



## GRADE 2 & 3 ARTIST: HUA TAO ZHANG

# CHINESE PAINTING: Bamboo Brush Painting

### OVERVIEW

Students will learn Chinese brush painting, with an emphasis on eight specialized brush stroke techniques. They will study these basic strokes, and also discuss the philosophy behind Chinese brush painting. Students will then use their new skills to apply ink and watercolors to rice paper, creating a traditional bamboo painting.

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn traditional Chinese brush stroke techniques.
- Students will learn about painting bamboo, with an emphasis on the shape of the leaves and the stem.
- Students will learn how to use water-based art media, such as ink and watercolors on rice paper.
- Students will learn about the traditional Chinese brush painting concept “less is more”. They will apply this idea to their own compositions.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Bamboo is an ideal subject for the traditional Chinese painting technique. Historically bamboo plants have been very popular in Chinese culture. Today the bamboo plant is grown in Southern China and is used for practical, everyday purposes. Many artists choose bamboo as a subject for their paintings because of its historical and spiritual importance.

The bamboo brush is different than western watercolor and oil painting brushes. It is often round and depending on the bristles it can be

## MATERIALS

\*Rice Paper (at any art supply store) Roll or Pad. Size 11" x 17"

Newsprint paper (for practice use, while making ink brush strokes) 11" x 17"

Dishes (For mixing ink, watercolor and other colors)

Cups (to wash brush)

\*\*Bamboo brushes (white sheep hair and brown wolf hair)

\*Chinese ink (liquid black ink)

Paper towels

\*Newsprint paper may substitute for the rice paper

\*\*Watercolor brushes (Nos. 8, 9, or 10) may substitute for the Bamboo brushes

\*\*\*Watercolor paints may substitute for the Chinese ink

## RESOURCES

Cassettari, Stephen. *Chinese Brush Painting Techniques: a Beginner's Guide to Painting Birds and Flowers*. HarperCollins. 1988.

Yu, Leslie Tseng-Tseng. *Chinese Painting in Four Seasons: a Manual of Aesthetics & Techniques*. Prentice Hall Trade. 1981.

Wikipedia. "Yong." [Online] Available. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yong> November, 2007.

Wikipedia. "Principles of Yong." [Online] Available. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eight\\_Principles\\_of\\_Yong](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eight_Principles_of_Yong) November, 2007.

Wikipedia. "Chinese character." [Online] Available. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_character](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_character), November, 2007.

hard or soft. Brown colored bristles of some brushes are made of wolf's hair. Wolf's hair is rigid and will not hold as much water as other types of artist's brushes, making it an ideal tool for drawing lines. Brushes with white colored bristles are made of sheep hair. Sheep hair is soft and holds plenty of water or ink.

The ink used for brush painting is liquid- it is black ink made from combining extract from pine tree wood with a traditional glue.

## VOCABULARY

**Bamboo brush:** a brush made out of bamboo, used to create Chinese brush paintings.

**Brush stroke:** the mark of ink or color from a brush. A brush stroke can be long, short, thin, thick etc.

**Ink:** Chinese black ink that is made from pine tree extract and traditional glue. Ink may come in the form of liquid or as a hard block that is softened by water.

**Tone (of ink):** five Different kinds of ink tones.

1. **Black:** 100% black tone- "neutral"

Dip the brush partially into the ink. There is no water used and the brush is not full of ink.

2. **Wet Black:** 100% black tone

Dip the brush all the way into the ink. There is no water used and the brush is so full of ink that it dripping.

3. **Dry Black:** 100% black tone

Dip the brush into the ink and then press the brush onto a paper towel or cloth to absorb some ink before painting. There is no water used and the brush is very dry.

4. **Wet grey:** from 1% to 99% black tone

Dip the brush into ink and then into water. Or, mix ink with water by collecting ink in the brush and wiping it against the side of an

empty cup. Then dip the brush into water and wipe it against the side once again. This will create a shade of grey.

