

## The colors of jade.

Pure nephrite and pure jadeite are both colored a translucent white; all other colors are due to chemical impurities in the stone. The most important of these impurities are iron and the iron oxides, traces of which combine in different ways to give the jade a whole range of colors – sometimes the famous jade-green, sometimes yellow, brown, grey, or even black.

The brown or yellow skin or “cortex” found on unworked jade is caused by natural abrasion and weathering, the action of wind, water, and sand on an exposed pebble or boulder. Although usually polished off before carving, this natural skin is sometimes incorporated by the lapidary into the finished piece’s design, as in the white snuff bottle exhibited here.

Burial in the earth can also change the color of jade. The much-prized “chicken-bone” effect is produced when the surface of a buried jade object becomes leached by groundwater. After it has lain in the earth for many years, a part and eventually the whole of the object turns an opaque, chalky white which is thought by jade fanciers to resemble the color of chicken bones. The small fish in this case illustrates this chicken-bone effect. A similar appearance can be produced through a much shorter and chemically quite different process, by burning the jade rather than burying it. Since the chicken-bone color has come to be considered a sign that a piece is old, the burning technique is naturally popular with forgers. Often, however, a collector will cherish jade objects he knows to have been artificially aged, feeling that the treatment, whatever the motives behind it, has rendered the objects more beautiful.

## Specimens left to right:

## Donors:

	wg Hs 35892, 72031-2	
Jade boulder	116497 (C)	(A) The Bahr Collection
Dragon	183049 (A)	(B) Mrs. Frances Gaylord Smith
"Chicken-bone" fish	182976 (A)	ng # 51667 (C) Mrs. T. B. Blackstone Expedition to China
Burned nephrite	183279 (A)	ng # 2245, 101863 (D) Captain Marshall Field Expedition to China
Snuff bottle	232038 (B)	ng # 86435 (R) Mrs. William H. Moore
Green screen	183229 (A)	
Blue censer	232675 (B)	-ng # 586348, 101655
Red blade	182811 (A)	-ng # 551646, 101962
Red/green pi	121021 (C)	
Spinach blade	116507 (C)	-ng # 35472, 74172
Green vase	182675 (R)	-ng # 71547, 71628
Green plaque	182902 (A)	wrong #
Grey turtle	183061 (A)	-ng # 54649a
Brown belthook	116565 (C)	-ng # 35864
Grey fish	182993 (A)	
White bowl	232657 (B)	-ng # 86330
Blue blade	182825 (A)	
Green buckle	127321 (D)	
Black blade	300351 (D)	