middle East, India, and other Islamic countries, families eat communally. Large plates of food are shared by the entire dinner party. Porcelain was the perfect material for producing these large wares. Once fired it is much harder and more durable than **earthenware** or other **stoneware**. It also holds its shape better in firing, making it easier to produce bigger pieces. Unlike metal, porcelain dishes do not impart a taste or flavor to foods served on them. Although there was a fine tradition of producing other ceramics, the natural resources for producing porcelain did not exist in the Middle East so it was necessary to acquire these goods from



Lesson Ideas

1. Geography EALR 3.3 **examine cultural characteristics, transmission, diffusion, and interaction**

Two fabled phoenix are pictured in the center of this plate. The phoenix myth about a bird that is reborn from fire originated in Africa and was common throughout the Islamic and Christian worlds. How would two phoenix come to be painted on a plate produced in China? What does this tell us about the relationship between China and the Middle East? As a class, have students brainstorm how this design might have appeared in China and list the possibilities. Have them write a mystery tale about how this phoenix painting appeared on a plate in China.

2. History EALR 2.1 **investigate and research**

Geography EALR 3.3 **examine cultural characteristics, transmission, diffusion, and interaction**

There are many different eating traditions around the world. As this blue-and-white plate illustrates, eating and serving wares reflect cultural practices. People use different utensils, sit in various ways while eating, serve meals in different ways, eat meals at different times of the day, and follow other customs. Break the class into small groups. Each group will use ethnic cookbooks and other sources (see resource list) to prepare a simple dish from a particular culture. The group then serves the dish in the traditional style it would be consumed (Japanese sticky rice served with chopsticks in a small bowl while sitting on the floor) for the class to sample. The food preparation need not be complicated or require a kitchen (salads, garnishes, fruits, cold dishes, etc.). As a class, students can hypothesize about why there are differences. What kinds of produce, grains, or meats are available in different regions of the world? What is the climate like? What kinds of foods are eaten in that culture? What sort of preparation and utensils are used in making meals? What do eating customs tell us about a culture?

4. MORTUARY JAR

Chinese, Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279)

Cultural Context and Use

The complicated design of this jar from a gravesite is highly symbolic. The top of the jar is a two-story bell tower. The tower represents a reception hall for the souls of the deceased. Birds alongside aid the soul as it ascends. The bell would ring to announce the arrival of the deceased in the celestial world of the afterlife. In the bottom of the tower is a chair, perhaps the earliest known three-dimensional representation of a **Song dynasty** chair. This piece marks the beginning of the popular use of chairs in China. Below the tower we see four mythological animals that represent the four directions: green dragon of the East, white tiger of the West, red phoenix of the South, and black tortoise of the North. Since only the dragon and the tiger are represented in their appropriate colors, it is possible that this is an unfinished piece.

Process and Techniques

The type of porcelain used in the making of this jar is called **qingbai ware**. It is made in Southern China from porcelain stone which is hard to mold but holds its shape better than other porcelain recipes. Therefore, artisans were able to produce complicated shapes and forms like the detail work on this piece. **Qingbai ware** has a bluish tint due to the type of material used in its creation.



Looking Questions

- Describe the objects that you see on this jar (chair, birds, dragon, etc.).
- Why might the artist put all of these objects on a jar?
- Each of the objects on the jar stands for or represents an idea or concept. What is a word for one thing that stands for or represents another (**symbol**)?
- What might some of the objects on this jar stand for or symbolize?

Lesson Ideas

1. Arts EALR 4.4 **recognize the influence of the arts in shaping and reflecting cultures and history**

Arts EALR 1.1 **understand and apply arts concepts and vocabulary to communicate ideas**

This mortuary jar is laden with objects that stand for ideas and concepts. As a class, discuss the definition of a **symbol**. Many cultures associate the four directions with the symbolic qualities of animals, colors, and seasons. Have students create their own four-part symbol that represents elements of themselves—their lives (school, family, friends, self), their feelings (happy, sad, scared, sorry), their past and future (infant, child, teenager, adult), etc. On a large piece of paper folded into four sections, students describe and create a symbol for each of the four chosen elements. Finally, have the class sculpt with clay or illustrate the object/symbol they create for each element, considering color, shape/form, and texture.



