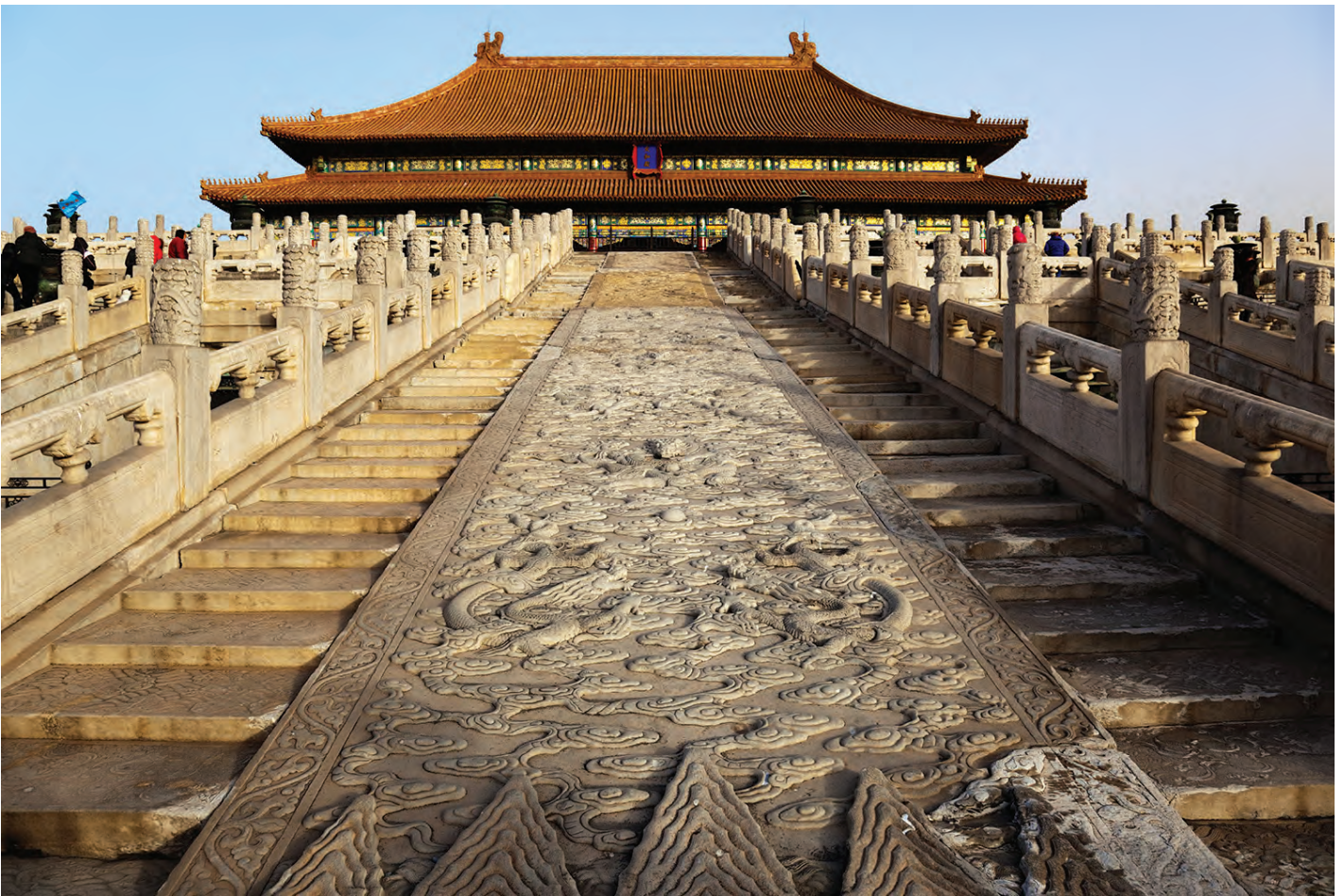


# Educators' Resource Guide

FORBIDDEN CITY: IMPERIAL TREASURES FROM THE PALACE MUSEUM, BEIJING

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Three Great Halls Palace, Forbidden City, Beijing, China. © Fotosearch.com

Grades 2–5

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# Introduction

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Welcome to the Educational Resource Guide for VMFA's special exhibition *Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum, Beijing*.

Beijing's Forbidden City consists of more than a thousand structures built by over a million workers—but it was off-limits to the general public for more than five hundred years when it served as the Chinese imperial palace. VMFA visitors will be able to experience this hidden world through stunning objects from the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties as well as a grand format 3-D model of the Forbidden City itself. The resources in this guide present important exhibition themes and provide historical context for key objects. Although the information and activities relate most directly to Virginia Standards of Learning for History and Social Science for grade 2 and World History from 1500 to the Present, they are easily adaptable to many levels and disciplines.

## How to Use This Guide

As described below, you can choose to sign up for a docent-guided tour or organize your own tour. Please make sure you have arranged for your group's visit ahead of time, reserved a tour guide if desired, and secured your tickets by visiting our **website** or contacting Tour Services at (804) 340-1419 or **tourservices@vmfa.museum**

**Docent-Guided Tour:** *Forbidden City* guided tours are led by VMFA Docents (specially trained volunteer tour guides) and are available to student groups of ten or more. If you are planning a docent-guided tour, consider using this guide in the classroom to prepare your students for their visit. Ask them to look at the images selected and start thinking of questions and/or comments related to the objects and themes. Use the information, activity suggestions, and questions to help stimulate your discussion. Or, consider some of the suggested activities as postvisit follow-up.

**Teacher-Directed Tour:** Teachers are welcome to lead student groups visiting the *Forbidden City* exhibition. When you arrive, older student groups with an adult chaperone may use the floor plan of the exhibition (see p. 5) to locate and investigate key objects. At lower grade levels, group interactions should be facilitated by a teacher or chaperone. If you are bringing a large group of students, we ask that you form smaller groups of about ten students, each accompanied by an adult chaperone.

### Activities for Your Teacher-Directed Tour

Each teacher and chaperone should print and bring a complete copy of the resource guide in order to read additional information and questions as needed. Activity sheets for students can be found on pages 28–26. Each student should have a clipboard, pencil, and appropriate activity sheets. *Note: Tour Services has a limited number of clipboards and pencils available upon request.*

Throughout this resource guide, you will see links associated with specific objects. You can access these links in the classroom using a computer or in the gallery using a mobile device.

### ***Beyond the Walls***

Be sure to visit *Beyond the Walls*, an interactive exhibition in the Memorial Foundation for Children Teaching Gallery, located in the MWV Art Education Center. In contrast to the imperial world on display in *Forbidden City*, this exhibition provides a glimpse into the daily life of a merchant-class family who lived in the 18th century. Hands-on activities include writing Chinese characters on a touch screen and designing personal, virtual seals. There are also opportunities to unroll and view reproduction scrolls similar to those featured in *Forbidden City* and in VMFA's East Asian galleries, or to play traditional musical instruments and games. Whether participating with family or as part of a school group, visitors of all ages will gain a new perspective on China's past.

**Please also check out our *Beyond the Walls* interactive website!**

<http://www.vmfa.museum/tours/mobile-apps/beyond-the-walls/>



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**Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum, Beijing** is organized by the Palace Museum and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The Banner Exhibition Program at VMFA is supported by the Julia Louise Reynolds Fund.

