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## Bridging Cultures Activity Guide

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A collection of activities that promote thinking about trade,  
culture, and assimilation

School Programs and Partnerships



THE HUNTINGTON  
Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens

# Theme

In this activity guide, the topic of bridging cultures is explored by investigating objects in The Huntington's collections. Students are asked to think about art as a cultural expression, and also to consider art as something that is traded and valued by many; it has its own journey and its own story to tell. Close looking and deep thinking may reveal how culture is represented and transmitted through these objects. There are opportunities throughout these activities for students to reflect on how trade shapes cultures, and how the influence of cultural artifacts and images prompts assimilation into a particular culture.

Items from The Huntington's collections in the following locations will be explored: the Huntington Art Gallery, the Chinese Garden (known as Liu Fang Yuan, the Garden of Flowing Fragrance), the Library Exhibition Hall, and the Virginia Steele Scott Galleries of American Art. All of the collection items can also be found online in the [Huntington Digital Library](#), [the Art Collections Catalog](#), or [the Huntington website](#).

## Collections Spotlight

### Huntington Art Gallery

*Mounted Double-Gourd Vase*

### Chinese Garden

*Bridge of the Joy of Fish*

*Clear and Transcendent Pavilion*

*Patching up the Sky*

*Plantain Court*

### Library Exhibition Hall

*Y.C. Hong Family Collection*

## Essential Questions

1. How does each object featured in this guide represent both the artisans who made it and their culture?
2. What values are reflected in the objects? (Think about values as personal, cultural, social, and historical.)
3. What stories do the objects tell about tracing identity?

## Curricular Alignment

### Intended age group/level/subject

The activities and writing tasks presented in this activity guide are appropriate for high school students, particularly those enrolled in English Language Development (ELD) or emerging bilingual classes, or students interested in Chinese identity in American culture.

All activities align with:

### The Huntington Framework

**Observe and Describe** – What do you see?

**Explain and Interpret** – What does it mean to you?

**Reason with Evidence** – What makes you think that?

**Wonder and Question** – What questions do you still have?

## The Four Cs of 21st-Century Learning

- Critical thinking and problem solving

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Creativity and innovation

## ELA Anchor Standards

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W/>

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences

## California English Language Development Standards

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/documents/eldstndpublication14.pdf>

Part I: Interacting in Meaningful Ways	Corresponding CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy*
<b>A. Collaborative</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exchanging information and ideas with others through oral collaborative discussions on a range of social and academic topics</li> <li>2. Interacting with others in written English in various communicative forms (print, communicative technology and multimedia)</li> <li>3. Offering and justifying opinions, negotiating with and persuading others in communicative exchanges</li> <li>4. Adapting language choices to various contexts (based on task, purpose, audience, and text type)</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SL.9-10.1, 6; L.9-10.3, 6</li> <li>• W.9-10.6; WHST.9-10.6; SL.9-10.2; L.9-10.3, 6</li> <li>• W.9-10.1; WHST.9-10.1; SL.9-10.1, 4, 6; L.9-10.3, 6</li> <li>• W.9-10.4-5; WHST. 9-10.4-5; SL.9-10.6; L.9-10.1, 3, 6</li> </ul>

(page 122)



New Chinatown (Los Angeles), West Gate on Hill Street,  
1939  
Photograph  
The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Garden  
<https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p16003coll12/id/5/rec/45>

### Practice the Huntington Framework

When you visit The Huntington, spend 1–2 minutes quietly looking at each artwork or object.

- What do you see?
- Share what you see (either with the group or to a partner). If you are completing this independently, write down what you see.
- What else do you notice? Look for additional details.
- Write down three questions you have about what you see. If possible, share these questions with your group or a partner.

