

Chinese Guitar Scale



Each month The California Museum will introduce a new artifact with accompanying information and questions, which will consist of three different difficulty levels to choose from. To be used as a sponge or opening activity, you can use the artifact of the month for your students to study, question and form ideas. You can also print the image and place it on each student's desk, have them work in teams or project the image for a class activity.

Use the provided questions to help your students learn more about the artifact and its importance to California -- or make up your own questions. Most importantly, have fun!

Be sure to check out our web site, CaliforniaMuseum.org, for other interesting and unique activities for your students.

Chinese Guitar Scale



Chinese Guitar Scale
Wood, ivory, brass
c. 1840-1860

Used by Chinese miners and storekeepers to weigh gold dust, herbs and more the guitar scale was brought to California by the tens of thousands of immigrants who came from China during the Gold Rush. At a time when gold dust was commonly used to pay for goods and supplies, a guitar scale was a handy tool for those dealing with the precious substance. They were highly portable, easy to pack and move from gold field to gold field.

The California Gold Rush began in January 1848 when James Marshall discovered gold in the American River at Sutter's Mill. By that fall, thousands of men, women and children packed up their belongings and headed to California, hoping to strike it rich. The gold-seekers, called "forty-niners" because so many of them arrived in 1849, came from all over the world.

One of the biggest groups of immigrants to come to California during the mid 1800s was the Chinese. Although the first immigrants were wealthy, successful merchants, artisans, fisherman and business owners, with the Gold Rush came large groups of unskilled laborers who worked for little pay as woodcutters, launderer and cooks. Soon, they created communities, America's first Chinatowns. They opened restaurants, herbal shops, general stores and barbershops where the guitar scale was used to weigh gold dust. During the height of the Gold Rush immigration in 1852, 67,000 people came to California, 20,000 of those were from China.

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Elementary

- 1) What substance did guitar scales often weigh?
- 2) Who brought guitar scales with them to California?

Middle

- 1) Why did people immigrate to California during the Gold Rush?
- 2) Most gold miners did not strike it rich; what were some other ways they found to earn money?

High School

- 1) Pretend you are a Chinese gold miner coming to America in 1849. What hardships - other than that you are an unskilled worker with little money - must you overcome?
- 2) What similarities does the Chinese guitar scale of the Gold Rush years have to Chinese products of modern times?

Word Scramble

N Z V K O Y B R W M K H U T S
V C I R S D H N A H I J U U O
N U M L F Y X V L T G N C I A
X G K T U L I L N B I O E N F
E R U S A E M C I G I U I R P
G G F K T I F A O M R H G I P
U J G Y N Z E L M E C I E Q P
A S Q V V Y D I Z L Z H D E I
H W R Y R M G F X A J M H D U
V L J L Z R T O J C C O Z C U
Z I K D A S K R A S W M N I X
N C V N G H E N H E R B S D S
O Q T B Q I G I P I N R A Y Z
P X Y M Q P E A C I J H Y L J
Q C P O M S R X X X D M J G J

CALIFORNIA
GUITAR
MEASURE
SHIPS

CHINA
HERBS
MINER

GOLD
IMMIGRANT
SCALE

