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This Month's Theme: Chinese Dragon Robes

The Language of Clothes

Hundreds of years ago, people in China were able to tell many things about a person's rank and social class just by their clothes! The clothes were decorated with symbols that represented all sorts of things that are meaningful and important in Chinese culture. You can see some real dragon robes – and paintings of people wearing them – in the new exhibition at the Santa Barbara

Museum of Art, called “Worshiping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits.”

Think about how you and your friends dress. What meanings and messages do you communicate to each other by the clothes you wear? Can you think of any symbols on your clothes?

If you bring this page with you to the Museum, you and your family will be admitted for free!



Empress's Dragon Robe, Qing dynasty, ca. 1870, silk-slit tapestry weave (kesi), silk and gold-wrapped threads with gilt buttons. 136 x 178.3 cm. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Lockwood de Forest, 1984.53.31.

Symbol Search



You may find that working with a magnifying glass will be helpful in finding all of the small symbols hidden in this robe.

Objects to look for in the Empress's Dragon Robe include:

1. Three Pearls of Wisdom
2. Clouds in the Sky
3. The Breaking Ocean Waves
4. Mountains
5. Five Dragons
6. Bats

Answers are below.

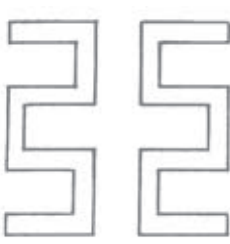
Answer Key
1. Pearls - middle of robe, pearls are chased by dragons.
2. Clouds surround dragons and cover the torso and sleeves of the robe.
3. Waves are on the bottom lining
4. Mountains emerging from the water in the middle, right and left sides
5. Dragons: Three are in the middle, one on top of left sleeve, one on top of right sleeve
6. Bats are flying around the torso and sleeves with red center bodies and white wings

These are Symbols of Authority that are also in the Robe. Color the images and look closely to see if you can find (Answers are below.):

Bronze Cups



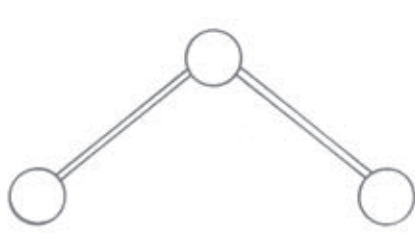
Fu



Water Weed



Stars



Answer s : 1. **Bronze Cups:** bottom right, above water and next to mountain. 2. **Fu:** upper left side, near black band. 3. **Water Weed:** bottom left, above water and next to mountain. 4. **Stars:** middle of the robe, in chest area.

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Page by Julie Lee, Santa Barbara Museum of Art
and Janice Rorick, Santa Barbara Public Library.

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