

## GUGU DRUM GROUP



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CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

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PHOTO: Lynn Lane  
COVER PHOTO: Lynn Lane

**Educators**, we invite you to share with us what you did in your classroom around this guide or the production! You can email [scoleman@portlandovations.org](mailto:scoleman@portlandovations.org) or reach us via [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

We want to hear and see what great learning is happening in your classrooms.



## ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

In their performance, GuGu Drum Group uses traditional Chinese drums and the strength and power of percussion instruments to portray ancient tales of Shanghai, China. The Bull and Tiger meet, play and fight, the golden pheasant playfully runs down the steep hills, the Dragon Drum is pure force and athleticism, and the Boatmen on the Yellow River (Huáng Hé) give homage to the sixth longest river in the world, all through the magic of drum and dance. Using ancient instruments from small finger cymbals to large standing drums, GuGu Drum Group's performance fuses traditional Chinese drums and the percussive vocabulary of these ancient instruments with modern percussion techniques most famous just outside of Shanghai.

The members of GuGu Drum Group - drummers, storytellers, and athletes - from Shanghai, China, perform high-energy epic drumming, with traditional movement and colorful costumes. GuGu represents a powerful lineage, dating back to the Emperors of long-ago Chinese dynasties, now with a contemporary approach. The company is under the direction of Yang Xiaodong and his choreography of authentic ancient drum movements, as well as the actual ancient drums themselves, represent a powerful lineage of drum movements dating back to the times of the Emperors of Chinese Dynasties. GuGu Drum Group's contemporary approach to a moving presentation has been featured at many outdoor festivals and arts centers throughout China and the United States.

## CANCELLATION

GuGu Drum Group's U.S. tour was cancelled because of the ongoing coronavirus crisis. Portland Oventions is very aware that this cancelled tour leaves the artists without income or publicity to share their artistry and build on their careers.

Our thoughts are with the people of China and those around the world who are working to learn more about and prevent this virus from having more impact.



PHOTO: Lynn Lane

# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

## 1. WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN MAINE?

It is widely acknowledged that people from China first visited or immigrated to what is now the United States around the mid-1800s with the hope of participating in the Gold Rush in California. So what brought Chinese people to Maine? Gary Libby, an attorney and writer in Portland who has done extensive research on this topic shares some of his knowledge below.

The majority of the Chinese people who came to the US in the 1840s up until 1882 when Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, came from China's Guangdong Province on the southeastern coast across from Taiwan. It is believed that the first Chinese person ended up in Maine by accident. A man arrived in Portland in 1857 having stowed away on a ship docked in his home of Amoy Island (now Xiamen). By the time he was discovered by sailors they were too far in their trip to return to China. His Chinese name is not known because he took the American name Daniel Cough when he arrived. Mr. Cough moved to Tremont, Maine on Mt. Desert Island and opened a general store that he ran until the early 1900s. Around this time, Aar Tee Lam opened a tobacco shop on Federal Street in Portland and then opened a Chinese restaurant in 1880. Portland had a Chinese restaurant before many other bigger cities across the country. At that time there were nine Chinese people known to be living in the state. In the late 1800s, a 14-year old boy from China, Sam Lee, arrived in Portland and started his own Chinese hand laundry store. Prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act, Chinese women and children did not come to the United States since they were not allowed to work. The Chinese Exclusion Act was not repealed until 1943 due to the United States' desire to build a stronger relationship with China during World War II. Today, there are over 5 million people who identify as being of Chinese descent in America (Pew Research Center, 2015).