# Floor Plan

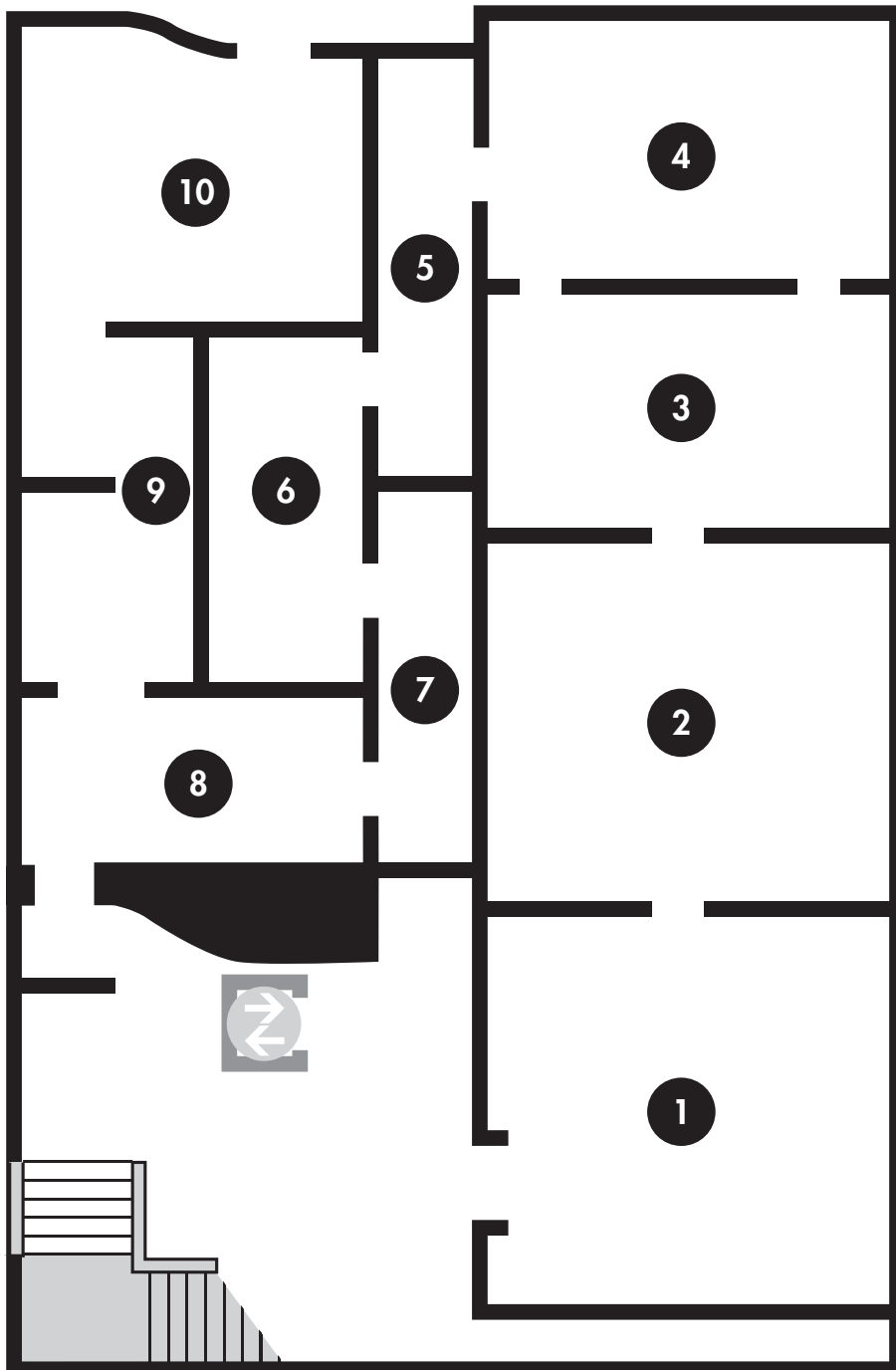
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Rooms 1–3  
**Rituals in the Qing Court**

Rooms 8–9  
**Court Paintings of the Qing Dynasty**

Rooms 4–7  
**Court Arts in the Inner Quarters**

Rooms 10  
**Religious Life in the Palace**



## Exhibition Overview

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### ***Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum, Beijing***

From 1420 to 1911, the walled complex of the Forbidden City served as the center of Chinese dynastic government and the residence for twenty-four emperors of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. In 1925, the Forbidden City became the Palace Museum, which today encompasses more than a thousand structures belonging to the original 180-acre site and contains an art collection totaling 1.8 million objects.

This exhibition presents nearly two hundred works of art—including large portraits, costumes, furniture, court paintings, religious sculptures, and decorative arts such as bronzes, lacquer ware, and jade—arranged in four thematic sections that reflect the activities of the palace’s outer and inner courts. “Rituals in the Qing Court” (Rooms 1–3) addresses state affairs and ceremonies that took place in the outer court. “Court Arts in the Inner Quarters” (Rooms 4–7) offers insights into daily imperial life while exploring artwork that was influenced by imperial patronage, cultural exchange, and trade with the West. “Court Paintings of the Qing Dynasty” (Rooms 8 and 9) focuses on these same influences as expressed in the subjects and styles of court paintings. “Religious Life in the Palace” (Room 10) delves into the Buddhist and Daoist activities in the inner court and provides a glimpse into the spiritual aspects of life in the Forbidden City.

# Historical Background

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## Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368)

In 1206, a young man named Temujin was elected as the leader of the Mongol people. He is known to the world by his title, Genghis Khan, which roughly translates as "Great Ruler." By the year of his death in 1227, his armies had conquered a vast territory that stretched from the Caspian Sea to the Sea of Japan (Central Asia, parts of the Middle East, and areas of present-day Manchuria that lay to the north of China and northwest of the Korean Peninsula).

Several years before his death, Genghis divided his empire among his four sons, and designated his third son, Ögedei, as his successor. In 1229, Ögedei was confirmed as the Great Khan by formal election in a *kuraltai* (assembly of the people). The Mongol empire continued to expand during Ögedei's rule, reaching its furthest extent in the west by the time of his death in 1241. The Jin dynasty in Mongolia and northern China fell to Ögedei's forces in 1234, laying the groundwork for a prolonged campaign to conquer the lands of the Song dynasty. During this interval, the Silk Road trade routes were re-established and protected by Mongol forces. The resulting communication between East and West was unprecedented and had long-term effects on the history of China.

In 1264, after defeating other contenders, Kubilai Khan (1215–1294), Ögedei's nephew, became the undisputed fifth and last Great Khan of the Mongol Empire. By 1279 he had defeated the forces of the Song dynasty, uniting China once again. He assumed the title of emperor and chose Yuan, which means "eternal," as the name of his dynasty. He established his capital, Dadu or "great capital," in the area of present-day Beijing. After the death of Kubilai in 1294, weak Yuan emperors failed to deal effectively with internal problems and power struggles. Mongol control disintegrated, and the dynasty came to an end in 1368.

## Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)

By the 1340s the stage had been set for the collapse of Yuan control over China. A great plague wiped out as much as half the population in some areas. Floods resulted from the failure to repair dikes and levees. By the 1350s, these calamities led to numerous peasant uprisings. Zhu Yuanzhang, the capable leader of a group called the Red Turbans, rose to power and prominence in the 1360s. By 1368 he was able to proclaim a new dynasty and begin the process of driving the Mongols out of China. After his forces took Dadu, the Yuan dynasty's capital, without any resistance, the remaining Mongols quietly returned to the northern steppes. Zhu Yuanzhang took the name Ming, which means "bright," for his dynasty, and Hongwu, or "huge force," for his reign name. He chose Nanjing for his capital, leaving his son Zhu Di in charge of Dadu.

## Historical Background

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### Ming Dynasty cont.

