



Portland Classical Chinese Garden The Five Elements: WATER

Whether trickling, flowing, spraying, foaming, splashing,
in rivers or oceans,
Water is the very blood and marrow of Heaven and Earth.

A Chinese View of Water

Inside the Portland Classical Chinese Garden water is important to many forms of life. Zither Lake, in the middle of the garden, is home to goldfish and pink lotus flowers. Over 500 different kinds of plants soak up water and then put out shiny green leaves, some with bright colored flowers, some with fruit, and others with strange-looking blooms. The wintersweet plant loves the rains of winter and brightens the garden even cloudy days with tiny flowers and a big scent that fills up a whole courtyard. Water tumbling down the rock mountain on the north side of the garden creates peaceful sounds to relax all the visitors. From fish to plants to people, water brings harmony and life to all in the garden.

Chinese culture uses many forms and symbols of the vital element of water. Architects, engineers, designers and craftsmen from Suzhou, China—Portland, Oregon's sister city—carefully planned for water to be used throughout the garden. Dragon fish—the guardians of rivers and protectors against fire—appear to leap off the roof atop the *Hall of Brocade Clouds*. Attached to the roof edges, drip tiles channel rain onto plants; the water often forms curtains of raindrops, or 'strings of pearls.' Along one side of Zither Lake, the *Painted Boat in Misty Rain* pavilion gives the feeling of being anchored on shore yet rocked by the moving ripples. On clear nights, the moon can be viewed from the *Moon-locking Pavilion* as a glassy spotlight in the center of the lake. Throughout this peaceful city garden, water is a focal point—one of the five essential elements in a classical Chinese garden.

Within Chinese culture, water has always been valued for its life-supporting qualities. China's most well-known and respected teacher, Confucius, considered water to possess qualities that may serve as a model for human behavior. Confucius (551-479 BCE) studied the nature of water and drew attention to the soft and yielding qualities of this element: The philosopher noted that flowing water can both yield and overcome any obstacle set in its path. Furthermore, overtime water will wear down the hardest stone. In the teachings of Confucius, wise people are encouraged to observe and learn from the virtues of water.

Activities for Learning from Water

1. THINKING LIKE A SCIENTIST

- a. **List of the component parts** of the human circulatory system and identify their various functions
- b. **List 6-8 ways** in which water functions as the circulatory system of the world.
- c. **Evaluate the Chinese view of water** as the world's circulatory system. **Compare and contrast** this to the functions of the human circulatory system you listed above.

2. THINKING LIKE A PHILOSOPHER

China's most well-known and respected teacher, Confucius (circa 6th-5th century BCE), considered water to possess qualities that may serve as a model for human behavior. According to Confucius, wise people can learn about themselves by studying and reflecting on the nature of water.

Confucius said:

Water extends everywhere and gives everything life, without acting. Water is like virtue.

Its stream descends downward, twisting and turning, but always following the same principle. Water is like rightness.

Used as a level, it is always even. Water is like law.

That which goes to it and enters into it, is cleansed and made pure. Water is like the transformation of goodness.

In twisting around ten thousand times but always going eastward, water is like will.

That is the reason that when a wise gentleman sees a great river, he will always look upon it.

Create a 3-Column Chart with the following headings: (1) Qualities of Water for the Virtuous Person to Observe; (2) Human Behavior Modeled after Qualities of Water; (3) Personal Reaction. Complete the chart with at least 5-7 original additions.

Read the examples; then complete your chart with YOUR OWN ideas

Qualities of Water for the Virtuous Person to Observe	Human Behavior Modeled after Qualities of Water	Personal Reaction
Water gives everything life	Giving help is like giving life to other people	Being helpful means being unselfish
Water follows the path of least resistance	Finding ways around obstacles is better than fighting with them	Is going around the same as 'giving in'?
Water extends everywhere	A person should try to be good in all situations	Sometimes what I think is right, bothers others

CONTINUE to complete the chart ON YOUR OWN...

3. THINKING LIKE A POET

Try your hand at thinking of yourself as being like different parts of Nature. For each of the following categories, identify a part of Nature that could **represent YOU** and explain why. Then try your hand at writing a poem with your answers! You might combine your answers with that of some of your friends. You can find a sample poem written by students who completed this activity.