*Toy Len Goon, an immigrant from China, used this electric iron in her Portland laundry in the 1950s. She and her husband operated the laundry and raised their children in the Woodfords area of Portland.*

*In 1952, Toy Len Goon was elected American Mother of the Year and traveled to Washington, D.C. to receive congratulations from the First Lady, Bess Truman.*



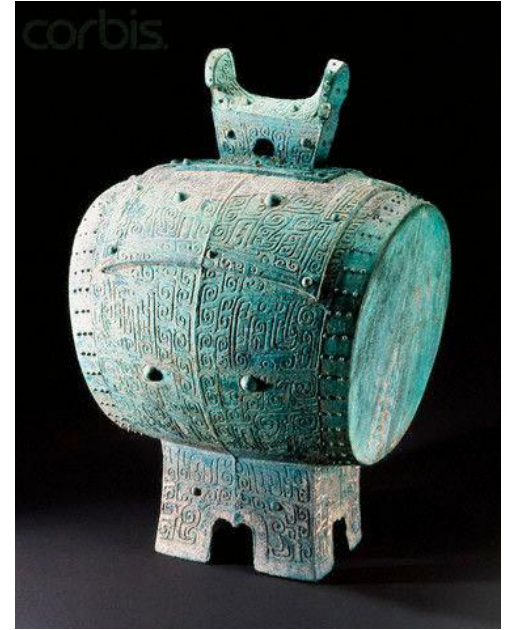
*Four of the children of Dogan and Toy Len Goon play with a car at their home at Arlington Place at Woodford's Corner.*

Credit: Maine Historical Society: [Maine Memory Network](http://MaineMemoryNetwork.org)

# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

## 2. WHY IS DRUMMING AN IMPORTANT PART OF CHINESE CULTURE?

One of the most important traditional instruments in Chinese music is the drum. It is agreed that drums were an important part of Chinese culture beginning at least 4,000 years ago (c. 1600 – 1100 B.C.). In ancient times, drumming accompanied military parades and marches. Very often a particular rhythm of the drums was used to intimidate enemies or communicate information to large groups of soldiers. Today, the sound of drums can be heard during traditional Chinese holidays, when the procession of drummers turns into a real theatrical performance. There are many different types of Chinese drums, ranging from small long drums that can be worn over your shoulder, all the way to drums large enough for people to dance on. Drums are often the color red, as that color symbolizes power and luck in Chinese culture. Drumming frequently happens as a group activity, meaning that there are many musicians playing together at one time, often with only other drums. Drummers typically use choreographed movements in their drumming performance that might look more elaborate to Western audiences. Drumming culture is not universal around China, and like the rest of Chinese culture, is subject to regional differences.



*Bronze drum from the  
Shang Dynasty*

## 5. WHAT DOES 'GUGU' MEAN IN CHINESE?

The Chinese character for drum is 鼓. It is often preceded by another character that describes the drum – its size, how it is played, or what region it is from. The Chinese characters that translate to GuGu are 鼓鼓 (gǔ gǔ). In this case, the first 鼓 would be the verb “to drum”, and the second 鼓 would be the noun “drum.” Thus, an English translation could be literally translated as “drum the drum.”



PHOTO: Lynn Lane



# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

## 3. IS THERE JUST ONE CHINESE CULTURE?

Definitely not! There are many cultural systems within China that are derived from different ethnicities and regions. There are over 50 minority ethnicities who call China their home, and they all have their own distinct culture. Differences appear in dress, cuisine, religion, music, holidays, marital customs, and more. Throughout history, the cultures in China have also been influenced by foreign cultures. Sometimes this influence came from countries who occupied parts of China (e.g. Japan, Germany, and Russia), some influence came through Christian missionaries. More recently, the hegemony of Western culture around the globe has brought many western customs into Chinese society.

July 10, 2009

FEEDBACK

### Minorities in China

China's ethnic minority groups are concentrated in inland border regions, far from economically prosperous areas to the east.



Source: [https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/07/10/world/20090711-xinjiang.html?\\_r=0](https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/07/10/world/20090711-xinjiang.html?_r=0)

# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

## 4. WHERE IS SHANGHAI AND HOW DOES IT CONTRIBUTE TO CHINESE CULTURE AND HISTORY?

Shanghai, also known as Hu or Shen, is located in East China on the central coast. It is south of the Yangtze River and borders the East China Sea. Its humid subtropical climate means its weather is somewhat similar to the southeastern United States but with more extremes in terms of rain. Shanghai is the most populated city in China with just over 24 million people. It is also the largest economic center and port of trade in China. In the 17th century B.C., Shanghai, then known as Shang, was a hunting and fishing site for noble Chinese. By the early 1000s A.D., the area was a busy port. During the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644 A.D.) farming and cotton spinning replaced fishing and salt as the most prominent industry. During the Qing Dynasty (1843 A.D.), the port of Shanghai was officially opened and people from all over the world began to move to Shanghai. Today, Shanghai is a unique culture of Eastern (Chinese) and Western (American, European) cultures. It is a busy and diverse city with a deep historical and cultural past.



# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

## 6. WHAT ROLE DO CHINESE FOLKTALES PLAY IN CHINESE CULTURE AND HISTORY?

Folktales play a huge role in Chinese culture. They can be separated into four categories: historical stories, fables, legends, and idiom stories. Idiom stories show the influence that folktales have had on the Chinese language. Much of the Chinese language is filled with commonly used 4-character idiomatic phrases (成语 *chéng yǔ*). These phrases are mostly derived from folktales and illustrate the strong link between these stories and current Chinese culture. (An example of a common way we use idioms in the English language is “it’s raining cats and dogs.”)

### SOME OF THE FOLKTALES THAT ARE INCLUDED IN THE GUGU DRUM GROUP PERFORMANCE ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW.

- **“Wedding of Mice” (老鼠嫁女 : lǎo shǔ jià nǚ).**

Once upon a time, there was a mouse father. He wanted to marry his daughter to the greatest person in the world. But, who was the greatest person in the world? Oh! The sun! He must be the greatest person in the world. The mouse father went to talk to the sun. “Hello! Mr. Sun. I know you are the greatest person in the world. Would you marry my daughter?”

“What? I’m not the greatest person in the world. The greatest person is the cloud. If he comes out, I’ll be covered.”

The mouse father went to talk to the cloud. “Hello! Mr. Cloud. I know you are the greatest person in the world. Would you marry my daughter?”

“What? I’m not the greatest person in the world. The greatest person is the wind. If he comes out, I’ll be blown away.”

The mouse father went to talk to the wind. “Hello! Mr. Wind. I know you are the greatest person in the world. Would you marry my daughter?”

“What? I’m not the greatest person in the world. The greatest person is the wall. If he comes out, I’ll be stopped.”

The mouse father went to talk to the wall. “Hello! Mr. Wall. I know you are the greatest person in the world. Would you marry my daughter?”

“What? I’m not the greatest person in the world. The greatest person is YOU, the mouse.” “The greatest person in the world is ... the mouse?” “Yes, the greatest person in the world is the mouse. See? If the mouse comes out, he’ll bite a hole in me!”

The two parents then tried to think of what else frightens mice. “I’ve got it! What are we afraid of? Cats!” So the mouse father went to find the cat and asked the cat to marry his daughter. The cat laughed and agreed. The wedding day came, and when the daughter went to the wedding, the mouse immediately swallowed his new bride.



- **“Women Generals of the Yang Family” (杨门女将: yáng mén nǚ jiāng)**

This is the story of a female warrior of the Yang Family, Mu Guiying, of the Northern Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.). Throughout modern Chinese culture, Mu often represents the steadfast women, one who is brave, resolute and loyal. This is a story that exemplifies a national spirit through heroism and patriotism.

You can watch another Chinese drum group’s interpretation of this story here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGVawKIJ5c>

- **“Rolling Walnuts”**

This composition is based on a northwest Chinese custom of drying walnuts on roofs and then rolling them down the gutters when finished. Walnuts hold special value in China. There is a tradition of carving intricate design into their shells as well as rotating them in your hands to promote circulation. Owning carved walnuts is seen as a status symbol because of their expense and association with Chinese emperors and officials.

You can watch a version of the musical composition here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3kL-2w5ESDs>

- **“Boatmen on the Yellow River” (黄河船夫曲 huáng hé chuán fū qǔ).**

This performance references the first movement of a famous modern Chinese piano concerto. It follows a group of men as they travel toward the Bohai Sea along the powerful Yellow River. Historically, this song is classed as a work song (劳动号子 láo dòng hào zǐ), and was originally in the style of call and response. However, unlike some American work songs, this is a happy work song.