5. KENDI

Chinese, Ming dynasty, Hongwu period (1368–98)

Trade and Cross-Cultural Exchange

Kendi is a Malay word for water vessel. Many were produced for and exported to Southeast Asian countries from China. In the ninth century, sea routes took over from the land routes along the Silk Road for the transport of trade goods. Travel by boat was much more *c o n d u c i v e* to transporting fragile wares like porcelain than land travel. China was able to bring goods to other countries instead of commerce being concentrated at the Chinese ports.



Looking Questions

- Describe the shapes and different parts of this object.
- Thinking about these shapes and parts, what might this object be used for?
- How would you hold it? What would the object feel like if you held it? How big do you think it is? Would it fit in your hands? What clues do you see that help answer these questions?
- Have ever seen an object like this one? What does this object remind you of?

Cultural Context and Use

Kendi are used for drinking and hand washing and are important objects in both Buddhist and Islamic rituals in Southeast Asia. Some **kendi** have long necks and others have short and stout ones. All have an opening at the top for pouring water in and a spout on the side for drinking out of. Other ritual objects like incense burners, burial items, and various vessels were also made out of porcelain. During the

fourteenth century in China, the Hongwu emperor declared that all sacrificial vessels be made of porcelain. The red glaze of this **kendi** became popular during this time as well. It was a way to break with the previous Mongol rulers, replacing their favored blue-and-white aesthetic. Red glaze also appealed to the Emperor because his family name, “Zhu,” signifies the color red.

Process and Techniques

This particular **kendi** is glazed with copper, which produces a rich red when fired. Copper is one of the few **metallic oxides** that can be fired at high temperatures. Unlike **cobalt**, which is used in **blue-and-white ware**, copper is unpredictable when fired and often turns a dull gray. This piece is rare and highly prized due to the beautiful red color.



Lesson Ideas

1. History EALR 2.1 **investigate and research**

Names can be full of information, association, and symbolism, as illustrated by the Hongwu emperor's name, Zhu, and its connection to the color red in this porcelain story. Give the class a list of names of famous or well-known people. Have students research the background of these names using the Internet, baby-naming books, or other resources. Some may discover that the name is symbolic of something, like Emperor Hongwu and the color red. Other names may tell about a family's occupation at one time. Students may find that family names change for various reasons. Talk with the class about naming traditions and common origins of surnames in different cultures.

2. Geography EALR 1.1 **use and construct maps, charts, and other resources**

Geography EALR 2.1 **describe the natural characteristics of places and regions**

Have the students each “become” a **kendi** and chart their travel course through Asia. Each student creates an illustrated map of the trade route they follow. The weather, seasons, flora and fauna, animals, towns, cities, countryside, and people encountered along the way should be indicated on the map. Then, have students write a narrative about the places they visit either as small blurbs on the map or as a travelogue to accompany it.

6. HOB IN THE WELL BOWL

English, Chelsea factory, ca.1755

Trade and Cross-Cultural Exchange

During the mid-seventeenth century, Chinese porcelain was not as available for export due to political unrest and a consequent downturn in porcelain production. Newly established Japanese kilns were able to fill the void. These early Japanese goods imitated Chinese style and **motif** to appease a European market and tastes accustomed to Chinese wares.

This bowl illustrates the full circle of influence—produced in England, it copies a Japanese illustration of a Chinese folktale. The Japanese telling of the story is that a boy falls in to a precious Chinese porcelain water jar in the center of town. The hero breaks the jar, saving the boy's life and sacrificing the object. On the side of the bowl we see the hero throwing a rock to break the jar. Next to the water jar is a friend assisting with the rescue. Europeans coined this **motif** *The Hob in the Well* after a popular comedy of the time. They had no knowledge of the story behind the scene. At times it was even interpreted as a cannibal cooking a young child in a giant pot.



