

## Study Guide

Background information • Classroom Activities • Teaching Resources

# CHINA Speaks Your Language

Presented by  
Silk Road Music  
[www.silkroadmusic.ca](http://www.silkroadmusic.ca)



Silk  
Road  
MUSIC  
丝绸之路中乐团

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Graphic design by EyeSoar Graphics; text by Crawford Killian (p1, pp7-12) and Pat McCarthy, Education Consultant (pp2-6).

# China Speaks Your Language!

Performed by The Silk Road Duo: Qiu Xia He and Andre Thibault



## Program Description:

Recent research suggests that the Chinese explorers of the 15th century voyaged not only to India and Africa, but around the world to the Americas. Whether true or not, this controversial theory has inspired a worldwide journey of musical exploration by the *Silk Road Duo*. In an adventurous encounter of musical traditions, *Qiu Xia He* and *Andre Thibault* show that China does indeed speak your language.

"*China Speaks Your Language*" is a music performance that will introduce audiences to different cultures through the experience, discoveries, and travels of the Silk Road Duo: *Qiu Xia He* accompanied by multi-instrumentalist *Andre Thibault*. The pipa, a Chinese lute with a wide range of expression, will be the focal point.

This husband-and-wife team is well equipped for their cultural voyage. Both have lived passionately as professional musicians. Their common bond and love of music have taken them on tours all over the world with award-winning groups like *Silk Road Music*, *ASZA*, *Cordes en Folie* and *Jou Tou*. They have performed from Montreal to London, from South Africa to Malaysia, from British Columbia to Hawaii. In 2004, they were featured with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra at the Orpheum to welcome His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

"*China Speaks Your Language*" will surround the Chinese pipa with many world instruments, such as the flamenco guitar from Spain and the oud and bouzouki, lutes from the Middle East and Greece. Percussion instruments include pandeiro and sourdo from Brazil; musical bow and mbira from Africa;

bendir from Morocco; kanjira tambourine and shanai from India; gongs and wood percussions from Asia; and hulusi and bawu flutes from China's Yunnan province.

## Music performed:

Chinese Classical & Folk  
Middle Eastern Folk

French and Celtic Music  
Spanish Flamenco

Indian Folk  
African and Brazilian

South American  
Original compositions

*Note: A guest percussionist is available for touring.*

"Vancouverites should be justly proud to have such innovative global artists working here."  
—Tony Montague, *The Vancouver Courier*

## About Silk Road Music

Silk Road Music's CDs, *Endless* and *Village Tales*, have twice won the West Coast Music award for Best World Music Album and *Endless* earned a 1999 Juno nomination for Best Global Album. Music lovers were amazed and delighted to find Chinese music so accessible, and to hear how eloquently Silk Road could express Western genres.

Silk Road's performance features traditional instrumental pieces, original compositions and Chinese folk songs, arranged for cross-cultural instrumentation, and performed in both English and Mandarin by duets from both cultures. All the presentations can be done in English, French and Mandarin Chinese. Audiences have found the result is a breathtaking work of beauty, virtuosity, and innovation.

The music is truly accessible to people of all cultures. In addition to its artistic strengths, Silk Road's music is also a remarkable window into Chinese culture. The 40-page Village Tales booklet contains sheet music for all the songs (with lyrics in both languages), Chinese pronunciation keys, and background on the instruments and songs. A teacher-designed study guide is also available for students, presenters and those who want to pursue their interest in Chinese culture or to share it with others.

Silk Road Music is one of the few Chinese touring ensembles in North America to have performed at all the major festivals in Canada. Its music has been featured on CBC's Asian music compilation, at the Philadelphia Museum, the Whitefish Theatre in Montana, the Seattle Asian Museum, BBC international recital in UK, Montreal Jazz Festival, Festival De Quebec, Kentucky Arts Center, and Charlotte, NC.

Throughout its travels, Silk Road Music has realized the potential of music as both the expression of a culture and a powerful link between cultures. Silk Road's audiences have gained a greater understanding for Chinese music, for the music of their own traditions, and for the energy that results when cultures eagerly try to learn from one another.

"I was most impressed by the manner in which they executed their performance. They catered to the needs and interests of the entire audience; they shared a part of themselves with the listeners; and they portrayed the importance of music in every society."  
—Heather Yopp, *Charlotte, NC*

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# PRE-SHOW Activities

## Primary and Junior

### Discussion

- Using a map of the World, show the children where China is in relation to Canada.
- Ask what they think of when they hear the word China.
- If you have Chinese students, ask them to talk about their country or even to bring in artifacts that represent China (or find some pictures to display).
- Display and talk about any artifacts brought by the children or yourself (use pictures if necessary).
- If possible play some Chinese music and ask the children to respond to it.
- Tell the children that they are going to attend a performance by Silk Road in which the performers will play some familiar and unfamiliar instruments, with music from China and other parts of the world.