In 1398 Hongwu died and was succeeded by his grandson, Zhu Yunwen. Interested in returning to a Confucian model of government, Zhu took the reign name Jaen ("establishing civil virtue"). However, he only ruled until 1402 when his uncle Zhu Di captured Nanjing and seized power for himself. Zhu Di took the reign name of Dongle, "perpetual happiness." In the early 15th century, Emperor Dongle moved the capital to Beijing ("northern capital"). There, between 1406 and 1420, he built the Forbidden City as his imperial residence and seat of government.

Relative peace in the 15th century resulted in the rapid growth of both the population and the economy. Improved trade routes led to an increase in tea production in Zhejiang and Hunan. Technical innovations energized the textile industry, including the weaving of silk and cotton, which were often richly embroidered. Likewise, new products such as blue and white ware gave the ceramics industry a boost. Cities and urban culture expanded to accommodate the artisans in these industries and the merchants trading in their commodities.

A great flowering of the arts accompanied economic growth. Court painters created landscapes, narrative scroll paintings, and flower-and-bird compositions. Ceramics, metalwork, and lacquer combined traditional Chinese elements with foreign influences that came into China over the Silk Road. Music, poetry, and calligraphy flourished, as did literature: three of the four classic Chinese novels—*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Water Margin*, and *Journey to the West*—appeared at this time.

In the early 16th century, European traders began to arrive in Chinese ports, hoping to profit from China's sought-after goods. At first the Ming administration resisted their efforts, but by 1557 they granted the Portuguese the right to trade in Macao. In 1565 the Spanish also began trading with China from their base in Manila. China was soon the richest nation in the world as silver from the Spanish colonies flowed into the economy. Around 1600 Jesuit missionaries also sought entrance into China. Impressed by their learning, Chinese emperors welcomed the Jesuits as advisors to the imperial court for the next 150 years.

Around the end of the 16th century, the Ming dynasty faced an increasing array of problems. New interpretations of Confucianism put emphasis on individual morality rather than on cooperative problem solving. This tendency led to political conflicts that prevented effective government operation. Attempts at tax reform failed to consider the disparity in the distribution of wealth in the empire, which led to difficulties for rural farmers. Finally, amid all of these internal challenges, a new power on China's northern frontier was on the rise.



# Historical Background

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## Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)

Around the end of the 16th century, a Jurchin leader named Nurhaci (1559–1626) brought together various nomadic groups who became known as the Manchus. To encourage the consolidation of these groups, Nurhaci mandated the creation of a written script and history. He also formed a military organization called the Eight Banners, which divided Jurchin's soldiers into eight groups of Bannermen. His forces quickly conquered the area of present-day Manchuria, and his heirs set their sights on China.

In 1626 the Manchus proclaimed the revival of the Jin dynasty. Their capital city, established at Mukden (present-day Shenyang), was based on the layout of Beijing. In 1636 they chose the new name of Qing, meaning "pure," for their dynasty to emphasize their intention to purify China by seizing power from the Ming dynasty.

Meanwhile, massive revolts had broken out in China. One force, led by a former Ming official named Li Zicheng, managed to capture Beijing. The last Ming emperor hanged himself on a tree just outside the Forbidden City, and Li Zicheng proclaimed his own dynasty. The Manchu forces took advantage of the internal conflicts and successfully defeated Li Zicheng in 1644. The same year, the young Qing emperor Shunzhi was proclaimed the ruler of all China during a ceremony in the Forbidden City. By 1683, Qing forces had conquered the remainder of China and established a dynasty that endured until 1911.

The Qing rulers adopted many aspects of the traditional Confucian-based Chinese bureaucracy, including the imperial examination system, but they were also careful to make various adjustments to ensure their ultimate control of the administration. Qing officials made Neo-Confucian philosophy, which emphasized obedience of subject to ruler, the official state doctrine. They introduced various requirements related to court dress, and they also ordered their new male subjects to adopt the Manchu hairstyle, in which the front of the head was shaved while the remaining hair was pulled into a queue (braid).

Between 1661 and 1795, the Qing Empire was ruled by only three emperors, Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong. This long period of stability and prosperity resulted in a golden age for China. The borders of the empire were gradually expanded to include large areas of Central Asia and Tibet, which kept the dynasty safe from nomadic invasions. These emperors also supported Chinese arts and culture. Emperors and court officials alike became patrons of painters, calligraphers, poets, and artisans.

By the end of the Qianlong emperor's reign in 1799, troubles began to darken the Qing golden age. The unparalleled increase in population began to strain the limits of Chinese food production. This shortage was coupled with inflation and financial instability. To make matters worse, the Qing policy of isolation from the Western world was sorely challenged. Beginning in the mid-18th century, Western trade was only allowed in Guangzhou (Canton)

## Historical Background

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### Qing Dynasty cont.

and had to be arranged through state-licensed merchants organized into a guild known as the Cohong (*hong* means “business”). The British sought to change the Cohong system because they wanted to market the products of their newly industrialized economy. The failure of their efforts had dire consequences for China.

The Industrial Revolution, which began in Great Britain around 1760, led to revolutionary changes in almost every aspect of life in European countries. Factories and railways as well as steam- and coal-powered machinery proliferated. The publication of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 fueled the desire of European merchants to trade freely throughout the world. In particular, European governments sought to counterbalance the flow of silver into China by selling products to the Chinese. The British soon discovered that opium, which they grew in India, could be sold very profitably in China, although it was illegal to do so. Eventually, the number of opium addicts in China began to threaten the security of the Qing state, and officials tried to enforce the ban on importing opium. This led to the humiliating defeat of the Chinese in the First Opium War (1839–42). The Qing government was forced to pay an indemnity, cede Hong Kong to the British, and open new trading ports to European ships. European demands for trading concessions continued to escalate, triggering the Second Opium War (1856–1860), also known as the Anglo-French War. Once again, the conflict resulted in defeat and further concessions by the Chinese.

The failure of the Qing government to protect China from foreign domination led to several uprisings, which in turn caused widespread famine. During the Taiping Rebellion, which lasted from 1850 to 1864, rebel forces captured most of southern China and the city Nanjing before they were defeated by Qing armies. Efforts to introduce reform and modernization to China made by the Guangxu emperor were too late to stop the swift decline of the dynasty. Internal opposition, led by Empress Dowager Cixi, overturned his reforms. In the late 19th century, further concessions to European powers sparked the Boxer Rebellion, which was quelled by Western international troops. Emperor Guangxu died in 1908. Pu Yi, the last Qing emperor, took the throne in 1909 at the age of two. An army mutiny in 1911 delivered the final blow to the dynasty, and province after province declared independence from imperial rule. Pu Yi officially abdicated his throne in 1912 at the age of six, bringing imperial rule in China to an end.

### **Rituals in the Qing Court**

The ancient Chinese considered rituals a form of dialogue with the gods, an opportunity to make supplications for bountiful harvests, good fortune, and societal peace. When the Manchus overthrew the last Ming-dynasty emperor in 1644 and established the Qing dynasty, Qing rulers adopted Han Chinese rituals and etiquette to ensure a peaceful transfer of power and cultural continuity. Qing imperial rituals, rooted deeply in Confucian teachings, integrated diverse cultural elements and developed into the most comprehensive model for ritual practices in China.

The ninety works of art in this section offer an intimate look at life within the Forbidden City, including the function of the outer court and the important roles of various state rituals. Included are paintings that depict historical events and the grandeur of palace buildings; formal portraits of emperors, empresses, and imperial horses (the latter life size), ceremonial costumes, throne-room furniture, arms and armor, and musical instruments.