Looking Questions

- Without trying to figure out what is happening in the scene painted on the bowl, describe the information presented (there are three figures shown, the background is white, etc.).
- Given that information, what do you think is happening in the scene on this bowl?
- Would you want to be there, inside the scene on the bowl? What would you do if you were there?
- Where do you think the person who painted this bowl was from? What do you see that makes you think that (clothing, facial features, landscape, etc.)?

Process and Techniques

This bowl is painted in the **Kakiemon style**, an extremely popular type of **enameled** porcelain ware produced in Japan and copied in Europe. Common **Kakiemon motifs** include birds, plants, and occasional figures. This style includes a color palette of turquoise, blue, yellow, and orange-red set against a background with lots of white open space.



Lesson Ideas

1. Geography EALR 3.3 **examine cultural characteristics, transmissions, diffusion, and interaction**

Have students write a folktale and illustrate the main scene from the story. Then have classmates view the illustration and explain what they think is happening in the scene. Why do people interpret the same information in different ways? What assumptions are made when looking at something new? Through this assignment, the class can discuss cultural perspective and interpretation and how it informs the way we view and judge information (and often people) that are foreign to us.

Present the class with a cultural practice or event (i.e. seeing a row of shoes outside a door), and talk about possible explanations for what is seen. How do we interpret customs like the one above and how might people from another place or culture interpret it?

7. FATHER TIME

German, Meissen Factory,
ca. 1745

Cultural Context and Use

Not all porcelain objects are functional; porcelain can also be cast or molded in sculptural forms. In fact, it was partially these properties that helped usher in the great Age of Porcelain in Europe during the mid-eighteenth century. The rise of the **Rococo** style, from France in the 1730s throughout Europe, coincided with porcelain's heyday. This figure of Father Time is a good example of the light, airy style with curving asymmetrical lines, often including forms from nature that characterized **Rococo** works. Allegory, or figural symbolic representation of themes, was also common in the arts of the eighteenth century. Father Time holds an gilded bowl-shape that would have held a watch. He carries a scythe due to an early confusion between the ancient Greek word for time, *chronos*, and the Greek god of agriculture, Cronus, who carried a scythe. This type of figure would have been displayed in a fine cabinet or along the center of a dining table.

Process and Technique

Porcelain is a perfect sculpting material because it is pliant and easy to form. This suited the **Rococo** taste for wild shapes and scrolling foliated **motifs** from nature. The white background resembles marble, yet is ideal for light, airy painting and detailing. The pastel palette of this figure is common to the **Rococo** style. Father Time is painted with enamel colors and gilt. First the porcelain is fired at high temperatures. Then it is painted with the enamels and metal gilt and fired again at a lower temperature.



Looking Questions

- Try to assume the pose of this figure with your body. How long can you hold this pose? Now that you've tried this pose yourself, do you think this figure is active, caught in the middle of moving, or still? What makes you think that?
- Look at the ground he is standing on. Would it be easy or hard to stay still on this type of ground?
- Describe all of the things around the figure. Do they give you any clues about who he is?
- There used to be a small watch in the bowl-shaped object he is holding. How does that information influence the way you view or interpret this figure?

Lesson Ideas

1. Language Arts EALR 2.2 **write for different purposes**

Communication EALR 2.2 **develop content and ideas**

Have students become newspaper reporters getting the scoop on a modern-day Father Time, Mother Time, or Kid Time. Students should first think about the type of character who would personify time right now and usher in the new millennium. The interview can begin like many celebrity interviews—where the meeting takes place, what the interviewee looks like, what kind of body language they use, what they are wearing, what they bring with them, what kind of demeanor they have, how hard it was to get an interview, etc. Students should explain what all this information tells about the Figure of Time. Students should come up with a list of questions to ask this celebrity and write a magazine or newspaper article including the answers. Questions should include information about what the Figure of Time has experienced in the past and what they are looking toward in the future.



