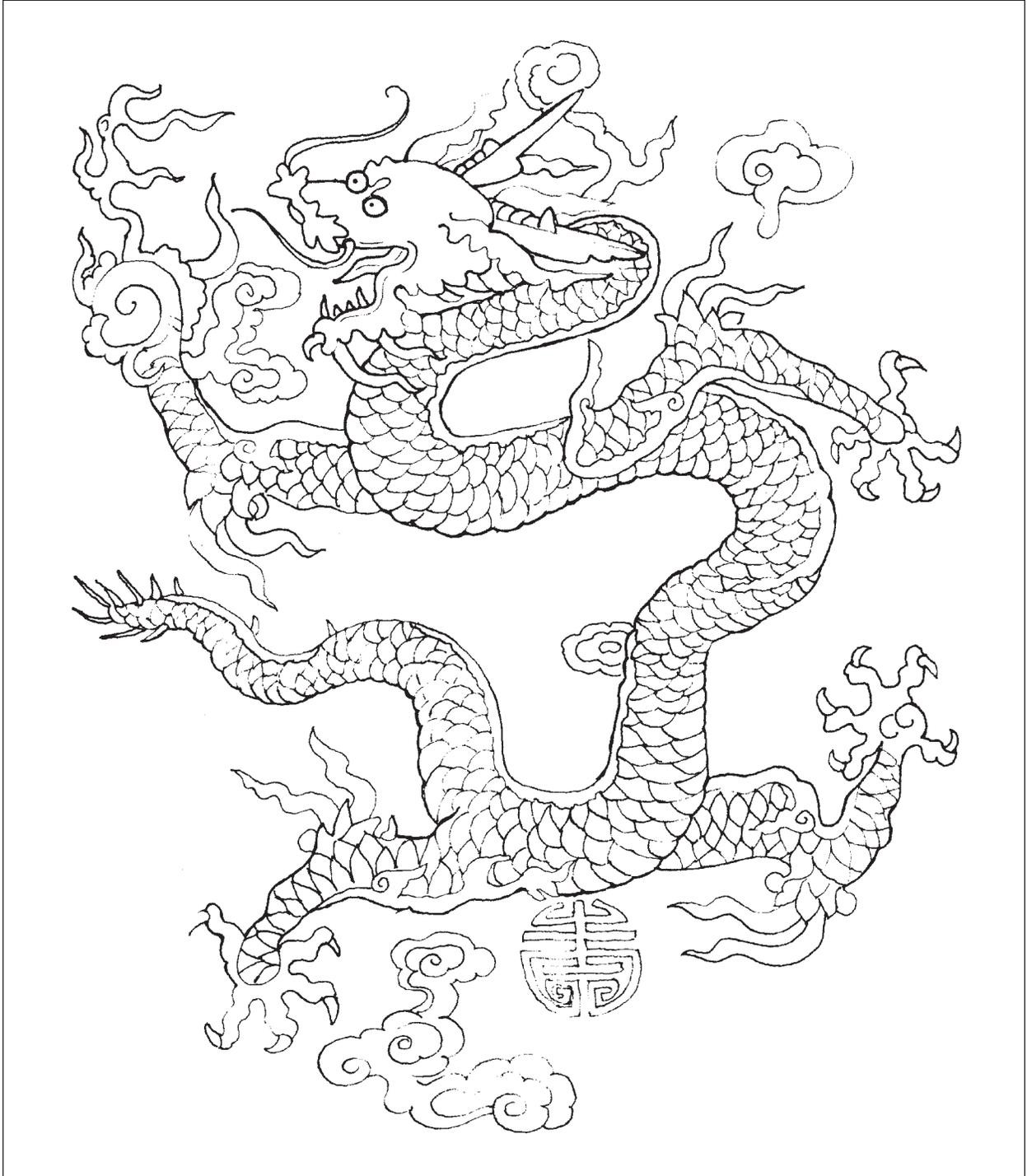


# Chinese Stories



ASIAN ART MUSEUM  
CHONG-MOON LEE CENTER  
FOR ASIAN ART AND CULTURE

# **Asian Art Museum of San Francisco Passport to Asia Storytelling Program**

Dear Instructor,

Welcome to the Asian Art Museum's "Passport to Asia" Storytelling Program. We look forward to coming to your classroom and presenting to you and your students art distinctive to the culture and traditions of China. Stories will be told to help bridge the world that the students know with the world they are entering and to enhance the students' imagination so that they can better connect with what they see.

