

# Chinese Terracotta Warriors

## 210 BC

Ideas of things to bring to class with you:

Elements of Art Board

Terracotta Warrior presentation CD

Take Home Sheets

(please make copies a day or two in advance)

Clay pot

Miniature reproductions of warriors

Points to reinforce: Archaeology, restoring art, texture and color.

Also available to you with the Art in the Classroom materials:

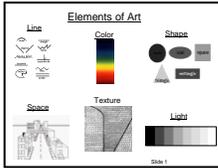
[The Emperor's Silent Army](#) by Jane O'Connor

[The Terracotta Army of the first Emperor of China](#) by Odyssey Press

These books were used as sources for this write up. Another source was  
[www.travelchinaguide.com](http://www.travelchinaguide.com)

Take a few minutes and ask the children if they remember some important points from the last Art in the Classroom presentation (briefly).

When we look at the artwork I am going to show you today, let's keep in mind the tools that an artist uses.



Slide 1  
Elements of Art Slide  
(Line, shape, color, light, texture, space)

Has anyone seen the Disney movie Mulan? Can anyone tell me in which country that story took place? *China*. The art we are going to look at today was created in China in the time period that happened right before Mulan's story takes place.



Slide 2  
Here is a map of the world. One red X is where we live. The second red X is on the other side of the world, in China.



Slide 3  
Our story begins with an Emperor that lived about 2,000 years ago. Does anyone know what an Emperor is? A ruler, a powerful king – his kingdom is called his empire. If this school was an empire, who might we say is the emperor? It is a good thing Mr. Kass is a kind ruler, not like Emperor Qin (**pronounced Chin**). This is an engraving of what people think Emperor Qin looked like.

Emperor Qin united 7 warring kingdoms and ruled them as one empire. We know it today as China. In fact the name China comes from Qin (even though they are spelled differently).

Can you imagine some problems there might be if you put 7 different countries together?

*They all speak and write different languages – how would they communicate with each other?–* Qin decided there would be one language to speak and write.

*They had different money - how could they buy things from each other?* Qin had to decide on one currency (money) to use.

*They had different ways of measuring things (like distance and height).* Qin decided what they should use to measure things (standard of measurement).

*The things that people were used to would change.*

Emperor Qin did not make these changes peacefully. There were many battles and many lives lost. He was not remembered as a kind leader.

How would you feel if someone told you that you had to learn a new language, follow new rules and use new money?

Some people thought that coming together made China strong. Others thought that Emperor Qin was cruel and they did not like all the changes in their way of life. Like it or not, Qin became a powerful Emperor, the first Emperor of the new China.



#### Slide 4

Has anyone heard of the Great Wall of China? What purpose do you think that the Great Wall of China had? *Protection*

Qin is the Emperor that began the work on the Great Wall. He was afraid that people from outside China would come and try to take their land.

We seem to know a lot about someone who lived so long ago. How do you think we found all of this out?

*Paper records - not easily available, would you expect paper last 2,000 years?*

*Some information comes from found objects and things uncovered after being buried for years and years.*

Does anyone know the name for a person that digs things up and uses them to find out about the past? *(no, not a tabloid reporter)*

*An archaeologist – finds artifacts, carefully uncovers them, lifts them out of the ground and then rebuilds them, puts them back together.*

In China at this time, people believed that after they died, they would live again in another world much like this one. Important people would have big and fancy tombs built, into which they would put all their valuables; all the things that they liked and the things they thought that they would need in the next world.

What kind of things would you think someone might need in a new life?

When these tombs are found underground years and years later, archaeologists can tell what was important to people by what they had in their tombs. It reminds me of the Egyptian pyramids, some of you may have heard about them.

To make sure that he was wealthy in his afterlife, Emperor Qin wanted to be buried with lots of valuable treasure and other riches, but that is not all... Can anyone take a guess at what else an Emperor like Qin may have wanted with him in his afterlife?

Let's find out if you are right. Let me tell you a story from China's more recent past – about 30 years ago....



#### Slide 5

Imagine yourself in the Chinese countryside. This is what it looks like today. It's just an ordinary day in early spring, or so three farmers think as they trudge across a field in China. They are looking for a good place to dig a well. There has been a drought and they must find water or risk losing their crops. They choose a spot. Down they dig, five feet, ten feet. No water. They decide to keep on digging a little deeper. All of a sudden, one of the farmers feels his shovel hit something hard. Is it a rock? It's difficult to see at the bottom of the dark hole. No, it isn't a rock. It is clay, but not raw clay. It is clay that has been baked into something. Now, more carefully, the men dig. Perhaps it is a pot or a vase. However, what slowly reveals itself is the pottery head of a man. They report their discovery to a local official. A group of archaeologists arrives to search the area more closely. Maybe they will find a clay body to go with the head. They actually found much more.



#### Slide 6

The pottery piece belonged to the figure of a clay soldier. It turns out that there are about 7,000 of them, an entire army! We call them Terra Cotta Warriors. Terra Cotta is the kind of clay from which they are made. Did anyone guess correctly that Emperor Qin buried an army for protection in what he believed was his next life?

