

Teachers' notes

Mandarin at the Museum

About the resource

- This resource is aimed at Primary 5-7 pupils learning Mandarin. It includes a film, object cards, and activity backpacks.
- The words of each colour are shown in English, Mandarin, and Pinyin.
- Pinyin is an international guide for pronouncing Mandarin words.
- Your pupils will also learn more about Chinese dragons, through the illustrated dragon character Dàhǎi.

Practical points

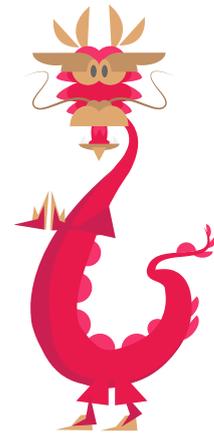
- Your class should watch the short film and animations/gifs before their visit to the museum.
- Book our activity backpacks to use during your visit which include illustrated object cards. Pupils can use the cards to find the objects around the museum, then choose one other object to create their own object card. They can do this at the museum or back in class, using our online collection or Google Streetview of the museum.
- The activity backpacks contain sensory items relating to each of the objects. Your pupils could use these to work out what they are looking for, or to recap on what they've found.
- Finding the objects should take approximately 60 minutes.
- All seven objects are on display on Level 5. You can find which gallery each object is in below. You can access the area using the lifts, escalators and stairs from the Grand Gallery on Level 1. Each group should take a map with them.
- The objects do not need to be found in order, so it is advisable to split the class up into smaller groups. You should try to stagger groups' arrivals in any galleries that are particularly busy.

- Enjoy looking at the objects up close, but please remind pupils not to touch them. If objects have numbers next to them, look at the numbered text nearby to give you more information.

Introduction to Dàhǎi – your Dragon Guide

- Your dragon guide, who appears in the film and object cards, is called Dàhǎi, which translates to ‘big sea’.

大	dà	big
海	hǎi	sea



- In East Asia, dragons are associated with water and responsible for bringing rain and storms. Unlike the fierce fire-breathers of western fairy-tales, the Chinese dragon is lucky, powerful and kind. It is one of the three national animals of China, the others being the Giant Panda and the Red-Crowned Crane. In China, the dragon is a symbol of imperial and mystical power.
- According to legend, the dragon’s distinctive look came from the mythical Huang Di, or the Yellow Emperor, who had a snake on his coat of arms. As a mighty warrior, Huang Di set out with his army to conquer neighbouring tribes. Every time a tribe was defeated he added its animal emblem to his own. In time his simple serpent turned into a complex beast with the horns of a deer, eyes of a demon, ears of a cow, tail of a lion and scales of a carp.
- By 221 BC Qin Shihuangdi, known as the First Emperor, had unified China. He was also responsible for building the Great Wall and assembling the Terracotta Army. Throughout Imperial China, there was a strong connection between dragons and the emperor. For example, emperors’ garments are known as ‘dragon robes’.

- Dragons are still very popular in China, where they play an important role in festivals and celebrations, especially Chinese New Year. During the New Year celebrations long dragon figures are supported on poles and carried through the streets by dancers whose movements make the creature appear to twist and turn.

About the objects

You can use the object cards to find these in any order. The order below is the order they appear in the film.

Object 1

Name: Coin sword

Colour: 红色 hóng sè red

Location: Exploring East Asia gallery, Level 5

Sensory item in your activity backpack: Coins and a red purse

Other information

The coin sword was said to ward off evil spirits. Red is a lucky colour in China. Traditionally, it is the colour that a woman would wear on her wedding day. It is also the symbol for fire and warmth. In ancient China the doors of most officials' homes were red, so the colour sometimes symbolises power and wealth.

Follow on activity

This sword is made of coins. In China the currency is the Yuan. Ask pupils to research the differences between currency used in Scotland and China.



Object 2

Name: Giant Panda

Colour: 白色 bái sè white

Location: Survival gallery, Level 5
Enter the gallery via the balcony and find it on the opposite wall.



Sensory item in your activity backpack: Panda toy

Other information

Pandas are a symbol of peace and friendship. The colours black 黑色 hēi sè (black) and white 白色 bái sè (white) in Chinese sound a little bit as if we are saying 'hey sir' as in 'hello sir!' and 'bye sir'. White in Chinese culture is the colour of mourning. Ask your pupils what the colour of mourning is in Scotland.

Follow on activity

Pandas live at Edinburgh Zoo. For more activities and resources, see the Beyond the Panda materials. See final page for details.

Object 3

Name: Fruit basket and stand

Colour: 蓝色 lán sè blue

Location: Artistic Legacies gallery
Level 5. It is in a case with other blue and white porcelain.



