

Asia: Handmade Concertina Book

Jayanti Seiler, University of Central Florida

OVERVIEW

The lesson engages 6th grade students in an exploration of the culture of Asia to create a handmade Concertina book which was used for over 1,000 years ago in Japan and Korea. The lesson requires students to learn about the culture of China and how books were used to communicate as art forms. The lesson requires students to analyze, understand, interpret and synthesize information. The lesson provides a technologically rich experience as well as hands on because the book imagery will be inspired by information the students research on the internet. The desired outcome will be a hand-made Concertina book in the style of Chinese art. Students will also collaborate across classrooms using tools like Padlet, Google Docs, and Flip. Students will be assessed using a rubric. This lesson was created with middle school grades (6-8) in mind but could be adapted to younger or older students by making minor adjustments.

Topics: Handmade book making in Asia, Hands on Project-based Learning

Time: It will take five to ten 50 minute class periods to complete the learning representation.

MATERIALS

List materials needed for your learning representation:

- Materials:
 - 2 pieces of matboard cut to size
 - 2 pieces of decorative paper to cover the matboard (cut larger than the matboard so it can be wrapped around at least an inch on all sides).
- Multiple handouts on Asian book art and calligraphy.
- Research Examples;
- <https://anneriggs.com/2014/08/06/concertina-books/>

- <https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=examples+of+concertina+books+from+asia&qpvt=examples+of+Concertina+books+from+asia&form=IGRE&first=1>
- <https://melissalazukaphotographs.com/artist-books>
- Instructional Video Tutorial; <https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?&q=examples+of+Concertina+books+from+asia&&mid=350FAE9669F10B778741350FAE9669F10B778741&&FORM=VRDGAR>
- Supplies; Glue, scissors
- Computer equipment for book research

SETUP

One-two hours were spent organizing materials to be given to each student. The learning environment is a medium size art room with 6 tables. The instructor should estimate 1-2 hours to setup the environment effectively.

Students will work in pairs of 2 and the 2 students work side by side at a desk to create their art. The instructors can circulate the room to easily monitor the students while they work.

The instructors would need to teach the art of Asia with regards to the Concertina books through worksheets that the students fill out before they are asked to research the content on the computer and search ideas for Concertina book art. The teacher provides numerous examples of student made and professionally made Concertina books for inspiration. Then students collaborate across classrooms and within the classroom using Padlet; "Padlet is an online platform that functions as a digital canvas, allowing users to create virtual boards for sharing various types of content, including text, images, links, and videos. It serves as an online noticeboard where users can organize and share information visually, making it ideal for brainstorming, collaborative projects, and classroom content. Padlet enables real-time collaboration, allowing multiple users to contribute simultaneously to the same board."

Students will click on a link or scan the QR code that the teacher sends them to access the Padlet board. Students can type, upload media, search google for images or add a link to their post. They can also comment on each other's work and add a like to the posts.

STANDARDS

The lesson supports the following Common Core Sunshine State Standards:

[VA.68.C.3.1](#) Incorporate accurate art vocabulary during the analysis process to describe the structural elements of art and organizational principles of design.

[VA.68.F.1.1](#) Use non-traditional thinking and various techniques to create two-, three-, and/or four-dimensional artworks.

[VA.68.S.1.2](#) Use media, technology, and other resources to derive ideas for personal art-making.

[VA.68.S.1.3](#) Use ideas from cultural, historical, and artistic references to create personal responses in personal artwork.

CONTEXT-AT-A-GLANCE (H2-CONTEXT)

Setting

This is a private Jewish Academy elementary and middle school in an urban mid-small size town in the United States.

Modality

Face-to-face

Class Structure

Class of 10-15 middle school students which met 5 days per week.

Organizational Norms

The school's goals are to impact the world through academic excellence, global citizenship, and compassionate action. The school creates a community where children of all faiths can demonstrate integrity, academic excellence and a desire to improve the world. The school supports students in critical thinking and project-based learning. The Art department encourages students to engage with historical and contemporary art as a means to generate critical thought and integration across all subjects in the school.

Learner Characteristics

Students were new to the history and contemporary theories of art. The students were very enthusiastic about participating in the art project. The class fits 10-15 students and there are differentiation needs.

Instructor Characteristics

The instructor brings a high level of expertise in both pedagogical strategies and content knowledge, ensuring an effective learning experience. As a specialist in PreK-12 art education, she is well-versed in age-appropriate instructional methods and curriculum design. Instructor expectations for the learning representation include adherence to established teaching norms, such as clarity of instruction, engagement through creative modalities, and responsiveness to diverse learning styles. Additionally, while extensive technical expertise is not required of participants, a familiarity with digital tools is expected to support the integration of artistic and literacy-based learning experiences.

Development Rationale

This lesson was designed to inspire and deepen students' understanding of art history, with a particular focus on the rich artistic traditions of Asia. The desired outcomes include fostering cultural appreciation, developing historical context, and enhancing visual literacy through the exploration of Asian art forms.