# RESOURCES

## MAINE'S CHINESE COMMUNITY

Bennett, Troy R. "Maine's Chinese History Is 'More than Just Ethnic Food and Laundry'." Bangor Daily News, [bangordailynews.com/2019/01/31/news/portland/maines-chinese-history-is-more-than-just-ethnic-food-and-laundry/](https://bangordailynews.com/2019/01/31/news/portland/maines-chinese-history-is-more-than-just-ethnic-food-and-laundry/)

## HISTORY OF CHINESE IN AMERICA

"Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts." Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/chinese-immigration>

Wu, Yuning. "Chinese Exclusion Act." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 22 Nov. 2019, [www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Exclusion-Act](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Exclusion-Act).

"The Chinese Exclusion Act." PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/chinese-exclusion-act/](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/chinese-exclusion-act/).

## MUSIC ACROSS CHINA

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, <https://folkways.si.edu/learn>  
*Once you search by geographic region you will find recordings for music across China.*

Cristina Gonzalez Martin University of Washington. "Discovering the East of China: Chinese Music in Elementary School." Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, <https://folkways.si.edu/discovering-east-china-elementary-school/lullaby-vocal-outdoor-solo-programmatic/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>.

## CHINESE LANGUAGE

Where to learn the Chinese language around Maine:  
<https://cafamaine.org/language-study/>

## CHINESE FOLKTALES

Lesson Plans

"Chinese Folktale: The Little Rabbits." PBS LearningMedia, KET, 2 Dec. 2019, <https://mainepublic.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/chinese/littlerabbits/>

Mazzurco, Elizabeth. "Lon Po Po: A Chinese Fairy Tale Lesson Plan." Scholastic, <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/lon-po-po-chinese-fairy-tale-lesson-plan/>

## LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Confucius Institute at USM: <https://usm.maine.edu/confucius>

Chinese American Friendship Association of Maine (CAFAM): <https://cafamaine.org/>

Portland Chinese-American History Walking Tour: <https://cafamaine.org/portland-walking-tour/>

Maine Memory Network Chinese in Maine <https://www.maine-memory.net/sitebuilder/site/165/page/424/display>

## 十二生肖里为什么没有猫？

### Why Isn't the Cat Included in the 12 Chinese Zodiac Animals?

There is a legend that once upon a time, the Jade Emperor in heaven had an idea to assign an animal to each year so that it would be easier for people to remember the Zodiac cycle. He decided to hold a competition among all the animals in order to select 12 of them to represent each year of the Zodiac cycle.

At that time, the cat and the rat were close friends, just like brothers. They were very excited to hear about the competition and decided to go together. The night before the competition, the cat said to the rat, "I have trouble waking up in the morning, would you please wake me up before the competition tomorrow?" The rat agreed, "No problem, take it easy. I will wake you up for sure!" The cat felt reassured and had sweet dreams that night.

Early the next morning, the rat got up quietly, and left for the competition without waking the cat. At the competition, the Jade Emperor selected in order, the Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig to represent the 12 years of the zodiac.

When the cat woke up in the afternoon, the selection competition was already over. The news about the new Zodiac Animals was everywhere, and the cat wasn't included. The cat felt betrayed by the rat, and from then on, they were enemies. That's why to this day, cats are always chasing after rats.

从前有个传说，玉皇大帝下旨普招天下动物，要进行一场比赛，来决定每一年的名字。那时猫和鼠还是好朋友，它们听到这个消息非常兴奋，决定一同去参加比赛。猫对老鼠说：“我有个贪睡的毛病，明天一早去天宫应选时叫我一声”。老鼠答应说：“没问题，我一定叫你”。猫听了很放心，一夜睡得非常香甜。

第二天一早，老鼠偷偷起床，但却是违背了诺言，不辞而别。经过激烈的比赛，玉皇大帝选了鼠、牛、虎、兔、龙、蛇、马、羊、猴、鸡、狗、猪作为十二生肖。然而，猫直到下午才醒来，可是比赛已经结束了。十二生肖的消息传遍了天下，当然没有猫！猫觉得被鼠欺骗了，从此跟老鼠成了冤家，追着它满世界跑。

