

Lesson Plans

On the following pages you will find four lesson plans written by teachers using the objects in this guide for inspiration. Each lesson was implemented in the classroom, and examples of student work are included.

1

How to Haiku: Poetry Reflecting the Feelings in Art

BASED ON “WAVES AT MATSUSHIMA” BY SOTATSU

CONTRIBUTED BY LISA O’NEILL AND TONI CONKLIN,
BANCROFT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

SUBJECTS:
ART/LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE LEVEL:
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TIME NEEDED:
THREE TO FOUR FORTY-MINUTE CLASS PERIODS

Goal

To write a haiku inspired by the brilliant painting “Waves of Matsushima” by Sotatsu.

Objectives

- Students will identify the elements of haiku.
- Students will identify the subjects in examples of haiku they read.
- Students will identify and describe the objects in the landscape painting “Waves at Matsushima.”
- Students will explain the feelings that the elements in the painting evoke.
- Students will write a haiku based on the painting.

Vocabulary

- Adjectives** descriptive words that create clear pictures and feelings about a subject
- Contemplative** a state of deep thought
- Contrast** two or more things that differ noticeably from one another in one or more ways
- Elements** meaningful parts of a whole
- Feelings** emotions that include happiness, sadness, loneliness, joy, fear, wonder, amazement, surprise, courage, etc.
- Haiku** One of the shortest poetry forms, originating in Japan, which focuses on nature, color, seasons, and contrasts. Haiku expresses a feeling and often contains a surprise.
- Landscape art** a painting or drawing that depicts a scene in nature
- Metaphor** a phrase that compares two things to show similarities (for example, “you are a shining star”)
- Syllable** The smallest segment of a word or sentence that can be clapped out. The unit of pronunciation that is organized around a vowel; it may or may not have consonants before or after the vowel.
- Verbs** words that describe actions

Day One

Motivation and Discussion

Discuss with students what they know about poetry. Then, introduce several haiku poems and, through creative discovery and “think aloud” techniques, solicit as many of the elements of the form as possible from children (nature, three lines, feelings, metaphor, contrast).

Students will then read the following paragraph about haiku.

Haiku is perhaps the shortest poetry form in the world. This tiny poem can say important things about how we feel about the world around us. Haiku was invented hundreds of years ago in Japan. It was used to express feelings about nature, animals, and the seasons at a particular time and place and to share those feelings with others. It is a contemplative or thoughtful form of poetry that focuses on nature, color, seasons, contrasts, and surprises. The first line contains five syllables; the second line contains seven syllables; and the third line contains five syllables. So, to write a haiku means to capture how you feel at a certain moment in time, even if you are writing it down sometime later.

After reading the paragraph, ask students to comment on the elements they had already mentioned in the poetry and to identify new ones. This will provide an opportunity for the teacher to do a hand-clapping activity that breaks words into their syllables. Students should then look at each of the haiku they read, checking to see if each line has the appropriate number of syllables and discussing the words (verbs, adjectives, etc.) that convey feelings to the reader. Students can work in small groups, concentrating on one poem and then sharing their conclusions with the whole group.

Activity

MATERIALS

- Several large pictures of “Waves at Matsushima,” downloaded from the Freer and Sackler website (www.asia.si.edu)
- Pencils
- Chart paper
- Multiple copies of the thesaurus and dictionary
- Watercolor sets with brushes
- Gold pens
- Gold glitter
- Large white drawing paper