## Art Words

**Artisan**—a worker in a skilled trade, especially one that involves making things by hand

**Period**—a length or portion of time

**Decorative**—serving to make something look more attractive; ornamental

**Depicted**—shown or represented by a drawing, painting, or other art form

**Represented**—shown or depicted by an art form

**Composite**—a thing made up of several parts or elements

**Firing**—baking until hard with high heat in a special oven called a kiln

## Feeling/Understanding Words

**Transcendent**—beyond or above the range of normal or merely physical human experience

**Exclusion**—the process or state of excluding or being excluded

**Elicit**—evoke or draw out (a response, answer, or fact) from someone in reaction to one's own actions or questions

**Prominent**—important; famous

**Esteemed**—held in great respect; admired

**Evoke**—bring or recall to the conscious mind

**Perceive**—become aware or conscious of something; come to realize or understand

**Proponent**—a person who advocates a theory, proposal, or project

**Befriending**—acting as a friend to someone by offering help or support

**Surfacing**—rising or coming up to the surface of the water or the ground

**Acceptance**—the action of consenting to receive or undertake something offered

## Helpful words to know

**Patching**—mending or strengthening fabric by putting a piece of material over a hole or weak point in it

**Immigration**—the action of coming to live permanently in a foreign country

**Lobbying**—seeking to influence a politician or public official on an issue

**Identity**—the fact of being who or what a person or thing is

**Fragrant**—having a pleasant or sweet smell

**Cross-cultural**—relating to different cultures or comparison between them

**Mythological**—relating to, based on, or appearing in myths or mythology

**Nautical**—of or concerning sailors or navigation; maritime

**Pavilion**—a decorative building used as a shelter in a park or large garden

## Huntington Art Gallery



### *Mounted Double-Gourd Vase*

Porcelain: 1300–1350, mounts: 1745–1749

Stoneware with slip-trailed, molded, and applied decoration, celadon glaze, gilt-bronze mounts

**Description:** Green, double gourd-shaped vase with gilt-bronze mounts in the shape of scrolls and grape vines. China, Longquan kilns, Zhejiang province, Yuan dynasty, c. 1300–1350; mounts added in France, c. 1750.

<https://huntington.emuseum.com/objects/12256/mounted-doublegourd-vase?ctx=ce-549c93072eeaff2959bcb9b2868edod7e312b6&idx=0>

This vase is made of stoneware. It is high fired, similar to porcelain, but at a lower temperature.

The stoneware vase is shaped like a gourd. Gourds are fleshy, typically large fruits with a hard skin; some varieties are edible.

A familiar example of a gourd is a pumpkin. Here are some images of other types of gourds you may have seen:



# Design Your Own Gourd-Inspired Vase

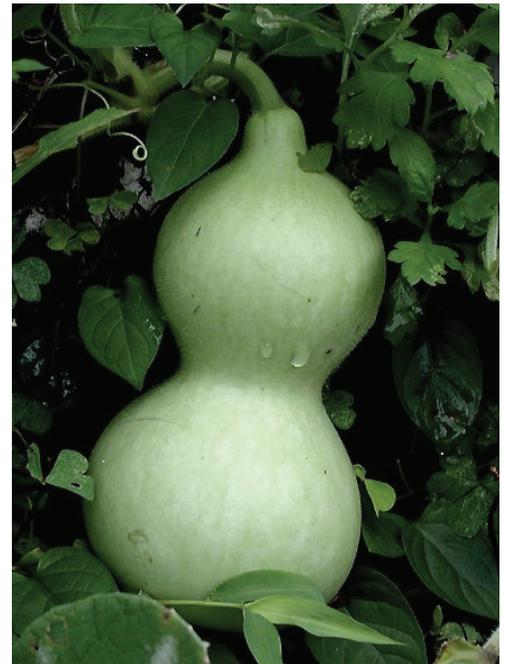
## Materials

- A gourd, or images of gourds
- Art supplies (pencils, markers, crayons, pastels, etc.)
- Paper
- Optional: clay and paint