鼠	牛	虎	兔	龙	蛇	马	羊	猴	鸡	狗	猪
shǔ	niú	hǔ	tù	lóng	shé	mǎ	yáng	hóu	jī	gǒu	zhū
Rat	Ox	Tiger	Rabbit	Dragon	Snake	Horse	Sheep	Monkey	Rooster	Dog	Pig





## 12 Chinese Zodiac Signs



1912, 1924, 1936,  
1948, 1960, 1972,  
1984, 1996, 2008

*Ambitious, honest,  
spends money easily*

鼠 shǔ



1913, 1925, 1937,  
1949, 1961, 1973,  
1985, 1997, 2009

*Patient, inspires  
others, good parent,  
bright, enjoys solitude*

牛 niú



1914, 1926, 1938,  
1950, 1962, 1974,  
1986, 1998, 2010

*Aggressive,  
courageous,  
candid, sensitive*

虎 hǔ



1915, 1927, 1939,  
1951, 1963, 1975,  
1987, 1999, 2011

*Shy, affectionate,  
talented, articulate,  
seeks peace,  
luckiest sign*

兔 tù



1916, 1928, 1940,  
1952, 1964, 1976,  
1988, 2000, 2012

*Eccentric, passionate,  
abundant health,  
complex life*

龙 lóng



1917, 1929, 1941,  
1953, 1965, 1977,  
1989, 2001, 2013

*Wise, intense,  
tendency toward  
physical beauty,  
high tempered*

蛇 shé



## 12 Chinese Zodiac Signs



1918, 1930, 1942,  
1954, 1966, 1978,  
1990, 2002, 2014

*Adventurous, popular,  
extroverted,  
ostentatious,  
impatient*

马 mǎ



1919, 1931, 1943,  
1955, 1967, 1979,  
1991, 2003, 2015

*Creative, timid,  
elegant,  
prefers anonymity*

羊 yáng



1920, 1932, 1944,  
1956, 1968, 1980,  
1992, 2004, 2016

*Enthusiastic,  
intelligent,  
influences people,  
easily confused*

猴 hóu



1921, 1933, 1945,  
1957, 1969, 1981,  
1993, 2005, 2017

*Devoted to work,  
pioneering,  
knowledge seeker,  
eccentric*

鸡 jī



1922, 1934, 1946,  
1958, 1970, 1982,  
1994, 2006, 2018

*Loyal, honest, works  
well with others,  
generous, stubborn*

狗 gǒu



1923, 1935, 1947,  
1959, 1971, 1983,  
1995, 2007, 2019

*Noble, chivalrous,  
makes lifelong  
friendships*

猪 zhū

## PORTLAND OVATIONS

Founded in 1931, produces dynamic performing arts events including classical music, jazz, opera, dance, theater, and Broadway. We believe that cultural enrichment should be high quality and accessible to all. Oventions collaborates with other nonprofit organizations, education systems, and the business sector to promote lifelong learning while celebrating the power and virtuosity of the performing arts. We bring the exhilaration of the performing arts into our communities with free events as part of Oventions Offstage, connecting artists and audiences. Join us at unexpected “art happenings,” classroom workshops, masterclasses, community discussions, and pre-performance lectures to explore together the relevance and connection of the performing arts to our lives.

## THEATER ETIQUETTE

Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform and each performance calls for different audience responses. Lively bands, musicians and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and will want an audience to applaud only when they have completed a portion of their performance. As your students enjoy the show, invite them to think about being a part of the performance.

- What are the differences between attending a live performance and going to a movie or watching television?
- What are some different types of live performances? How many can you name?
- What kind of responses might an audience give to different types of performances?
- What are the different cues that a performer will give you so that you know how to respond? For example, might they bow or pause for applause?

*Also, remember that a theater is designed to magnify sound and even the smallest whispers or paper rustling can be heard throughout the auditorium. Each person is a part of a community of audience members and we all work together to create your theater experience.*

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Portland Oventions acknowledges that the places where we gather, dance, and sing is ancestral Wabanaki land. We will to pay respect to the Abenaki, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot – and their elders past, present and future.



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Gary Libby  
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