To ensure that your students gain the maximum advantage of participating in the storytelling program, the enclosed activities are suggested for before and after our visit. The storyteller's presentation will be narrower in concept; however, the information, stories and activities we have prepared will be helpful for developing context relative to our visit. In addition to these suggested activities, we have also included a list of resources for your classroom use.

Thank you for participating in our Passport to Asia Program.

*Asian Art Museum Storytelling Corps*

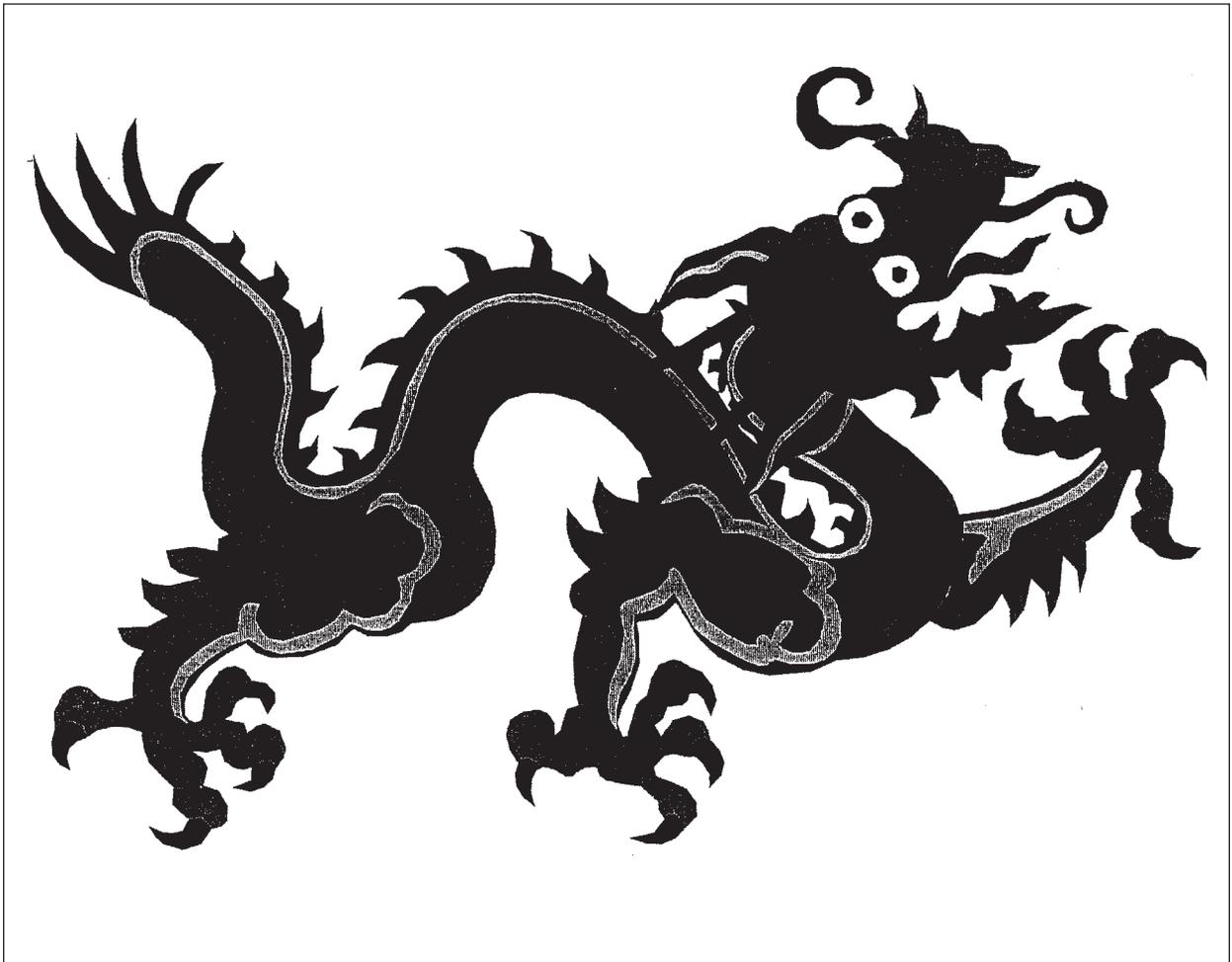


## Dragon Eyes

The most wonderful painter of dragons was Zhang Zengyao of the Liang dynasty. Once he painted four dragons on a wall in Anle Temple in Nanjing. He did not paint the eyes, saying that if he painted the eyes, the dragon would fly away.

The people urged him to add the finishing touch and so, complying, he painted the eyes of two dragons. In no time, the clouds began to roll, thunder and lightning struck, and the two finished dragons broke the wall and soared to the sky.

“Adding eyes to a painted dragon,” meaning “giving the finishing touch,” thus became a proverb that has been handed down to the present day from this romantic story.



## Suggested Pre-visit Activities

**Show students China on a world map.**

**Show the students the ideogram for the word "China"**



1. The first ideogram means the Center of the World.
2. The second ideogram means Country.
3. Put together, do these characters describe China?
4. Is it the center of the world on in the United States? Can it be made the center of the world on a map? Can the U.S. be made the center of the world? Discuss role of mapmaker relative to worldview. (Note: Maps made in the U S have the U.S. in the center. Maps made in Europe have Europe in the center.)
