Language of Stamps
Mandarin Chinese
Background

StampIT is the Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies youth outreach programme where children can discover a world of stamps through interactive games and activities.

StampIT provides a number of ideas for teachers to use stamps across the curriculum. In particular, ‘Language of Stamps’ is a series of resources for studying language and culture.

The ‘Language of Stamps’ resources are available to download free of charge from the ASPS website – scottishphilately.co.uk/youth

StampIT is part of ASPS which is a voluntary, not for profit organisation. The Development Officer works on a voluntary basis developing and delivering the outreach and resources.

Mandarin Chinese resources
The China stamp game is a an information and activity game using Chinese postage stamps to learn about China’s culture and the Chinese characters. Through the images on the stamps, this game provides an insight into the etymology of the Chinese characters (the study of their origin and the way in which their meanings have changed throughout history). It provides a deeper understanding behind the characters, the original pictograms, ideograms and phonograms where one part of the character links to the sound.

Digital content

- Language of Stamps – Mandarin Chinese
- Chinese stamp cards – 33 cards
- Start, finish and instruction cards – 3 cards
Suggestions on how to use the information and activity cards:

1. **Class or individual activity**: Mix the cards and place face down. Pick one of the cards at random, read the information and do one or more of the suggested activities.

2. **Class activity**: Deal a card out to all pupils (there are 33 cards in total). Each pupil reads their card and does one or more of the suggested activities. This is ideal for a homework project. Each pupil can share the information they learned with the rest of the class.

3. **Class or group game**: *requires counters and dice*. Lay out the cards face down on the floor in a game board style – see suggestion below. Place the start (起点 (qǐ diǎn)) and finish (终点 (zhōng diǎn)) cards at either end. You will need some items to use as large coloured counters. Roll a dice and move the number of places. Turn over the card when landed on. Read the information and do one or more of the suggested activities. Continue play until every card has been landed on or until time allows. Pass over cards that have already been turned over.
The China stamp game

Suggested answers and additional information:

Answers are not provided for the challenges which state – ‘find out about…’
It is expected that the pupils will research and find out more about these subjects.

Kite:
风筝
风筝
The character 风fēng is shown on the card. The character 筝zhēng is the Chinese zither also known as 古筝 gǔzhēng meaning ancient zheng.

The Summer Palace:
颐和园
颐和园
The character 园yuán is shown on the card. The character 和hé is detailed on theZhèng Hé card. The character颐yí means to nourish or preserve.

Golden pheasant:
红腹锦鸡
红腹锦鸡
The other colours on the golden pheasant are:
red 红色 hóngsè
yellow 黄色 huángsè
green 绿色 lǜsè
orange 橙色 chéngsè
brown 棕色 zōngsè

Phoenix:
凤凰
凤凰
Both characters 风fēng and 凰huáng mean phoenix and the two characters are put together to form the word. There are some other Chinese words which take this pattern.

Terracotta army:
兵马俑
兵马俑
The character 马mǎ is shown on the card. The character 兵bīng means soldiers and the character 俑yǒng means ‘wooden figures buried with the dead’.
The China stamp game

Suggested answers and additional information: (continued)

Mount Gongga:

贡嘎山
The character 山 shān is shown on the card. The characters 白 gònggā give the name of the mountain in the Gongga county, Tibet. [贡 gong also means to offer tribute or gifts and 嘎 gá or gā means a cackling sound.]

White river dolphin:

白暨豚
The character 白 bái is shown on the card. The character 暨 jì is another word for ‘and’. The character 豚 tún means dolphin. Therefore literally the name is ‘white and dolphin’.