#### 5. **Dry grey:** from 1% to 99% black tone

Dip the brush into ink, then into water, and then brush onto a paper towel or cloth until the brush is nearly dry. The brush is grey and dry.

**Chinese Calligraphy:** a technique of using a brush to write characters in the Chinese style which is similar to calligraphy.

## INTRODUCTION

This lesson focuses on developing skills for using the bamboo brush and for creating brush strokes. This practice of the brush stroke is the foundation of Chinese Brush painting. On a



The character "Yong"

large poster or the board, show students the Chinese character, "Yong". The brush strokes that created this character can be used to create many other things, like a painting of the bamboo plant. "Yong" is the

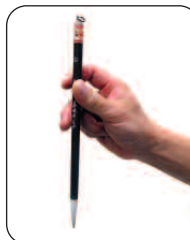
Chinese character for "courage" or "bravery" and was developed by the Song Dynasty (87 AD) in China. It is unique because the single character contains and combines eight brush strokes commonly found in Chinese characters. It was believed that if beginners practiced these strokes, they would develop the skills necessary to create beautiful calligraphy. Isolate sections of "Yong" and ask students to compare the shape of bamboo leaves with each stroke in "Yong". By looking at the eight brush strokes, the students should be able to see that the strokes that can represent bamboo leaves and other shapes.

Chinese painting is based on the idea that "less is more." Often, artists decide to simplify the image or emphasize one part of the painting by leaving part of the page blank. A Chinese painting of bamboo will leave much of the page blank. The areas of blank rice paper become important parts of the painting and the composition. Simplicity and patience is integral to the the Chinese brush painting style. Remind students to move slowly while they paint the brush strokes.

Demonstrate how you use the brush to create a variety of brush strokes. Bristles can be placed on paper, dragged and slowly lifted off the page to create a line with a tapered end. The bristles can also be pressed against the page and lifted off in a sweeping motion to create a smaller mark that has a pointed end. Encourage students to see how many different types of marks they can create by holding and moving their brushes in different ways.



Hold the brush with two fingers.



Hold the brush with three fingers.



Hold the brush with all five fingers, three hold the brush and two fingers rest behind the brush to stabilize it.

## STEP BY STEP

1. Show the "Yong" calligraphy character and create the eight brush strokes.
2. Remind students that the ink will not come out of their clothing and that they should move slowly during the whole lesson. Have students lay out newspaper, water cup, ink, paper towel, brush, and cup for creating grey tones.
3. Students practice creating all eight strokes and the "Yong" character on the newspaper.
4. Explain the different tones of black and how to use the brush and cup to create grey (refer to vocabulary section of lesson). Place both the ink and empty cup close to each other on a paper towel. Dip the brush into the ink and fill brush. Press brush bristles on side of cup so ink runs into the cup. Repeat this with water, to create a grey tone.
5. Students then practice creating the different tones of black by making different brush strokes on the newspaper.
6. Gather students at demonstration table, away from their seats. Show a picture of painted leaves in the Chinese brush painting style.
7. Show the students how to make the brush strokes for the bamboo and leaves. (1-3)



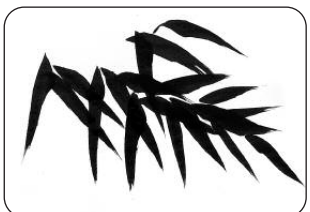
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8. Continue to overlap leaves to create a group of them. Ensure bamboo leaves overlap each other. Avoid leaving huge gaps or spaces in-between leaves. (4)
9. Show students the brush strokes for the stem of the bamboo. Lay brush flat horizontally against page and apply gentle pressure while dragging bristles two to three inches away from the starting point. Keep bristles flat, horizontally against page while dragging to create mark. Lift directly up off page. (5)