Learning objectives:

- >Identify key characteristics and historical developments in Asian art.
- >Understand the cultural influences that shaped these artistic expressions.
- >Apply this knowledge through a creative, interdisciplinary project that connects art history to book making traditions and Padlet technology.

Design Framework

Project-Based Learning (PBL), Design centered

CONTEXT AND SETTING

The 6th-grade art lesson takes place during the fall semester in a middle school deeply committed to project-based learning, cultural diversity, and Jewish values such as honesty, integrity, mutual trust, and respect. The school was founded locally to meet the needs of modern families and embraces a diverse philosophy, welcoming students of all faiths.

Guided by the Reggio Emilia approach, the classroom fosters hands-on, student-centered learning with small class sizes that encourage inquiry and creativity. The lesson invites students to explore Asian culture, particularly from Japan and Korea, through the creation of a Concertina book, an ancient art form that blends storytelling and design.

Students use technology to research Asian cultural themes, blending their findings into original, handmade books inspired by traditional Japanese and Korean art. Then students collaborate across classrooms and within the classroom using Padlet to increase collaboration and retention.

The decision to explore Asian culture through bookmaking was influenced by the school's goal to integrate art, history, and technology in a cohesive

way with a meaningful learning experience rooted in both global awareness and strong values.

This blend of digital exploration and tangible, hands-on creation supports multiple learning styles and honors the school's commitment to technologically rich and student-centered learning. Ultimately, this lesson reflects the school's holistic approach: it celebrates cultural diversity, student support, and artistic expression, while grounding students in lasting values and thoughtful, purposeful learning. The resulting handmade Concertina books are not just artistic artifacts, but also representations of the students' critical thinking, cultural appreciation, and personal connection to the material.

LEARNING REPRESENTATION

This lesson was founded on the following premises:

Incorporating formal analysis into art education encourages students to describe and interpret artworks using specific vocabulary related to elements and principles of design. This method fosters a deeper understanding of artistic techniques and intentions (Hostos Community College Library, Chapter 11, Elements and Principles of Design).

Visualization is a process of mentally constructing, shaping and understanding information and the ability to externally communicate it. This process extends beyond simply representing in visual terms – using manual activities such as drawing, imaging (photography, collages), or making skills. Rather it relies on these abilities as methods for thinking, conceiving, exploring, and proposing ideas. In essence visualization is the pathway for design [Anderson], (Anderson & Lilly, 2004, p.2-3).

Drawing is a foundation for other two and three-dimensional works of art, even being incorporated with digital media that expands the idea of its formal expression (Saylor.org, Module 6, p.7-8).

Korean concertina binding style was originally used in the middle of the Goryeo Period and preserved through the Joseon dynasty. A representative concertina binding is the hand-copied sutra (Korean: *sagyong*, 寫經). This genre of illuminated, handwritten copies of Buddhist sutras executed during the Goryeo period was highly appreciated for its supreme technique and artistry (Song, 2010).

With these premises in mind, we sought to help students see threads between reading, research and hands on art making. Each is a valuable skill our learners need. Technology was used to help learners engage with the history of Asian Concertina Books. Engaging learners through their interests is essential for delivering meaningful instruction and fostering a genuine enjoyment of the learning process. Art serves as a powerful channel to literacy, enabling students to develop their language skills while simultaneously incorporating elements of creative expression into their educational experience.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

This lesson was implemented one time over the course of the fall semester with the same section of 6th-grade students. Overall, the lesson successfully met many of its intended goals, especially in terms of engaging students in cross-cultural exploration and creative expression. Students demonstrated an ability to research, interpret, and synthesize information about Asian culture and translate their findings into unique, meaningful visuals in their Concertina books. However, depth of understanding varied among students. While some created thoughtful, symbolically rich artwork, others leaned more heavily on surface-level imagery. In retrospect, a clearer scaffold for cultural analysis and visual interpretation may have strengthened these outcomes.

Students, in some cases, needed more time expected for both the research and the bookmaking process. Future versions of the project should allow for more flexible pacing or portion the project more purposefully. Some students struggled with how to locate meaningful cultural details online. A more structured research template or a more robust curated resource list would be helpful. Providing visual examples at multiple skill levels helped students of varying abilities succeed. Those who were less confident in art benefited from guided templates and examples. Cross collaboration between classrooms and within the classroom using Padlet went well and increased the desire to learn.

REFERENCES

WEBSITES

Song, M. (2009). The history and characteristics of traditional Korean books and bookbinding. *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, 32(1), 53–78.
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BOOKS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jayanti Seiler, MFA., is currently an Instructional System Designer for the Department of Juvenile Justice in Tallahassee Florida designing eLearning courses as part of the Department of Talent, Leadership and Culture. Jayanti was a certified preK-12 Art instructor in the Sarasota School District for 5 years. She received her Master of Fine Arts Degree in Photography from the University of Florida where she was the recipient of the Graduate Fellowship Award and she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Photography from the Rhode Island School of Design where she received the T.C. Colley Award and Scholarship.