

China through the Arts Supplementary Lesson

Chinese Brush Painting & Calligraphy - Part II

After practicing analyzing Chinese brush painting and calligraphy, the students will have an opportunity to practice making strokes and then painting a picture with poetry. Several samples of bamboo painting and calligraphy are provided. Allow at least two days to complete the painting.

Materials: ink sticks and grinding stone **OR** bottled ink and dishes
class set of Chinese wolf's hair brushes
Alternative to ink and brushes: paint brush markers
(available in art stores in many colors, markers with paint brush tips)
rice paper or other appropriate absorbent paper (for final artwork)
newspaper to practice strokes and to protectively cover desks
"Bamboo" instructions from Chinese Brush Painting by I. Ching Hsu.
(Price Stern Sloan, Inc. New York. 1993.)
Animal overheads from *Lóng is a Dragon: Chinese Writing for Children* by Peggy Goldstein (Scholastic, Inc. New York. 1991.)
Dictionary etymology chart worksheet
"Calligraphy" instructions from Chinese Brush Painting by I. Ching Hsu.
(Price Stern Sloan, Inc. New York. 1993.)

Vocabulary: technique, shade, node, taper, pictograph

Day 1 - Preparing Ink, Practicing Strokes & Painting Bamboo

(1) Demonstration

Lay out necessary materials - have students follow suit.

- Pass out the "Bamboo" worksheets
- Show how to prepare ink - then have students prepare their ink
 - if using a stick, grind end in a few drops of water using a circular motion
 - if using liquid ink, add several drops to the dish
 - demonstrate first three brush strokes (see "Bamboo" for further detail)
 - have students practice the strokes on spare newsprint

(2) Painting Bamboo

- Have students assess ink supply and quality and prepare more if necessary.

- Demonstrate how to put brush strokes together in the correct order.
 - stalks first
 - nodes next
 - add leaves last
- Again encourage students to practice bamboo in entirety on newsprint.
- Circulate to assist.
- When ready, provide paper for students to paint their bamboo, directing them to leave space for calligraphy which they will paint tomorrow.

(3) Clean Up

- Direct students in cleaning up their desks.
- Spread out paintings so that they can dry.

Day 2 - More about Calligraphy, Practicing Calligraphy & Adding Poetry

(1) Further Background on Calligraphy

- Using overheads of the animal pictures and their ancient and current equivalents, discuss how early Chinese characters were pictographs.
- Pass out copies of dictionary etymology chart worksheet - one per group.
 - Give groups an equal amount of time to guess how many of the pictographs they can figure out.
 - Clue: Most of the words are nouns but a few are verbs and one is an adjective.
 - Go over the chart and see how many each group got correct.

Answers:

(line 1) measurement unit, rice, boat, sheep, meat, ear, bugs, bamboo, ,
alive, container

(line 2) see, step, rabbit, old, foot, walk, shell, car, west, travel, rest

(line 3) wine, home, grass, horse, fly (v.), head, shelter, fruit, capital, gate,
rain

- Talk about how Chinese calligraphers paint in different styles and how each has a unique handwriting. Show several of the samples provided that the students can compare and contrast.

(2) Demonstration

- Lay out necessary materials - have students follow suit.
- Pass out "Calligraphy" worksheet
- Prepare ink
 - demonstrate a few brush strokes on the page
 - allow students time to practice the 17 brush strokes on newsprint.

- Demonstrate how to paint several characters that they might want to use for their poetry:



chun (chun)
spring

xià (sha)
summer

qiū (chiu)
fall

dong (dong)
winter

- Have students select poetry characters and practice on newsprint.
- Distribute bamboo paintings.
- Students complete final poetry on paintings.

(3) Clean Up

- Direct students in cleaning up their desks.
- Spread out paintings so that they can dry.

Bamboo

2

It is very common for beginners to start by practicing bamboo as it incorporates some of the basic brush stroke techniques. Bamboo is also a particularly suitable subject for painting with just black ink and very satisfactory results can be obtained with just a little practice. Bamboo is painted with a wolf's hair brush in this order: stem, nodes, branches and leaves.

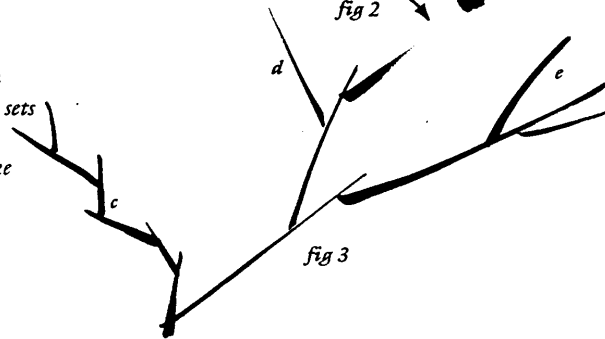
Stems The stem is painted in sections from the bottom of the paper upward. The sections gradually increase in length as you move up and then become shorter again at the top. To paint a stem section (fig 1) place your brush down, move it up the paper and then lift it off, with a slight flick at the end of the stroke. Leave a small space (for the node) and add the next section.