### **Importance of Dragons**

Dragons appear throughout this exhibition, on clothing, decorative objects, seals, armor, paintings, and scrolls. In China, dragons have been important cultural symbols for at least six thousand years! Chinese dragons are seen as wise creatures with great physical and spiritual powers. They were linked with authority and fertility—and they could bring wealth and good fortune to those who honored them. It is said there are 9,999 dragons in the Forbidden City.

Scholars believe that Chinese dragons likely began as rain deities or spirits. In ancient Chinese myth and legend, dragons were usually connected with water and often lived in lakes and rivers.

In many tales dragons were keepers of the clouds and winds, but they could also be fierce guardians of special places or treasures. The mightiest dragons were the Lords of the Oceans, where they lived in great underwater palaces.

Beginning in very early times, Chinese rulers adopted the dragon as an imperial symbol. They sat on dragon thrones, and sometimes even slept in dragon beds. During many ancient Chinese dynasties, the emperor alone was allowed to have the five-clawed dragon as his emblem or symbol. (Other people had to be content with three and four claws.)

**Look for dragons throughout the exhibit and on the objects you explore!**

## ROOM 1

### Ceremonial Armor with Dragon Design

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Satin with embroidery, gold thread, pearls, gilt copper studs, steel, copper buttons

Palace Museum, Gu.171798

Assembled with six protective panels, the jacket for this imperial armor guards the shoulders, the underarms, the belly, and the left side. The materials include imperial yellow satin, thin padding, and a blue tabby lining, all stabilized with metal studs. The outstanding embroidery on the armor includes five-clawed dragons in gold thread, multicolor flaming pearls, and other auspicious motifs, such as clouds, ocean waves, and mountains. Golden horizontal plates are woven in gilded strips to imitate overlapping metal scales. An almost identical suit of armor can be seen in *Emperor Qianlong on Horseback*, the portrait nearby.



© The Palace Museum

The dragons on this set of armor have five claws, showing us it was made for the emperor.

**How many dragons can you count?**

---

**What would you put a dragon symbol on?**

---

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In this room you will also find eight more sets of armor made for soldiers of the imperial army to wear during ceremonies in the Outer Court.

### ROOM 2

#### **Horse Zizaiju**, 1743

Lang Shining (Giuseppe Castiglione, Italian, 1688–1766)

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Palace Museum, Gu.5355

Lang Shining was a trained portrait painter from Italy. He arrived in Beijing in 1715 as a young Jesuit missionary, and his artistic talent yielded a successful fifty-year career as a court painter. Lang painted this life-size portrait of Zizaiju (“at ease with oneself”), an imperial horse given to Emperor Qianlong, as tribute from Mongolia. The artist combined his Western training with conventional Chinese methods, which together give his subject both substance and character. The painting includes the horse’s name written in three languages (Chinese, Manchurian, and Mongolian), a poem written by Qianlong in both Chinese and Manchurian, and an inscription by a court official.



© The Palace Museum

#### **Link to Video**

<http://www.vmf-resources.org/activities/giuseppe-castiglione-in-china-imperial-painter-humble-servant/>

#### **Writing Connection**

Horses were highly valued by the Chinese for both practical and aesthetic reasons. They often appear in Chinese myth and legends. In fact, there are even tales about the Longma, a winged horse covered in dragon scales. Each year of the Chinese zodiac, or calendar, is named after one of twelve animals and one of five natural elements (wood, fire, air, metal and water). The period between January 31, 2014, and February 18, 2015, is called the Year of the Wood Horse.

The horse also inspired its own Chinese character. The written form of Chinese began about 3,500 years ago as combinations of pictographs, which were simplified pictures of things (such as animals,

water, sun, moon, etc). Over time, these characters were simplified in form and often combined to stand for sounds as well as words and concepts. Sometimes it's difficult to figure out what various characters originally represented. For example, the Chinese character for horse once showed the legs and body of the horse, but the simplified, modern form replaced the four legs with a single stroke.

**Practice your hand at calligraphy online.**

<http://vmfa.museum/interactives/beyond-the-walls/calligraphy/>

These two Chinese characters both represent the word for horse, but in two different scripts. The one on the left is written in the Oracle Bone Script, the earliest form of Chinese writing, which was developed between about 1500 and 1200 BC. On the right is an example of the Running Script, a semicursive script developed during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD).

**Try writing your own Chinese character for horse in two different scripts.**



*Oracle Bone  
Script*



*Running  
Script*

### **Set of Ritual Bells**, dated 1713

Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1662–1722)

Gilt bronze, gold lacquer on wood, painted design, silk

Palace Museum, Gu.169500-1-16/16

As the most important of ritual instruments used for formal state events, the sixteen gilt-bronze bells were cast with dragons amid clouds and a pair of dragons on each knob. With varying inner diameters, heights, and wall thicknesses, the bells produce distinct musical notes and, when struck along the rim, emit rhythmic tones.

Suspended from a lacquered wooden stand supported by a pair of crouching lions, this set of bells was played outside a palace hall during events such as the emperor's enthronement, sacrifices, and state banquets.

### **Listen to bronze bells being played or try playing your own!**

<http://www.vmfa.museum/interactives/beyond-the-walls/bell/>

Also, visit VMFA's permanent collection of Chinese art to see an ancient bronze bell that dates to the 6th century BC.



© The Palace Museum

## ROOM 3

### **Emperor's Seal with Dragon Knob**, approx. 1797

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Nephrite, gold pigment, silk, coral

Palace Museum, Gu.1166798

An emperor's seal represents the supreme power of the emperor and his empire. This seal was used when issuing imperial edicts to provincial officials. Engraved on white jade, it bears four Chinese characters in the clerical script, *jing tian qin min*, which means "honor heaven, dedicated to the people." These words reflect Emperor Kangxi's idealistic governing philosophy. The seal became a model for his two successors, who sought harmony between gods and human beings.

During the Qing Dynasty, the Qianlong emperor selected a total of twenty-five seals for official use. Seals marked official documents and were also used by artists and authors to sign their work and by art collectors to document their holdings and pass on their artistic taste to future generations. The form on top of this seal, called the knob,



© The Palace Museum

is in the shape of a pair of dragons. Carved around the four sides of the seal is a poem written by the emperor.

Chinese seals can be made out of numerous materials, including stone, metal, wood, ivory, and bamboo. This seal is carved from nephrite (jade), which is a precious material that has been highly valued in China for thousands of years. Although this piece was made a relatively short time ago, jade objects have been found in ancient Chinese burial sites.

The Chinese characters on this seal were carved long after writing began in China. The seal's inscription is written in one of the older Chinese scripts (forms of writing), the clerical script, which was developed in the 5th century BC.

**Learn more about the history of seals and design your own online!**

<http://vmfa.museum/interactives/beyond-the-walls/seal/>

**If you could create your own seal, what would it say?**

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**What would you choose as your seal's symbol?**

---

Look for Emperor Qianlong's seal on other works throughout the exhibition.



© The Palace Museum

Printed seal of  
Qianlong emperor



### **Emperor Qianlong in Ceremonial Robe, 1740s**

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Palace Museum, Gu.6467

This portrait depicts Emperor Qianlong, the fourth son of Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1723–35) and the favorite grandson of Emperor Kangxi (r. 1662–1722). Emperor Qianlong ascended the throne at age twenty-five in 1736 and reigned until age eighty-five, becoming the longest-reigning emperor in Chinese history. The richly embroidered dragon garment, a sable crown decorated with gold and pearls, and the belt around his waist reveal his supreme status.



© The Palace Museum

Compare the robe Emperor Qianlong is wearing in this portrait with an actual robe from roughly the same time period, seen nearby.

