



Michigan 4-H Children's Art Exchange with China Visual Letters Art

Enjoy learning how to make visual letter art to share with Chinese children.

Purpose:

To learn about China through Chinese children's visual art; to understand how art can tell stories, ideas and feelings; and to explore and experiment with two-dimensional art making.

Objectives:

- ◇ Learn the cultural history and origins of China.
- ◇ Develop fine motor skills in creating visual letter art.
- ◇ Increase cultural awareness and creativity.

Education Standards:

- ◇ Understand the visual arts in relation to history and culture.
- ◇ Apply geometric methods to solve design problems.

Experiential Learning:

- ◇ Create a "visual letter" (painting or drawing) piece of art.
- ◇ Develop fine motor skills in creating visual letter art.
- ◇ Increase cultural awareness and creativity.

Use these phrases:

Do it, What happened, What's important, So What, Now What?

Audience: Grades K-6 in all youth educational settings



Photo courtesy of Song Lize, 4-H Youth Development Programming Partner with Binzhou City Education Bureau; Shandong Province, China

CONTINENT: ASIA

Asia is the largest of the world's continents. Home to 48 countries, three of them (Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey) having part of their land in Europe. Some areas of the world combine **Asia** and **Europe** into one continent called **Eurasia**.

Shandong Province People's Republic of China

The Michigan 4-H China Project, conducted in cooperation with the People's Republic of China, is a global education program that often uses the arts for both in-school and after-school learning experiences.

LESSON: Visual Letters

Children will create "visual letters" art to send to children their own age in China. A "visual letter" is just like a written letter in that both can tell stories and share important ideas and feelings. The medium however is different; one uses images and the other uses words - both are effective in connecting children on two different sides of the globe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Developed by MSU Extension Educator, Janis Brinn with reference to http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/china_project

TIME:

30-45 minutes or multiple days depending upon the interest to learn more.

MATERIALS:

- ◇ Chinese children's pictures with descriptions (power point, kits, or received artwork)
- ◇ Globe or world map
- ◇ Optional Chinese word characters
- ◇ Art medium materials (crayons, markers, paint, pencils, etc.)
- ◇ Paper (Encourage artwork to be about 12" x 18" for easier handling/mailing)
- ◇ Art Labels with name, age, title, gender and optional story
- ◇ Parent or Guardian Authorization if media release required

Optional reference for details:

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/china_project

INFORMATIONAL VIDEO LINK: https://mediaspace.msu.edu/media/t/1_eqcuq5mb

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce the Chinese Children's Art - Contact your county MSU Extension office to borrow materials if needed.
2. Talk about the Chinese Children's Art and China – Find China on a map or globe. Talk about the Chinese children's art as each picture has a story, an idea, a feeling or a dream to share. Every piece of art becomes a visual letter to children in Michigan about life in China, as depicted by a child. Ultimately, children will see many similarities between their Chinese counterparts (friends/peers) and themselves.
3. Create Visual Letters - a Painting or Drawing. Ask to communicate (via art) something important in their lives, such as friends, family, pets, home, school, sports and holidays. Samples shared through their artwork may include their fears (sick family member, bullying); features unique to Michigan (Mackinac Bridge, Lake Michigan); Michigan wildlife (Black Bears, Deer, Robins), patriotism (White House, Fourth of July fireworks, American flag), rural scenes and urban scenes (mid-Michigan corn fields and street scenes in Detroit); big ideas (world peace and protecting the environment); and special dreams (Disneyland, a bedroom filled with books).
4. Display the Children's Art and/or submit for a selection process to be sent to China

Reflection Questions:

- ◇ What do you see when looking at the visual letter art from China?
- ◇ What do you think the visual letter or "story" that is being told?
- ◇ What did you learn about China?
- ◇ How are you the same? How are you different?
- ◇ Why did you make your visual letter art the way that you did?
- ◇ What surprised you during this creation or process?
- ◇ How did you overcome something difficult?
- ◇ Let's have a conversation about this piece of art.

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