## Intermediate

### Discussion

- Using a map of the world, have the students point out China and its location relative to Canada.
- Ask what they know about European exploration of China. (When? Who? What? they were searching for.)
- Ask them why the route to China is often called the Silk Road.
- Explain that China also went out to explore the world and show them on the map the places that they Chinese explored: India, Australia, Africa, and maybe even the Americas. Trace the route the ships would have taken. (From Southern China, around Africa to the coast of Spain)
- Explain that any time people visit other countries they are influenced by the culture and they leave influences behind, in food, clothing, music etc. (Example: First Nations and British and French settlers)
- Tell the students that they are going to attend a performance by Silk Road, a musical duo, who play Chinese and western instruments to explore music from many countries.

### \* Teacher Talk \_\_\_\_\_

Involving children in pre-show activities makes them a more focused and enthusiastic audience and helps them to get the most out of the experience.



### \* Teacher Talk \_\_\_\_\_

Giving a few suggestions will encourage active watching and listening, and provide starting points for follow-up.

## All Levels

### What to Watch and Listen for During the Performance:

- Look for musical instruments that are familiar and unfamiliar.
- Listen for music from the countries we "visit" on our journey.
- Listen for the story of the Chinese ships, and where they went exploring.

# POST-SHOW Activities

## Primary

### Discussion

- Refer to the “What to Watch For” section and ask them to report on what they saw and heard.
- Ask them about the instruments that they heard, and how they were played. (See Additional Information)
- Review the story of the Chinese ships and check for specific details (how many, what kind of ships, what kind of jobs were needed on the journey).
- Ask if they heard any music that was scary, happy, sad etc.
- Ask if they have any favourite parts.

## Primary

### Music Activities

- Let the students use percussion instruments, found instruments, or body percussion, and vocal sounds to recreate the storm at sea. Ask them to close their eyes as they listen and see what pictures come to mind.
- Play the storm music from the CD and have the students move to the music to act out what happens in the storm.
- In pairs, one student can be the snake and the other the snake-charmer. One can mime playing as the music plays on the CD. The other can move like a snake. (or can be done in whole group, with one person being the charmer)

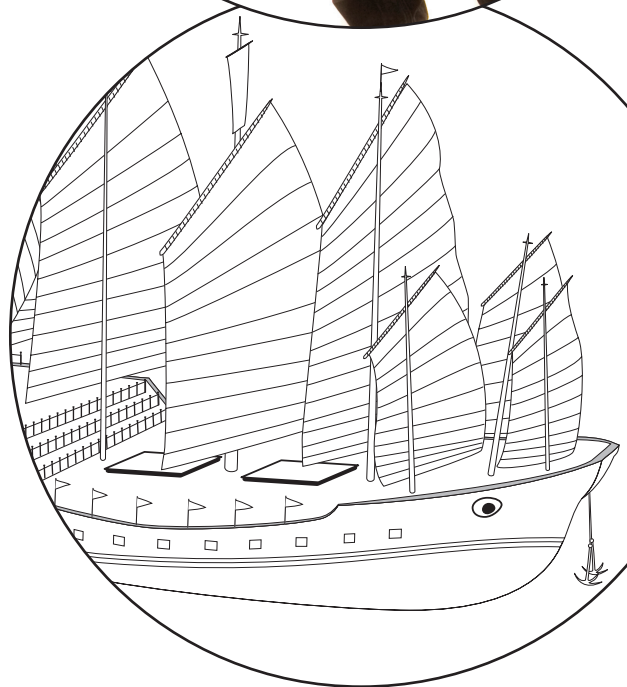
## Primary

### Visual Arts Activities

- Create a mural with the ocean and continents. Have the children draw and cutout ships to paste onto the places that the Chinese visited.
- Show the page with the instruments and ask the children to choose their favourite to draw. Have them label their picture in Chinese and English, by copying the chart.
- Make a list of all the jobs that people would need to do on these large ships. Have the children decide which job they would like to do. Draw a picture of themselves doing that job.

### \* Teacher Talk

While watching a performance, students are engaged physically, emotionally and intellectually. The post-show activities allow them to ask questions, clarify meaning and to express their feelings, or to create their own art as a response to what they have experienced.