### **Imperial Yellow Robe with Dragon and Clouds**

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Embroidered satin, ermine trim, twill-damask lining,

cotton padding, coral, pearls, metal buttons

Palace Museum, Gu.42147

This luxuriously embroidered robe belonged to Emperor Qianlong. Made of imperial yellow satin, the robe has a sleeved tunic, a pleated apron, a right placket, padding with ermine trim, and a dark border woven in gold. The overall design reveals both Han and Manchu nomadic elements. Horse-hoof cuffs, a cape collar, and a folding apron were derived from the Qing nomadic costume tradition, whereas the dragons and the Twelve Imperial Symbols are Han stylistic motifs from the Ming dynasty. The emperor wore the robe primarily in winter for rituals such as New Year's Day, birthdays, the winter solstice, and ritual sacrifices.



© The Palace Museum

### **The Twelve Imperial Symbols**

The Twelve Imperial Symbols on the next page are symbolic interpretations of the universe. These symbols of imperial authority assumed a cosmic significance and indicated the emperor's status as the ruler of "all under heaven."

The symbols (their numbers accumulated over the years) appeared on the ceremonial robes (also called dragon robes) of the emperor. The Twelve Imperial Symbols that adorn the front and back of the upper robe are the sun, moon, stars, mountain, dragon, and pheasant. Designs of double goblets, weeds, fire, rice, axe, and bow are shown on the lower garment.

**Look at the symbols and see how many of them you can find on this robe. There are always nine dragons on these robes; nine is considered a lucky number. Are all of them visible?**

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**The ninth dragon was hidden under the fold-over front. Why do you think he is hidden? (Teachers: Scholars believe the hidden dragon was a protective element.)**

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**What other common symbols of power, strength, and authority do you know of?**

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### The Twelve Imperial Symbols



**The Sun**—Located on left shoulder, represented by a three-legged bird in a yellow disc; symbolizes Heaven and intellectual enlightenment. The number three is the symbol of the masculine principle, of which the sun is the essence.



**The Moon**—On the right shoulder, a white disc within which the Hare of the Moon is pounding with a pestle to obtain the elixir of immortality.



**Constellation**—Above the principal dragon on the chest, an arrangement of three small discs representing stars; symbolizes Heaven and the cosmic universe.



**Mountains**—Located on the back, above the principal dragon; signifies the earth.

*The sun, moon, constellation, and mountains represented the four annual sacrifices made by the emperor and together indicated his authority over the whole universe.*



**Pair of Dragons**—Symbolizes the emperor's adaptability through transformation or renewal.



**Pheasant**—Exemplifies literary refinement and education.



**Fu**—A character, means discernment of good and evil or judgement.



**Axe**—Denotes temporal power and justice in the punishment of crime.



**Water Weeds**—Represent responses to the needs of the moment, since they rise and fall with the seasons.



**Libation Cups**—Understood as made of bronze, represent the element of metal and signify filial piety.



**Flames**—Symbolize intellectual brilliance and zeal for virtue.



**Grain**—Shown as a plate of millet or grain, denotes the emperor's responsibility to feed the people.

*The twelve symbols completed the message that the emperor, the Son of Heaven, had control over all creation as regent for the Lord of Heaven.*

### Court Arts of the Inner Quarters

Under the Qing emperors Kangxi (r. 1662–1722), Yongzheng (r. 1723–35), and Qianlong (r. 1736–95), the court experienced stability, prosperity, and continuity. Many royal Qing artworks were commissioned by the Imperial Household Department and made in imperial or local workshops, while others were tributes from regional and foreign governments. The tributes from Jiangnan, a large area located in the Yangtze River Delta and encompassing the cities of Suzhou, Yangzhou, Nanjing, and Hangzhou, enjoyed a reputation for their superior quality for many years.

These rooms contain approximately sixty works of art, including imperial portraits and costumes, gold and silver, ceramics, jade, and furniture. These works were created either for decoration of interior spaces or for functional use. The wall texts explore how the patronage of emperors, cultural exchange, and trade with the West inspired imperial and regional workshops to create new art forms and styles.

### ROOM 4

#### Emperor Qianlong Writing in His Studio

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Palace Museum, Gu.6524-1/2

A man of energy and intelligence as well as a poet, calligrapher, and art connoisseur, Emperor Qianlong (1711–1799) is best known as a highly educated, versatile ruler. The forty thousand verses and poems he wrote earned him a reputation as the most literary and indeed the most prolific emperor in Chinese history. This portrait features the emperor seated at his desk and dressed in Han-style clothing with a stylish literati hat and plum-patterned gown. Featuring writing implements that convey a literati atmosphere and symbolize the virtues of a scholar, the scene exudes the sophistication and elegance for which Emperor Qianlong was known.



© The Palace Museum

Emperors were expected to be able to write poetry and spend time enjoying intellectual pursuits, such as reading, writing, painting, and calligraphy. The studio was one of the most important rooms in the home of a well-educated person and was a place for contemplation, study, and practice.

Look around the room for examples of writing tools that would have been used by emperors. How are these items different from what we use today?

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What qualities are current American leaders supposed to have?

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### ROOM 5

**Covered Bowl with Emperor Qianlong's Poem, 1746–80**

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Carved red and black lacquer on wood

Palace Museum, Gu.109555

As Emperor Qianlong describes in the poem on this bowl, his favorite tea in winter was Three Purities tea (*sanqing cha*). To make the tea, pine nuts, plum blossom petals, and the fruit known as Buddha's hand citron were mixed together and steeped in melted snow. Emperor Qianlong was directly involved in the design for this particular lacquer bowl.



© The Palace Museum

The Qianlong emperor wrote a poem about his favorite tea on this bowl.

**What's your favorite drink?**

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**Write three adjectives to describe how it tastes.**

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**If you could rename your drink, what would you call it and why?**

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### ROOM 6

**Empress Dowager Cixi Taking Snuff**, approx. 1860s–70s  
Qing dynasty, Tongzhi period (1862–14) or  
Guangxu period (1875–1908)  
Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper  
Palace Museum, Gu.6361

Empress Xiaozhixian, best known as Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908), rose from low-ranking concubine to honored imperial consort when she gave birth to a son, the future Emperor Tongzhi. Cixi managed to take full control of the government and ruled during the reigns of Emperor Tongzhi (r. 1862–74) and Emperor Guangxu (r. 1875–1908).

Here, Cixi sits under a pine tree in a courtyard and dabs her middle finger in snuff. Her yellow garment's design of a dragon over the Eastern Ocean in the Daoist paradise identifies it as ceremonial attire (*jifu*) for an empress or honored consort. Over her left shoulder, a striking ensemble of peonies and nine peaches symbolizes good fortune and longevity, suggesting Cixi's upcoming birthday celebration.

Empress Cixi, who lived from 1835 to 1908, had a remarkable life—especially for a Chinese woman. In imperial China, most of the powerful leaders were men. Cixi came to live in the Forbidden City at the age of sixteen and became very important in 1861 when Emperor Xianfeng died. Their son, who was only five years old, was too young to rule by himself. As the Dowager Empress (a term for an emperor's mother), she, along with others, made decisions for the young emperor until he was old enough to rule himself. It must have been difficult for her to understand what life was like outside of the Forbidden City and other palaces. Even when she was involved in making serious decisions for the dynasty, she could not appear before Chinese officials. As a woman, she had to remain hidden behind a curtain while carrying out state business.

Cixi also advanced the status of women in China, encouraging them to obtain an education and move beyond the confines of their homes.

The American reformer Susan B. Anthony lived from 1820 to 1906, about the same time as Empress Cixi. Although Anthony faced



© The Palace Museum

opposition from many sides, she was a passionate advocate for the rights of women and the abolition of slavery. She traveled across the United States, giving lectures and attending meetings to help women win the right to vote.