Nodes These are added in one brush stroke with a dark ink color. You can practice them separately to get the correct technique (fig 2). Slightly increase the brush pressure as you change direction at points a and b, making sure to add a slight curve to the line across.

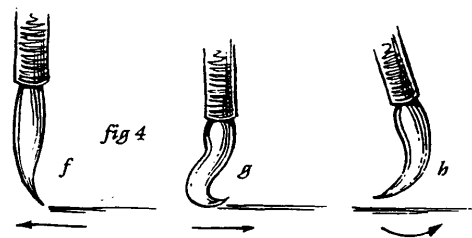


Branches Using an upright held brush, branches are added from the node at an angle of about 30° or less. Add them in sets of 3 strokes but avoid making zig-zag patterns as in fig 3(c). The branch stroke should not end in a point (d) nor on the same level (e).

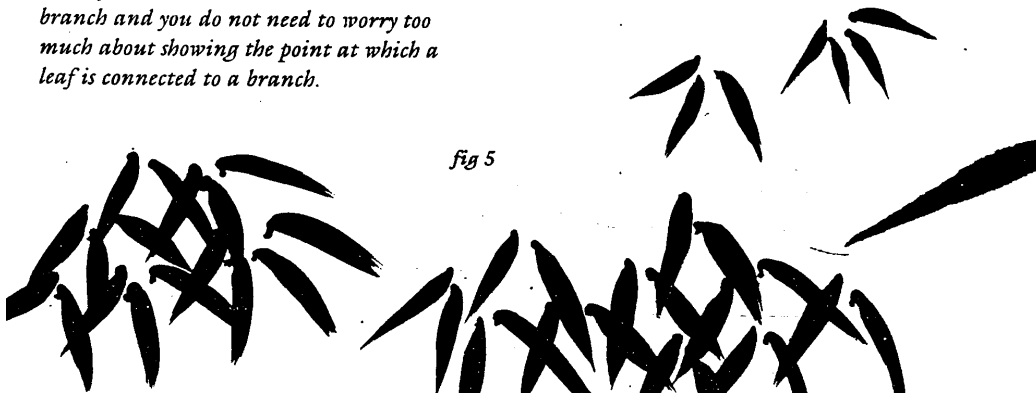


Leaves These are done with one swift tapering brush stroke as shown in fig 4.

Place the tip of the brush at point f, press slightly upward first and then move the brush down (g). The last third of the leaf is gradually tapered to a point by lifting the brush off the paper (h). Leaves can be added in patterns of twos, threes, fours or even more (see fig 5). For all groupings, make sure the leaf tops of each set start from a different height and that the leaves are not parallel. A more natural look is achieved by overlapping sets on top of each other.

