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# Chinese Literature

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## PURPOSE

To familiarize students with Chinese values related through Chinese stories.

## THEME STATEMENT

Aesthetics, Celebrations & Values (ACV): All people need things of beauty, times of leisure and celebration, and a sense of values and service in their lives.

## SUGGESTED TIME

Two class periods of forty minutes each.

## KEY VOCABULARY & CONCEPTS

Values, province, socialist, comrade, commune, selflessness, Red Guard.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Chinese stories and folktales such as: *Sweeping the Snow*, *Thirteen Yuan*, *Finding the Owner*, *L's Arithmetic Test*, *Money Makes Cares*, *Hsiao Hui and His Grandpa* (Student Handouts #2-5); T-chart to compare/contrast stories (Student Handout #1).

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Values are an important aspect of all cultures and are expressed in a variety of ways. Folktales and stories are often used to reinforce cultural values.

## INITIATION (Inquiry, Preview, Involvement)

1. Read the story, *Hsiao Hui and His Grandpa* (Student Handout #2), to the class.
2. Discuss the meaning of "value."
3. Divide the students into groups of three or four.
4. Have each group write a list of values that are important to them and give examples of each one.
5. Each group will share its values with the rest of the class.

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## SUMMARY

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Adaptable Levels  
Grades 4-8

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Related Themes  
CCC

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Values  
Hard work, selflessness,  
thoughtfulness, consideration  
of others, honesty

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Skills  
Reading, analyzing literature,  
making inferences, comparing,  
recognizing

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Integration  
Language, social studies,  
reading

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**DEVELOPMENT (Instruction, Data Collection, Organization)**

1. Each group will read the stories (Student Handouts #3-5) in their group.
2. Have students list values on a “T-chart” (Student Handout #1) and discuss the values related by each story.
3. Have students compare these values with their own values.

**EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT (Idea Articulation, Ownership, Experimentation)**

- Assign students to find other folktales or stories from China. List any additional values related by these stories or folktales.
- Discuss favorite American folktales and/or books and what values are expressed by these stories.
- Invite storytellers to the classroom to present Chinese stories and folktales.
- Act out a folktale in class.
- Have a puppet show illustrating a story.

**ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT**

1. Students write a paragraph about one of the values expressed in the story or by the class.
2. Compare and contrast Chinese and American values. Cite examples.

*Sample rubrics for cooperative assessments:*

10 = articulate; 8 = adequate; 6 = less than satisfactory; 4 = barely sufficient

**KEY QUESTIONS**

- What are the main values expressed in the stories?
- Why are values important?

**REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

- *A Children's Palace*. Center for Asian Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Van Over, Raymond. *Taoist Tales*. New York: New American Library, 1984. (ISBN: 0452007011)
- Reys, Paul. *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1989. (ISBN: 0385081308)

STUDENT HANDOUT #1:

*T-Chart to Compare/Contrast Stories*

CHINESE VALUES	YOUR VALUES

## STUDENT HANDOUT #2:

*“Hsiao Hui and His Grandpa”*

Hsiao Hui’s grandpa used to be a machine operator in a coastal town in Kwangtung Province. Retired for many years, he keeps himself busy doing odd jobs for the factory, repairing things, or giving pointers to young workers.

One Saturday, Grandpa brought an old discarded cart back home and worked late into the night repairing it. Hsiao Hui was sure that Grandpa was going to use it in some “big job” for the factory the next day because it would be Sunday, and he always did extra work on Sundays.

Before daylight the next morning, Hsiao Hui heard the sound of the cart and jumped out of bed to follow Grandpa.

The factory area was quiet. Ahead of him, Hsiao Hui heard the squeak of cart wheels and saw Grandpa having a hard time pulling the cart up a slope. It was loaded with stones. Hsiao Hui ran to catch up and pushed the cart with all his might from behind. Grandpa suddenly felt the cart lighten and turned to look.

“Grandpa!” Hsiao Hui greeted him.

Startled, Grandpa laughed.

“We little Red Guards aren’t meeting today so I’ve come to help you,” said Hsiao Hui.

“Fine.”

Hsiao Hui picked a pebble off the cart and tossed it toward some birds perched on a tree. As they flew off, he grabbed some more pebbles.

“Put those back!” Grandpa ordered. Surprised, Hsiao Hui dropped the pebbles on the road. Putting the cart down, Grandpa picked the pebbles up. “These small stones will be used to build an extension to our factory. How can you throw them away like that?”

“But there are lots of pebbles at the worksite. What do a few matter?” Hsiao Hui answered indifferently.

Grandpa was angry. “The workers are doing all they can, really working hard to build up our socialist country as fast as possible,” he told Hsiao Hui. “You know what they say: ‘Drops of water make an ocean.’ If everybody brought just one pebble to the factory, they would have a big pile. And if everybody took one pebble away, the pile would disappear. I gathered these stones myself, one by one, until I got this cartload.”

Hsiao Hui’s face grew red. “Grandpa, these stones...”

(Continued...)

“... were all collected.”

Hsiao Hui was sorry now that he had thrown the stone. He ran back to pick up the one that he had thrown at the tree. Grandpa nodded with approval.

