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Introduction

Oracle Bones Memory Match Card Game

Oracle Bones Memory Match is the first game in a series of card games for teaching Primary Mandarin. The game helps children remember 20 commonly used characters by showing them the original pictographs from centuries ago.

What is the Oracle Bones Memory Match Activity Pack?

The accompanying Activity Pack consolidates and extends language learning beyond the game. The 10 photocopiable activities develop:

- knowledge about different writing systems from around the world;
- knowledge of life in the Shang era;
- an understanding of how characters have changed over time;
- the ability to use a Chinese specific language learning strategy;
- character recognition and pronunciation of 20 words from the game;
- character recognition of an additional 20 commonly used words.

The pack includes a variety of activities from oracle bones code cracking to testing tarisas. There are opportunities for children to work alone, in small groups or as a whole class. Activities can be used as a series or as standalone lessons.

Who is it for?

The Activity Pack is designed for specialist and non-specialist primary teachers. Background information and clear step-by-step teaching notes are included to guarantee a quality lesson every time.

Activities have been extensively trialled in classes of 7–11-year-olds. Where appropriate, differentiated versions of worksheets are included. Each activity has an extension task and a link to a relevant IT based resource.

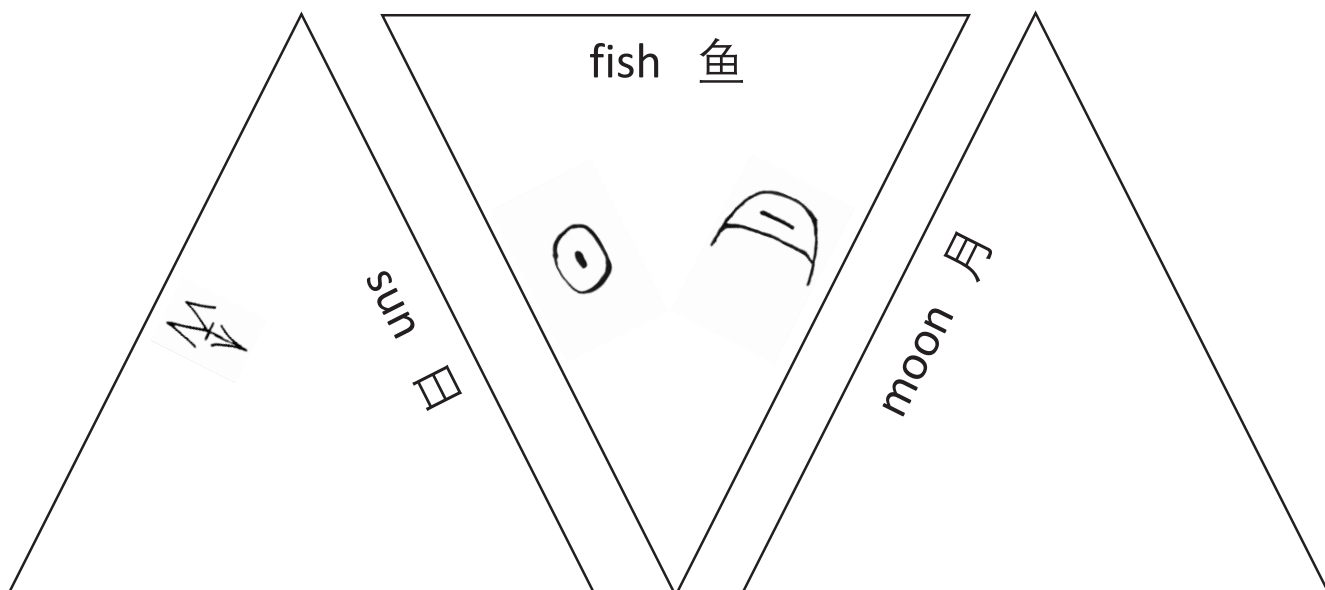
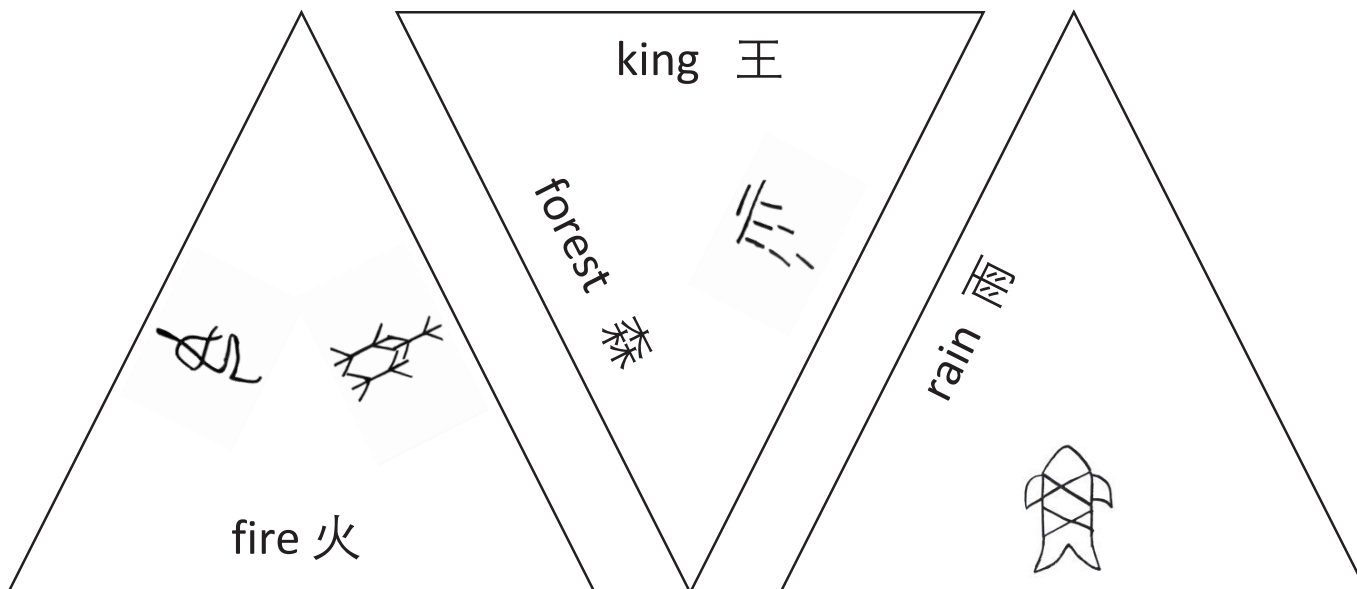
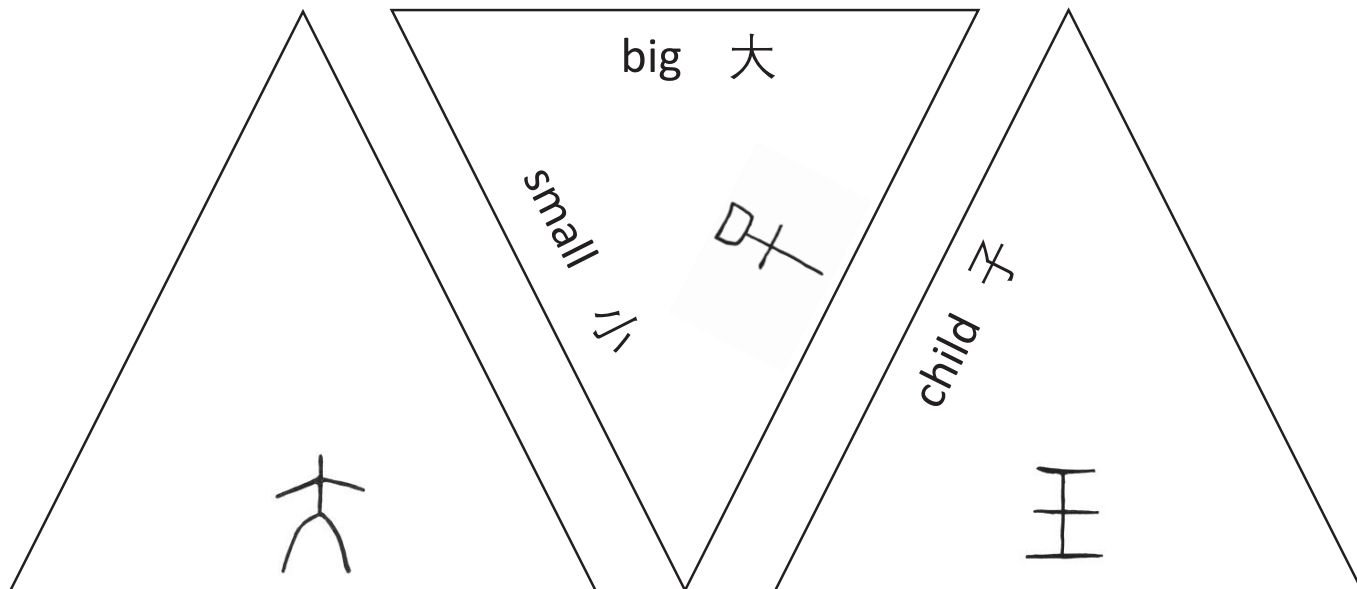
YCT (Youth Chinese Test) compatible

To help schools working towards YCT, more than 35 characters / components from Level 1 appear across the 8 activities.