**How have conditions for women changed since the days of Empress Cixi and Susan B. Anthony? Are those conditions the same everywhere in the world today?**

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### ROOM 7

According to Chinese tradition, Leizu, wife of the legendary Yellow Emperor, discovered the secret of silk weaving. The empress was having tea in a garden when a silkworm cocoon fell into her cup. Noticing how the cocoon threads unraveled, Leizu became the first person to weave with silk. She is known in China as the “Silkworm Mother.” Whether or not this story is true, there is ample evidence that silk was being produced in China by around 3000 BC. Silk became the most popular fabric for the clothing of Chinese royalty and one of the most exported trade items. In fact, the Silk Road was so named because of the amount of silk that travelled along these trading routes from China in the East to Rome in the West.

**Looking into a Mirror** from the series **Yinzhen’s Consorts Partaking in Pleasurable Activities**, approx. 1709–23  
Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1662–1722)  
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk  
Palace Museum, Gu.6458-2/12

This painting, along with another in this room, belongs to a series that portrays the daily activities of women in the imperial residence. Here, a female in a Han-style robe sits on a tree-root couch and looks into a bronze mirror. Her right hand rests on a Ming-style warmer. The calligraphy is a handwritten poem by Yinzhen (future emperor Yongzheng). Having the characteristic scholarly air of Chinese studios belonging to educated men and the court elite, the woman’s room



© The Palace Museum

contains antiques and contemporary works: a 12th-century purple narcissus planter by the window, a 15th-century red-glazed plate containing the fruit known as Buddha's hand citron, a 17th-century bamboo stool that holds a teacup, and a contemporary water boiler.

**How are the lives of the women you see represented in Room 7 different from those of women in most cultures today?**

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### Court Paintings of the Qing Dynasty

Qing court painting represents the last great chapter in China's dynastic painting history. The Qing rulers, being true heirs to the Ming legacy, reinstated court painters, tailoring the tradition to meet the demands and tastes of their own time. While demonstrating their wide intellectual interests in Chinese arts and culture, the Manchu-based Qing rulers exercised great control in shaping court painting. The high regard for Qing court painting can be summarized by the script of a seal Emperor Qianlong bestowed to his leading court painters: "Brushes Dipped in the Benevolent Imperial Rain."

These rooms feature Ming and Qing court paintings that depict animals, figures in gardens and landscapes, and botanical scenes. The paintings were executed by court painters, court officials, and members of the imperial family. The wall texts explore symbolism and mythology in these scenes and address how Qing rulers reinstated court painters in the 18th century, in keeping with the Ming tradition.

### ROOM 8

#### Children Playing in the Garden

Jin Tingbiao (d. 1767)

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Palace Museum, Gu.5267

Jin Tingbiao entered the court in 1757 after presenting Emperor Qianlong an album of his Luohan paintings during the imperial tour of the South. As a highly skilled court painter, Jin won great imperial favor and produced numerous works upon imperial command. In this painting, Jin depicts a group of young boys picking flowers and herbs and playing games in a garden during the Duanyang festival. The festival occurs on May 5 of the lunar calendar. One of the oldest festival activities is picking medicinal herbs and hanging them above doors to ward off evil and toxins.



© The Palace Museum

Many paintings have verses written on them. The Qianlong emperor, who is believed to have written over forty thousand poems in his lifetime, wrote the verse that appears on this painting:

*By willow trees, garden rocks, and fresh grass,  
Children in red and green are playing the straw-fighting game.  
The young boys love the vital spring,  
Not yet learning any famous words by Lianxi.*  
(Lianxi was an 11th century Chinese philosopher)

Several works in this room and Room 9 are painted on scrolls. Scrolls are continuous rolls of paper or silk in varying lengths. There are two types of scrolls: hanging scrolls, which were meant to be hung on the wall, like the one we see here, and hand scrolls, which were only to be viewed at certain times. The hanging-scroll format is used for vertical compositions. The image is mounted onto paper and framed with decorative silk borders. A cord attached to a wooden strip at the top of the scroll is used to hang the work on a wall. A wooden rod at the bottom not only serves as a weight when the work is hanging but also helps to roll up the painting for storage.

Hand scrolls, on the other hand, were kept rolled up and tied with a cord when not in use. For viewing, hand scrolls were carefully unrolled from right to left, so that each section could be admired as it was revealed. Before proceeding to the next section, the previous one was rerolled. There was an element of surprise in unrolling a scroll, and anticipation for what came next was exciting!

### Explore more about Chinese scrolls!

<http://www.vmfamuseum.org/interactives/beyond-the-walls/painting/>

**Choose an image from one of the scrolls in this room or the next that inspires you and write a short poem about it.**

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### **Religious Life in the Palace**

Ming and Qing emperors and their extended families were pious believers in Buddhism and Daoism, both strongly connected with nature and spiritual practices. Emperor Qianlong (r. 1736–95) was a faithful follower of Tibetan Buddhism. His personal beliefs greatly influenced his decisions on every aspect of court life. Thirty Tibetan temples were constructed within the residential complexes and gardens of the inner court, in addition to two Daoist shrines. Private chambers belonging to the emperor or members of his family contain private chapels, indicating religion's important role in their lives. Today, the Palace Museum's collection boasts more than forty-eight thousand religious works, ninety percent of which are Tibetan Buddhist.

The exhibition features thirty works, including Buddhist and Daoist statues, *thangkas* (paintings on cloth), manuscript sutras, models of pagodas, and altar offerings. These objects were used for Buddhist and Daoist activities in the palace and provide a glimpse into the spiritual life of the inner court.

Enjoy looking at these religious items from the inner court of the Forbidden City.

**We hope you have enjoyed your visit to the Forbidden City!**

# Worksheets for Students, Grades 2–5

FORBIDDEN CITY: IMPERIAL TREASURES FROM THE PALACE MUSEUM, BEIJING

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Three Great Halls Palace, Forbidden City, Beijing, China. © Fotosearch.com

**These pages include only the activity suggestions and questions for students. Teachers and chaperones, please use your full curriculum packet for information for facilitating discussion and activities.**

Look for dragons throughout the exhibit and in the objects you explore!

## ROOM 1



© The Palace Museum

**Ceremonial Armor with Dragon Design**, mid-18th century Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)  
Satin with embroidery, gold thread, pearls, gilt copper studs, steel, copper buttons  
Palace Museum, Gu.171798

The dragons on this set of armor have five claws, showing us it was made for the emperor.

**How many dragons can you count?**

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**What would you put a dragon symbol on?**

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In this room you will also find eight more sets of armor made for soldiers of the imperial army to wear during ceremonies in the Outer Court.

**ROOM 2**



© The Palace Museum

**Horse Zizaiju, 1743**

Lang Shining (Giuseppe Castiglione, Italian, 1688–1766)

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Palace Museum, Gu.5355

**Practice writing the Chinese character for horse in these two different scripts.**



Oracle Bone  
Script



Running  
Script

### Room 3



© The Palace Museum

**Emperor's Seal with Dragon Knob**, approx. 1797  
Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)  
Nephrite, gold pigment, silk, coral  
Palace Museum, Gu.1166798

The Emperor's seal says:  
"Honor heaven, dedicated to the people."

**If you could create your own seal, what would it say?**

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**What would you choose as your seal's symbol?**

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**Look for the Emperor Qianlong's seal on other works throughout the exhibition.**



© The Palace Museum

Printed seal of  
Qianlong emperor



© The Palace Museum

**Emperor Qianlong in Ceremonial Robe, 1740s**

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Palace Museum, Gu.6467

Compare the robe Emperor Qianlong is wearing in this portrait with an actual robe from roughly the same time period, seen nearby.