# POST-SHOW Activities

## Primary

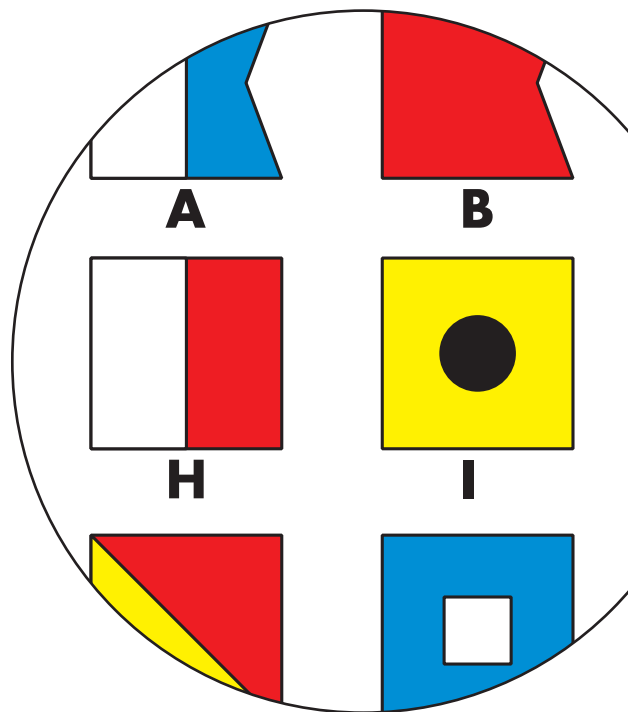
### Drama and Movement Activities

- Make a list of all the things that they would need to take on a voyage around the world, and use the list to play “I Packed My Suitcase” in which each child adds a new object and the others have to try and remember, as they repeat what they have heard and add a new item in turn.
- Have the children choose a job they would do on the ship. One half the class acts out the role they have chosen while the other children guess what they are doing.

## Primary

### Language Arts Activities

- Using the boat flags, have the children write their names. (see page 9)
- Write captions on their occupational drawings, and put the pictures together into a Big Book.



## Curriculum Connections

*By completing the above activities the students will demonstrate their achievement of the following Curriculum Expectations:*

- Respond to music through movement and visual art (Music).
- Learn how musical instruments are made, and how they produce sound (Music).
- Mark locations and routes on a map (Social Studies).
- Research information about Chinese history (Social Studies).
- Explore occupations and daily lives in historical context (Social Studies).
- Create soundscapes of various environments (Music/ Drama).
- Move to music to explore meaning in a story (Drama/Dance).
- Solve problems as part of a whole-group role-play (Drama).
- Learn about life at sea, including communicating by the use of flags (Social Studies).
- Respond to stories through drawings and models (visual art and technology).

# POST-SHOW Activities

## Junior/Intermediate

### Discussion

- Refer to the “What to Watch For” section from the pre-show activities, and have the students report on their observations.
- Use the map to trace where the Chinese ships went on their explorations.
- Make a list of the different kinds of music that you heard.
- Talk about the use of musical instruments to play music from different cultures (e.g. the guitar used in Chinese music; the Pipa to play a Quebec reel.)
- Discuss the exploration by China and how it is the same or different from other voyages of discovery they know about (Columbus, Magellan etc.)
- Recall the fictional letter from the sailor to his father, and discuss what it would be like to go on a journey that lasted for years.

## Junior/Intermediate

### Social Studies Activities

- Research the Chinese junk, and make a report including drawings or scale models. (see Page 8)
- Research early Chinese explorations and map the journey, showing the continents or countries they visited.
- Make a list of the jobs needed on the journey, and write a job description for one of them.

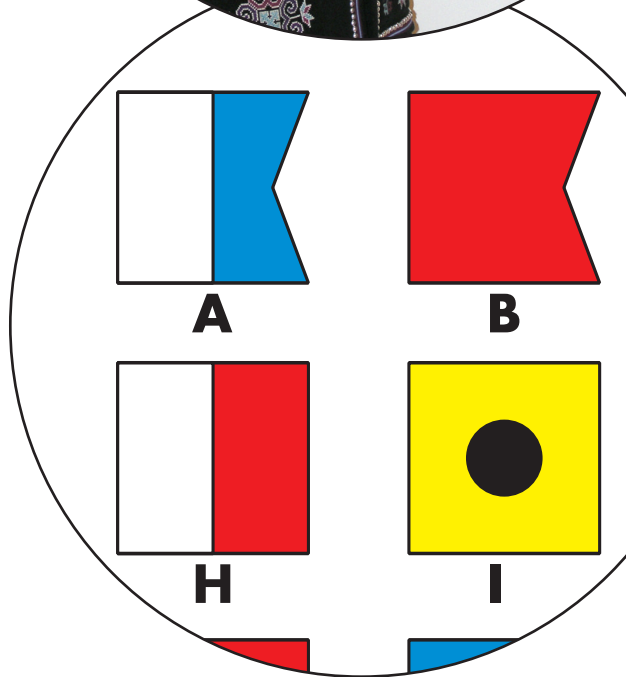
## Junior/Intermediate

### Language Arts Activities

- Write in-role as a sailor on a Chinese junk, sailing around the world. Tell about life on the ship and the wonders you see in the different lands.
- Create secret messages using the flag alphabet, and exchange with peers to see if they can decipher them. (see page 9)

### \* Teacher Talk \_\_\_\_\_

While watching a performance, students are engaged physically, emotionally and intellectually. The post-show activities allow them to ask questions, clarify meaning and to express their feelings, or to create their own art as a response to what they have experienced.