Cross Curricular Links

There are clear links with UK primary history curricula. Activities 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6 and 1.7 develop children's understanding of an ancient civilization in a non-European society. Children learn about life and people from the Shang era and experience first-hand how a primary source of evidence can teach us about the past.

1.5 Testing Tarisas – Puzzle 1



1.6 Oracle Bones Code Cracking

LOs:

- Use knowledge of ancient characters learnt through the module and a glossary to work out the meaning of oracle bone questions.
- Be able to create and write oracle bone questions in ancient Chinese.

ACTIVITY TYPE

translation puzzle / writing

LOGISTICS

individual / pair

FOCUS

culture
history
reading

VOCAB FOCUS

ancient characters:
animal, big, child, die,
family, few, fire, forty,
good, harvest, king, man,
many, not, North, peace,
people, rain, sheep,
small, soldier, South,
day, today, vehicle, flood,
queen.

TIME

60 mins

MATERIALS

a copy of the activity
sheet and glossary per
individual / pair

Before Class

- Make a copy of the Oracle Bone Code Cracking activity sheet and glossary for every child / pair of children.

In class

1. Use the flashcards or slides 18-39 to review ancient characters from the Oracle Bones card game.
2. Explain that oracle bones were used by Shang kings to predict the future (see activity 1.3). By studying oracle bone questions, we can learn more about life in Shang times. See slide 8 for a 3D image of an oracle bone.
3. Give each pair a copy of the Oracle Bone Code Cracking worksheet. Tell children that by using their knowledge of ancient characters and the glossary on slide 9, they are going to find out what ancient kings and queens used to ask their gods.
4. Examine question 1 on the worksheet. Ask individual children to translate each character and write the literal translation on the board. Discuss how children could re-phrase the translation to make it sound more natural. Children write the translation on their worksheet.
5. Ask children to complete the rest of the worksheet by translating each question and writing a translation (literal or in more natural sounding English) on the corresponding dotted line.
6. Circulate to monitor and help.
7. The activity can be corrected by asking individual children to share their translations. When literal translations are given, encourage children to re-phrase using more natural sounding English. Slides 10-12 show literal translations.

Extend

- Children imagine they are King Wu Ding / Queen Fu Hao and write their own questions for the gods. Children draw/paint a turtle plastron and draw / paint questions on vertically.
- Children make an English-Chinese dictionary. Each word entry to include: English definition, ancient character, modern character and word group (noun, verb, adjective or preposition).

Links

- [What Are Oracle Bones - BBC Bitesize](#)
- [3D image of an oracle bone](#)

Information For Non-Specialist Teachers

1.1 Language Detectives - Writing From Around the World

General Information

- Writing systems are divided into alphabetic and non-alphabetic languages. Linguists use a lot of other divisions but we're keeping it simple here!
- Latin is the most widely used alphabet in the world, the Chinese writing system is the second most widely used.

Chinese and Japanese

- The Chinese writing system is a non-alphabetic system which uses characters instead of letters.
- Characters are a system of symbols used to write Chinese. There are more than 50,000 Chinese characters. That sounds like a lot but you only need to know about 2500 to read and understand a Chinese newspaper. A university graduate will know between 7000 and 8000 characters.
- In Chinese, characters are called Hanzi.
- Japanese uses 3 different writing systems, one of which is Chinese characters.
- In Japanese, Chinese characters are called Kanji.
- Japanese adults will know about 2000 Kanji.

Visual Diagram of How Many People Speak Each Language of the World

1.2 The Shang People : Where and When?

- The Shang dynasty ruled China for 500 years, from 1600- 1046 BC.
- The Shang territory was along the Yellow River which produced fertile farms for the people.

Map of the Shang Territory

1.3 How the Shang Invented Writing

Writing in ancient China

- Some of the first Chinese characters are more than 3000 years old and were invented during the Shang era.
- These early characters look just like pictures:



fish



tree



moon

What are oracle bones?

- Some historians believe many of these early characters were invented so that people could communicate with their ancestors and the gods.
- These early characters were scratched onto the flat side of turtle shells (the plastron) or the shoulder blades of cattle.
- Only priests or diviners / fortune tellers could speak to the gods. They carved questions onto bones (sometimes called dragon bones) on behalf of other people. They then held the bones over a fire until cracks appeared on the surface and interpreted the cracks as messages from the gods.
- The ancient (and modern) character for home / family shows a pig under a roof. One explanation for this is that pigs were once domesticated animals.



ancient



modern