

Gallery Guardians



Find the greenish-gray containers with three legs, like the one to the left. These metal vessels were made in China more than 3,000 years ago.

The Chinese believed their ancestors (family members who had already died) had special powers. Food cooked in pots like these were offered during ritual ceremonies in return for ancestors' protection.

Chinese, Shang Dynasty, Ding (Ritual Cooking Vessel), 14th–13th century BCE, cast bronze, 6 5/8 in.

Look closely at the designs on the surface of the vessels. This special design is called a **taotie** (taow-tee-eh).

Taotie were possibly added to scare away evil spirits and to protect the offering inside the pot.



To many, the taotie looks like a mask or the face of an animal-like creature.

What parts of the taotie look like parts of a face to you?

Draw them in the space on the right.

A taotie often looks like it could be a combination of different animal features such as **fangs** from a snake and **horns** from a bull.



Use your imagination to combine different animals to create your own taotie.

Combine parts from your two favorite
taotie.

Look carefully in the other cases to
find something at the other entrance
to this gallery that looks like an
animal mask.

When you find it, draw it below.

This fearsome face was used as a roof
tile to guard an important building.

What mythical animal does this mask
look like?

What would you re-name this mask?

The ancient Chinese also created other kinds of objects for protection.

Look for the figures that look like soldiers or warriors.

They are made out of clay and were originally painted with bright colors. These figures originally guarded the tombs of those who died. They were thought to protect the dead from evil spirits.



Try posing like this figure.

Describe how you feel when you stand this way.

Chinese, Tang Dynasty (618–907), *Tomb Guardian Figure*, c. 650–700, molded and modeled unglazed earthenware, 27 1/4 in.

What do you think this guardian tomb figure might have once held in its hands?