GLOSSARY

BLUE-AND-WHITE WARES

A common decorative style of underglaze cobalt design painted on a white porcelain background. This style first became popular in the Middle East and China during the fourteenth century and later spread to Europe.

CERAMIC WARE

The broad term for all objects made of fired clay. Principal divisions are earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain.

CLAY

A natural, fine-grained material formed by the decomposition of feldspathic rock. Its main components are minerals in the form of tiny platelets that slip and slide over each other when wet, giving clay its plasticity.

COBALT

A metallic element. A mixture of cobalt oxides and iron oxides creates a blue to green pigment.

COMMODITIES

An article of trade or commerce that can be transported.

CUSTOMS

Conventional modes or forms of action, or common traditions among people.

DOUBLE BURNING LENS APPARATUS

Mechanism for concentrating solar energy between two large glass lenses. The ability to generate heat with this apparatus helped boost temperatures of early European kilns, allowing for the production of the first porcelain in Europe.

EARTHENWARE

A ceramic object made from clay that has not vitrified or fused during a low-temperature firing (around 600 to 1100 degrees Celsius). It is porous and cannot hold liquids unless sealed with a glaze.

ENAMELED WARE

Porcelain decorated with metallic oxides mixed with glass as a bonding agent. Enamel is painted over a prefired glaze and fired again at a lower temperature.

KAKIEMON STYLE

The Kakiemon family was well known for producing enameled ware in Japan. They became involved with porcelain glazing in the mid-1600s and developed a famed color palette and style that was widely imitated.

KAOLIN

A fine white clay rich in aluminum silicate. Named after a mine site (Gaoling, or Kaoling) near Jingdezhen (a popular kiln site in southern China), kaolin is an essential component of hard-paste porcelain. It is also known as “china clay.”

KENDI

A vessel used to contain and pour water for drinking and hand washing. Commonly used in Buddhist and Islamic rituals in South East Asia.

KILN

A brick or stone instrument which may be heated for the purpose of hardening, burning, or drying anything placed in it.

LACQUERWARE

Shiny colored wares from Asia made of wood coated with resin from a lacquer tree.

METALLIC OXIDES

A binary compound of a metal element and oxygen.

MONGOLS

A cultural and ethnic group from Mongolia in east central Asia.

MOTIF

A recurrent or repeated thematic element in an artistic work or tradition.

PORCELAIN

A ceramic body very hard and dense in texture after being fired in the range of 1250 to 1400 degrees Celsius. It is white, translucent, and resonant when struck. In ancient China, porcelains were made from either kaolin or porcelain stone, or a mixture of the two. Porcelain made from the latter is also referred to in Europe as “hard paste.”

PORCELAIN STONE

A feldspathic rock mixed with clay to produce porcelain. Some types contain kaolin and can be used to create a dense porcelain body without the addition of clay.

QINGBAI WARE

Early porcelain from southern China produced during the Song dynasty. Porcelain stone is the base material with a thin glaze that produces a bluish-green tint applied.

RITUALS

Ceremonial acts or rites that often pertain to religious practices.

ROCOCO

The origin of the term is the word *rocaille* (rockery)—meaning the ornamental rock structures of French gardens and grottoes that became fashionable in the 16th century. Rococo is most commonly understood as the light, airy style in art that evolved in France in the 1720's based on lively, asymmetrical curving lines.

SONG DYNASTY

Dynasty that ruled China from 1127–1279

STONEWARE

A ceramic body that has fused (vitrified) during high firing, from 1200 to 1300 degrees Celsius, and become impermeable, hard, and dense in texture and is resonant when struck. Stoneware can be made in various colors and is not translucent.

SYMBOL

Something that represents something else, often a sign that resembles a concept, idea, or action.

TEA CADDIES

A small container for holding and storing tea.

VESSELS

A hollow container, usually for holding liquids.

XING WARE

Porcelain produced in northern China at the Xing kilns during the Tang Dynasty (618–906). Due to the purity of the kaolin used in its production, Xing ware has a smooth, snowy or silvery white appearance.