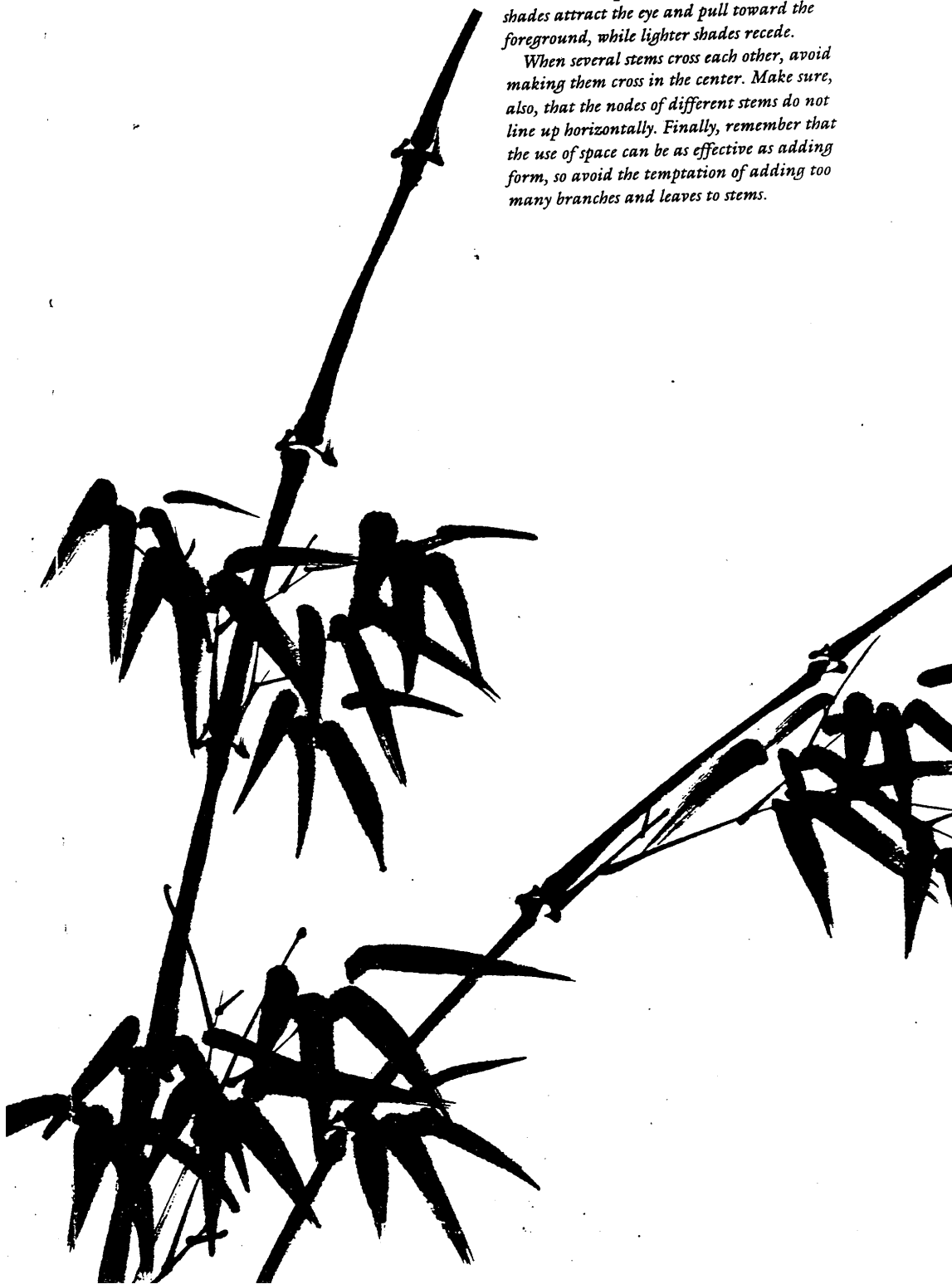


Leaves can be added above or below a branch and you do not need to worry too much about showing the point at which a leaf is connected to a branch.



Using different shades of black will add interest and depth to your painting. Darker shades attract the eye and pull toward the foreground, while lighter shades recede.

When several stems cross each other, avoid making them cross in the center. Make sure, also, that the nodes of different stems do not line up horizontally. Finally, remember that the use of space can be as effective as adding form, so avoid the temptation of adding too many branches and leaves to stems.



From Chinese Brush Painting by I. Ching Hsu. (Price Stern Sloan, Inc. New York, 1993.)

Many Chinese characters represent animals. Chinese folklore is a rich storehouse of animal stories and legends.

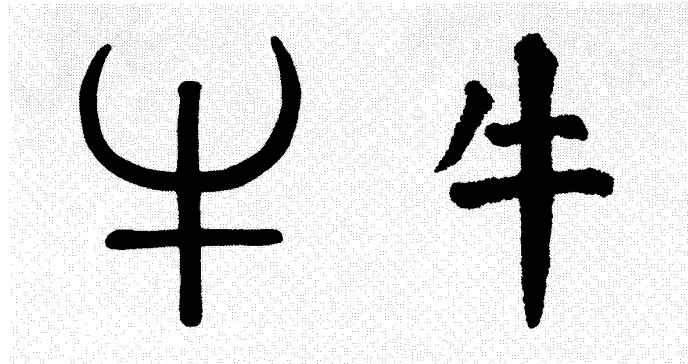
The illustrations here show how ancient signs have come from animal shapes and how the characters are written today.