**Imperial Yellow Robe with Dragon and Clouds**

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Embroidered satin, ermine trim, twill-damask lining,

cotton padding, coral, pearls, metal buttons

Palace Museum, Gu.42147



© The Palace Museum

The Twelve Imperial Symbols shown on the next page are symbolic interpretations of the universe. These symbols of imperial authority assumed a cosmic significance and indicated the emperor's status as the ruler of "all under heaven."

The symbols (their numbers accumulated over the years) appeared on the ceremonial robes (also called dragon robes) of the emperor. The Twelve Imperial Symbols that adorn the front and back of the upper robe are the sun, moon, stars, mountain, dragon, and pheasant. Designs of double goblets, weeds, fire, rice, axe, and bow are shown on the lower garment.

**Look at the symbols and see how many of them you can find on this robe. There are always nine dragons on these robes; nine is considered a lucky number. Are all of them visible?**

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**The ninth dragon was hidden under the fold-over front. Why do you think he is hidden?**

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**What other common symbols of power, strength, and authority do you know of?**

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### The Twelve Imperial Symbols



**The Sun**



**The Moon**



**Constellation**



**Mountains.**

*The sun, moon, constellation, and mountains represented the four annual sacrifices made by the emperor and together indicated his authority over the whole universe.*



**Pair of Dragons**



**Pheasant**



**Fu**



**Axe**



**Water Weeds**



**Libation Cups**



**Flames**



**Grain**

*The twelve symbols completed the message that the emperor, the Son of Heaven, had control over all creation as regent for the Lord of Heaven.*

## ROOM 4



© The Palace Museum

### Emperor Qianlong Writing in His Studio

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Palace Museum, Gu.6524-1/2

Emperors were expected to be able to write poetry and spend time enjoying intellectual pursuits, such as reading, writing, painting, and calligraphy. The studio was one of the most important rooms in the home of a well-educated person and was a place for contemplation, study, and practice.

**Look around the room for examples of writing tools that would have been used by emperors. How are these items different from what we use today?**

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**What qualities are current American leaders supposed to have?**

---

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## ROOM 5



© The Palace Museum

### Covered Bowl with Emperor Qianlong's Poem, 1746–80

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Carved red and black lacquer on wood

Palace Museum, Gu.109555

The Qianlong Emperor wrote a poem about his favorite tea on this bowl.

**What's your favorite drink?**

---

**Write three adjectives to describe how it tastes?**

---

**If you could rename your drink, what would you call it and why?**

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## ROOM 6



© The Palace Museum

**Empress Dowager Cixi Taking Snuff**, approx. 1860s–70s  
Qing dynasty, Tongzhi period (1862–14) or Guangxu period (1875–1908)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper  
Palace Museum, Gu.6361

**How have conditions for women changed since the days of Empress Cixi and Susan B. Anthony? Are those conditions the same everywhere in the world today?**

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## ROOM 7



© The Palace Museum

**Looking into a Mirror** from the series **Yinzhen's Consorts Partaking in Pleasurable Activities**, approx. 1709–23  
Qing dynasty, Yongzheng period (1723–35)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk  
Palace Museum, Gu.6458-2/12

**How are the lives of the women you see represented in Room 7 different from those of women in most cultures today?**

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ROOM 8



© The Palace Museum

**Children Playing in the Garden**

Jin Tingbiao (d. 1767)

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95)

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Many paintings have verses written on them. The Qianlong emperor, who is believed to have written over forty thousand poems in his lifetime, wrote the verse that appears on this painting:

*By willow trees, garden rocks, and fresh grass,  
Children in red and green are playing the straw-fighting game.  
The young boys love the vital spring . . .*

**Choose an image from one of the scrolls in this room or the next that inspires you and write a short poem about it.**

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**We hope you have enjoyed your visit to the Forbidden City!**

## Appendix | Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum, Beijing

From 1420 to 1911, the Forbidden City, a 180-acre walled complex in Beijing, served as the center of Chinese dynastic government and the residence for twenty-four emperors of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. In 1925, the Forbidden City became the Palace Museum, which today encompasses more than a thousand structures belonging to the original site and contains an art collection totaling 1.8 million objects.

This exhibition presents nearly two hundred works of art arranged in four thematic sections that reflect the activities of the palace's outer and inner courts. "Rituals in the Qing Court" addresses state affairs and ceremonies that took place in the outer court. "Court Arts in the Inner Quarters" offers insights into daily imperial life while exploring artwork that was influenced by imperial patronage, cultural exchange, and trade with the West. "Court Paintings of the Qing Dynasty" focuses on these same influences as expressed in the subjects and styles of court paintings. "Religious Life in the Palace" delves into the Buddhist and Daoist activities in the inner court and provides a glimpse into the spiritual aspects of life in the Forbidden City.



The Chinese language, like most languages, is both spoken and written. The spoken language includes seven main dialects, including Mandarin and Cantonese, as well as numerous sub-dialects. The differences can sometimes make oral communication challenging. All Chinese dialects, however, have traditionally shared the same writing systems, which developed from symbols—or characters—that represented objects and concepts. Over time, these characters were simplified in form and often combined to stand for sounds as well as words and concepts. As Westerners began to interact with China, they needed a system for representing spoken Chinese in the Western alphabet. The Wade-Giles system, developed by two British scholars, was used for most of the 20th century. In the 1950s, the Chinese government sponsored the development of a new representation system called pinyin, which means “spelled out sounds.” In pinyin, words are spelled as they are pronounced in the official language of the People’s Republic of China, the dialect of Mandarin spoken in Beijing.

The majority of consonants in the pinyin system are pronounced as they are in standard English.

Below are a few exceptions:

c is pronounced ts (as in “hats”)

q is pronounced ch (as in “chirp”)

x is pronounced sh (as in “sharp”)

z is pronounced ds (as in “bands”)

zh is pronounced j (as in “Joe”)

Pronunciation of some pinyin vowel sounds:

a      ah

e      uh

i      ee, or ih (when preceded by c, s, sh, z)

o      awe

u      oo

ai     eye

ei     ay

ao     ow

ou     o

ui     way

uai    why

ia     yah

ian    yen

ie     yeh

Duration of construction: 14 years (1406–1420)

Rooms: more than 10,000

Buildings: more than 1,000 surviving buildings

Courtyards: 90

Total surface area: 180 acres

Surrounding wall: 26 feet high

Moat outside the walls: 171 feet wide

The Forbidden City, or Zijincheng, was considered the earthly counterpart of the North Star (*zihui*), which in Chinese legend was the home of the Heavenly Lord (Tiandi). In the name Zi-jin-cheng, *zi* refers to the North Star, *jin* means “inaccessible” to the public, and *cheng* means “city.” As a palace for the emperor, who believed he was the Son of Heaven, the Forbidden City was constructed based on this constellation.

Built on the ruins of the palace inhabited by the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), the new imperial palace was laid out on a central axis, facing south. Surrounded by a defensive moat and a wall with a watchtower at each corner, the Forbidden City contained more than a thousand structures, including ceremonial buildings, private complexes, gardens, and temples.

Divided into an outer court and inner court, the Forbidden City’s layout allowed for separation of public and private activities. The outer court was the setting for the most important state events including emperors’ inaugurations and birthdays, New Year’s celebrations, receptions for foreign ambassadors and honorary guests, and imperial state examination. The inner court was reserved for private activities and also served as the living quarters for the empress and consorts.