# POST-SHOW Activities

## Junior/Intermediate

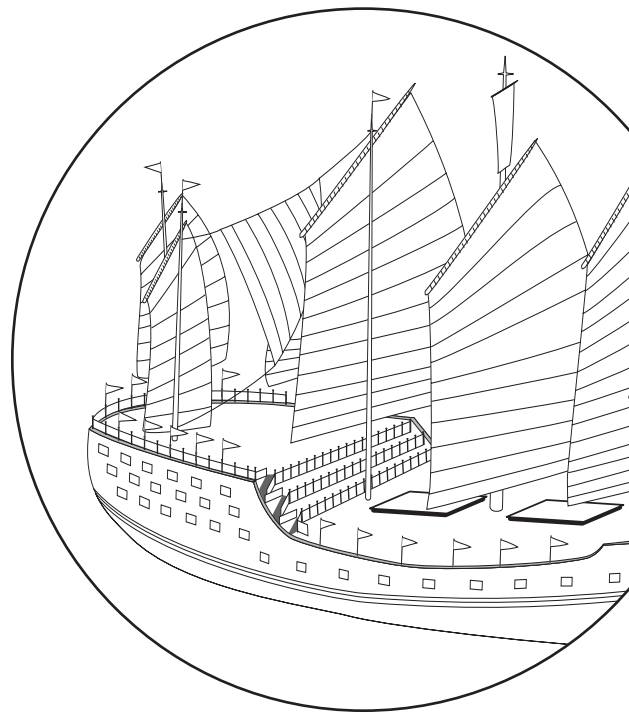
### Drama Activities

- Role-play a group meeting, in which sailors prepare for their journey, deciding what to take, what jobs they will each do, and how they will handle emergencies etc.
- Present the letter (they have written in role as Sailors) as a monologue from the point of view of one of the sailors on the Chinese Junks.
- In pairs: With one person as interviewer and one as a sailor candidate, conduct an interview in role, to see if the person would be suitable for a sea journey.

## Junior/Intermediate

### Music Activities

- Create soundscapes of the storm at sea, or the market place, using found instruments, percussion instrument, and vocal sounds.
- Using the musical styles on page 10, share with the class a music recording in one of the styles.
- Tell where the music comes from and what instruments are used. Talk about rhythm, beat, and what you like about the music.



## Curriculum Connections

*By completing the above activities the students will demonstrate their achievement of the following Curriculum Expectations:*

- Compare and contrast Asian and Western music and instruments (Music).
- Learn how musical instruments are made, and how they produce sound (Music).
- Respond to music through movement and visual art (Music).
- Learn about the fusion of music from different cultures (Music).
- Write in role, using a specific point of view (Language Arts).
- Prepare and present monologues (Language Arts and Drama).
- Mark locations and routes on a map (Social Studies).
- Research information about Chinese history (Social Studies).
- Explore occupations and daily lives in historical context (Social Studies).
- Create soundscapes of various environments (Music/ Drama).
- Solve problems as part of a whole-group role-play (Drama).
- Make scale drawings or models (Visual Art/ Technology).
- Learn about life at sea, including communicating by the use of flags (Social Studies).

## Qiu Xia He

—— Chinese pipa performer, composer and producer ——

Born in Baoji, China, Qiu Xia He (pronounced chu sha her) has had two notable careers in music: as a performer and teacher in China, and then as performer, composer, producer and teacher in Canada.

Neither career was entirely predictable. As a little girl hoping to learn the violin, Qiu Xia was told she would instead study the pipa, a Chinese lute. Showing early talent, she toured the country with the popular Bao ji Shaanxi Music and Dance Troupe. She both studied and taught the pipa at Xian Music Academy.

Given the opportunity to settle in Canada, Qiu Xia learned fluent English, made friends everywhere she went, and delighted audiences across the country and around the world. Qiu Xia has been a featured soloist with the Vancouver Symphony and the Glacier Symphony of Montana. She has performed with top musicians such as Brazilian virtuoso Celso Machado and Indian legend Trichy Sankaran. She has toured internationally with her own remarkable group, Silk Road Music, as well as with the renowned world-music groups ASZA and Jou Tou.

As a musical producer, Qiu Xia is the founder and musical director of "Enchanted Evenings," a series of summer concerts at the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Gardens in Vancouver. She has produced numerous concerts, musical events, and CDs. Her compositions include the sound tracks for films such as Tears of the Lotus and Darcy Island (both Leo nominees) and In Our Own Hand.

Qiu Xia has been an artist in residence with the Vancouver School Board, and a musician in the "Learning through the Arts" program of the Royal Conservatory of Canada. In both these roles, she teaches music appreciation to children in the schools.