Day Two

1. Review the elements of haiku using the self-assessment rubric. (See “assessment and evaluation.”)
2. Tell students that they are going to write a haiku based on a beautiful painting by Sotatsu, a Japanese artist who created two folding screens of the landscape at Matsushima (Pine Islands). (See “Waves at Matsushima,” page 64.) Show students how the panels fold up, using the copies.
3. Through “creative visualization,” students close their eyes and imagine themselves alone somewhere “in” the picture. Tell them to think about what they see, hear, touch, and feel.
4. Next, in whole group or small groups, have students make lists of colors, adjectives, verbs, nouns, and feelings that came to mind as they imagined themselves “in” the screen painting, a copy of which they have in front of them.
5. Discuss the difference between regular words and exciting, thought-provoking ones; model the use of a thesaurus and/or dictionary to find such words.
6. Look throughout the picture and see if children can identify elements that look familiar to them.
7. Make a list of all their ideas on a chart at the front of the room, and encourage students to think about a feeling they could express in a haiku, using some of the words from this chart.
8. Students write their haiku and check it against the rubric. Peer and teacher conferencing works well to clap syllables and brainstorm on word use.

Day Three

1. Students will draw a picture on a large piece of white paper, depicting that part of the painting their poem most speaks to.
2. After drawing the outline of the picture, students will proceed to paint it with watercolors.
3. After the paint dries, students will choose where to add the gold “threads” with their gold pens and glitter.
4. Finally, students choose either to write their haiku on their painting or copy it neatly on writing paper.

Assessment and Evaluation

The following rubric can be used for students to self-assess and also for the teacher to confirm that each haiku meets the criteria.

Haiku Rubric

Grade yourself! Read each question. If you are able to answer yes to the question, give yourself one point. An excellent haiku will have a total of six points.

Does my haiku have three lines? _____

Does my first line have five syllables? _____

Does my second line have seven syllables? _____

Does my third line have five syllables? _____

Does my haiku express how I feel at a specific moment in time? _____

Does my haiku focus on one of the following? _____

Circle one or two elements that your haiku contains:

NATURE

COLOR

SEASON

SURPRISE

TOTAL POINTS _____

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE _____

Student Work

Twirling and swirling
Waves sliding like spaghetti
Slipping off the rocks.

by Jocelyn

Wild water splashing
Washing colorful green rocks
I'm wet looking on.

by Shantell

A giant hammock
Resting place for splashing waves.
Wish I was there too.

by Enris

standing in the waves
tall rocks block the strong splashes
solid rounded shape.

by Angela

topsy turvey waves
water splashing on the rocks
topsy turvey waves

by Jonas

The dragon's a beast
Waves destroying the mountain
It squashes the land.

by Abiy



2

Kenzan and Korin: Collaboration and Integration in Ceramic Design

CONTRIBUTED BY PATRICK TIMOTHY CAUGHY, CENTENNIAL LANE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUBJECTS:
ART

GRADE LEVEL:
INTERMEDIATE ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL; ADAPTABLE TO
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

TIME NEEDED:
THREE TO FOUR ONE HOUR
CLASS SESSIONS

Goal

To investigate for inspiration a ceramic exemplar produced in collaboration by artist brothers, Ogata Kenzan and Ogata Korin, and to gain an understanding of the merging of two media (in this case, ceramics and painting) to produce a unique object.

Objectives

- Students will explore the interrelated arts of pottery, painting, and literature in the cultural life of Edo-period Japan.
- Students will view and respond to work by both Kenzan and Korin and learn how to identify characteristics of their styles.
- Students will produce an original hand-built, decorated, and glazed ceramic plate using elements of design evident in the collaborative work of Kenzan and Korin.

Vocabulary

Ceramic ware	clay products, often used in the preparation, storage, and serving of foods
Characteristic	the properties unique to a style or expression
Collaboration	individuals or groups working together to accomplish a purpose
Design	a visual plan for an artwork
Edo period	Japan of the period between 1615–1868 that was characterized by a rise of the merchant class, growth of urban areas, and blossoming of the arts.
Glaze	the outer surface, often glasslike, of a ceramic piece
Style	a unique manner of expression

Motivation and Discussion

Show students the image of the Kenzan/Korin tray “Square dish with design of ‘Eight Bridges.’” Ask students to critique the tray based on the process below developed by Edmund Feldman, author and arts educator:

1. DESCRIBE

Students should look at the object carefully and describe it.