## Steps

1. After careful examination of the *Mounted Double-Gourd Vase*, think about how you might design a vase inspired by a gourd.
2. Using the art supplies you have, design your own gourd vase.
  - a. Consider the purpose of your vase: What could it hold?
  - b. Think about which gourd shape would be visually appealing.
  - c. What materials could you use to create the vase? What kind of gourd do you plan to use as a model?
3. Optional: Use your sketch as a plan to make a vase out of clay. Here is a link to make play dough at home from The Huntington's Creativity Lab.  
<https://www.huntington.org/creativity-lab>

If you have paint available, you can paint your vase. Will you use luxurious colors like gold? Will you use earth tones like the gourds?



The particular kind of gourd that inspired this vase is the calabash gourd, which has a double-bulb shape.



## Questions

You will be able to answer these questions after a thoughtful, close look at the image of the *Mounted Double-Gourd Vase*; however, reading the linked articles and the information from the Huntington Digital Library will help you develop a deeper understanding.

1. What cultures can you connect to the *Mounted Double-Gourd Vase*? What does the vase tell you about the artisans who made it? What can you learn about different cultures by looking closely at the vase?
  - a. Think about the date and location of this object's creation, and how it is now on display in a museum in California. What do you think its journey was like? Where might this vase have traveled?
  - b. Think about artisans and cultures. This vase is the product of artisans from at least two different cultures, at two different times, with two radically different conceptions of aesthetics. The path that it took to get to France likely involved Ottoman traders. The only other extant vases of similar date and form are in the collection of a museum in Istanbul. The vases likely arrived there in the 15th or 16th centuries, according to Philip Bloom, the curator of the Chinese Garden at The Huntington.



2. How do you think this vase was made? Details about the medium of the vase are described in The Huntington's Art Collections Catalog:

Medium: Stoneware with slip-trailed, molded and applied decoration, celadon glaze, gilt-bronze

Look up those materials. Write out the steps of the process.

### Writing

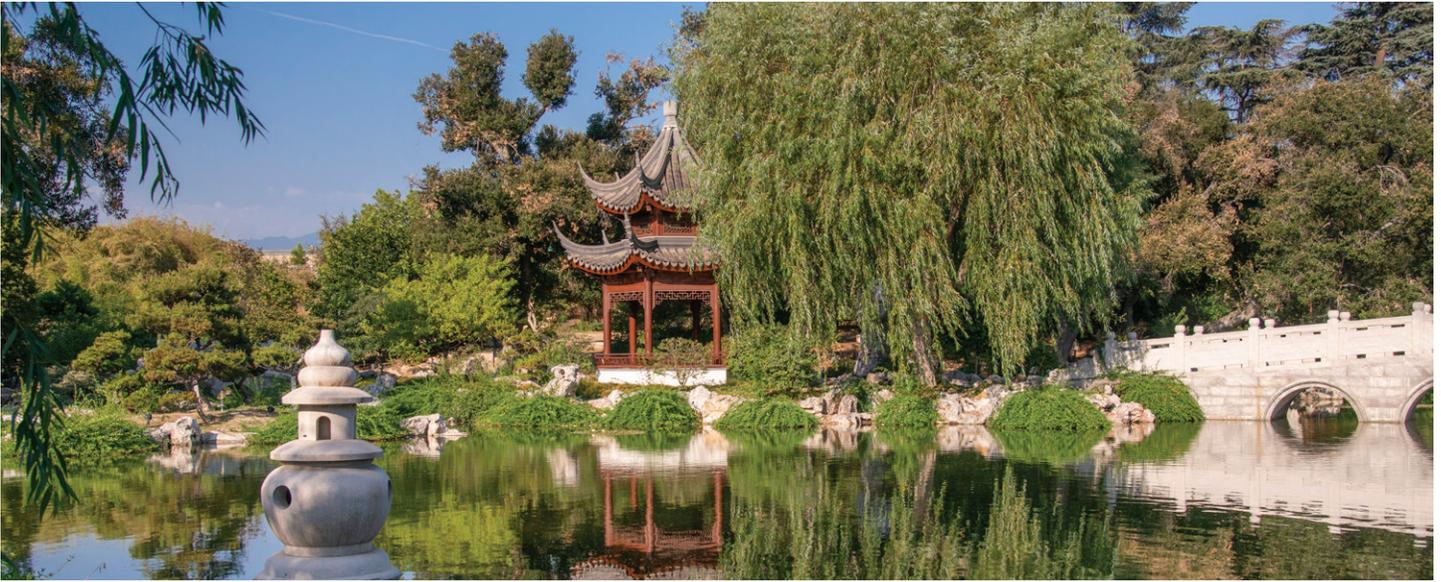
Based on your answers to the questions above, write a narrative about the vase's journey from the time it was created, between 1300–1350, to today. You can personify the vase and write from its perspective, or you can write about the artisan who created the vase, or perhaps a person who traveled with the vase from China to France to California. Add some creative details; use your imagination! For more details on the journey, read the links at the beginning of this activity.