5. Note on a map how far China is from the United States.
6. Why do you think it is important to know about other countries in the world even when they are so far away?

### **Introduce the following vocabulary:**

Deity: A person honored as a god or goddess

Buddhism: A belief system based on the teachings of Buddha, the awakened one. These teachings are to help people to become truly awake to their own joyful and compassionate natures, which they are to share with all living creatures.

Symbol: Something used to represent something else. Some Chinese symbols are:  
Bat = Good Luck Fish = Abundance

Vessel: A container used for holding liquids such as a cup, bowl, or vase.

Scroll: A painting or writing on silk or paper that is hung on a wall to be seen and then rolled up when not in use.

Calligraphy: The art of writing beautifully, often done with ink and a brush. It is one of the most revered arts in China.

Ceramics: Objects made of clay such as pottery and porcelain.

Bronze: A work of art made from metal composed of copper and other metals.

### **Learn some Chinese Proverbs**

Discuss what they might mean. Do we have similar proverbs?

“Talk does not cook rice.”

“Do not try to escape from a flood by clinging to a tiger’s tail.”

“No great thing is created suddenly.”

### **Learn some Chinese Words (from Lonely Planet’s *Mandarin Chinese Phrasebook*)**

Hello *ni hao* (i = ee as in see, ao = ow as in now)

Good by *zaijian* (z = ds as in fads, ai = uy as in buy, j = ds as in fads, ian = yen)

Thank you *xiexie* (x = s as in sock, ie = ere as in here)

Learn to count and write one to ten in Chinese



one *yi*



six *liu*



two *er*



seven *qi*



three *san*



eight *ba*



four *si*



nine *jiu*



five *wu*



ten *shi*

## Pre-visit Stories

Read and discuss the following fables based on Chinese proverbs:

