

**Curriculum Materials and Lesson Plans
For Arts**

(Middle School Level)

Draft Version 1.0

Table of Contents

Lesson Plan 1 - The Chinese Zither (Guzheng).....	3
Appendix 1: Facts About Guzheng.....	5
Appendix 2: A Story Related to Guzheng	6

Lesson Plan 1 - The Chinese Zither (Guzheng)

In ancient China, there were four major art forms that educated people engaged in: Qin (zither), Qi (a board game also known as Go), Shu (calligraphy and poetry) and Hua (painting). Scholars and noble ladies prided themselves in mastering these four arts.

In this document we will provide information on the first of four arts—the zither.

Objectives: Students will become familiar with the history, purpose and sound of the Chinese zither (guzheng).

Enduring Understanding: Music expresses characteristics specific to a certain culture.

Materials:

Photo link of zither on Educational Outreach website

<http://education.ntdtv.com/Library/zither.jpg> (Coming soon)

Audio link of zither on Educational Outreach website

<http://education.ntdtv.com/Library/PastStories.mp3>

Video link of zither performance on Educational Outreach

<http://education.ntdtv.com/Library/zither.wmv> (Coming soon)

Attached documents about the zither and a story associated with it

Music Clips Online:

Turkey: <http://www.turkishmusic.org/index1.html>

Africa: http://africanmusicsource.com/music_list.html

Japan: <http://www.shakuhachi.com/SM-Taniguchi.html>

Classical European: <http://www.catovah.com/music-library.htm>

Spanish (flamenco): http://www.flamencolatino.com/music.htm#music_clips

Lesson:

Introduction: Teacher tells students they will be learning about an ancient Chinese instrument that, though once very popular, now few people know how to play. Ask them (depending on the age group) what kinds of instruments they know about and if they can trace their origin.

Examples: piano (Italy), harp (Egypt), drum (all over the world), flute (Germany), lute (Egypt, Turkey, China), guitar (Central Asia), banjo (United States), bagpipe (Greece or the region of Israel/ Egypt), xylophone (Indonesia)

According to your age group, talk about how different cultures like different kinds of sounds and different kinds of music. Classical music from Europe is quite different from the traditional music found in Turkey, Africa or Japan.

The teacher then shows a picture of a zither and plays a clip of zither music. Before listening, ask students to close their eyes and think about what they think the music is about, and what is different about it than the other music they have heard.

Individual or Small Group Work:

Students draw or write down what they think the music was about. They also do their best to describe the music and explain how it is different from what they have previously heard.

Conclusion: Ask for some of the themes students thought the song was portraying and review some of the topics the guzheng traditionally expressed (friendship, memories of their past, sadness at having to leave their home, the beauty of nature, the joy of a society with upright rulers and the misery of a corrupt society). The teacher reviews some relevant history about the guzheng—about its history and use by the educated elite of ancient Chinese society.

Follow-up:

- The history and the traditional use of the guzheng using the materials in the appendix. Older students can read themselves the material prepared and give reports or answer comprehension questions on the material.
- Ancient legend that mentions the guzheng, in the appendix. The instrument was played by the educated elite who often had a hand in government affairs. Educated, and often religious, themes in their songs included the joy of a society with upright rulers and the misery of a corrupt society. In this story, the protagonist literally uses his guzheng to drive these points home to the king.

Appendix 1: Facts About Guzheng

History

The guzheng is one of the most ancient of all Chinese instruments. It is first mentioned written on bronze from the Zhou Dynasty (1027-221 B.C.), up to 3,000 years ago. “Gu” means ancient in Chinese. A “zheng” is a stringed instrument that is played with the fingers on a flat board.

The Chinese character for Zheng is composed of two different characters, one meaning “bamboo” and one meaning “argue.” From its name, we assume it used to be made of bamboo. But why is there the character argue?

There is a story behind this. Once there was an old man, who was a master of a 25-string instrument called a se. He was getting old wanted to pass on his instrument to one of his daughters, both of whom were very talented. They both wanted the instrument and both were very talented. Not knowing what else to do, he split the instrument in two—one had 12 strings and one had 13 strings. The smaller instruments were even more beautiful than the original and the father called it Zheng.

The Chinese zither was often played by the educated Chinese. They were part of the ruling elite and most often worked for the government, sometimes far from home. Common themes in their songs were friendship, memories of their past, sadness at having to leave their home, the beauty of nature and the joy of a society with upright rulers but the misery of a society that does not follow correct principals.

Structure

A Zheng is now built with a wooden body and strings arched across movable bridges. In the early times the zheng had five strings. During the Tang Dynasty (618 to 907A.D.), it had 12 to 13 strings and 16 strings in the Song and Ming Dynasties (from the 10th to the 15th centuries). In the 1960s the zheng was changed from an 18-string instrument to its current 21-25 string size. It is about five feet long and a foot wide. In the past the strings were made of silk, but now they are made of steel covered with nylon.

Sources:

www.silkqin.com, www.wikipedia.com

www.philmultic.com/guzheng/

Appendix 2: A Story Related to Guzheng

I Was Striking the Tyrants Jie and Zhou, Not My King

Shi Ran, Ed.

During the Spring and Autumn Period (772 to 481 B.C.) in China, there was a royal court musician named Shi Jing, from the Wei Kingdom, who was very good at playing the Chinese zither.

One day, while Shi Jing was playing the Chinese zither in front of the King, the King became very happy and started dancing and singing with the music. Gradually he got lost in excitement and shouted, "Everyone must obey me! Whoever dares to go against me will be punished!" Upon hearing this, Shi Jing stopped playing and threw his zither at the King. The zither hit the King's crown and broke the jade tassels on the crown into pieces. The King was very angry and ordered that Shi Jing be executed right away. Shi Jing said, "Please let me say one thing before I die." The King granted his wish.

Shi Jing said, "In the past, the sage kings Yao and Shun (the first two emperors of China who reigned over 4,000 years ago) were often worried that their people might follow all their orders blindly. They hoped that their subjects would consider whether what they said was good or bad. When the tyrants Jie (ruled from 181-1766 B.C.) and Zhou (ruled from 1075-1047 B.C.) ran the country, they forced people to obey their orders blindly. I was striking Jie and Zhou with the zither, not my king!"

The king became very ashamed of himself and ordered the guards to release Shi Jing immediately. He also hung the zither above the gate of the capital city and did not take off the broken jade tassels from his crown to act as a reminder to always be open to all criticism.

From the book Garden of Explanations, written by the Chinese scholar Xu Shen in the Later Han Dynasty (947-950 A.D.)