Why do you think the *Mounted Double-Gourd Vase* is not attributed to one artisan? Should each artisan receive credit? Should the brand, company, or in this case ruling dynasty receive credit? Who should have the credit of creating objects that require the artistry and skill of more than one person? By not giving credit to the person who

made it, what value does that reflect about the culture? In what ways does that happen today? Write an argument in which you address the practice of attributing art made by more than one hand.

### Extension

Look for an object with a cultural meaning or cultural representation in the Art Collections Catalog. Read the information provided on the object. Try to trace its journey from where it was created to The Huntington. Draw a map of the object's travels and note key moments. For example, the *Mounted Double-Gourd Vase* did not have the gold mounts until long after it was originally created.



### The Garden of Flowing Fragrance

<https://www.huntington.org/chinese-garden>

Take a virtual tour of the Garden of Flowing Fragrance, Liu Fang Yuan, at The Huntington.

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=b4efdo72e35e468f8dd224e9e0c85be1>

As you explore the Garden of Flowing Fragrance, either in person or online, take a moment to read about the following areas in the garden. Then, answer the questions and complete the quick activities for each featured area below.

#### Bridge of the Joy of Fish

Read the story that inspired this bridge's name in the virtual tour of the Garden of Flowing Fragrance.

##### Questions

1. What does the story mean? What is the purpose?
2. What can we learn from this story?

##### Quick Activity

Write a short story that provides the reader with an insight about what it means to be human. Include an important value or character trait in the story: it should have a lesson to be learned. Like the story in the tour linked above, it can be a short conversation between friends, or it can be a narrative of an experience. Be creative!

