Family Activity: Your Neighborhood Scroll
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Materials
- scrap paper for brainstorming
- colored pencils, crayons, and/or markers
- transparent tape
- 2–5 sheets of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper (light in color)
- short piece of string or yarn (about 10 inches)

Introduction
This scene of a busy street is only a small part of a handscroll that unrolls to almost 24 feet in length. The entire scroll shows the activities of many different types of people who lived in a large Chinese city during the Yuan dynasty, around 600 years ago.

This segment of the scroll shows a group of woodworkers and stonemasons working on new construction in the city. Other segments of the scroll depict the daily life of families, scholars, merchants, musicians, and silk-workers.

Chinese scrolls are looked at in the same way that one reads Chinese writing—from right to left. This type of handscroll was brought out of its special storage box only when the owner wished to view it. Rather than looking at the entire 24-foot handscroll, the viewer unrolled the scroll and examined it in small sections.

Discussion Questions
Look closely at the image of the handscroll.
- This section of the handscroll shows both woodworkers and stonemasons. How many woodworkers can you find? How many stonemasons do you see? What do you see that tells you who is a woodworkers and who is a stonemason?
- This handscroll shows daily life in a city in China 600 years ago. What would you include in a handscroll that depicted your daily life?
Activity: My Neighborhood Handscroll

Steps

1) Brainstorm!
   • Make a list of the people and activities you see in your neighborhood, such as children playing outdoor games or neighbors walking dogs.
   • Select several of the people and activities on your list that you feel best represents life on your street.
   • Number your selections to reflect the order in which they will appear on your handscroll.

2) Create!
   • Begin by taping together the shorter sides of two or three pieces of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper. Only tape the bottom side (wait to tape the side you plan to draw on until you are finished). The taped paper should be horizontal in format (longer than it is tall).
   • Start by drawing the first scene from your list at the furthest right side of your handscroll. Continue adding figures and scenes from your lists to the left.
   • After you complete your handscroll, tape the seams on the top of the paper.
   • Beginning on the left side, roll up your handscroll. This way you can unroll the right side for viewing. Tie a string around your scroll to keep it rolled.

3) Share!
   • Show your handscroll to a friend or family member and discuss what it’s like to live in your neighborhood. Remember to unroll your scroll into smaller segments for viewing rather than looking at the entire handscroll at once.

Glossary

stonemasons (n)
a person who is skilled in preparing stone for building

Yuan Dynasty (n)
c. 1260–1368. A period of foreign occupation by the nomadic tribes of Mongolia. Faced with discrimination by foreign rulers, educated Chinese recalled their past and turned their energies to art and culture.