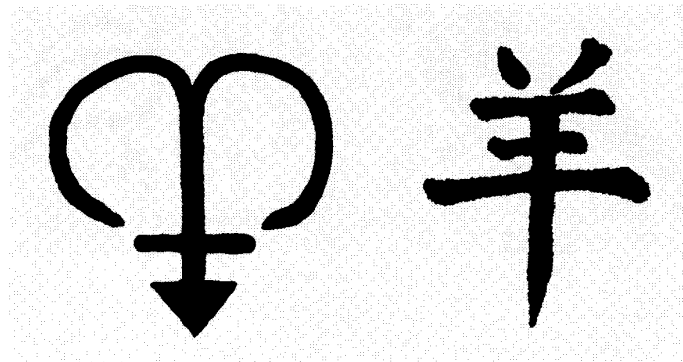
OX

ancient

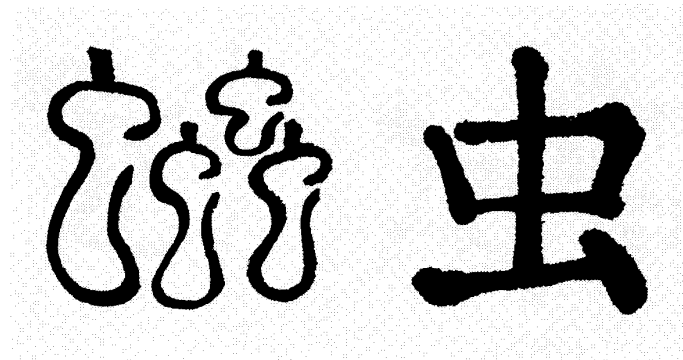
current



sheep



insect



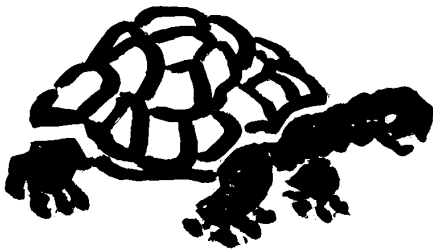
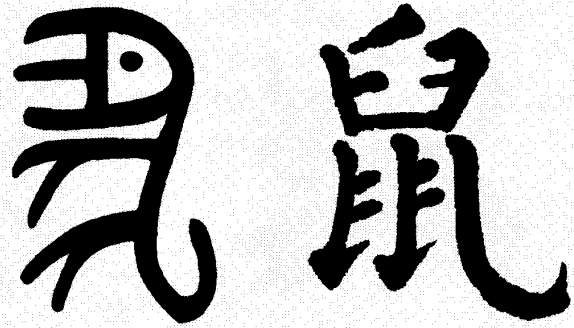
From *Lóng is a Dragon: Chinese Writing for Children*. by Peggy Goldstein.
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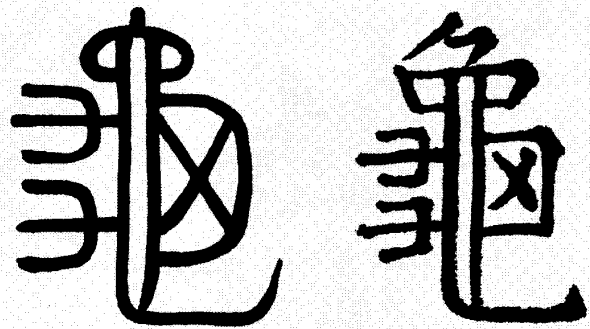
rat

ancient

current



tortoise



deer



From *Lóng is a Dragon: Chinese Writing for Children*. by Peggy Goldstein.
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白	米	舟	羊	肉	耳	蟲	竹	系	生	皿
hík jiou	mi	jiou	yáng	rou	er	chung	ji	xi	sheng	min
見	步	兔	老	足	走	貝	車	西	行	休
jian	bu	tu	lao	zu	zou	bei	che	xi	xing	xiu
酒	家	草	馬	飛	首	舍	果	京	門	雨
jiu	jia	cao	ma	fei	shou	she	guo	jing	men	yu

CALLIGRAPHY



CHINESE PAINTING IS VERY DIFFERENT from any other kind of painting, as the skills it employs have their origins in calligraphy. Together, painting and calligraphy are referred to as the Twin Sisters.

Calligraphy is used on paintings for two reasons. One is to add the painter's signature and date. In addition, painters often add a poem that relates to the subject or feeling of the painting.

Writing Chinese calligraphy may seem like a daunting task, but it is worth persevering.

In learning the strokes of calligraphy, you will have an excellent training exercise for practicing the brush stroke techniques of Chinese brush painting.

Secondly, you may be able to obtain a Chinese name for yourself from a Chinese-speaking friend. It's quite common for westerners to be given a Chinese name based on the phonetics of their own name. If this is possible for you, you will then have at least three characters to practice so that you can sign your own work!