2. ANALYZE

Students should take their initial descriptions and, based on their observations, analyze how the work is composed. Ask students to look for patterns and connections.

3. INTERPRET

Using their analysis, students should explore why they think the artist made the choices he/she did in this particular work.

(In this exercise, there will be no “Evaluation,” as is customary in a Feldman critique.)

Some prompting clues for the students may also include the questions:

- Where am I?
- When am I there?
- What is around me?

Explain the tradition in Japanese art of drawing inspiration from nature, literature, fashion — either separately or, sometimes, in combination. In the instance of the Kenzan/Korin tray, a passage from a work of literature familiar to many literate people provided the inspiration for the design. Give students information on the literary source for the visual image on the tray. (See “Square dish with design of ‘Eight Bridges,’” page 25.)

Describe the way Kenzan and Korin collaborated to produce ceramic work that represented an innovation for the Edo period. Ask students to consider the challenges and advantages of such a collaboration. Students should begin to think about ways that they would combine painting and ceramics in the manner of Kenzan and Korin (albeit as one artist).

Activity

MATERIALS

- Low fire white stoneware
- Rolling pins
- A variety of grocery store Styrofoam trays
- Paper towels
- Black underglaze slips or stains
- Bamboo brushes
- Ink
- White paper
- Clay tools and cleaning supplies
- Large plastic Ziploc bags
- Large paper clips

1. Direct students to roll an orange-size ball of clay and to form it into a slab. This may be rolled out, flung, and stretched to a thickness of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.
2. Have students press their slabs into foam plates or trays. A barrier between the clay and the tray, such as a paper towel, may be useful.
3. Clay around the plate edge should be trimmed with an extended paper clip. If necessary, students may store this work in a sealed plastic bag with a label until the next class period.
4. The teacher will offer students a guided practice with bamboo brushes, ink, and paper in preparation for their ceramic decoration. Images of seasonal flowers should be presented for inspiration, and students should be asked to keep in mind the stylistic model of the Korin decoration.
5. Using underglaze stains, students will decorate their plates. Review aspects of the Kenzan/Korin style.
6. After bisque firing, a coat of clear matte glaze will seal the work for use at home and give it protective permanence.

Assessment and Evaluation

1. CLASS DISCUSSION SUMMARY Use a visual web designating three key areas of reflection as a review of the lesson.

- Culture
- Clay
- Collaboration

Invite students to comment on what they learned about these aspects of the lesson.

2. ARTIST STATEMENTS From the visual web above, students may write captions for their artwork.

3. IMAGINATIVE LETTER Reflecting again on the collective, student response web, students will write letters detailing their clay experience. The letter may be addressed to one of the Kenzan ceramics craftsmen, inquiring about their training and career. Or it may be addressed to a classmate or relative, describing the sequence of production in completing the goal.

Possible Extension

Students can compose a haiku (a three-line, seventeen-syllable poem) about their ceramic piece to accompany the display of their painted plate and to emulate the Edo-period practice of visual and literary interplay.

Student Artwork Samples



3

Capturing a Moment: Art and Haiku

CONTRIBUTED BY LAURA PHINIZY, PYLE MIDDLE SCHOOL, BETHESDA, MARYLAND

SUBJECTS:
ART/LANGUAGE ARTS/
SOCIAL STUDIES

GRADE LEVEL:
MIDDLE SCHOOL TO
EARLY HIGH SCHOOL

TIME NEEDED:
TWO NINETY-MINUTE CLASS PERIODS OR THREE TO FOUR FORTY-MINUTE CLASS PERIODS. IT WOULD BE BEST TO START THIS WHEN THE SEASON IS AT ITS HEIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE IN THE FALL, WHEN LEAVES ARE TURNING, OR IN THE SPRING, WHEN FLOWERS ARE BLOOMING.

Goal

To instill an appreciation for the way natural imagery and sensory information are used in the composition of a haiku poem.

