

Look at this *qilin*



Rank badge | China. 15th century. Silk

Can you guess what this is?



Silkworm | China. Han Dynasty. Bronze

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**LOOK** for the *qilin* rank badge. Embroidered woven badges were sewn onto robes to identify rank.  
**GUESS** who this badge was made for.

**SUGGEST** how long it took to stitch this badge.

**WHY** do you say so?

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
The *qilin* is a Chinese mythical creature that is said to be **gentle and a defender of innocent people**.

**FIND** this mystery object. **WHAT** do you think it is?

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Silk is made from the fibres of the silkworm cocoon. The rearing of silkworms began in China around 3000 years ago, or possibly earlier. **It takes several thousand cocoons to make just a small amount of silk.**

Silk was expensive. **Only the imperial family and other wealthy Chinese could afford to wear silk.** Silk was also in great demand. Merchants used the Silk Road to transport silk from China to Europe.

Suitable for ages 10 and up

ADVENTURES IN CHINA

**ANIMALS IN ART**  
You can find real and imaginary animals in Chinese art. Artists wanted to show the powers that these animals have. There were special meanings given to these animals too.

Explore animals in Chinese art and their rich symbolic meanings in pairs.

Explore the activities with the magnifying glass symbol if you have completed the main questions at each station.

Name of Explorer

Look at this Gu!



Gu | China, late Shang dynasty, Bronze

**LOOK** closely at this vase, which in Chinese is called “gu”.  
**GUESS** what this bronze vessel was used for.

**WHY** do you say so?

**SPOT** and **CIRCLE** the *taotie* 饕餮 motifs you can see on this gu 觚.

**? DID YOU KNOW?**  
Inscriptions cast into bronze vessels tell us that they were valuable in ancient China. The *taotie* 饕餮 motif that is found on the bronze is said to be a **creature with bulging eyes**.

**✎** No one knows exactly what the *taotie* means.  
**WHAT** kind of creature do you think it is? **DRAW** a *taotie*!

Meet the dragons



Top: Dish with Dragon | Jingdezhen, mid-16th century. Porcelain  
Bottom: Stemcup | China, Yuan dynasty. Ceramic

**FIND** and **LOOK** closely at the dragons on the artworks below. **SPOT** and **CIRCLE** the difference between them. (Hint: Claw)

**WHICH** of these objects was most likely used by the Chinese emperor?

The dragon combines the elements of many different animals. **CIRCLE** three animals that you think help make up the dragon.

Rabbit      Tiger      Boar      Snake      Cat

**🎭 ACT IT OUT!**  
**IMAGINE** you are a dragon. **MIMIC** to your friend the sound a dragon would make.

**📢 LET'S DISCUSS!**  
**WHY** the dragon is a popular symbol to the Chinese?  
**ARE** dragons real? How can you tell?

**? DID YOU KNOW?**  
For people in ancient China, the *long* 龙 (dragon) was a **messenger from heaven and a bringer of rain**.

Meet the zhenmushou



Earth Spirit | China, Tang Dynasty. Ceramic

**LOOK** closely at the *zhenmushou*. It combines the elements of many different animals. **NAME** at least three of these animals.

**SUGGEST** why it looks so ferocious.

This *zhenmushou* is displayed together with other guardian figures. **COUNT** how many there are on display.

**SPOT** two differences between all the figures.

These tomb guardian figures have been decorated with *sancai* (三彩, three-colour) glazes, popular during the Tang dynasty. **LIST** the three colours you see.

**? DID YOU KNOW?**  
This mythical creature is known as *zhenmushou* 镇墓兽. *Zhenmu* is usually translated as tomb guardian and *shou* as beast. They are usually **found in pairs at the entrances to tombs**.

**📢 LET'S DISCUSS!**  
If you were to design a guardian figure, **WHAT** animals would you use parts of and **WHY?**