"My music has a definite cross-cultural bent," she says. "It combines the traditional styles of the east, with new influences picked up in the west. I play Chinese music on Chinese instruments, but with western performance techniques gained from jazz, folk, and Celtic music. And I also use the pipa to play western music. I love to play with musicians from other cultural backgrounds, creating an entirely new sound."

Her own Silk Road Music CDs, *Endless* and *Village Tales*, capture this multicultural fusion by including songs from both Chinese and western traditions.

"I believe strongly in this new art," she says. "I want to bring the Chinese pipa into the new world where I now live, to introduce the richness of Chinese music to a new audience. I want to build a deeper understanding between east and west, and to develop a unique new language on this traditional instrument."

"My wife and I were enthralled with the virtuosity of the performers and by the beautiful fit of the lyrics to the Chinese rhythms... Thanks for a new experience."

— Ken Pinder, Vancouver



## Andre Thibault

—— Guitarist, multi-instrumentalist, and vocalist ——

Andre Thibault is well respected in the acoustic music world. He is a brilliant guitarist, whose fiery rhythms and stunning technique result from a unique blend of Flamenco and Moorish traditions coloured with jazz, classical, and world music.

His virtuosity has led him to share the stage with famous musicians such as David Lindley, D'Gary, and Oscar Lopez. He has been an opening act for such stars as Strunz and Farah, Tuck and Patti, and Rachid Taha.

Raised in Montreal, Andre began his guitar studies at an early age. His interest in world music led him to study bouzouki and oud, lutes of the Arabic world. He is also skillful on flutes and percussion.

The noted musician Sal Ferreras says: "Andre is a voyageur whose quest for the spirit of Spanish, Arabic and Brazilian folklore is amply evident in the breadth of his work and the beauty of his interpretations. He can transport the listener from the Casbah to the Gypsy caves of Andalucia."

### Redefining Multicultural Music

Andre has been a key player on the west coast world-music scene for over 20 years. Through groups like ASZA, Cordes en Folie and now JouTou, he has helped to redefine—and energize—multicultural music. He also performs with Silk Road Music, where his many instruments add new sounds and colour to its Chinese-based repertoire. His recording *Samar* was nominated for a West Coast Award, and as a band member he has received several awards and nominations.

For Andre, "world music" is not just a phrase; besides North America, he has played all over the planet, from Malaysia to



India, Cuba, Colombia, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Hawaii, and South Africa. His audiences have ranged from crowds at festivals and concerts to intimate groups in workshops and schools. Whatever the setting, he creates an instant rapport with his audiences through his love of music, his virtuosity, and his sense of humour.

### Ancient sounds

#### Chinese sounds

Drum sounds, guitar sounds, other sounds

Loud, noisy, shrill like commotion

Then soft, little sounds

Beautiful like "Jasmine Flower"

Chinese and English

Written by Ms. Scalfani's 2nd Grade Poets  
at H.O. Wheeler School, Burlington, Vermont



# China Speaks Your Language!

## Suggestions for Study Activities

### A. Sailing the Seas in a Chinese "Junk"

#### The Chinese Junk

A junk is a wooden sailing vessel used in China and other countries of the Far East. The word "junk" comes from the Javanese word "djong," which became "junco" in Portuguese and "jonk" in Dutch.

The junk's bow (front) is broad and flat, and its stern (rear) is broad and high. Junks are used to transport goods on rivers and seas. Some people live on junks. Most junks have two or three masts (poles that hold the sails), but some have as many as five. The junk's sails are made of cotton cloth or matting. The sails have "battens," like rods, that stiffen the sails.

Junks can be very small, but the biggest junks of Admiral Zheng He's fleet were 146 meters (480 feet) long and 55 meters (180 feet) wide, with 9 masts!

#### Junk Exercises:

Measure your school's playing field. Would Admiral Zheng's biggest junk fit on your field?

Color the "Junk" by following the names of parts of the ship shown on the junk coloring sheet.

#### Sailing in a Junk

##### *How fast could a junk sail?*

Knot is a unit of speed used for ships. One knot equals one nautical mile an hour. The international nautical mile equals exactly 1.852 kilometers, or 6,076.115 international feet, or 1.151 statute miles. A ship with a 20-knot speed can go 20 nautical miles in an hour.

In 1400, a Chinese junk could travel 100 nautical miles a day in the Indian Ocean. From Guangzhou, China to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, it is about 11,838 kilometers.

#### Sailing Question:

How many days are needed for the junk to make this trip without a stop? How many knots does it have to travel? How many statute miles is that? And how many international feet?

#### Anchoring

##### *How did junks stay in one place?*

An anchor is a heavy weight used to hold a ship or boat in place. A rope or chain is fastened to the anchor and tied to the ship. When the anchor is lowered, it generally catches on the sea bottom to keep the vessel in place. An anchor may be as simple as a rock tied to the end of a line. Most anchors are made of iron or steel.