Sensory item in your activity backpack: Plate

Other information

This fruit basket was discovered on a ship wreck, at the bottom of the ocean. The basket base is hand-painted with a landscape scene of China that was popular in Europe at the time. This scene was further developed by European potters to become known as

the 'Willow Pattern'. The Willow Pattern refers to a scene with two birds and a willow tree. It is based on a Chinese legend about two lovers who eloped to escape the woman's family and were transformed into a pair of doves.

Follow on activity

Using paper plates, real plates, or a circle drawn on paper, ask pupils to create their own interpretation of these patterns. You can practice the Mandarin names for the colours blue and white whilst you are painting.

Object 4

Name: Vase with dragons chasing the flaming pearl.

Colour: 粉色 fěn sè pink

Location: Inspired by Nature gallery, Level 5



Sensory item in your activity backpack: Dragon figure

Other information

Dragons play a vital role in Chinese culture. They are seen as positive beings, rather than as something to be afraid of. People believe that dragons can bring good luck and harmony to human beings, but can also punish people's mistakes. Dragons are also thought to bring rain for crops. Dragons are often shown chasing a flaming pearl, like the ones on this vase.

Follow on activity

Every time you see 'en' in pinyin, it is pronounced 'un' as in 'fun'. Ask your pupils to find other examples of words which use this rule.

Object 5

Name: Statue of Weituo

Colour: 棕色 zōng sè brown

Location: Exploring East Asia gallery, Level 5 at the main entrance to the gallery.

Sensory item in your activity backpack: Bell and incense from temple

Other information

Weituo is a Buddhist guardian figure. Weituo often resides in the entrance hall of a Buddhist temple. Here, Weituo's palms are joined as a sign of greeting, welcoming visitors to his temple. Buddhism is a popular belief system in China. Buddhism came to China from India. The other belief systems in China are Taoism/ Daoism and Confucianism.

Follow on activity

Your class can learn how to sing *Head, shoulders, knees and toes* in Mandarin, then use these words to point out Weituo's features.



Object 6

Name: Table screen

Colour: 绿色 lǜ sè green

Location: Exploring East Asia, Level 5

Sensory item in your activity backpack: Calligraphy set



Other information

Table screens were used to stop draughts from drying out ink while a calligrapher was working. In Chinese homes, screens like this, in different sizes, are also used to create a Feng shui environment. Feng shui is a practise in which furniture and other items in the home are arranged carefully to create an atmosphere of calm, comfort and harmony.

In China, the calligrapher has four treasures: 墨 mò (ink), 笔 bǐ (brush), 纸 zhǐ (paper) and 砚 yàn (inkstone). Traditionally ink was in the form of a solid stick. This was then ground up on an inkstone and water added to make fluid ink.

Follow on activity

Whilst in the gallery, your class can try calligraphy on the digital touchscreen near the table screen. The mythical creature on this screen is the Qilin. Watch the museum's film online or in the Inspired by Nature gallery to find out more.

Object 7

Name: Scholar's Rock sculpture

Colour: 银色 yín sè silver

Location: Inspired by Nature gallery, Level 5

Sensory item in your activity backpack: Stones

Other information

This silver sculpture was inspired by weathered rocks found in China's landscape. It was made in 2007 by artist Zhan Wang. In China, an entire collecting culture developed around strange rocks, which were seen as small models standing in for nature. Wang takes this traditional idea and uses natural rock formations as metal moulds for his art pieces.



Follow on activity

As an Outdoor Learning activity, ask pupils to collect interesting rocks from the area around your school, and then make their own artistic creations inspired by or using the rocks.

Object 8

The final object is chosen by the pupils. You can find other Chinese objects in **Patterns of Life gallery, Level 1** and **Art of Ceramics gallery, Level 3 balcony**. There is also a fantastic Chinese-inspired dragon in the **Imagine gallery, Level 1**.

Once pupils have chosen their object they should make a note of its colour and practice saying that colour in Mandarin.

List of colours

黑色
白色
红色
蓝色
粉色
棕色
绿色
银色
黄色
橘色
紫色
金色

hēi sè
bái sè
hóng sè
lán sè
fěn sè
zōng sè
lǜ sè
yín sè
huáng sè
jú sè
zǐ sè
jīn sè

black
white
red
blue
pink
brown
green
silver
yellow
orange
purple
gold

Useful resources

You can find a range of resources online including:

[National Museum's Scotland China-related resources](#)

[Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools resources](#) including:

- Progression Framework for Mandarin learning
- Grammar Progression Grid
- My Panda Passport (for younger learners) or My China Passport (for older learners)

[Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's Beyond the Panda resources](#)

Thank you to pupils from Dalry Primary School who helped choose the objects, colours and the dragon's name.

Funded by



Confucius Institute Headquarters' funding