Objectives

- Students will observe nature to collect sensory data in order to compose a haiku.
- Students will learn to identify the seasons represented in Japanese art objects.
- Students will compose their own haiku based on moments captured in Japanese art objects.

Motivation and Discussion

Day One

1. Introduce the concept of haiku, a poem of seventeen syllables that captures one moment in nature. The poem consists of three lines and the syllabic structure is 5–7–5.
2. Show students an excerpt of a video on Japan to give them a sense of the Japanese landscape and aesthetic. Suggestions:
 - “Journey to a Lost Japan,” *Travels*, video, 50 minutes, 1991 Thirteen/WNET. This is an episode of the PBS *Travels* series that follows the ancient pilgrimage route between three sacred mountains in Yamagata Prefecture, Japan.
 - “Beauty of Haiku Poetry,” Teachers Video Co. 18 mins.
3. Read as a class some of the haiku by poets of all different backgrounds
4. Have the students identify and write all the senses that these poems appeal to, for example, how snow feels cold to the touch.
5. Have the students try to give the poems titles.

HOMEWORK DAY ONE Go out and take a walk for at least twenty minutes. Try to notice nature as you walk. Think of what you hear, see, smell, taste, and touch. When you get home, jot down the most vivid sounds, images, smells, or textures you encountered.

Day 2

1. Have students share with partners their homework: the most vivid sounds, images, smells, or textures they encountered the day before.
2. Explain to them that they will be analyzing Japanese art. Like poets, the artists capture a moment in time by appealing to viewers' senses and emotions. Explain that they will be observing and identifying first, then analyzing and writing.

Activity

MATERIALS

- Color images of objects listed below
 - Photo of irises in bloom.
 - Haiku worksheet (see page 90)
3. Present the following images one at a time to the students. With each object, have the students observe quietly for a minute or so before asking the following questions to spark analysis and discussion. Have students record their observations on the haiku worksheet (see page 90).
 - “Square dish with design of ‘Eight Bridges’” (see page 25)
 - “Boy and Mount Fuji” (see page 22)
 - “Square dish with design after poems of birds and flowers” (see page 49)
 - “Nabeshima ware dish with design of reeds and mist” (see page 46)
 (An alternative that can be used in place of the Nabeshima ware dish is the “Inkstone box,” page 62; adjust the observation questions as necessary.)

GUIDING QUESTIONS:**OBJECT 1: “SQUARE DISH WITH DESIGN OF ‘EIGHT BRIDGES’” (SEE PAGE 25)**

- What kind of object is it? (tray)
- What material do you think it’s made of? (ceramic or clay with glaze to look shiny)
- How big do you think it is? (about 1 inch deep and 8.5 inches square)
- What objects do you see? (It may help to have them start in one corner and move around. Grasses or reeds. Flowers. Large and small sticks. Writing in corner. Flowers around edges.)
- What could the big sticks be used for? Hint: Look at their size compared with the flowers. Have you ever been walking outside and wanted to walk on sticks? Why? (Sticks are in fact a bridge.)
- In what season would these flowers be in full bloom? (summer)
- Tell students a version of the story behind the imagery (see object description, page 25)
- Have students record on worksheet the senses that the artist appeals to in this object (for example: wet, slimy log; squishy ground; perfume of flowers; bright purple and green)
- What emotions do you feel as you look at this? Write your answer down.

OBJECT 2: “BOY AND MOUNT FUJI” (SEE PAGE 22)

- What kind of object is it? (painting)
- How big do you think this is? (about 50 inches by 27 inches — show with your hands)
- What objects do you see? (mountain, snow, tree, boy, flute, bucket, water, ground, crater at top of mountain, writing and seal in corner, cloud) They may also be able to identify Mount Fuji, but if not, help them to understand that it is a volcano. Explain a bit about Mount Fuji — that it is a symbol, a place where even today people make pilgrimages. One of the most beautiful sights in Japan is supposed to be sunrise from the summit, so many people hike all through the middle of the night to arrive there for sunrise.
- Look at the water and the tree carefully. What season do you think this could be? (probably spring — no flowers anymore, but lots of water, maybe from snowmelt. If they think it is winter, you will need to explain the elevation effect, where the higher up you go, the colder the temperature is.)
- What’s happening in the picture? (boy is playing flute while looking at nature)
- What might have happened before or will happen after this? (boy should be gathering or carrying something in his bucket)

