

Good Fortune Boxes

Celebrate the Chinese tradition of passing “Fu” or Good Luck to others during the New Year

(art + social studies)

In China, the New Year’s celebration is recognized as a time when people put the past behind them and welcome new beginnings. Enthusiastic greetings of “kung hei fat choi,” meaning “congratulations and be prosperous” are delivered to family and friends during this 15-day holiday period. Floral decorations, red and gold banners and poems of prosperity, health and happiness are placed in homes and public places. New clothing, special foods, family reunions and fireworks are all traditional parts of the Chinese New Year, as well as the passing of red and gold envelopes filled with money to children. The red symbolizes power, happiness and good fortune, the gold represents wealth and prosperity — and the passing of the envelopes signifies the passing of blessings to the next generation.

This lesson plan celebrates the Chinese tradition of passing along good fortune or “Fu” to others. Instead of a red envelope, students will use a box form that is a familiar part of the Asian-American culture, decorate it festively with red, gold and Asian-themed paper patterns and create gold “fu coins” bearing good wishes to place on or inside of the box. The Fu coins can also be exchanged or passed along as gifts, if desired.

GRADES K-8 Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Process

1. Start by making the coins out of a 1” ball of clay. Flatten each ball into a circle about 1-3/4” diameter (3/16” thick) and trim any rough edges away with scissors. Allow to dry, turning over at least once to allow air to get to both sides.
2. While the clay dries, decorate the box with origami paper or paint.
3. Using a small amount of gold paint, cover one side of the coin, allow to dry, and paint the other side. Make sure the edges are covered, too.
4. Practice writing Chinese good luck symbols on paper while waiting for coins to dry. See examples on next page.

Although Chinese calligraphy is an artform that takes years to master, young children can make symbols using simple lines and dots. The important thing is to connect students to the Chinese written language. Write the good-luck symbols on either side of the coin, using black paint and a bamboo brush.



Materials

Cardboard take-out food container, one per student

[Blick[®] Construction Paper](#), 50-sheet pkg, 12” x 18” assorted colors (11409-1006); share among class

[Origami Paper](#), recommend:

[Aitoh[™] Chiyogami](#), pkg of 24, 5-7/8” squares (12234-1002)

[Folk Art Assortment](#), pkg of 40, 4-5/8” squares (11206-0149)

[Yasutomo[®] Yuzen](#), pkg of 10, 5-7/8” squares (12489-1090)

[Westcott[®] Kids Value Scissors](#) (57058-1015); need one per student

[Blick[®] White Glue](#), 4-oz bottle (23882-1004); share between two students

[Crayola[®] Air-Dry Clay](#), White, 2-1/2-lb bucket (33272-1125); share among class

[Sargent[®] Metallic Acrylic](#), Gold, 8-oz (00730-9015); share among class

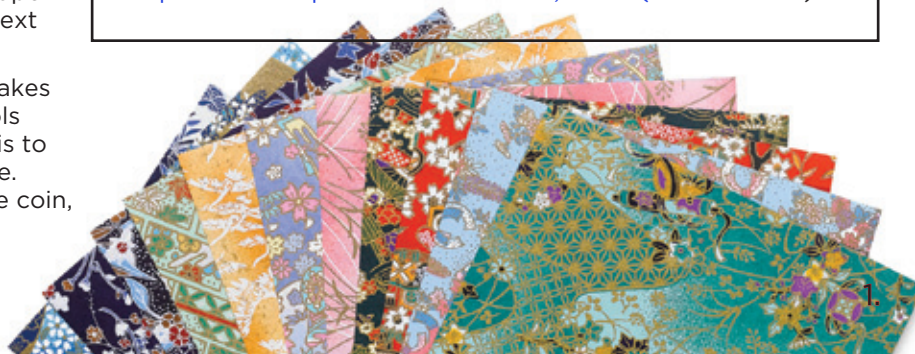
[Blickrylic[®] Student Acrylic](#), Mars Black, pint (00711-2046); share among class

[Blick[®] Brown Hair Sumi Brush](#), size 1 (05401-1001); need one per student

Optional Materials

[Blick[®] Construction Card](#), Gold, 18” x 24” sheets (11408-4079)

[Sharpie[®] Brush Tip Permanent Marker](#), Black (19900-2020)





福

Good Fortune
(Fu)

運

Good Luck
(Chee)

祿

Prosperity
(Lu)

樂

Happiness
(Lerh)

壽

Long Life
(Shou)

和

Harmony
(He)

美

Beauty
(Zen)

愛

Love
(Ai)



Options

1. If working with very young children or on limited time, cut circles from gold paper to use as coins.
2. Use a black brush tip marker rather than paint for the symbols.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

K-4 Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art

5-8 Students use subjects, themes and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artwork

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times and places

5-8 Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts