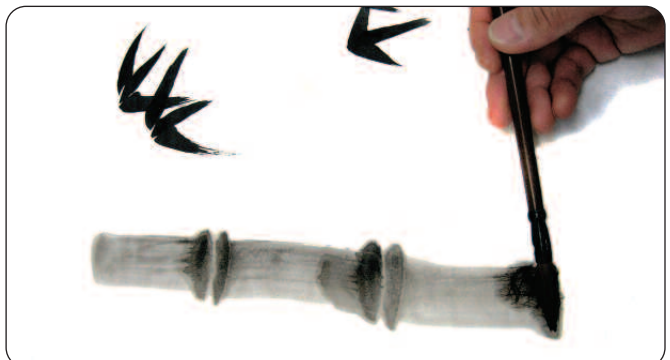


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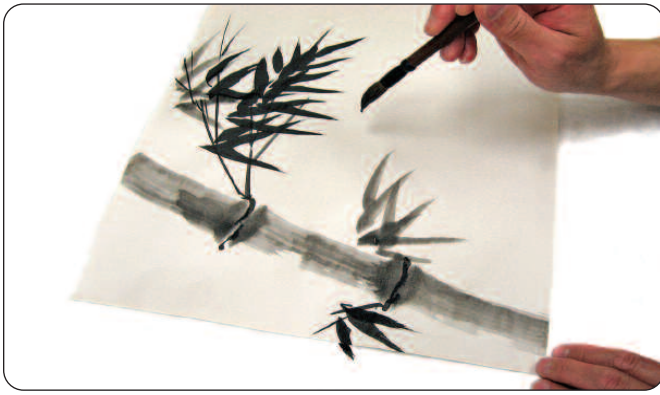
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10. Demonstrate how to hold brush sideways, and press bristles horizontally against page in one place to create the joints of the bamboo plant. (6) Create two such marks at each joint, one for each side of joint. Be sure to leave a small space between each mark to distinguish their meeting place. (7)



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11. Students return to their seats and practice the stem, the joints, and the leaves of the bamboo on the newspaper paper. Create two practice paintings.
12. After completing the two practice pieces, use the rice paper and create a final painting.



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Final Drawing

### Duration of Lesson

This lesson will take approximately one hour and 15 minutes.

- 15 minutes for introduction and demo of “Yong” calligraphy and bamboo.
- 50 minutes for students to practice.
- 10 minutes to clean-up.

### During the Lesson

- Discuss how bamboo grows.
- Make sure bamboo leaves overlap each other.
- Do not let students leave huge gaps and spaces in-between leaves.
- Take note of the way that the branch stem connects to the joint.

- The branch of the leaf is growing from the joint of the main stem, not the smooth area of the bamboo stem.
- The branches and leaves usually grow out from the left on one joint and out from the right on the next joint, alternating each joint.

### Concluding the Lesson

#### *Cleaning up:*

- Allow 10 minutes for clean up. Have students sign their pieces by painting their names or initials on a corner. Set paintings on a flat surface to dry. (avoid hanging pictures, as wet ink may drip down the page surface.)

#### *Post-project discussion:*

Ask the students to share what they like about their paintings and/or what they would change if given the opportunity to create another painting.

Encourage students to vary the orientation of their page to make vertical and horizontal compositions. Ask them, "how does the orientation effect the look of the bamboo on the page?"

Ask students to create bamboo paintings in color. (liquid watercolor may be used).

#### *Variations:*

Introduce more Chinese calligraphy, such as the sun, moon, fire, water, mountains, waterfall, earth, clay, metal, wood, etc. Students can also add colorful background or images with those words.

Students can create a “chop”, or Chinese signature for their artwork using foam plates cut into squares. Have the students draw a symbol into the foam square with a sharpened pencil. Apply ink and press it onto the paper to print a symbol (chop) for the student’s name.

## STANDARDS

### Grade 2

- 1.1 Perceive and describe repetition and balance in nature, in the environment, and in works of art.
- 2.2 Demonstrate beginning skill in the use of art media, such as oil pastels, watercolors, and tempera.
- 3.2 Recognize and use the vocabulary of art to describe art objects from various cultures and time periods.
- 4.3 Use the vocabulary of art to talk about what they wanted to do in their own works of art and how they succeeded.
- 5.1 Use placement, overlapping, and size differences to show opposites.

## NOTES

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