7,000 figures! ...and each one is a little different from all the others. Some people believe that they were modeled after real life soldiers. Others think that they were modeled after the artists' friends or family members.

Did you notice that they are positioned in lines or columns? This army is in battle formation.



### Slide 7

These soldiers are standing at the front of the formation. They form 3 straight lines. They are foot soldiers or infantrymen.



### Slide 8

Here is a close up view of a few of them. Do you see the buns on their heads? This hair style was very typical of men at this time in China. It is called a top knot. There are some things missing from the soldiers in this army that a real army would need. Who can tell me something that you notice is missing?

- One is missing its head! Yes. When these figures were found, they were not in one piece. Archeologists had to very carefully put them together. In some cases they had modern artists recreate body parts that are missing. In this case, however, they did not.
- They wear no armor, no helmets to protect them. These were low ranking soldiers; these men were archers or carried spears and needed freedom of movement. Some people think that none of the soldiers wear head protection or carry shields because Emperor Qin wanted to show that his soldiers were fearless. Yikes!
- No weapons!

Look at the soldiers that are standing behind the others. Do you notice something odd about the way they are posed? Their arms are extended and their hands are shaped as if they are holding something. Can anyone guess what they might have been holding? When the figures were buried, they were holding real weapons. The soldiers in these lines would have been holding spears or cross bows. What could have happened to the weapons? The wood from which they were made decayed over the 2,000 years that they were underground. All the archaeologists found were the metal parts of the weapons – still as sharp as the day they were made. What kind of metals do you think were available 2,000 years ago? The metals used in the weapons were bronze and copper.

The archaeologists had to figure out by the soldier's hand and arm position and also by his stance what weapon he might have been holding.



Slide 9

Here is an example of a soldier that would have been holding a cross bow (a bow and arrow). Notice the sleeves. The artists added details to make the clay appear as if it is folded fabric.



Slide 10

What do you notice about this figure's uniform? There is some armor protecting his shoulders and chest. Do you see his arm outstretched? Let's play art detective again. What weapon do you think he might have been holding?

Archaeologists think that it was a sword. Since he has armor and a sword, he was probably higher ranking than the foot soldiers we saw earlier.



Slide 11

Here is a close up of a General. How do we know he is a General? From his headgear. It is "double-tailed". It almost looks like a butterfly. Look at his features. You can see how much time the artists took to create a realistic appearance. See how the bow around the neck lays like real fabric? What other details do you notice that give the figure it's real life appearance?

Most of the soldiers in Qin's army were foot soldiers. Can anyone guess how a soldier could have traveled 2,000 years ago other than by foot?  
*Horses and chariots or carriages.*



#### Slide 12

Emperor Qin's army also had horses. Let's make believe we are archaeologists and try to figure out what the soldier behind the horses may be holding. *The reins of the horse.*

Did anyone notice that there is a gap behind the horses? Something was there that decayed away just like the wooden shafts of the weapons.

Can anyone guess what it might have been? A *chariot.*



#### Slide 13

Here is a drawing of what the chariot would have looked like.



#### Slide 14

Here are some more Terra Cotta horses. Does anyone notice the hole in the horse's side? That hole is there for a reason. These figures were made with clay from nearby hills. It was then fired in a hot oven – or a kiln. Figures of this size would have to be hollow, so the artists had to make holes for the hot

steam to get escape during the baking - or the piece would crack or explode!



#### Slide 15

Here is another example of horses pulling a chariot. These figures were found in a different section than the others we have seen so far. There have been four major areas that have been excavated. They are called pits. The first images we saw were from pit one. These figures

are from pit two. Let's see what was found in pit three.



#### Slide 16

Here is a scene from pit 3. What is different about how the soldiers are arranged here and how they were arranged in pit 1, the first images that we saw? The soldiers in pit 1 were in columns, as if going into battle. Not so here. It is hard to tell from this image, but these are higher ranking members of the army. They are also fewer in numbers – only about 70 figures in pit 3. Pit 1 has about 6,000! All this leads archaeologists to think that this is the command center or the headquarters of the army. Who knows what the soldiers at the command center are responsible for? *They plan the battles. The fate of the entire army lies with these officers.*

But what about pit 4? That is a mystery. Pit 4 is empty! Nothing was found. What do you think might have been intended for its use?



#### Slide 17

The bodies of these warriors are made from molds. The artists then added details to individualize them; uniforms, hairstyles, facial hair and expressions, facial features, age. Take a minute to look at the four heads and notice the fine detail work these artists were able to include.

What are the similarities?

What are the differences?

Note: Do you notice the chin strap on the soldier on the bottom right? He is a member of the cavalry (he rode a horse or chariot) and the strap was there to hold on his hat as he galloped across a battlefield.

Let's think about the texture, one of the elements of art. How do you think the surface of these pieces feels like? Rough, smooth? Would the texture have changed over 2,000 years? You may pass around the clay pot to let the children feel baked clay (you may choose to do this at the end of the presentation as it could be a distraction).