### **A Chinese Zoo: A Book of Fables and Proverbs**

By Demi Harcourt Brace and Co

#### **Small Animals Must Live By Their Wits**

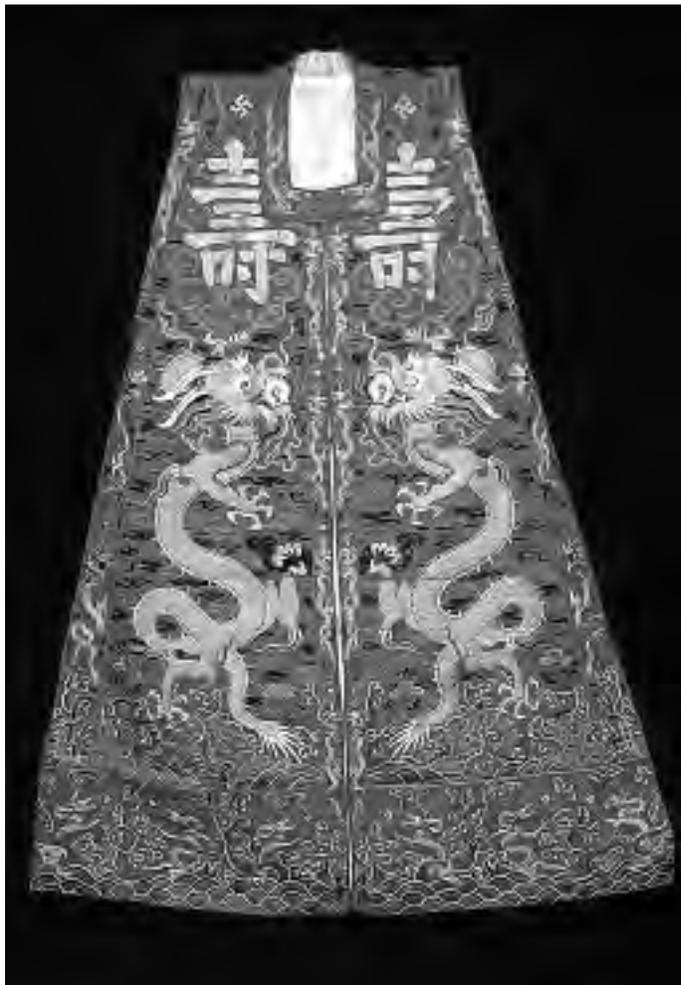
(Tiger and Fox)

When the tiger was out hunting one day deep in the forest, he caught a fox.

As he prepared to eat his prey, the fox said to the tiger, “You must not eat me. I am the king of the forest. Come with me and I will show you how the other animals fear me.”

When the other animals saw the big tiger following the fox, they scattered in many different directions.

“I see what you mean,” said the tiger, not realizing it was from him, not the fox that the animals were fleeing. “I’d better find something else to eat.”



## **No Great Thing is Created Suddenly**

(Dragon)

There once was a mighty Dragon King who had a beautiful wife. “I really must have her picture painted,” he thought to himself. Summoning his best court artist, he instructed him to paint a picture of his Dragon Queen.

The artist slithered up to his mountain studio, high above the clouds, took out his brushes and his silks and began mixing his paints. He then embarked upon his task. Month after month went by and the Dragon King heard nothing. Finally, flaming at the mouth, he charged up the mountain to the artist’s studio and demanded to see the picture of his wife.

At once the artist unrolled some silk, took out his brushes and quickly mixed his paints. In a flash a magnificent picture of the Queen emerged on the silk.

“If you can paint such a beautiful picture so quickly,” roared the Dragon King, “why did you keep me waiting a whole year?”

Then the artist opened the back door of his studio. Whole mountains of discarded paintings were there showing the Dragon Queen sitting, standing, running, rolling, roaring—the Queen pictured in every aspect of life.

“Your Majesty,” explained the poor artist, “it took a year to learn how to paint a perfect picture of the Dragon Queen in a flash!”

## **In the Face of Disaster, Don’t Waste Time Arguing**

(Crane)

One summer day a clam came out of the water to sun himself on the sand. A young crane, spotting him from above, thought what a tasty meal he would make. Flying down, the crane tried to take the clam out of his shell, but the clam clamped down, trapping the crane’s beak inside.

The young crane tugged and tugged but could not free his beak, while the clam, of course, was unable to get back into the water.

Time passed, but neither would give in. “Since you cannot live without water, how can you survive if it doesn’t rain in a day or two?” asked the crane.

“If you cannot fly away soon and find food, you will be a dead crane,” replied the clam.

While they were talking, a fisherman came by and captured them both!

## **Not All Who Make A Great Show Of Devotion Can Be Trusted**

(Cat and Mice)

A cat with prayer beads around his neck was sitting quietly and mewling softly. His eyes seemed tightly shut. Two mice saw him and were astonished that their enemy had suddenly become religious.

“That old cat has evidently changed his ways,” they said.  
“He is saying his prayers. We don’t have to worry about him anymore.”