#### Navigation

##### *How did Chinese sailors know where they were, and where they were going?*

They used the sun, moon, and stars. Sailors have known for thousands of years that the positions of the sun, moon, and planets change from night to night. We know that these movements are a result of the revolution of the moon about Earth

and the revolution of Earth and the other planets about the sun. Many civilizations used the stars as navigational aids. For example, the Chinese used the positions of the stars to guide them as they sailed from China to Africa through the Indian Ocean.

The Chinese also used the compass to tell directions. The simplest form of the compass is a magnetized needle mounted on a pivot so that it can turn freely. The needle aligns itself with the earth's magnetic field and points roughly toward the North Pole. The four cardinal points of the compass are north, east, south, and west. Midway between these points are northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest, called the "intercardinal points." Chinese and Mediterranean navigators were probably the first to use magnetic compasses to guide their ships.

#### Compass Exercise:

Find a compass, cover your eyes, turn around a few times, and uncover your eyes. Then use only the compass to determine which direction you are facing.

The Chinese also measured their position by the equator and by longitude and latitude. The Equator is an imaginary circle around the middle of the earth, halfway between the North Pole and the South Pole.

Longitude is distance east or west on the earth's surface, measured in degrees from a certain meridian (line from the North to the South Pole). In modern times the meridian through Greenwich, England is used.

If one person on the equator travels directly north, and another person 69 miles (111 kilometers) west also travels directly north, their paths will meet at the North Pole. Each person will have traveled in the same direction along a different line of longitude. Lines of longitude run north and south along the surface of the earth. Mapmakers think of the earth as a huge globe that is divided into 360 equal slices. The lines between the slices on the outside of the globe are called meridians. Meridians are the main lines of longitude on maps.

Latitude is the distance north or south of the equator, measured in degrees. A degree of latitude is about 69 miles. Latitude describes the position of a point on the earth's surface in relation to the equator. Latitude is one of the two grid coordinates that can be used to locate any point on the earth. The other coordinate is longitude.

#### Longitude and Latitude Exercise:

Use a world map to determine the longitude and latitude of your parents' birthplace. Now see if your city or town is closer to England or China. Are you closer to the North Pole or to the equator?

continued...

## A. Sailing the Seas...(continued)

### Communicating at Sea

Before radios, it was very hard for ships at sea to communicate. Sailors would have to row from one ship to another. So they invented a new kind of "language" with flags.

The international Flag System has more than 40 flags. One flag stands for each letter of the alphabet, and pennants (triangular flags) stand for zero and the numerals 1 through 9. To send messages, sailors fly "hoists" (groups) of one to five flags that have code meanings or spell out words.

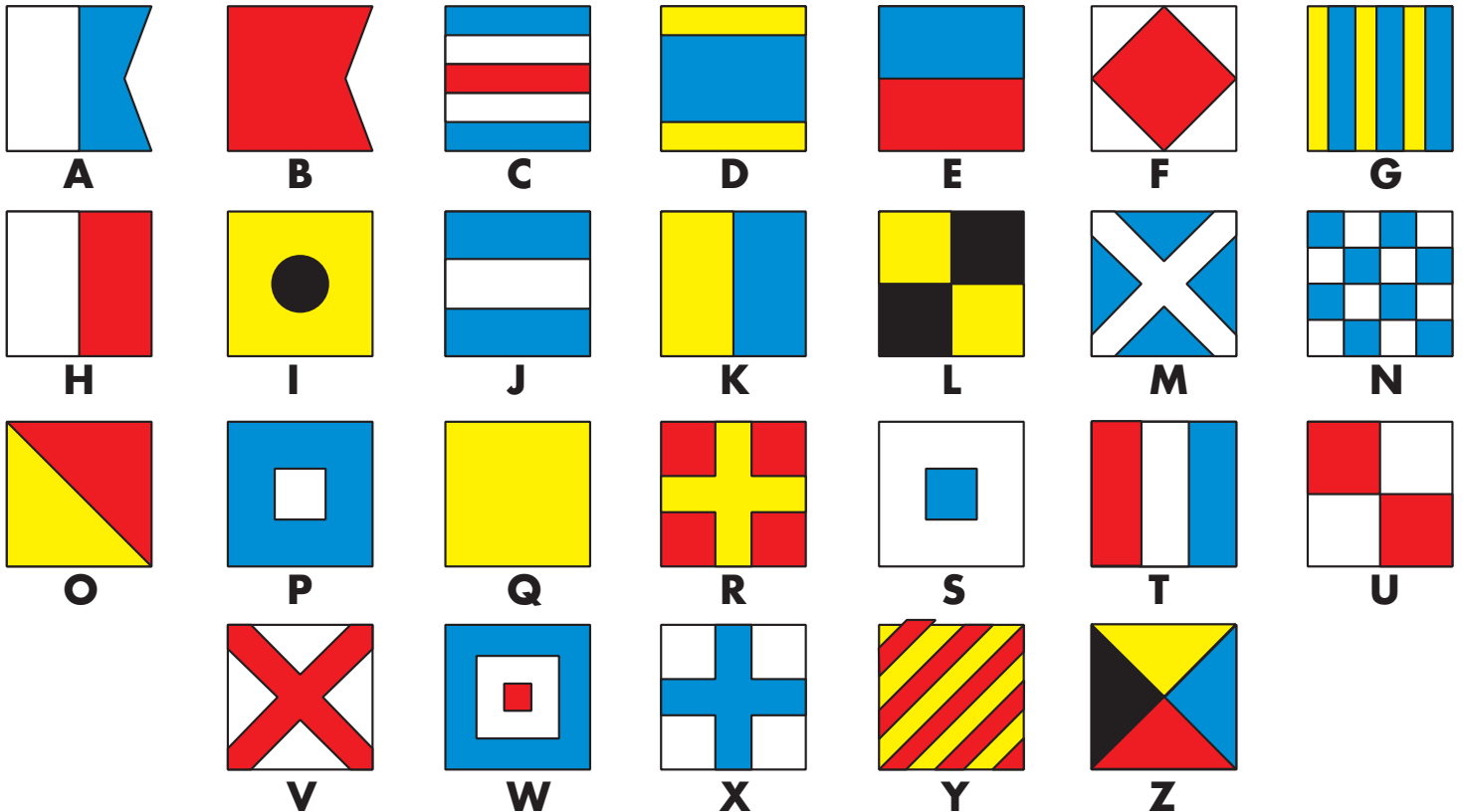
Sailors use certain flags from the international code for warnings or announcements. A ship in harbor that is about to sail

