

Gallery Trail: Chinese Connections




Welcome to the Chinese Galleries. The objects in these galleries encompass over 10,000 years of Chinese history. By looking at the objects used by common people, nobility, and royalty, we can start to understand what has changed and what has stayed the same throughout China's vast history.

Work in small groups to explore the galleries and discover what a collection of objects can tell you about the lives of the people who connected them.

Museum Guidelines:

1. Walk. Do not run.
2. Use indoor voices.
3. Stay with your chaperone.
4. Make way for ROM educators if they need a space for a lesson.
5. Don't touch objects. Only touch objects that are clearly marked as safe to touch.
6. Don't rush. Focus your time on the objects that capture your interest and complete what you can within the time you have.
7. Ask questions and have fun!



-  Find objects that illustrate a tradition or practice, such as:
- food and drink
 - religion
 - death and burial
 - another tradition or practice you find interesting

Explain what these objects tell you about this practice. How is it similar to and/or different from a practice that you or your family do today?

- ✎ Find objects that show how people were influenced by the environment in which they lived. In the space below, explain what the object is and what it tells you about the people who made, owned and used it.

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- ✎ Choose your favourite object in the gallery, and imagine that you are the original owner of the object, the person who made it, a museum curator studying it, or a viewer who has something to say about it.

In your chosen role, make as many notes as you can about the object. Think about:

- what it looks like
- what it's made of
- what it was used for
- who would have used it

BACK IN CLASS

In your chosen role, tell the story of the object from your perspective. Use your imagination! You could:

- Write a letter, a diary entry, a short story, a poem, or a postcard to a friend
- Draw a comic
- Create a skit
- Or anything else that tells the story of this object from your perspective.

#atROM

Animals are represented throughout in the Chinese galleries! Choose one object that shows an animal and do your best impression of that animal. Have your teacher share a photo with [#ROMLearning!](#)

Seek and Discover: Can you find...?



Bronze *ding*, or tripod vessels, like this one, were used to make ritual offerings of food to the gods or ancestors, and an important symbol of wealth and power. Which of your possessions would you use to show off in the afterlife?



This delicate picnic basket used by noble family members in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) was carved from ivory. What would you make a picnic basket out of, and what would you fill it with?



Yanluo, the King of Hell, was the commander of an army of demons who punished the dead, but he was a good person to have on your side, since he would watch out for you and reward good people when they reached the afterlife. How would you describe his face and posture? How does he make you feel?



Can you find the auspicious (or lucky) symbols on the Vase of the Hundred Deer? Look for the peaches of longevity and the fungus of immortality, and for the seal (like a signature) on the bottom.



Oracle bones like this one were used 3000 years ago to predict the future. What would you want to know about your future?



What mythical creature decorates this Imperial Palace and shows us that it is the home of the Emperor? If you could pick a mythical creature to decorate your home and represent you, which would you pick?

Did You Know?

In these galleries, you can find a burial suit made of jade. Jade is an extremely important material in many Chinese traditions, and in the courts of the Emperors and Empressess, it was carved by skilled artisans, since jade was even more prized than gold or silver. Since it would often be placed in the tombs of kings or queens, it also came to be regarded as being powerful in death, protecting its owner's body from decay, such as with a burial suit like the one on display.

Due to its strength and rarity, jade was also highly prized by Indegenous Mesoamerican peoples such as the Olmec and the Maya. It was closely associated with life and death, and used in many symbolic rituals. The Maya placed jade beads in the mouths of the dead.

Royal Maya jade pendant (left) and Chinese jade burial suit (right)



Across the Museum

- ✎ Choose one aspect of Chinese culture that you learned about from the objects in these galleries (e.g., afterlife, clothing, food, religion, art, etc.) that you find interesting, and note below what you learned.

Now travel to a gallery that explores another world culture and find objects that illustrate the same thing.

- How are these objects similar between the two cultures?
- How are they different?
- How are they influenced by the environment in which they were made?
- What do they tell you about the cultures they belong to?

[More at the ROM](#)

[Discover our Summer Club Campers' favourite Forbidden City objects](#)

[Learn who owned the bronze *ding* with Curator Chen Shen](#)

[Find out how Empress Cixi mastered the skills of painting and calligraphy](#)

[Watch how we conserved the *Paradise of the Maitreya* mural](#)

[Glossary:](#)

Auspicious - Leading to success; favourable; lucky

Culture - The customary beliefs, values, social forms, and material traits of an ethnic, religious, or social group.

Forbidden City -The Forbidden City in Beijing, China was the largest palace complex in history, home to the last 24 emperors of China and their families from 1420 to 1912. In the past, ordinary citizens were forbidden to enter. Today, the Forbidden City is home to the Palace Museum, where visitors can learn about imperial life in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Tradition - a way of thinking, behaving, or doing something that has been used by the people in a particular group, family, society, etc., for a long time.

Create your own glossary for other unfamiliar words you come across. Share your findings with your class!