

old times

old times happen but now im taken you back to the past

--kayla castillo -peace-

Tiger Pillow



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OBJECT IN FOCUS: Tiger Pillow



Click here to Zoom!

Flipping black stripes on a rich orange coat. Gleaming white teeth and a focused gaze. A long tail tucked against a robust body. Most people would immediately recognize this animal as a tiger. But you might be surprised to learn that this ceramic beast—about fifteen inches long—was used as a pillow in 12th-century China. According to Chinese tradition, a pillow could give special qualities to the person who slept on it. Because the tiger has been a powerful symbol in China since ancient times, it made a good pillow.

China
Tiger Pillow, late 12th century
Stoneware with black and tan glaze over a white slip under a clear glaze

KEY IDEAS:

1. A Place to Rest Your Head
2. The Power of Pillows
3. Signs and Symbols

RELATED ACTIVITIES:

Pillow Talk: What qualities do you associate with tigers? What animal would help you sleep? What animal would be the most comforting? Why? Draw or sculpt a pillow in the shape of your favorite animal.

A Hard Night's Sleep: Many people are surprised to learn that pillows are sometimes made of hard materials instead of the soft ones common in the United States. How would it feel to sleep on a ceramic pillow or a wood pillow? How do you think you would sleep? What kind of pillow do you prefer?

Good Night and Good Luck: Ceramic pillows usually had popular songs, Confucian sayings, or poems inscribed on them. What would you like inscribed on your pillow? Write a short poem wishing yourself good luck and a good night's sleep.

The Dream Diaries: Sleep and dreams can seem mysterious. What do you think happens when you sleep? What do you think causes dreams? Keep a dream journal for a week. What kinds of dreams did you have? What was your favorite dream? Did things you did during the day affect your dreams?

Pillow Pile-Up: Using Art Collector, an online tool from ArtsConnected, view an online collection of Chinese ceramic pillows. How are these pillows alike? How are they different? Which one is your favorite? Why? Would some pillows be more comfortable than others? Organize the collection by shape, color, or size. Click here to view the collection. Click here to learn more about ArtsConnected.

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Tiger Pillow: Gallery Label - Current

This amusing pillow is modeled in the form of a crouching tiger, with head upturned and fangs bared. The body is covered with amber-orange glaze, which, in turn, is painted with lively black stripes imparting a naturalistic look and rhythmic flare. The top of the headrest is painted with a central medallion encircling a butterfly hovering above an orchid and lotus leaf, all flanked with floral sprays. The earliest dates inscribed on tiger-form pillows are from the Chin dynasty (1115-1234) and the theme itself may be derived from paintings of tigers, which were popular throughout the Sung period (960-1279). This type of two-color (tan and black) slip painted decoration is one of over twenty decorative techniques developed at the several Tz'u-chou kilns of North China. This marvelous example is exceptionally well preserved.