The two mice congratulated each other, jumped up and down and began to play. They paid no attention to the cat, but when one mouse came too close, the sly cat immediately caught him and ate him. The other mouse, rushing home, said to himself. “Who would have believed that a cat who was busy saying his prayers would behave like that?”

### **It Is Foolish To Worry About Everything You Are Told**

(Deer)

One day a deer came upon a squirrel lying flat on his back with his feet in the air.

“Why are you doing that? What is wrong?” asked the deer.

“I was recently told that the great sky above is going to fall down,” answered the squirrel.

“Foolish one!” replied the deer. “Perhaps a mighty dragon might be able to hold up the sky, but can you prop it up with just your two small feet?”

“Perhaps I can’t hold all of it, but should I not try to hold up as much as I can?” answered the squirrel.

## **Post-Visit Stories**

### **Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts: Festivals of China**

By Carol Stepanchuk and Charles Wong

#### **Dragon Boat Festival**

Held in the summer months close to June 21. Festival has a two thousand-year-old history that is believed to have been associated with fertility and agriculture (growth of rice). Today, it is celebrated in Central and South China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The celebration includes brightly painted and decorated boats that compete in the annual Dragon Boat Race. The teams paddle their slender boats in unison to the beat of drums and gongs. Boats reach from 40 to 100 feet in length and at times with as many as 80 rowers in the larger boats. The competition is taken very seriously, and one belief is that the dragon boats race in order to please the water creatures or to attract the attention of the dragons in the air to induce rain for crops.

Others believe that the festival originated in order to recall the soul of Qu Yuan, a famous Chinese poet who had died. He lived in the 3rd Century AD and had advised the King at one time not to go into battle. The King ignored Qu Yuan’s pleas and banished him from the kingdom. Later the Kingdom was burned and the people went in search of Qu Yuan.

Colors, which are symbolic of the five elements, are worn or displayed at the festival.

Azure = wood  
White = metal  
Black = water  
Red = fire  
Yellow = earth

These elements symbolize the natural forces which work together in a cyclical sequence when then depicts times of rise and decay, production and destruction. Wood exists over earth, metal exists over wood, fire over metal, water over fire, and earth over water.

## **Lady in the Picture**

China Folklore, Panda Books

### **Zongzi and Dragon Boat**

After Qu Yuan threw himself into the river, all the people in the state deeply regretted his loss and missed him. To commemorate him, on the fifth day of the fifth month, many people rowed their boats to the middle reaches of the river and threw food into it as sacrifices to him.

Two years passed and then one night they dreamt that Qu Yuan was coming; in their dream he wore a high official hat and had a long sword at his waist. He was adorned with pearls and jade and his expression was noble but sad. Everyone was delighted to see him and saluted him. Qu Yuan smiled and said, "I am very grateful to you for your kind regards. What you have done makes me believe that we are patriotic and firmly hold to the truth. Noticing that Qu Yuan was very thin, the people asked in concern, "Did you get the rice we gave you, sir?" "Thank you very much," replied Qu Yuan gratefully, but then sighed, "The rice was stolen by fish, shrimp, turtles, mussels, and other aquatic animals."

On hearing this, the people were very indignant, "Don't let them do that!"

"How can I fight with them for food?" said Qu Yuan with a bitter smile.

"Then what can we do to drive them away from the food?"

"If you wrap the rice in bamboo leaves shaped into a triangle with sharp points, they won't dare eat them for they will mistake them for water chestnuts," said Qu Yuan.

So, on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month of the following year the people did as they were told and called the food ZONGZI. However, the day after, Qu Yuan appeared in their dreams and said, "Thanks for your ZONGZI. I had some of them, but the rest were still eaten by the scum among the aquatic animals."

"Is there any other means to drive them away?" the people asked.

"Yes. When you deliver ZONGZI to me, you should decorate your boats as dragons. Since all the aquatic animals come within the jurisdiction of dragon, they will not dare eat on the food delivered by dragons," said Qu Yuan.

After that, each year the people went out on the river in dragon boats. Thereafter, the fifth day of the fifth lunar month became an established festival, during which time people eat ZONGZI and row dragon boats.

**Children's rhyme:**

The dragon boats! There they go!  
Beat the drums! Row and row!  
The swiftest dragon in the race  
Will be the dragon in first place!