#### Clear and Transcendent Pavilion

##### Questions

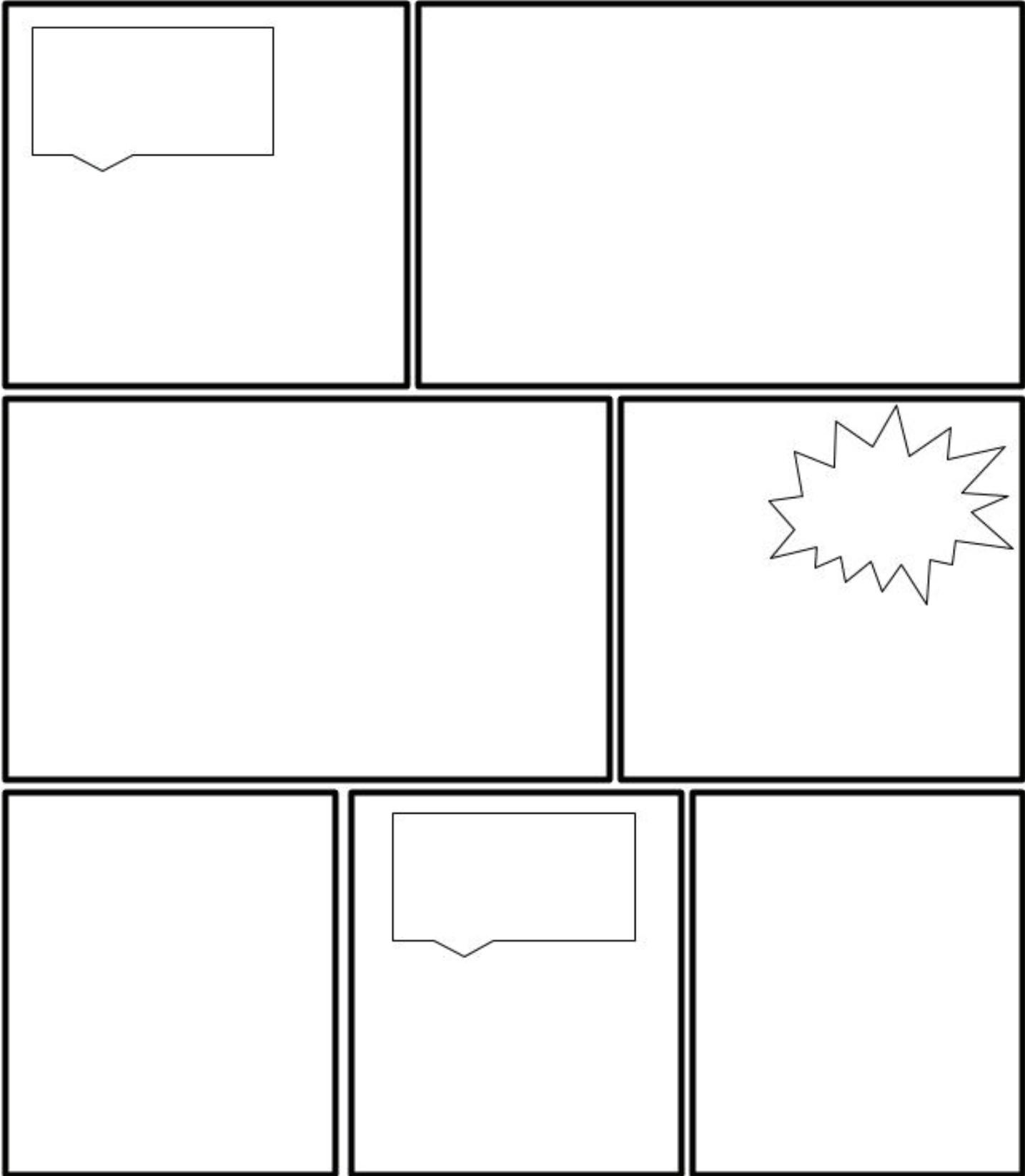
1. Which art forms are represented by the pavilion?
2. How does the location of the pavilion lend itself to different art forms?

In the center of the pavilion are wooden panels carved with decorative designs. Each panel tells part of a story.

##### Quick Activity

Make a comic strip that tells a story inspired by the Garden of Flowing Fragrance. Many of the features in the garden have symbolic meanings and stories behind them. You can use a story from the virtual tour or labels in the garden. You can also create your own story using your imagination. The comic strip should tell a story that has a beginning, middle, and end.

Comic Strip Template



## Plantain Court and the Freshwater Pavilion

### Questions

1. Think about how handwriting can be art, or about how calligraphy (as an art form) differs from handwriting used in daily life. What visual features might differentiate them?
2. How does an artist's culture and identity shape their work? How does an artist's culture and identity shape their work? For example, both of the artists whose calligraphy is featured in the Chinese Garden were born in China but were influenced by other cultures.

Write a line or a short poem in your own handwriting. Can you identify elements of your handwriting that reveal your cultural identity? Are there components of your personality that are shown in your handwriting? What about the words you chose?

