

Bronze and Sunflower teaching ideas

In this extract, Bronze and Sunflower are writing characters in the earth with a stick. Over the centuries, Chinese characters have been written in many different ways: not just with brush or pen and ink on paper, but scratched onto bone in the earliest form of Chinese writing, cast into bronze vessels, carved on stone in huge inscriptions. In parks in China you can see people practicing their calligraphy using a giant brush a bit like a mop writing on the ground with water so the characters disappear as the water dries. Chinese characters are not just words, they are miniature pictures, stories and sculptures, so choose your favourite characters, either by themselves or in a sentence, and experiment with different ways of writing or creating them:

- As a giant poster or scroll (use wall-paper for an interesting background)
- As a collage using strips of coloured paper
- As 3D models using modelling clay
- Carved into tablets of modelling clay
- As a graffiti design – then reproduce it on a larger surface if you have permission
- Work with your friends to make a human character and photograph it
- Think up your own ideas

At the end of the extract, it says:

Bronze saw the beautiful world around him transform into the magical world of characters. The sun became more gorgeous, more vivid, more enticing than ever.....everything took on a new life.

Because, in ancient times, many characters we know now started out as pictures of the things they represent, they do feel very different from western writing using letters. Some of them actually seem to tell a story about what they mean. Try making characters into pictures showing what they mean, or tell your own story about them. You can find some examples to start you off here:

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