# Suggested Post Visit Activities

How well can you write these Chinese Characters?



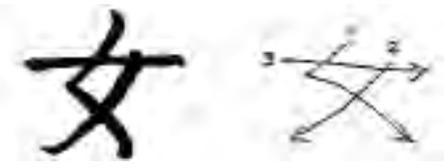
sun



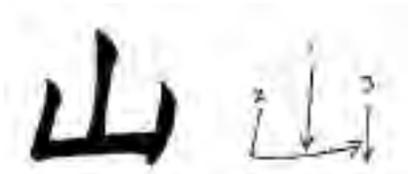
tree



moon



woman



mountain



fire



rain



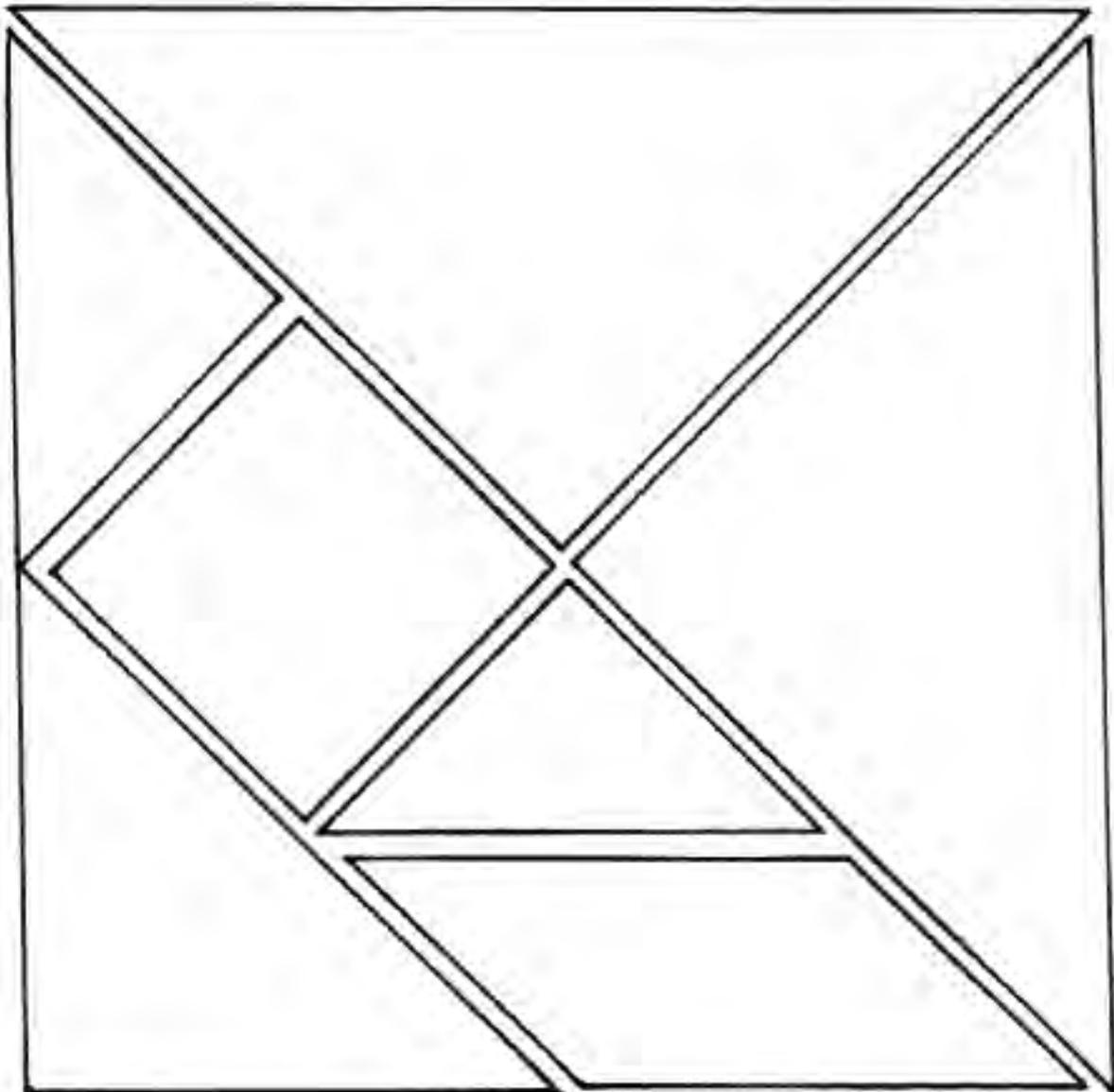
man

## Tangram...Seven Pieces of Cleverness

**Materials:** Xeroxed patterns, construction paper or cardboard, envelopes.

“About 4000 years ago in China, there lived a man called Tan. His greatest possession was a fine ceramic tile. One day, while he was carrying it to show the emperor, he tripped and the tile fell onto the floor and smashed into seven pieces. Tan spent the rest of his life trying to put the tile back together again. Even though he was unsuccessful, he did succeed in creating many different geometric shapes and pictures.”

Cut your own tangram out of cardboard or colored paper. See how many pictures you can make using the tangram. You must use all seven pieces in each design. Store tangram pieces in a pre-made envelope or one you have made, so you can invent more new shapes. You might even sketch your shapes on paper for friends to try to duplicate with their tangrams.