### Quick Activity

## WRITING CHINESE COUPLETS:

- Chinese couplets consist of two lines of poetry that have the same number of characters and a similar structure.
- Chinese couplets often focus on pairs of contrasting or complimentary objects, traits or feelings. If the first line talks about rocks, the second line may talk about clouds. Other pairs could be: summer and winter, blue and green, swimming and floating, sun and moon, sadness and joy, or calm and storm.
- In Chinese couplets, parts of speech generally appear in each line in the same order. For example, a noun in the first line matches up to a noun in the second line.

### Couplet Example

1st Line: Flowing water can be listened to like the tune of a zither;  
2nd Line: fine mountains should be viewed as an image in a painting.

### Write the Second Line

- Read each line more than once to feel the mood.
- Create your own second line by matching each underlined word with a parallel word to balance the poem.

1st Line: Unbending bamboo grows in the golden sunshine;

2nd Line: \_\_\_\_\_

1st Line: Butterfly wings flutter in the sky among bright water lilies;

2nd Line: \_\_\_\_\_

## Patching up the Sky



“Nüwa Patches up the Sky” is one of several myths that relate to the title of this large, limestone rock. Another myth is called “Mending the Pillars of Heaven.”

### Questions

1. Why do you think the title *Patching up the Sky* was chosen for this rock?
2. How does it feel to be surrounded by beautiful scenery and then be asked to look up? How does looking up impact your experience? Does it take you out of the garden space? Does it connect the sky to the garden?

### Quick Activity

Use a feature in the garden to inspire your own myth. A myth is a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events. If you are unable to visit The Huntington in person, review the virtual tour of the Garden of Flowing Fragrance. The virtual tour can show different aspects of the Chinese Garden that might inspire you to create a story.

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=b4efdo72e35e468f8dd224e9eoc85be1>

### Library Exhibition Hall You Chong Hong Family Collection



This is a “coaching book” scroll, circa 1935, from the Y. C. Hong Family Collection at The Huntington.

To zoom in to this primary source in more detail, click here:

<https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p16003coll12/id/88/rec/2>

For more of the Y.C. Hong Collection, follow this link:

<https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p16003coll12>

Y.C. Hong was a Chinese American immigration lawyer. He and many others created coaching papers to help their clients, friends, or families with the interview process for immigrating to the US. These were often in the form of a long scroll written in Chinese calligraphy, containing the questions and answers an applicant could use to prepare for the interview.

(From <https://www.huntington.org/verso/2018/08/chinese-american-advocate-yc-hong>)