After they took the pebbles to the worksite, Grandpa asked Hsiao Hui to help clean up the ground. The boy worked with high spirits shoveling the rubbish into the cart.

“Not so fast. Careful you don’t throw any treasures away,” Grandpa called out.

“What treasures? This stuff is all rubbish,” Hsiao Hui wondered to himself.

Grandpa came over with an iron bar, poked around in the pile and finally fished out several bunches of cotton waste. He gently shook the dust and grit out of them. “The workshop will want these. They’re good for cleaning the machinery,” he said.

Hsiao Hui and Grandpa hauled the rubbish-filled cart to a ditch. The boy saw several bricks that somebody had thrown into the ditch, and he jumped down to get them. Grandpa didn’t know what he was doing, but when he saw Hsiao Hui coming out of the ditch with the bricks, he smiled with satisfaction.

## STUDENT HANDOUT #3A:

*“Sweeping the Snow”*

*Lei Feng was a soldier in the Chinese army (People’s Liberation Army or PLA). He was known for his love of the people, his kind deeds and his selflessness. He studied Chairman Mao’s teachings and tried to live by them. He died at a young age in a truck accident while he was on duty in 1963. After his death, Chairman Mao called on the Chinese people to “Learn from Comrade Lei Feng.” Lei Feng’s behavior is a model that people look to in the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.) This story tells how Chinese children tried to be like Lei Feng; this story is taken from real life.*

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Early one morning last February, Ling Yung, a primary school student in Shanghai, woke up to discover a world of white outside. He was excited about playing in the snow. But as he looked out through the window, he saw people cautiously making their way to work along the slippery road. He thought of the paths inside the compound of his school. Someone could easily slip and fall on them. A thought flashed through his mind. He would be like Lei Feng. Without waiting to eat breakfast, he ran out to find his classmate, Hsia Chang, and the two hurried to school in the cold wind.

As they approached, they heard the swish-swish of a broom sweeping. Who was here so early? When they entered the yard, they saw Hsiao Lui, one of their schoolmates energetically sweeping the paths, sweat streaming down his face. The two boys joined him, and later, other pupils and teachers came to help. With great satisfaction, they watched their schoolmates walking to class over clean paths.

## STUDENT HANDOUT #3B:

*“Finding the Owner”*

*Lei Feng was a soldier in the Chinese army (People’s Liberation Army or PLA). He was known for his love of the people, his kind deeds and his selflessness. He studied Chairman Mao’s teachings and tried to live by them. He died at a young age in a truck accident while he was on duty in 1963. After his death, Chairman Mao called on the Chinese people to “Learn from Comrade Lei Feng.” Lei Feng’s behavior is a model that people look to in the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.) This story tells how Chinese children tried to be like Lei Feng; this story is taken from real life.*

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One drizzly Sunday morning last August, Wei Mao-hao, a boy who lived on a commune in Shantung Province, slung his basket over his shoulder and went out to cut grass for the pigs. On the road, he came across a black bag. Inside it were a new East Wind wrist watch, a check for 150 yuan, about 30 yuan in bills, and some clothing. There was not a soul around.

“How worried the owner must be,” Wei Mao-hao thought. “As a Little Red Guard, I should find him and return the bag as soon as possible.” He stood beside the road and questioned all who passed by.

An hour and a half later, he still had no clue. The rain was falling, and he was cold and hungry. “What shall I do?” he wondered. He thought of the story of Lei Feng, and how he had taken an old woman to her home in the rain. It gave him new strength. He stayed by the roadside despite the rain.

After a long while, he was two men hurrying toward him. They were searching for something. He ran to them and asked what they were looking for. They told him that a bag had slipped off their cart. Wei Mao-hao handed them the bag.

“Just like Lei Feng!” they said.

## STUDENT HANDOUT #3C:

*“Thirteen Yuan”*

*Lei Feng was a soldier in the Chinese army (People’s Liberation Army or PLA). He was known for his love of the people, his kind deeds and his selflessness. He studied Chairman Mao’s teachings and tried to live by them. He died at a young age in a truck accident while he was on duty in 1963. After his death, Chairman Mao called on the Chinese people to “Learn from Comrade Lei Feng.” Lei Feng’s behavior is a model that people look to in the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.) This story tells how Chinese children tried to be like Lei Feng; this story is taken from real life.*

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The day after the Tangshan earthquake on July 28, An Hai-ying, a middle school student in Shansi Province, asked her mother to mail a letter for her. It said: “I am a middle school student. Here is thirteen yuan for the people of the earthquake area. Please accept it with the good wishes of a Red Guard.”

A few months later, the money was returned by the post office with a note of thanks. It said that the people’s government was taking care of the people in the disaster area and that no individual contributions were necessary.

An Hai-ying had been trying to be like Lei Feng since the day she entered school. With help from her teachers, she learned to read Lei Feng’s diary which had been published. She read it again and again. She knew every good deed he had done.