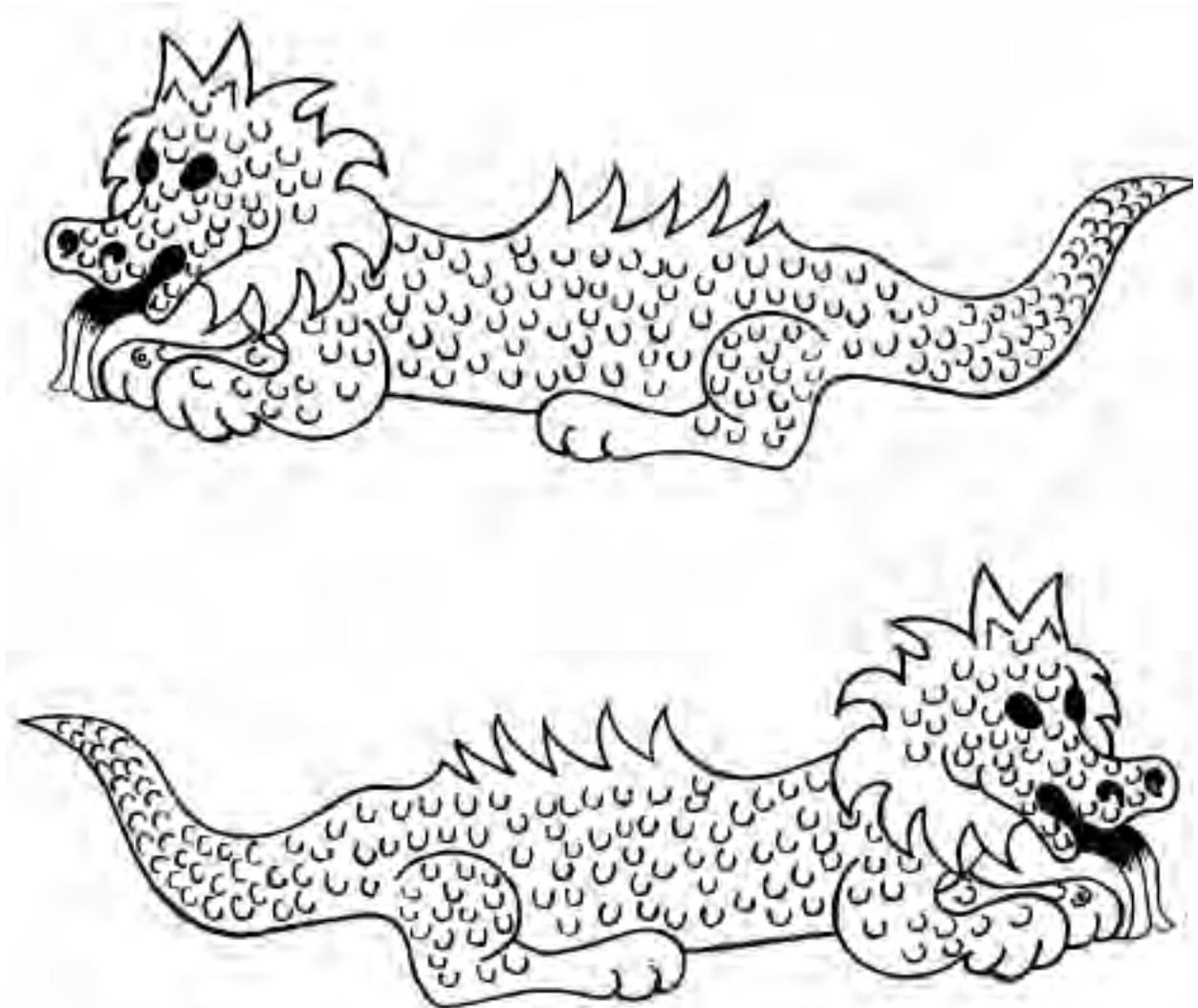
## Suggested Post Visit Activities

### Dragon Boats

**Procedure:** Read the story about dragon boats and the dragon boat festival.

**Materials:** Story, xeroxed patterns, felt pens or crayons, egg cartons, staples.

Have students color their dragons, reminding them that when they color the dragon's eyes that the dragon will be given its power. (Note dragon story in packet.) Then cut them out carefully. Staple the noses together. Place the noses at the end of three sections of egg carton so that one dragon goes on either side of the carton. Staple the tails together so the dragon fits snugly around carton. Place one or two staples along the sides to hold the dragons in place on the carton. The Dragon Boat is now ready to race. The boats will float, so students can race them at home or in a big puddle on the way home!



## Make A Scroll

**Materials:** Construction or butcher paper, felt pens, crayons or paints, staples, yarn (dowels at either end optional).

**Procedure:** Write on the blackboard or duplicate ideograph page for each student. Using construction paper, have the students copy the ideographs they wish on the construction paper in a vertical position. Then have them draw or paint a picture that relates to the ideographs selected. The ideographs can be in the center with the pictures around them or the picture can be in the center with the ideographs on one side. When the picture is finished, help the student roll the top and bottom over in a scroll like fashion and staple. Put a piece of yarn through the top and tie to hang, or use dowels at top and bottom and tie ends of top dowel with yarn to hang.