Black and white:
black 黑色 hēisè
white 白色 báisè

Zodiac:

生肖
The zodiac animals are:
rat 鼠 shǔ
ox 牛 niú
tiger 虎 hǔ
rabbit 兔 tù
dragon 龙 lóng
snake 蛇 shé
horse 马 mǎ
goat or sheep 羊 yáng
monkey 猴 hóu
rooster 鸡 jī
dog 狗 gǒu
pig 猪 zhū
The China stamp game

Suggested answers and additional information: (continued)

Confucius:
孔子

Some famous Confucius quotes:
‘Everything has beauty but not everyone sees it.’
‘It does not matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop’
‘Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but rising every time we fall.’
‘I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.’
‘Life is really simple but we insist on making it complicated.’
‘Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.’
‘The journey of a 1000 miles begins with one step.’
‘The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.’
‘He who knows all the answers has not been asked all the questions.’
‘Give a bowl of rice to a man and you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to grow his own rice and you will save his life.’
‘If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart’.

Confucius Institute:
孔子学院

The character 学xué is shown on the card. The characters 孔子 Kǒngzǐ are detailed on the Confucius card. The character 院yuàn means institution. The character 阝 usually means walls or hill/mound when on the left and city when on the right. It is on the left in yuàn and is the meaning part of the character – an area surrounded by walls. The character 完 links to the sound part – wán.
An example of 阝 on the right is 都 dū meaning city (Chéngdū 成都). Although also note that the same character 都 but with different pronunciation dōu means all/both.
There are many characters where 阝 has lost its meaning, for example: 那nà – that 哪nǎ – which/where.
It appears in a character that is on the stamps 郵yóu meaning post.
中国邮政 zhōngguó yóuzhèng meaning Chinese postal service.
A postage stamp is 郵票 yóupiào.

Beyond the Panda is the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland’s China and giant panda education programme and manages the first science specialist Confucius Classroom in the world. For further resources on China, Chinese language and giant pandas, please see beyondthepanda.org.uk
The China stamp game

Suggested answers and additional information: (continued)

Football:
zuò qiú
足球

Some other sports:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>football</td>
<td>足球</td>
<td>zúqiú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basketball</td>
<td>篮球</td>
<td>lánqiú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tennis</td>
<td>网球</td>
<td>wǎngqiú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>table tennis</td>
<td>乒乓球</td>
<td>pīngpāngqiú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badminton</td>
<td>羽毛球</td>
<td>yǔmáoqiú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volleyball</td>
<td>排球</td>
<td>páiqiú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rugby</td>
<td>橄榄球</td>
<td>gānlǎnqiú</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zheng He:
zhèng hé
郑和

The character 和 hé is shown on the card. The character 郑 zhèng means the Zheng state during the Warring States period and is also a common surname.

Willow tree porcelain:
liǔ shù cí qì
柳树瓷器

The character 树 shù is shown on the card. The character 柳 liǔ means willow. Note that it contains the character for wood/tree 木. The characters 瓷器 cíqì mean porcelain. The first character 瓷 cí means porcelain or chinaware.

The second character 器 qì means a vessel or utensil and has an interesting history. This character is made up from four mouths 口 and a character meaning dog 犬. An ancient character shows a form of a hand and four pots. Another later version has four mouths with the character for work 工 in the centre and that would create the meaning ‘a collection of work vessels for many mouths’. However along the way the character for work has been replaced by dog. Maybe you can remember this character as the vessels for many mouths and the dog that cleans them!
Acknowledgments

Royal Zoological Society of Scotland

Confucius Institute for Scotland

Confucius Institute for Scotland’s Schools

Stamp images ©China Post, ©Hong Kong Post and ©Macau Post

Many thanks to Dr. Jane Robb for proofreading.

Many thanks to Jie Chen and teachers from the Confucius Institute for Scotland for proofreading the Chinese translations.

Bibliography:


Wieger, Dr. L. 1965, Chinese Characters – Their origin, etymology, history, classification and signification: Paragon Book Reprint Corp and Dover Publications, Inc.

Further information from:
Sandie Robb
Language Project Coordinator, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
Development Officer, Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies

srobb@rzss.org.uk
@Sandie_Robb