

SONG CHINA THROUGH PAINTINGS

This activity uses an Internet site developed at the University of Washington by Dr. Patricia Buckley Ebrey. Follow the instructions on this worksheet and write down your answers here as you navigate through the Web pages.

TO START - Go to <http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/painting/4ptgintr.htm> Read the introduction and look at the questions at the bottom. Keep the questions in mind as you navigate forward in the Website.

Part 1 - Technical Aspects of Chinese Painting

Click on "Technical Aspects of Chinese Painting" in the bottom right. Read the text to answer the following questions.

1. How is a hand scroll different from a hanging scroll?
2. What are the two common painting surfaces used in this era? How were they treated to prevent the ink from soaking through?
3. How did the owners of paintings typically mark their property? (Hint: Read about "Seals")

Part 2- Painting as a Social Record: Urban Life

Return to the start page on "Painting" (you may simply hit the "back" or "Up button"). Click on "Painting as a Social Record" and read the text here.

Next, click on the link for "Urban Life" at the bottom of the page. Read the short introduction and view the different sections of *The Spring Festival Along the River* by court painter Zhang Zeduan (be sure to go from right to left, as noted).

1. Who do you think might have commissioned this painting? For what purpose?
2. List at least three adjectives describing the city of Kaifeng, as depicted in this painting.
3. Proceed to the section on "Shops and Commerce" and look at the close-up image at the top of the page.
 - a. Is this a busy district? Why or why not? What evidence is there for your answer?
 - b. Based on the activities you see taking place, can you guess what time of day it might be? (Hint! Click on "Answer")
4. Also explore the rest of the close-ups and exercises presented on this page. List and briefly describe at least five specific activities taking place in the scenes depicted.
5. Hit the back button to return to the "Urban Life" page. This time, click on "Individuals and Groups" in the links at the bottom of the page. Scroll through the close-up images shown under "Individuals on the Street." You may notice that one social group seems proportionally under- represented. What is that group, and what do you think accounts for its absence?

Part 3 - Painting as a Social Record: Private Life

Hit the back button twice to return to the page titled "Painting as a Social Record." This time, click on "Private Life" and read the text presented on this new page.

1. Look at the painting *One Hundred Children Celebrating Spring* (second from top). Why do you think artists were interested in painting children, in particular? Why were these paintings appealing to their society? (Hint! Click on "Answer")

2. Take a few minutes to view the rest of the images on this page. In particular, look at how women are depicted before you answer the following questions.

- a. What sorts of activities are the women engaging in?
- b. How can you tell the social status of the women? How do the artists portray differences in status?

3. Considering the paintings you have examined so far in this activity, how useful do you think paintings are as evidence of social history? What kind of information can they provide about a particular society? How? What information might they leave out?

Part 4 - Painting as a Fine Art: Landscape Painting

Return to the start page on "Painting" by using the "Back" or "Up" buttons. This time, click on the link for "Painting as a Fine Art" on the right. Read the introduction and then click on "Landscape Painting" on the right. Read the text here as well.

1. What does the introductory text suggest about why landscape scenes were appealing and/or valued by Chinese society in this era? How might Daoism have influenced this cultural trend?

2. Move on to "Northern Song Landscape Painting" by clicking on the link at the bottom of the page. Examine Fan Kuan's *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams*, clicking on the close-ups as desired. What emotional response do you think this painting encourages on the part of the viewer?

3. Click on the first link to see the close-up of this painting's foreground. Why do you think the artist included the mule train? And why is it so small? What does this tell you about how the artist perceives mankind's relationship to nature?

4. Go back to the previous page if you haven't already and move on to the next painting by Guo Xi. Read the quote by Guo Xi at the left. What does his quote add to your understanding of why Chinese artists painted landscapes? Interpret his quote in your own words.

5. Click on the link at right "For a full view and details" about *Early Spring*. Read the text and view the close-ups that follow. What did Guo Xi mean by "the angle of totality"? How is this technique displayed in *Early Spring*?

6. Go back to the previous page and move on to "Southern Song Landscape Painting" by clicking on the link at the bottom of the page. (You may skip the rest of the material for the "Northern Song.") Examine *On a Mountain Path in Spring* (top painting). How is this painting different from the two paintings you just explored on the previous page?