### Create Your Own Coaching Paper

#### Materials

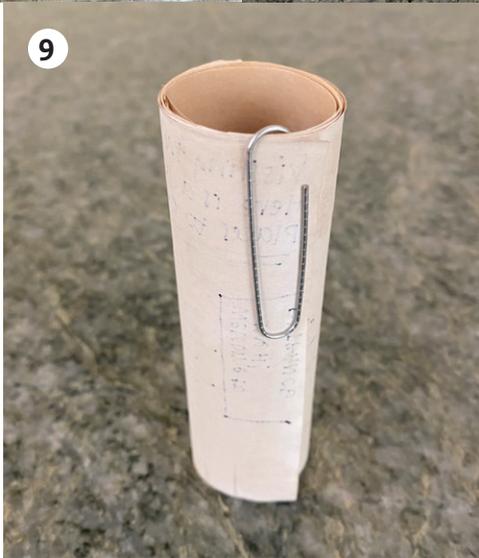
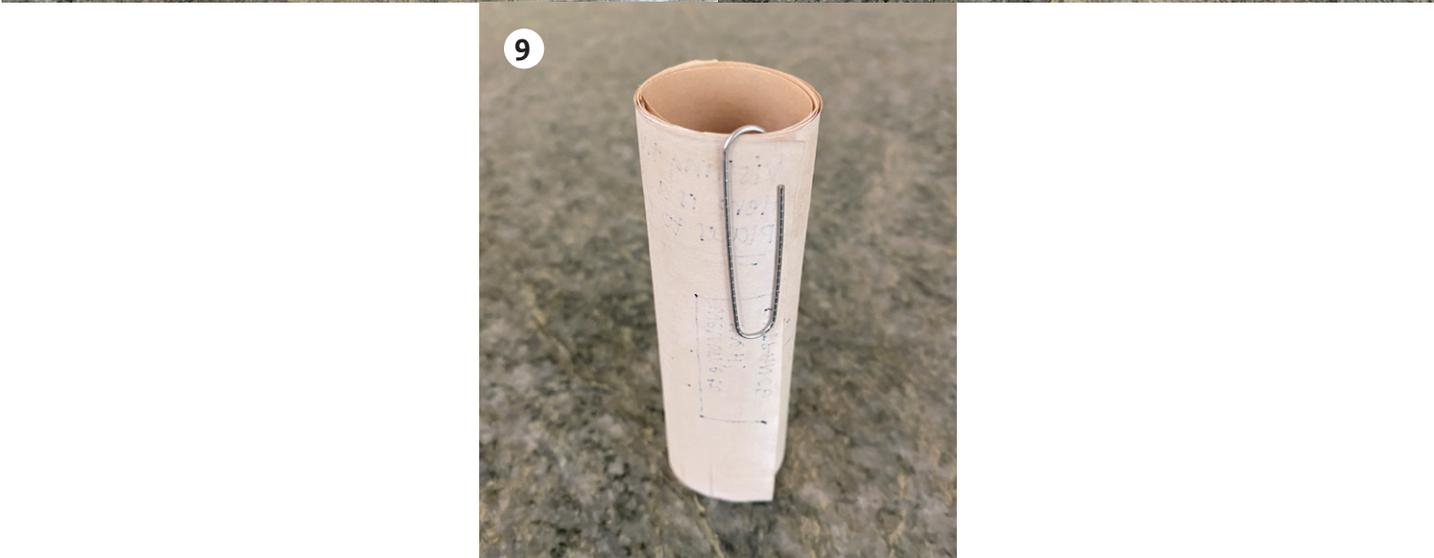
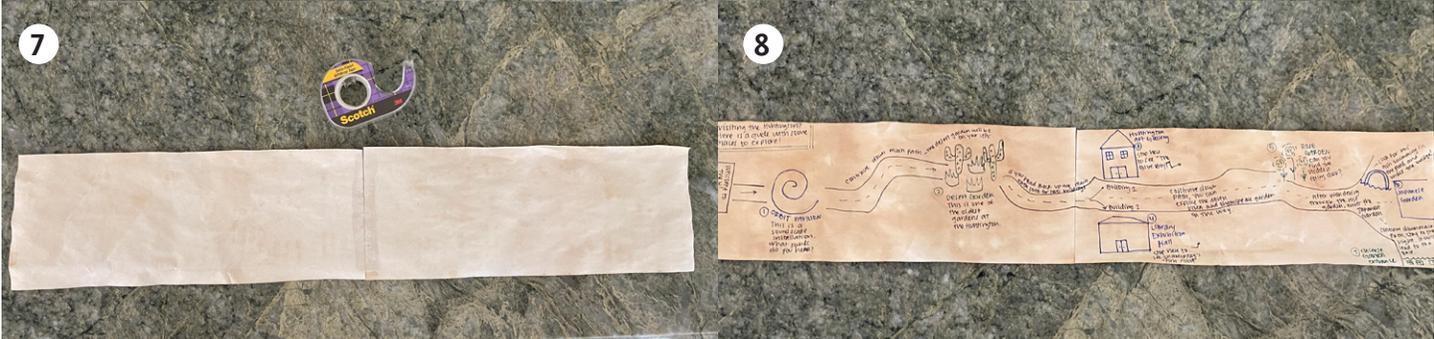
- Scratch paper
- Pencil
- Piece of paper
- Tape
- Pen with dark ink (calligraphy pen, if available)
- Tea bag
- Cup of water