- How is the story of this scroll similar to the story implied in the first tray? (stopping and looking at nature, nature as an inspiration)
- Have students record on worksheet the senses that the artist appeals to in this object (for example: roaring of water; melody of flute; texture of bark; vision of huge mountain; stickiness of air with rain cloud)
- What emotions do you feel as you look at this? Write your answer down.

OBJECT 3: “SQUARE DISH WITH DESIGN AFTER POEMS OF BIRDS AND FLOWERS” (SEE PAGE 49)

- What kind of object is this? (tray)
- How big do you think it is? (about 1 inch deep and 6.5 inches square)
- What objects do you see on the tray? (tree, snow, bird, ground, grasses, pond with snow and ice, blue-and-white designs on rim)
- What season do you think this is? (winter)
- What do you think the bumps on the tree could be? (They may guess clumps of snow, but guide them to the idea of blossoms. These are plum blossoms.)
- How is the story in this scroll similar to the other two objects? (The bird is paused in the middle of this winter scene.)
- Have students record on worksheet the senses that the artist appeals to in this object (for example: cold, wet snow; crispy air; quiet of snow-muffled ground; quack of duck; variations of white and gray)
- What emotions do you feel as you look at this? Write your answer down.

OBJECT 4: “NABESHIMA WARE DISH WITH DESIGN OF REEDS AND MIST” (SEE PAGE 46)

- What is this? (a ceramic plate)
- What do you see on it? (some kind of plant, two colors; some unpainted areas, some painted blue areas)
- Why do you think there are two colors? (maybe changing colors with the season or dying)
- What could the dark blue painted areas be? (sky, water, fog)
- Why do you think the artist chose not to paint the whole plate? What could the unpainted parts be? (water, fog) Do you think it would have been better to paint the whole plate or leave us to fill in the gaps with our imagination?

- What season do you think this is? (fall)
 - Have students record on student worksheet the senses that the artist appeals to in this object (for example: spiky, wet, rotting blades of grass; damp fog or mist; squishy ground; maybe frogs or water bugs in the water)
 - What emotions do you feel as you look at this? Write your answer down.
4. Have students choose one object. They should try to write as many 5–7–5 haiku as they can on that one subject, trying to appeal to multiple senses. Allow fifteen to twenty minutes for this activity. Slow down, perhaps using quiet music to calm the students.
 5. Have students pair up to peer edit. Have them circle sensory words and guess what emotion the author is trying to evoke.

HOMEWORK DAY TWO Choose one of your poems to polish. Check for 5–7–5 structure, vivid sensory imagery, and emotion.

Assessment and Evaluation

Have students share their poems with the class and describe the process of writing the haiku.

DID STUDENTS:

- complete the homework assignments?
- participate in class discussions?
- follow the format of the haiku (three lines of 5–7–5 syllables)?
- use descriptive words and sensory images in their haiku?
- clearly attempt to capture a moment in time?

Possible Extension

Invite student volunteers to share poems aloud. Post the poems on a bulletin board with images of art. Have students repeat the haiku-writing exercise on the next day, focusing on new objects.