hoists the flag for the letter P, a flag once known as the "blue peter." A ship flies the D if it is having difficulty steering, and the O if it has lost someone overboard. Flags for the letters I and T together warn that the ship is on fire; and the signal MAA requests urgent medical advice.

### Flag Exercise

Use the international flag code (below) as a guide to print the following message:

"Your first name", love, rumba



# "Your first name"

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

# l o v e , r u m b a

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



## B. Music Styles

### Wen Qu

Chinese classical music. Wen means lyrical, and Qu means song.

### Wu Qu

Chinese classical music. Wu means martial. Qu means song.

### Rumba

There are many styles of this music ,Flamenco Rumba is played in a 2-beat rhythm with Spanish guitar and some kind of drum like bongo, conga or cajon.

### Samba

Samba originates from Brazil and was created in the poor districts of Rio de Janeiro. It uses many kinds of drums, tambourines, shakers and vocals to celebrate the Carnaval season.

### Fisherman's song

A vocal style used by fishermen around the world to express their life on the water. Often used as a "call and response" for work requiring a rhythm from all parties such as paddling forward, or haulers pulling on ropes to draw a boat off the sandbar.

### Reel

Traditional Celtic dance music with a 4/4 rhythm often played on instruments such as guitar, fiddle, flute and accordion.

### Snake charming music

A folk music often found in India and North Africa. Usually performed in the markets to entertain visitors using a shanai, a primitive oboe or flute-like instrument, along with some hand-drums and dancing. The idea is to hypnotize the snake with music and movement so he doesn't bite the performers or the audience.

#### Exercise:

Share with the class a music recording or video from home, friends or library which contains the style of the music in the list. Tell them where the music is from and what instruments they used in the song.

## C. Instruments

The instruments used in the China Speaks Your Language Program are shown on the instruments page.

#### Exercise:

Describe how each of the instruments makes musical sounds. What materials are they made of? Which category do they belong to: string, wind, or percussion?

## D. Countries the Chinese may have visited

Countries possibly visited by the Chinese include China, India, Ivory Coast, Brazil, Cuba and Canada.

#### Exercises:

What are the main languages spoken in those countries?

What is the capital city of these countries today?

What are the major religions from their traditions?

Are some of those cultures similar in their:

Language

Food

Clothing

Music

Natural resources

Weather & temperature

Superstitions

Write a story about travelling on the oceans 500 years ago. For example, imagine you are on a fishing boat or a canoe when a Chinese junk sails by. Or imagine you are a crew member, and write a short diary about finding a new land.