*If you do not have access to a tea bag to stain the paper, you can use a brown grocery bag instead of a piece of paper.*

*Just cut the long center piece to use for your scroll.*

#### Steps

1. Place the tea bag in the water
2. While the tea is steeping, use the scratch paper to sketch what you will put on your coaching paper.
3. Think about the purpose of your coaching paper. What can you help someone do? Is there an upcoming test they could use the coaching paper to study for? Do you have a younger sibling who may need help navigating the rules of house or a new school? Do you know anyone who is new at school and may need help with the school culture? Once you have thought about your coaching paper, draw a draft on the scratch paper using pencil.
4. Remove the tea bag from the water
5. Brush the tea bag across the blank piece of paper to stain it a darker color. Stain the paper until it looks like an old scroll. You may want to let each layer of stain dry before adding another layer. Don't let the paper become saturated.
6. Let the paper dry
7. Cut the paper in half vertically
8. Connect two of the shorter edges and tape the paper on the back.
9. You should have a long scroll to write your coaching paper.
10. Use pencil first to trace what you plan to include on your coaching paper. Then trace back over it with dark ink.
11. Once the coaching paper is dry, you can roll it up like a scroll.



## Questions

1. Why do you think coaching papers were used?
2. What versions of coaching papers do we have today?
3. Who do you hope to help with your coaching papers?

## Writing Activity

Write a letter to the person who can learn from your coaching papers. Let them know about the circumstances that they will need your help. Explain to them how to use the coaching papers.

## Extension Activity

Look through the images in the Y.C. Hong Family Collection in the Huntington Digital Library. Here is the link:  
<https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p16003coll12>.

What contributions did Y.C. Hong add to the experiences of Chinese immigrants? How did he help them? What contributions did Y.C. Hong make to Los Angeles? Why is he an important figure not only for Chinese Americans, but also for the Los Angeles landscape?

Imagine you are introducing Y.C. Hong to a room of very important people. Perhaps he is winning an award, and you were chosen to bring him on stage. Write a speech that highlights his accomplishments.

## Additional Resources

### Books

*Another World Lies Beyond: Creating Liu Fang Yuan, the Huntington's Chinese Garden.* T. June Li, editor.  
Huntington Library Press, 2009.

### Listen

Chinese Garden Audio Tour

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/chinese-garden-audio-tour-english/id1449296310>

“Chop Suey, USA: How American’s Discovered Chinese Food”

<https://www.huntington.org/videos-recorded-programs/chop-suey-usa-how-americans-discovered-chinese-food>

“The Chinese in the Huntington Archives”

<https://www.huntington.org/videos-recorded-programs/chinese-huntington-archives>

“The Transformations of the Chinese Garden”

<https://www.huntington.org/videos-recorded-programs/transformations-chinese-garden>

### Web Links

“Beside the Edge of the World,” by Carribeana Fragoza

<https://www.huntington.org/verso/2020/01/beside-edge-world>

“Chinese-American Advocate, Y.C. Hong” by Linda Chiavaroli

<https://www.huntington.org/verso/2018/08/chinese-american-advocate-yc-hong>

“Chinese Poetry, Painting, and Gardens,” by Diana W. Thompson

<https://www.huntington.org/verso/2018/08/chinese-poetry-painting-and-gardens>

“First Chinese Lawyer in the U.S.” by Kevin Durkin

<https://www.huntington.org/verso/2018/08/first-chinese-lawyer-us>

“Reading the Chinese Garden” by Phillip E. Bloom

<https://www.huntington.org/frontiers/2018-fall-winter/reading-chinese-garden>