

Classroom Connections

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Going on the Journey of Learning to Respect Our Elders

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I use a multiyear vertical curriculum model for annually occurring traditions (Mid-Autumn Festival, Lunar New Year, and Tomb Sweeping Festival). Within each K-8 grade level, I teach Tomb Sweeping Festival lessons for a couple of weeks. These mini-units build upon what students learned about the festival in prior years and together over nine years form the entire unit. Thus, students deepen their learning about this tradition nonrepetitively each year. I present the three instructional topics below: traditions about death, remembrance traditions and the worldview values they reinforce, and the history and tangible traditions that make up the festival. The chart indicates the topics I focus on in each grade to show how my vertical unit is structured, but the unit could also be taught as a horizontal unit in intermediate or middle school grades.

Grade	Traditions about Death	Remembrance Traditions	Qing Ming Jie History and Traditions
K		What do you do to help remember a person special to you? Do you have a special elder in your heart who is living and/or has passed away? Name that relation.	Introduce 清明节 as a festival to honor deceased loved ones.
1		What do you do to help remember a person special to you? Do you have a special elder in your heart who is living and/or has passed away? What do you remember about the special elder or the deceased? Illustrate your favorite activity with or memory of this person.	Introduce 清明节 as a festival to honor deceased loved ones.
2	Do you know anyone who has passed away? Name the relationship of the deceased to you.	What do you remember about a special elder or a deceased relative? Do you have any special items or photos to help you remember that special person? Draw illustrations of this special object or item.	Introduce 清明节 as a festival to honor deceased loved ones.
3		Introduce 孝, 孝子 - honorable child as defined by Confucius as individual behaviors toward living elders and ancestors and remembering and doing things to honor living elders and deceased family members. List actions of filial piety described by Confucius.	Introduce 清明节 Pure and Brightness Festival to honor deceased loved ones, value those ones who came before you, and do a collective act of filial piety.

4		<p>Discuss 孝, 孝子 - filial piety, honorable child defined by Confucius as individual behaviors toward living elders and ancestors and remembering and doing things to honor the deceased. List actions you personally take or seen done by your family that are examples of filial piety.</p>	<p>Introduce 清明节 Pure and Brightness Festival to honor deceased loved ones, value those ones who came before you, and do a collective act of filial piety. Discuss whether having such a festival is necessary and how you might do it differently. How would you rename such a festival? Create a poster promoting your remembrance festival.</p>
5	<p>How is death generally viewed in our society? In our communities? Validate that there can be many feelings around the topic of death.</p>	<p>Discuss 孝 filial piety, 孝子 honorable child, and the Chinese belief in a continued relationship between the living and the dead to establish and maintain order and harmony in their relationships. Describe 祠堂 family altars in homes for frequent practice of honoring the deceased. Reflect on rituals practiced to remember the deceased in your family/home.</p>	<p>Introduce 清明节 as a festival to honor deceased loved ones with prayers and goods. Identify food and ritual items. Examine joss paper goods purchased from Asian supermarkets. Identify feelings and opinions about the joss paper goods. Design your own joss paper goods.</p>
6	<p>How is death viewed in our society? Identify death rituals seen in our community or media.</p>	<p>Discuss 孝 filial piety, 孝子 honorable child, and the Chinese belief in a continued relationship between the living and the dead to establish and maintain order and harmony in their relationships. 祠堂 Chinese family has altar in home for frequent practice of honoring the deceased. Reflect on rituals practiced to remember the deceased in your family/home. Interview family or close friends about remembrance rituals of deceased loved ones they know about or have seen.</p>	<p>Story of Jie Zi Tui 介子推 started the ritual of tomb sweeping 扫墓 and cold food ritual 寒食节 to honor the deceased. Roleplay the story of Jie Zi Tui, the government official who sacrificed himself for his Duke and later was honored by the Duke, which historically started part one of this festival.</p>

7	<p>Research death or funeral rituals seen in our community or media. Discover types of funerals and ceremonies and influential factors. Make use of personal narratives or interviews, for example.</p>	<p>Research to gather information on ways people grieve and remember those who have died in different cultures. What rituals, celebrations, or traditions around remembrance do different cultures practice?</p>	<p>清明节 is the combination of Cold Food Festival 寒食节 and Shangsi Festival 上巳节 (naming specific foods and activities related to the festival). Students compare these two festivals.</p>
8	<p>Examine traditional Chinese death rituals (preparations, mourning, burial). Discuss death rituals of family and/or friends or community. Explore the relationship of personal comfort with death rituals.</p>	<p>What do you do to help remember a person special to you? Do you have a special elder in your heart who is living and/or has passed away? Name that relation.</p>	<p>Examine the classic poem 清明 from Tang dynasty by 杜牧, emotions related to 清明节, and the famous Song dynasty painting Along the River During the Qingming Festival to view rituals of everyday people at that time.</p>