IF I WERE

1. If I were a **BODY of WATER** I would be _____ because:

2. If I were a **TREE** I would be _____ because:

3. If I were a **BIRD** I would be _____ because:

4. If I were a **FLOWER** I would be _____ because:

5. If I were a **FOUR-LEGGED ANIMAL** I would be _____ because:

6. If I were a **MOUNTAIN** I would be _____ because:

7. If I were a **PLACE in the WORLD** I would be _____ because:

8. If I were a **COLOR** I would be _____ because:

9. If I were an **EMOTION** I would be _____ because:

We have the body of a human
The inner peace of a cat
The wild spirit of a wolf
In this we are the same
We are a waterfall
Flowing to the sea
To carve out the Olympic peninsula
In this we are the same
We are the sky
Orange, like the laughter of children
Blue, the calm of the morning
Red, the passion and life within us
The colors blend and mix, swirling together
To create the sunrise
Rising on our tomorrow

4. THINKING LIKE AN ART HISTORIAN and a SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Background:

The Grand Canal in China is the world's longest human-made river. It flows in a north-south direction and was built because all China's major rivers naturally flow from the west eastward to the sea. Chinese emperors wanted to bring food that was grown in the south of China to people who lived in the north of the country. Beginning more than 2,000 years ago, different emperors in China's long history ordered people to dig parts of the canal. For hundreds of years, more and more people dug out this long riverbed. By the year 584, different parts of the canal were linked together into the Grand Canal. This new waterway stretched along a route of 1,800 kilometers.

During the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, boat-filled canals transported grain and silk northward to serve the needs of the emperor's court in Beijing. The ease of transport also enabled the emperors to lead inspection tours to southern China.

In the Qing Dynasty, the Kangxi Emperor and the Qianlong Emperor traveled along the water network of the Grand Canal; each emperor took 6 inspection tours to southern China. The Kangxi Emperor's first tour was in 1684; his grandson, the Qianlong Emperor, completed his first tour in 1751. Each emperor commissioned a set of 12 monumental scrolls, by artists in the imperial court, to thoroughly document life in southern China during their tours as well as to record significant ceremonies performed by the Emperor along the way.

During these inspection tours, both emperors witnessed the lives of the local people, inspected schools and, most importantly, checked on the large-scale irrigation and flood control projects so necessary to expand the amount of crops needed to feed China's growing population. Imperial artists recorded these important trips.

Both emperors included visits to Suzhou, a city in the fertile Yangtze River delta. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Suzhou and the surrounding region was the commercial engine of the entire Chinese empire, estimated to have produced between 33%- 50% of the economic wealth of China. Located within the *Land of Fish and Rice*, Suzhou was also famous as one of China's leading centers of silk production for hundreds of years.

In 1988, Suzhou became Portland Oregon's sister city. Plans then followed to build an authentic Ming dynasty Suzhou-style classical garden in Portland. *Lan Su Yuan—the Garden of Awakening Orchids* opened in September 2000.

a. Take a Virtual Visit into China's Past along the Grand Canal

The Metropolitan Museum of Art:

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/qing_1/ho_1988.350.htm

The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour, Scroll Six: Entering Suzhou and the Grand Canal

65-foot -long painted scroll was done in ink on silk and credited as the work of Xu Yang, a Chinese painter active during 1750–76.

Scroll down the museum page to **find 14 close-up images** of this Qing dynasty (1644–1911) painting of this historic event that took place during China's last dynasty.

OR, you can view the entire 65 foot long scroll with an Interactive Scroll Viewer at:

<http://www.learn.columbia.edu/nanxuntu/start.html>

Enter Scroll Six: Entering Suzhou and the Grand Canal using Columbia University's Interactive Scroll Viewer.

Follow above link; skip intro; allow next page to load; click on 'Southern Inspection Tour'; click 'Interactive Scroll Viewer;' on the bottom of the screen, click on Qianlong Scroll VI (6). You may need to click on 'Explore Scroll', Qianlong Emperor Tour 1751, Scroll VI. Be patient—allow it to load for soon you will be able to 'virtually' step foot inside Suzhou's clothing and textile shops, food shops and restaurants, banks, art performances, retails stores such as fan shops and more. There is much background information to read along the way. **Stop and explore!**

SHORT CUT TO SCROLL SIX:

http://www.learn.columbia.edu/nanxuntu/district3/html/shops_d3.html

- b. Keep a journal as if YOU traveled with the Qianlong Emperor along the Grand Canal while on his Southern Inspection Tour to Suzhou.** Describe your visits to teahouses and shops selling rice and other foods. Since you are traveling as part of the imperial entourage, you are certainly going to visit an Imperial Silk Factory which sells 8-floss silk and velvet manufactured only for the emperor and his family. Perhaps you will consult a fortune teller or seek medical attention. You are going to describe the sights you see—the people and how they are dressed, the architecture of buildings and bridges, the hard-working people in the streets, the sounds of horses, the busy canal. Perhaps you will stop to buy a book or eat in a vegetarian restaurant. **ALL OF THESE ARE PORTRAYED IN THE SCROLL. CAN YOU FIND THEM? WRITE ABOUT WHAT YOU SEE!**