## Additional study

For further study of the music, please go to:

[www.silkroadmusic.ca](http://www.silkroadmusic.ca)

CDs available from the web site:

Chinese Folk Songs:

*Village Tales* CD and Study Guide

Chinese Music:

*Endless*

World Music on Guitars:

*Sheik-It*

*Cookin at Constanza's*

*Samar*

Global French Music:

*Joutou*

Latin Christmas Music:

*Noel Tropical*

Upcoming Pipa Music:

*See the website*

# China Speaks Your Language!

Instruments used in the program



**Birimbao** (*bi, rim, baw*)  
Afro-Brazilian musical bow



**Luo** (*lowa*)  
Chinese Gong



**Oud** (*woud*)  
Middle Eastern lute



**Di zi** (*di, tzi*)  
Chinese bamboo flute



**Rik** (*rick*)  
Tambourine



**Shou gu** (*show, goo*)  
Chinese frame drum



**Capachos** (*ka, pa, chos*)  
Venezuelan Maracas



**Basket shakers**  
Central Africa



**Pi pa** (*pee, pah*)  
Chinese lute



**Mu yu** (*moo, eu*)  
Wooden tone block

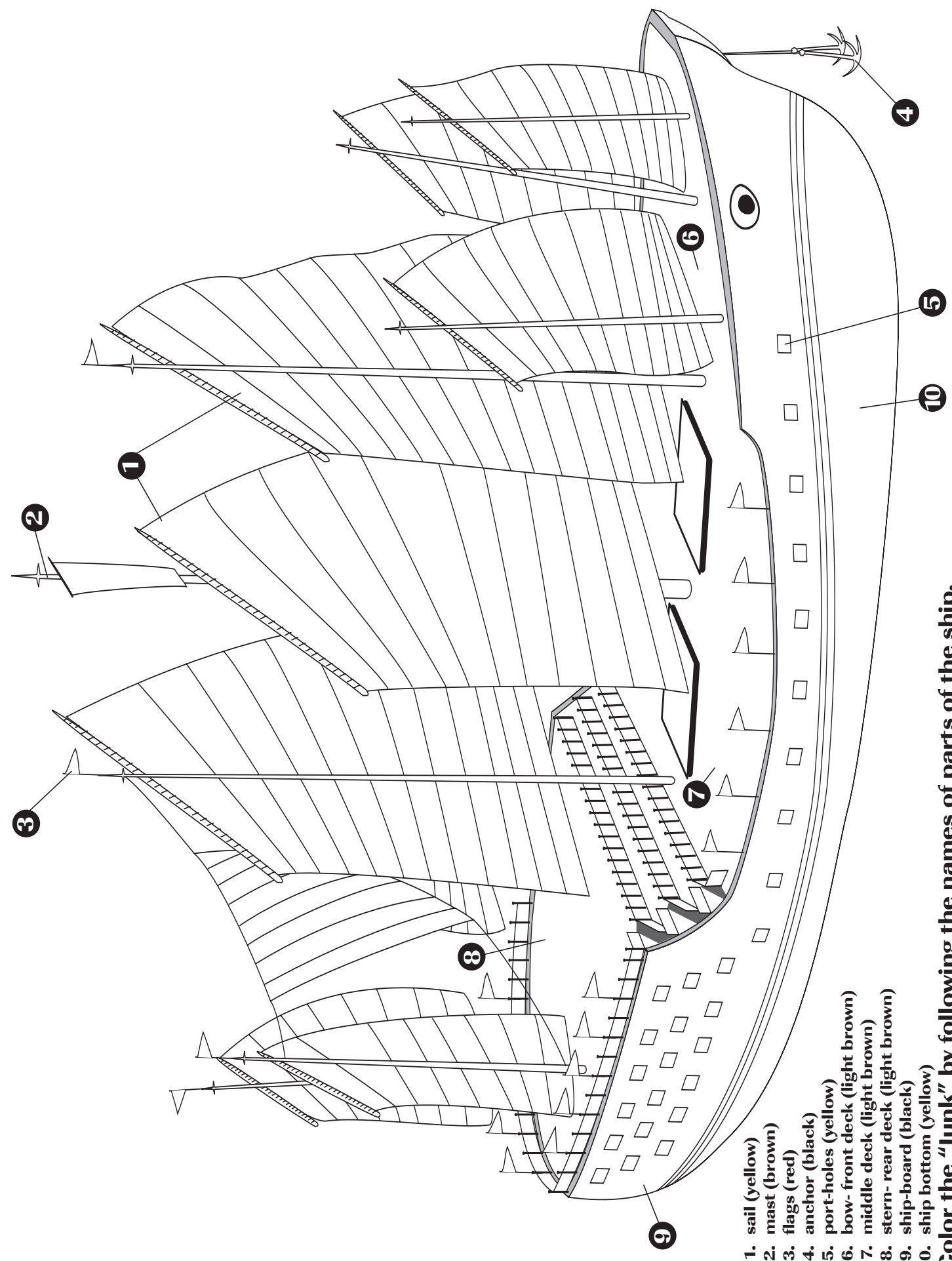


**Guitar**  
Flamenco



**Bombarde**  
Medieval oboe





Color the "junk" by following the names of parts of the ship.