Slide 18

Here is a close up of the back of a soldier's head and his "top knot"

Can someone give me a word to describe the texture of the piece? What do you think about the skill of the artists? They give a realistic look to this head made of clay. Look at the braid . What details!

How about color, another element of art?



Slides 19 and 20

Tell me about the color of these figures. *Almost a ghostly gray.* This was not how the artists intended them to be.



Slide 21

Can anyone see the bits of color on this warrior? As the figures were unburied, they were found to have been painted; most of the color had been worn away. Some figures had colors that were still brilliant, but as soon as they were uncovered, the colors chipped off or broke down within a few days due to the exposure to air. Can you think of a solution to this problem? Researchers are always looking for new ways to preserve the color of the soldiers with different chemical processes. They have decided to leave many soldiers buried, until a way can be created to preserve the colors!

What weapon do you think this figure may have been holding? A cross bow.

Today this whole site is a museum in China. They have reproduced some of the soldiers as they would have looked 2,000 years ago.



Slide 22

Here is a reproduction. Can anyone tell me what a reproduction is? *A copy; made to look like the original.* At the Terra Cotta Museum, they have recreated some of the warriors and have left them outdoors for people to walk in and around; to get a close up look at them. You can tell by the paint on this figure that rain, sun and wind can fade the bright colors.



Slide 23

Here is a view of a few more.

How large do you think that these figures are? *They are a little larger than life size.* Let me show you a picture of someone standing next to one so you can get an idea of how big this army of 7,000 soldiers is.



Slide 24

Here is a photograph of a tourist standing among the reproductions at the museum. He looks familiar to me.



Slide 25

Here he is again! It is *our* leader, Mr. Kass. He visited the Terra Cotta Museum in China and was kind enough to share some of his photos with us. Look at the brilliant colors of the figure in this photo. Does anyone have a different reaction to the soldiers when you see one in full color as opposed to the faded clay originals? It shows us how color in art can change how we see things.



#### Slide 26

Here is another example of the difference color can make. Which version do you prefer? Why?

OK, you have learned quite a lot about Emperor Qin's army. Let's see if we can be amateur archaeologists (or art detectives) and use the clues to find out a little more about some of the warriors.

Who can tell me what rank this warrior was? Hint – you can tell by his head gear. *A General*



#### Slide 27

Super! Can you tell me what position this soldier had in the army? What did he do? Use the position of his hands and arms as clues. *He drove a chariot.*



#### Slide 28

Great job! Look at this one carefully and tell me if you can guess what weapon he is preparing to use. *A crossbow or bow and arrow.* You can almost see him pulling one arm back while the other is held taut in front.



#### Slide 29

Let's try one more. *This is a kneeling archer. He is also holding a cross bow, but he is in a relaxed pose.*

It is easier to figure things out when the warriors are in one piece. Unfortunately, that is not how most of them are found.



Slide 30

Here are some warriors in the process of being carefully uncovered.



Slide 31

Here is a whole section where only fragments were found.



Slide 32

This kneeling archer is waiting to be restored.



Slide 33

Here is an area of the museum where the "spare parts" are kept and where the warriors are put back together.

There are some things about the soldiers that are different than the works we usually look at in Art in the Classroom. Can anyone give me an example?

- Purpose - The pieces we usually look at in Art in the Classroom are made by people that want their work to be seen. It is to be displayed, maybe in a museum, gallery, a public building or even in someone's home. This art is different. These soldiers were not made to be admired. They had a different purpose.
- The artists that we usually talk about choose to make their art. The hundreds of talented men who made these terra cotta warriors were brought from villages all around the empire. They were taken from their families, never to return to them. Emperor Qin wanted to keep his clay army a secret, so no one would be able to destroy it. He did not want word to get out. He was able to keep it a secret for 2,200 years. Well, almost; it was a secret to Modern Historians, See below if you have time.
- These pieces are much older than what we usually talk about.
- These warriors are 3-dimensional. Paintings on canvas are only 2-dimensional.
- We do not know much about the names, lives and personalities of the artists.

**Interesting facts you may want to share, if you have time:**

Emperor Qin (259-210 BC) became ruler at the age of 13. He had a consultant that led the kingdom for about 10 years. He became Emperor in 221 BC and ruled for 11 years before he died. After his death, his son ruled for 3 years until a revolt that led to what would become the Han Dynasty that lasted almost 400 years.

The warriors were not really a secret for the entire 2,200 years that they were buried. Evidence shows that shortly after they were buried, robbers broke into the underground pits. The wooden logs used to support the pits and the thatched grass used to keep out moisture were burned. Some weapons were stolen. The warriors were damaged, but not looted. That may be because they were too heavy or because the robbers may have thought it bad luck to remove them.

Less than a mile from where the warriors are buried, there lies an underground palace that is supposed to be larger and grander than all Qin's castles put together. It is believed to have jewel encrusted ceiling and walls. It is also thought to be booby trapped. Among other things, rigged with cross bows to stop any intruder or grave robber. The Chinese government has no plans at this time to unearth the mausoleum! What restraint.

Please summarize important points and thank the students for being such good observers and junior art detectives!