

Chinese Opera

1. Question & Research Task

The arts can serve as an ambassador, or representative, to a culture.

Visual arts, literature, dance, and music can deliver cultural messages and values to an audience.

This is true of Chinese Opera, also called Beijing Opera.

Watch the video on the right as a class to gain an understanding about Chinese Opera and how it may act as an ambassador for Chinese culture.

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

How can music represent cultural values?

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Select the image above to view a China Insight video about the Beijing Opera.

Image Source: YouTube

2. Information Sources

Choose several of the information sources* linked here to complete the Student Activity on Slide 3.

- [China Beijing Opera](#): Travel China guide
- [Peking Opera](#)
- [Overview of Chinese Opera](#): China Tour Guide
- [Makeup, Staging, Costumes & Music](#) from China Educational Tours
- [Beijing Opera](#) from China Highlights



Stage actress Vicky Lai (L) acts out her scene while Lee Yuen Yee (R) waits for her queue on stage at the Chinese/Cantonese Opera on Lamma Island, Hong Kong, 15 April 2001. The famous annual Hong Kong traditional Chinese/Cantonese Opera has been showing on Lamma Island over the Easter holidays with two shows per day.

Photo Selected by SIRS Staff

3. Student Activity

Use the information sources on Slide 2 to gather notes about:

- Chinese opera: background information, brief history
- The 4 character roles of Chinese opera
- Cultural values and mask colors
- Training and skills required

Download this Cornell Notes sheet to gather your information:

[Cornell Notes Sheet](#)

If you prefer a paper Cornell Notes Sheet, ask your teacher for a copy.



The famous heroine Mu Guiying in traditional Beijing opera.

Image Source: [China Tour Guide](#)

4. Assessment Activity

Imagine that your school is hosting a performance from a Chinese opera company.

You will create an informational [Discovery Education Board](#) for your school's website to educate students and parents about Chinese opera's history and significance.

Your board must include:

- A brief historical background
- Information about the four character roles of Chinese opera
- Cultural values and mask colors
- Training and skills needed to perform Chinese opera
- At least 2 images: You must cite your source.

*Refer to the rubric provided by your teacher.



One kind of female character in the opera - Wudan, woman who is good at martial arts.

Image Source: [China Tour Guide](#)

5. Enrichment Activities



Sheng 生 male characters, leading roles with multiple subtypes: aged (*laosheng*), young & handsome (*xiaosheng*), martial skills (*wusheng*), and more.



Dan 旦 female characters, major roles also with subtypes: gentle & quiet (*qingyi*), beautiful (*huadan*), aged (*laodan*), and more.



Jing 净 supporting male characters with painted faces (over a thousand variations), strong personalities and exaggerated gestures. Face color and design symbolism reveal their inner nature.



Chou 丑 comic characters, entertaining secondary roles with more dialog than singing, often accompanied by orchestra percussion, may also involve improv and martial arts.

Select the image above to read more about the 4 character roles in Chinese Opera.

Image Source: China Simplified

Use what you have learned about the characters, costumes, and colors used in the Chinese Opera to create an original character.

What will your character look like?

Will your character be a hero, a villain, or something in between?

How will your character's costume and face paint reflect their personality?

Use drawing materials to create a visual of your original character.

Use Google Docs to write a description.

6. Teacher Resources

Learning Standards Alignment

Maryland State Fine Arts Standards

Anchor Standard 7 – Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8 – Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard 11 – Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

Reading: 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Writing: 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by:

I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:

I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:

I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:

I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

P21 Framework: 21st Century Student Outcomes

3. Information, Media & Technology Skills: Information Literacy: Access information efficiently and effectively; Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.

ICT Literacy: Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.

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6th Grade Music

Time Frame: 1-2 50-minute class periods

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Have students use learning supports provided in any [BCPS Digital Content](#) included in this lesson, such as audio read-aloud and labeled Reading Levels/ or Lexile. Use [Digital Content Snapshots & Support resources](#) for support as needed.

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- [A Brief History of Chinese opera](#)
- Consider using the [Schoology Assignment Apps](#) feature to assign Microsoft/Google Docs for students to access, edit, and submit through Schoology.
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Last updated: **July 2023.** Use this [form to report broken links](#) to: BCPS Library Media Programs 443-809-4035

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