People noticed that An Hai-ying always thought about the collective group before herself. She realized one day that the walls of her classroom had become dirty and brought lime from home to whitewash them. When the class broom was worn out, she brought one from home. When the ceiling needed papering, she persuaded her mother to give her 200 sheets of old newspaper and three kilograms of paste flour that the family had saved for their own rooms, to use as an under-layer. She got several schoolmates to help her; one Sunday, they prepared the ceiling of the classroom.

One day, her mother said she was going to look for a pretty cotton print to make An Hai-ying a new blouse. “Let me buy it,” An Hai-ying said. When she bought a less pretty one at a lower price, her mother was angry. “Lei Feng said that one’s food and clothing are small matters,” An Hai-ying said. “Please keep the rest of the money for me, and I’ll use it for some good cause.”

Her mother smiled.

## STUDENT HANDOUT #4:

*“Li’s Arithmetic Test”*

For the first time ever, Li Xiaogui received an “A” on an arithmetic test. His teacher was very pleased because Li Xiaogui was fond of playing and did not study very hard. Usually Li Xiaogui received the lowest grade in arithmetic. One day in class the teacher praised Li Xiaogui. She said, “Fellow students, Li Xiaogui’s good grade shows not only that he studied hard, but it also shows that he now understands that it is important to study hard.” The students applauded. Li Xiaogui dropped his head, and his face turned red.

That afternoon when Li Xiaogui returned home after school, his father hugged him and said, “Your teacher telephoned me and told me about your good grade. Good boy. I hope you continue to work hard, but you should never become proud.”

His father handed Li Xiaogui a pen that he had bought for him as a reward for his good work. Li Xiaogui did not take the pen. He said, “No, I can’t take it. My grade was not good.”

His father began to laugh and said, “I just said that you shouldn’t become too proud, and right away you act modestly. But you deserve this reward.”

Li Xiaogui still did not take the pen and ran into the kitchen to help Mama prepare dinner. At dinner, Li Xiaogui did not eat well. Papa and Mama thought that he was excited about the test. They said that as a special treat he could watch T.V.

He watched a program about a boy who secretly took money from his mother’s pocket to buy a toy that he wanted. When his mother discovered that money was missing, the boy lied and said he didn’t know what happened to it.

After the program, Li Xiaogui said to his parents, “Papa, Mama. My grade of an ‘A’ is not a passing grade.” His parents did not understand.

Li Xiaogui said, “I cheated on the test. I copied another boy’s paper.”

His parents were very angry, but they did not scold him. They only said, “We are pleased that you told the truth.”

The next day, Li Xiaogui went to school very early to tell his teacher. After he told his teacher, she said, “Children of New China should not only do well in school, but they should also be honest. I hope you learn from this experience. Only if you understand your mistake and correct it will you become a better person.”

When Li Xiaogui came home from school that afternoon, he sat down and worked hard on his homework. His parents had never seen him work so hard on his studies.

## STUDENT HANDOUT #5:

*“Four Good Friends”*

Xiao Ling, Xiao Yu, Xiao Chun, and Xiao Jia were good friends. Every day they played together. They sang, danced, and played hide and seek. Sometimes they played cops and robbers or war games, but they were very gentle with one another and no one was ever hurt. But best of all, they liked to go up the small hill behind the houses and play “house.” Whenever they had anything good to eat, they shared it.

On Xiao Jia’s birthday, her mother gave her a beautiful toy hen. The hen pulled two baby chicks which cheeped when they moved. The hen could also lay an egg. Xiao Jia ran to tell her good friends. Her friends said, “Let us play with the chicken. Bring it to the playhouse.”

Xiao Jia ran home to get the hen, but her mother said, “You are not allowed to take such an expensive toy outside. You might break the toy or use up the batteries.” Xiao Jia did not want to break her toy so she said to her friends, “My hen is more expensive than your toys. You could break it or use up the batteries. I am not going to let you play with it.”

Her friends said, “Xiao Jia is a stingy devil.” Xiao Jia got angry. “You call me a stingy devil... I will go tell Mother.” Her mother said, “Don’t pay attention to them. You play with the hen at home.”

The next day, her three friends came to ask Xiao Jia to come out to play. Xiao Jia said, “I am not coming out. I have my hen and chicks, and I will play with them.” Xiao Jia played with the hen by herself, but very quickly, she was bored. Soon she was in a bad mood. She hated the hen and took her mother’s ruler to hit it. While she was hitting it, she said, “You are not as good as Xiao Ling! You are not as good as Xiao Yu! You are not as good as Xiao Chun!”

Xiao Jia didn’t speak to other people and didn’t laugh much. At meals, she ate very little. Mama thought she was sick and bought her many good things to eat, but Xiao Jia didn’t want anything to eat. The three friends heard that Xiao Jia was ill, and they all came to see her. Xiao Ling brought a stick and gave Xiao Jia and “injection.” Xiao Yu brought some chocolate, and Xiao Chun brought some fried rice. They said, “This is special medicine.” Xiao Jia took the “medicine” and felt better right away. She climbed out of bed and went outside with her friends to play house.

The next day, Mama went and bought two more toy chicks and put them in the small cart that the hen pulled. She said to the four children, “Why don’t you all take the hen outside and play?” The children played very happily with the hen.