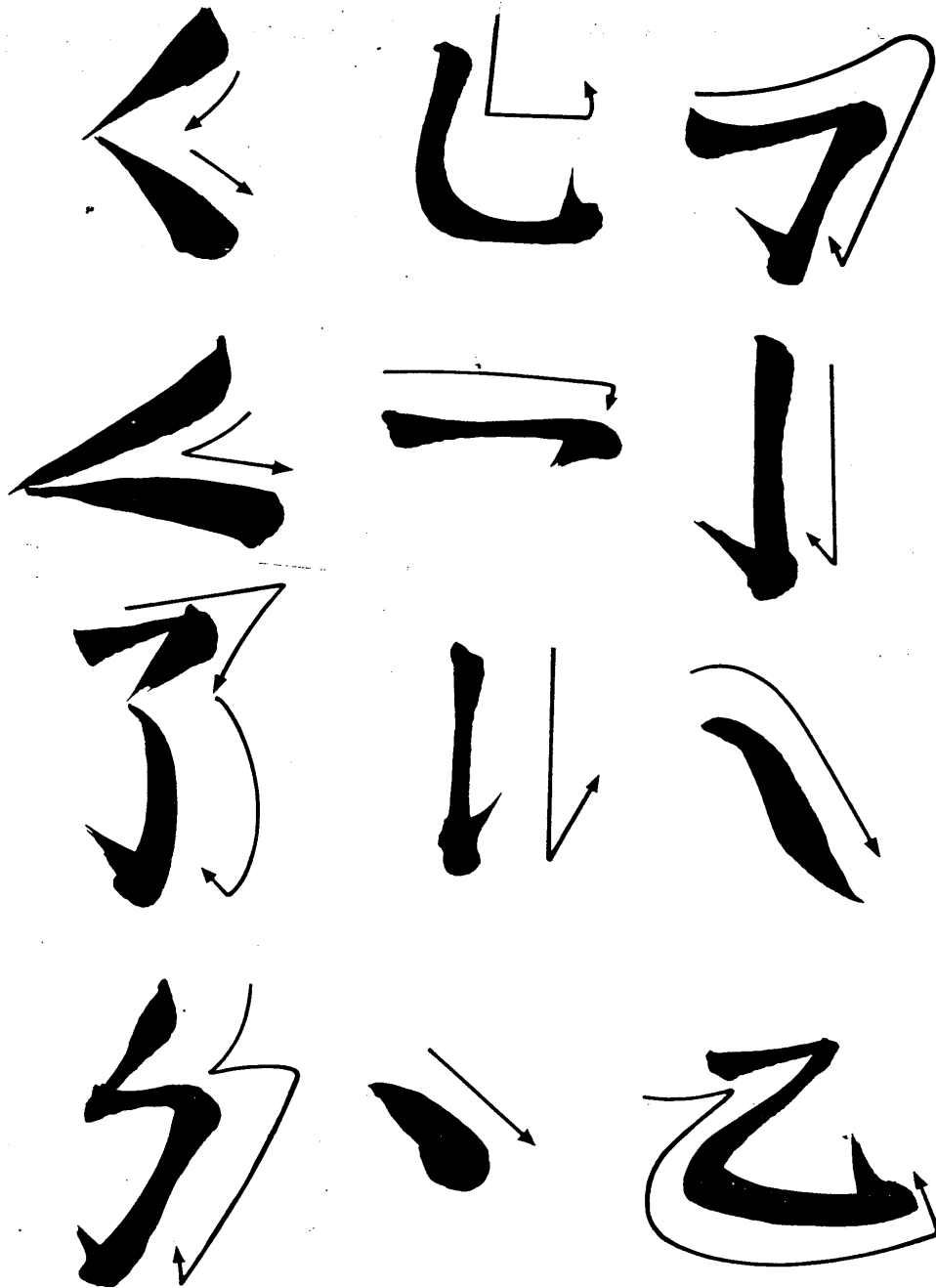
Basic Strokes

The first thing to remember when doing calligraphy is to grind up your ink to make it sufficiently black.

From the calligraphic point of view, the Chinese characters are all reduced into simple strokes.

There are nine strokes in theory and about seventeen in practice as shown here.





The main calligraphy strokes are shown here. As they are very specific and need to be executed with precision, you should practice them first, before going on to paint characters. The arrows indicate the movement of the brush as the strokes are carried out.

Wolf's or leopard's hair brushes are used for calligraphy and the brush is always held upright. The brush pressure varies depending on which direction the stroke tapers. For each character, there is a particular order by which the strokes are added—i.e. from left to right and from top to bottom. Most strokes include a flick of the brush at the end and this should be done slowly in order to obtain a nice finishing point.

From Chinese Brush Painting by I. Ching Hsu. (Price Stern Sloan, Inc. New York. 1993.)