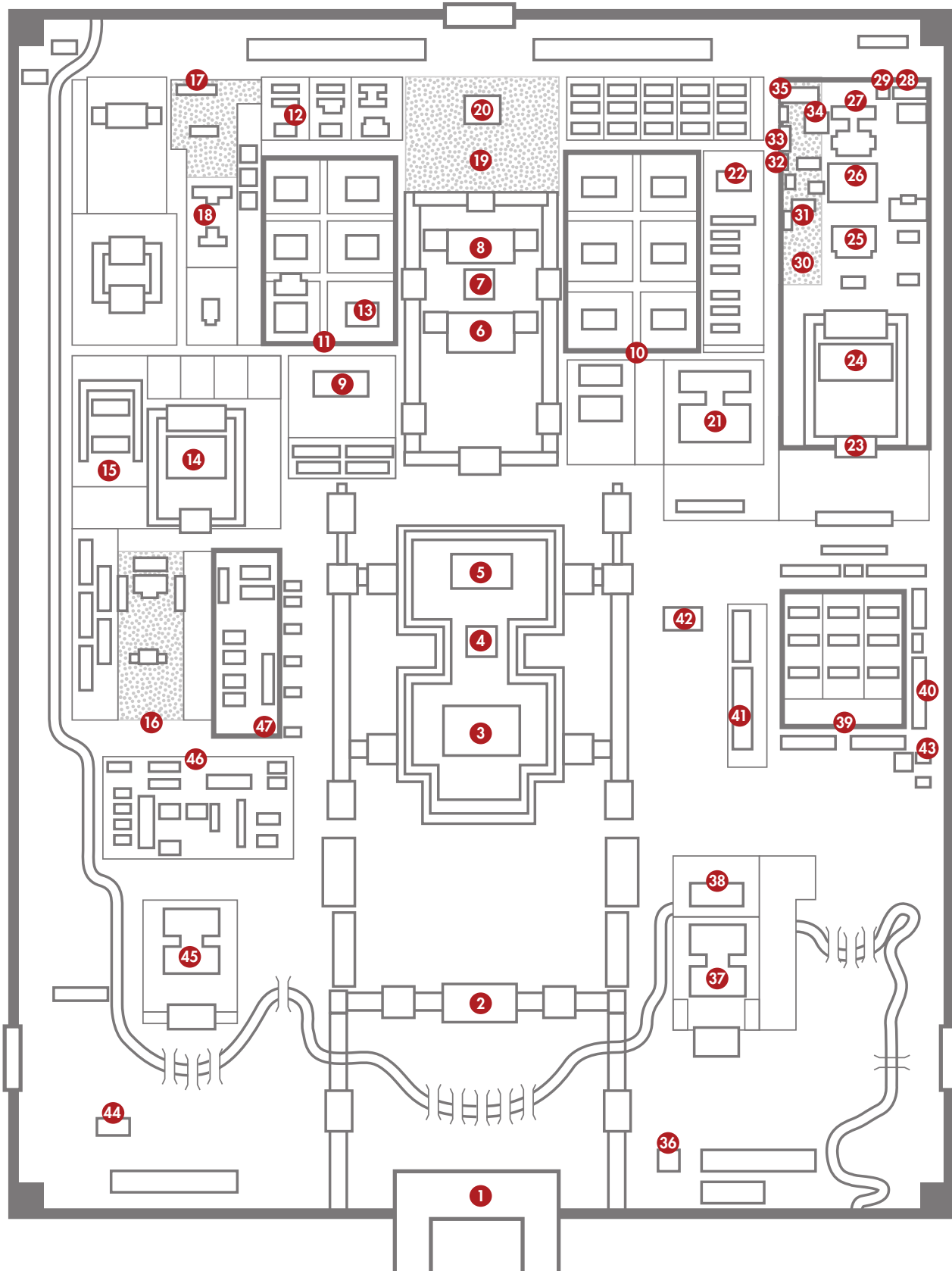
## Appendix | Plan of the Forbidden City—Key Sites

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1. Meridian Gate (Wumen)
2. Gate of the Hall of Supreme Harmony (Taihemmen)
3. Hall of Supreme Harmony (Taihedian)
4. Hall of Central Harmony (Zhonghedian)
5. Hall of Preserving Harmony (Baohedian)
6. Palace of Heavenly Purity (Qianqinggong)
7. Hall of Union (Jiaotaidian)
8. Palace of Earthly Tranquility (Kunninggong)
9. Hall of the Intellectual Cultivation (Yangxindian)
10. Six Eastern Chambers (Dongliugong)
11. Six Western Chambers (Xiliugong)
12. Palace of the Double Splendor (Chonghuagong)
13. Palace of Eternal Longevity (Yongshougong)
14. Palace of Benevolent Tranquility (Cininggong)
15. Palace of Longevity and Health (Shoukanggong)
16. Garden of Benevolent Tranquility (Cininghuayuan)
17. Garden of Building Happiness (Jianfugonghuayuan)
18. Hall of Rectitude (Zhongzhengdian)
19. Imperial Garden (Yuhuayuan)
20. Hall of Imperial Peace (Qin'andian)
21. Hall of Ancestral Worship (Fengxiandian)
22. Hall of Heavenly Sky (Tianqiongbaodian)
23. Palace of Tranquil Longevity (Ningshougong)
24. Hall of Imperial Supremacy (Huangjidian)
25. Hall of Spiritual Cultivation (Yangxingdian)
26. Hall of Joyful Longevity (Leshoutang)
27. Pavilion of Auspicious View (Jingqige)
28. Pavilion of Buddhist Glory (Fanhualou)
29. Pavilion of Buddha's Sun (Forilou)
30. Qianlong Garden (Qianlonghuayuan)
31. Hall of Following Instincts (Suichutang)
32. Pavilion of Lasting Amusement (Yanqulou)
33. Pavilion of Illuminating Clouds (Yunguanglou)
34. Pavilion of Viewing Destiny (Fuwangge)
35. Studio for Retirement from Diligent Service (Juanqinzhai)
36. Imperial Cabinet Offices (Neigedatang)
37. Hall of Literary Glory (Wenhudian)
38. Pavilion of Literary Profundity (Wenyuange)
39. South Three Lodges (Nansansuo)
40. Imperial Kitchen (Yushanfang)
41. Hospital and Pharmacy (Taiyiyuan)
42. Archery Pavilion (Jianting)
43. Imperial Stable (Yumajiu)
44. Hall of Southern Fragrance (Nanxundian)
45. Hall of Military Eminence (Wuyingdian)
46. Imperial Household Department (Neiwufu)
47. Zaobanchu imperial workshop



# Appendix | Plan of the Forbidden City—Key Sites



## Appendix | Chronology of Chinese Dynasties

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Xia dynasty	2100–1600 BC
Shang dynasty	1600–1045 BC
Western Zhou dynasty	1046–771 BC
Eastern Zhou dynasty	771–256 BC
Qin dynasty	221–206 BC
Han dynasty	206 BC–220 AD
Western Han dynasty	206 BC–9 AD
Eastern Han dynasty	25–220
Three Kingdoms period	220–280
Western Jin dynasty	265–316
Eastern Jin dynasty	317–420
Southern and Northern dynasties	386–589
Sui dynasty	581–618
Tang dynasty	618–907
Five Dynasties & Ten Kingdoms	907–960
Liao dynasty	916–1125
Song dynasty	960–1279
Northern Song dynasty	960–1127
Southern Song dynasty	1127–1279
Jin dynasty	1115–1234
Yuan dynasty	1279–1368
*Ming dynasty	1368–1644
*Qing dynasty	1644–1911
Republic period	1912–1949
People's Republic period	1949–present

\*Dynasties living in Forbidden City