NAME _____

Student Worksheet—Haiku in Japanese Art

For each object, list the senses that the artist evokes:

OBJECT 1	_____	OBJECT 3	_____
Season	_____	Season	_____
Sight	_____	Sight	_____
Smell	_____	Smell	_____
Taste	_____	Taste	_____
Sound	_____	Sound	_____
Touch	_____	Touch	_____
Emotion	_____	Emotion	_____
 OBJECT 2	 _____	 OBJECT 4	 _____
Season	_____	Season	_____
Sight	_____	Sight	_____
Smell	_____	Smell	_____
Taste	_____	Taste	_____
Sound	_____	Sound	_____
Touch	_____	Touch	_____
Emotion	_____	Emotion	_____

Student Work

Inspired by “Square dish with design after poems of birds and flowers”

Just There

The bird sits, stairs, waits
With winter dripping from the trees
The spring slowly comes.

by Alyssa

The Smells of Winter

Smelling hurts too much,
In the middle of winter,
With nothing but ice.

by Laura

Inspired by “Inkstone box”

A little light means
So much to a tree that has
Been in dark so long.

by Dimitry

Inspired by “Boy and Mount Fuji”

Wind pierces my skin,
The distance below me grows,
Now I feel alone.

By Ellie

Swish, the leaves rustle
the wind whips the silent smoke
water crashes down.

By Emily

Stream rushing below
Looming mountain sheds its smoke
Music moves with wind.

By Melissa

Inspired by “Nabeshima ware dish with design of reeds and mist”

I’m the orange fox
hiding in the thick luscious
underbrush waiting.

By Matthew

4

Here and There: Exploring Place in Art through “Boy and Mount Fuji”

CONTRIBUTED BY CORINNE MULLEN AND KEVIN SLIVKA, FREDERICK DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL
UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND

SUBJECTS:
ART/SOCIAL STUDIES

GRADE LEVEL:
HIGH SCHOOL; ADAPTABLE
TO ELEMENTARY AND
MIDDLE SCHOOL

TIME NEEDED:
THREE TO FOUR FORTY-
MINUTE CLASS PERIODS

Goal

To understand the significance of Japan’s Mount Fuji, relate it to other similar places in the United States, and convey the importance of a cultural landmark through visual art.

Objectives

- Students will list landmarks — places of cultural significance — in Japan and the United States.
- Students will explore the painting “Boy and Mount Fuji” (see page 22) by describing and analyzing its content and approach.
- Students will choose a cultural landmark in Japan or the United States and illustrate that place, using “Boy and Mount Fuji” as inspiration, in a pencil or oil pastel drawing.

Motivation and Discussion

1. Ask students to write a short paragraph identifying and describing one place in Washington, D.C., that represents the United States. Have them include how they felt when they visited this place or saw images of it.

Students should then share their paragraphs with a partner. Ask for volunteers to share their paragraphs with the entire class.

2. Begin a discussion of cultural landmarks in the United States and Japan using the following questions:

- What is, in your opinion, a place that represents the United States to the world? Why?
- What is a place that might represent Washington, D.C., to the world? Can you think of one place of cultural significance to the Japanese people in Washington, D.C.?

Students may already know about cherry blossoms, but if not, share with them that cherry blossom trees were given in 1912 by the people of Tokyo to the people of Washington, D.C. These particular cherry blossom trees are seen as a symbol of friendship between the United States and Japan. They are near the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C. Every year there is a Cherry Blossom Festival in late March through early April, because around that time the trees bloom. Cherry blossoms are treasured in Japan because of their beauty and because the flowers are in bloom for only a short time each year.

- What do you think is one place that is very sacred in Japan or special to the Japanese people? Why? Where did you learn about this place?
3. Show students the image “Boy and Mount Fuji.” Ask them to take their time looking carefully at the image.
 4. Share with the class that the mountain (volcano) in the painting is Mount Fuji. Ask anyone to share what he or she knows about Mount Fuji.
 5. Initiate a discussion with the following questions:
 - Can you describe this image in detail? What are the different elements of the painting?
 - Why do you think the boy is dwarfed by Mount Fuji?
 - Write down three thoughts you might have if you were the boy gazing at Mount Fuji.
 - Have you ever traveled to a famous place in the United States? How did you feel when you were looking at the place from a distance?
 - What are some art materials you could use to express the feeling of the boy viewing Mount Fuji? Why would you choose those materials?

