

China Lesson 1

Here's What I See

The Basics

Objective: To introduce participants to objects from China.

Performance of Skill Expectations/Enduring Understandings: The participants will continue developing observational skills through a discussion of new artifacts.

Prerequisite Lessons: *Introductory Lesson 1: The Key to Understanding Artifacts*. You may also want to view a video of this activity modeled on the Spurlock Museum's website at <https://www.spurlock.illinois.edu/educators/borrow-objects/profiles/aas-china.html>

Estimated Materials Preparation Time: 5 minutes.

Duration: Instructor discretion.

Materials Provided in the Box: Three chopstick rests, a set of decorated chopsticks, and Artifact Information Sheets.

Materials to be Provided by the Instructor: A smartboard, chalkboard, or easel pad, and associated writing materials; a tray may be helpful to place the chopsticks on while showing them around the room.

Note: All of the instructions for *Here's What I See* lessons are nearly identical. Differences will be found in vocabulary, development, and the artifacts used. The full instructions are repeated each time as a refresher for returning educators or a full lesson for educators new to the program.

Concepts/Vocabulary

none

Procedure

Preparation: Have the artifacts to be discussed out of the box and ready for showing. At the beginning of the lesson, hide the chopsticks from the view of the participants.

Introduction/Instruction: Explain to the participants that when historians/archaeologists/anthropologists look at artifacts, they look for patterns: characteristics that are common among all artifacts of a certain type for a certain group of people. They examine how and why those patterns may vary among the different places where those people live or how the patterns have evolved over time.

Explain that for this lesson, they will be playing a game called “Here’s What I See.” As you walk around the room with an artifact, the participants will look at it then raise their hands when they have an observation to make about it. The observation is stated as “Here’s what I see; I see a _____.” Observations are things they actually see—facts—not assumptions or conclusions they have made from what they see. They are looking for aspects of the artifact, the things that are recognizable and can be compared among artifacts. An easy example to show before looking at the ancient artifacts is a watch. Good observations for a watch might be (depending on the watch):

- “I see numbers.”
- “I see a word.”
- “I see moving parts.”
- “I see a buckle.”
- “I see metal.”

Tell the participants not to worry about stating an observation that seems obvious. Sometimes the obvious thing is a very important thing (e.g., you may get 10 observations about a statue, but no one will say that it is a male or female figure portrayed).

Before taking observations, suggest that the participants speak loudly enough for all to hear, because you want to see how many observations they give before you get a repeat.

Development:

1. For the China lesson, the first objects to be shown around the room are the chopstick rests. Once observations have been made, ask the participants to guess what the artifact is (what is its function). If the participants do not guess the answer, place one the rests on a desk or table where everyone can see it and place the chopsticks on the rest as they would be if on a table (the tapered ends resting on the rest). Use the information on the Artifact Information Sheet to tell the participants about the artifact. Here are a few key facts.

Chopstick rest:

- These artifacts are used to help keep the table/tablecloth clean during a meal of Chinese food.
- Rests come in many different shapes and materials.

2. Most of the participants will recognize the chopsticks. Have them tell you what they know about them. Here are some key facts.

Chopsticks:

- These are used by many people of East Asia for eating their food.
- They work well because much of food is prepared and served in small bites.

3. Pass the chopsticks around. Have the participants guess what the decoration on the chopsticks represents. If the participants do not guess the correct answer, explain the decorations using information on the Artifact Information Sheet.

Reflection: Generate a short discussion with these questions:

For all participants:

- Read to the participants the information on chopstick etiquette. Have them list the different rules they have for eating at home with their family. Ask: What things do our table manners have in common with those who eat with chopsticks? What things are different? Do you know anything about table manners in other parts of the world? If so, share what you know with the other participants.
- Have you ever eaten with chopsticks? What was the experience like?

If this is the first time the game is played:

- What was the most fun about this activity?
- Why is it important to learn about the skill of observation when studying other cultures?

If the game has been once before:

- What was easier about playing the game this time? Do you think your observation skills have improved? If so, how?

If the game has been played twice before:

- What aspects of the artifacts/types of observations do you find you are making with every artifact? Why do you think these are important?

Assessment: This game will be played multiple times if all loan kits are used. Use the game to assess how well the participants' observation and description skills develop over time.