## Other Resources

The BAGEP (Bay Area Global Education Project) office, 312 Sutter St. (The World Affairs Building), Suite 200, San Francisco, 94108, Tel. 415-982-3263. Resource Center Catalogue (price on request), or make an appointment to visit the office and look through the materials offered to teachers free of charge for two week periods, or you can request by phone specific books and manuals, free of charge, which will be mailed to you such as:

*China's Bravest Girl*, The Legend of Hua Mu Lan.

*The Drum that Shook Heaven*, A book of stories for grades 1–6.

*Twelve Animals of the Zodiac*, Pictures to be duplicated for handouts, grades K–9.

*Rooster's Horns*, A Chinese Puppet Play to Make and Perform, grades K–6.

*Growing Up in Ancient China*, A book describing everyday life , grades 1–4.

*Buddhism* (Calliope Magazine), The story of Buddhism, grades 3–7.

*China Resources*, A guide for Classroom Resources, grades K–12.

*China Activities for Elementary Students*, grades K–6.

*Teaching About China: Cultural Expressions*, An up to date annotated bibliography for teachers and students for resources K–12.

### At your libraries you can find:

Carpenter, Frances, *Tales of a Chinese Grandmother*.

Chin, Yin-lien C., Center, Yelta S., Ross, Mildred, *Traditional Chinese Folktales*, M.E. Sharpe, Inc. NY, 1989.

Demi, *The Magic Tapestry*, Henry Holt, NY.

Demi, *Chinese Zoo, Book of Fables and Proverbs*, Harcourt Brace and Co, NY, 1987.

Kendall, Carol, Li, Yao-wen, *Sweet and Sour, Tales from China*, The Seabury Press, NY, 1978.

Yep, Laurence, *Tongues of Jade*, Harper Collins, NY 1991.

Young, Ed, *Lan Po Po* (Chinese Red Riding Hood), Philomel Books, NY 1989.