Activity

MATERIALS

- Paper
- Pencils
- Oil pastels
- Digital camera

1. Ask students to choose a place of cultural significance in the United States or Japan to depict in a drawing.

2. Distribute paper, pencils, and oil pastels to students.

Have students sketch the picture, using oil pastels to fill in the picture if they wish. Some students may choose to work solely in the pencil medium.

3. While students are working on their drawings, ask students to come to you one at a time so that you can take a photograph of their back.

4. When students have completed their drawings, have them cut their images out of the photographs and paste them onto the drawing so that they appear to be gazing at the place or structure they chose to depict.

Assessment and Evaluation

1. Did the student participate actively in the discussions?
2. Did the student complete the project?

Have students write an artist–statement label for their drawings, to be mounted with display of their work. This statement should include a passage on their understanding of the approach taken in “Boy and Mount Fuji,” an explanation of the choices they made in deciding which place to depict, and description of how they attempted to convey the importance of the place in their drawing.

Possible Extension

For schools in the Washington, D.C., area, a field trip to the Tidal Basin would be useful in early April. Have students sketch the Japanese cherry blossom trees with the Washington Monument or Jefferson Memorial in the background. Later, the pictures can be filled in with oil pastels. Students can also write haikus (three-line poems with syllabic structure of 5–7–5) to capture a momentary aspect of the scene.

Student Work



Resources

Traditional Musical and Performing Arts of Japan: An Introduction and Resource Guide

BY JOANNA PECORE

OVERVIEW

Japan has an extensive and diverse music and performing arts heritage that has developed in tandem with the country's art and culture. These traditions have continuously thrived hand-in-hand with the visual arts, literature, religion, social life, and rituals. Therefore, many of the ideas and aesthetic principles that distinguish Japanese visual arts also resonate across the world of Japanese sound and performance. The most striking themes shared by these art forms are reflections on the transformations that constitute the physical world.

As a complement to this teacher's guide, this introduction is general and limited in several respects. First, it emphasizes Japan's "traditional" music and performing arts, because the objects featured in this guide predate Japan's era of "modernization," the Meiji period (1869–1912). Second, also because of this focus on the Freer collection, the synopsis does not include the traditions of the Ainu or of the Okinawan islands. Third, the overview highlights musical and performance genres that relate closely to the themes of this teacher's guide. Finally, among these styles, it focuses on those that have related resources readily available to teachers.

In traditional Japan, especially from the sixth through the sixteenth centuries, the country's international contact was dominated by exchange with China and Korea. Adopting Buddhism and an imperial state had the most significant impact on the country's arts and culture. Numerous musical ensembles and instruments (such as *gagaku*, *shakuhachi*, *koto*, *biwa*, and *shamisen*), which today are considered to be quintessentially Japanese, may all be traced to the Asian mainland. Additionally, much of the literature that inspired the Japanese performing arts has roots in China.

Some of the most well-known Japanese visual and performing arts and music (such as *Bunraku*, Kabuki, and solo *koto* traditions) date to the Edo period (1615–1868). During this era, Japan limited trade with the West. It was relatively secluded and prosperous. The merchant class gained influence, and the samurai lost their former role in society. As a result, both of these groups became heavily involved in the arts, spurring unprecedented creativity among musicians, actors, puppeteers, playwrights, painters, and potters.

Over the centuries, Japan's interactions with both the East and the West have stimulated unique innovations in the country's music and performing arts. At the same time, however, a look at several of these traditions also reveals a consistent return to core religious (especially Shinto and Buddhist), literary (such as *The Tale of Heike* and *The Tale of Genji*), and cultural (such as the transience of nature) concepts that communicate enduring popular perceptions about the meaning of human experience.

JAPAN'S TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS

The principal inspirations for Japanese music and performing arts include the interdependent realms of religion, history, literature, and nature. Their connections — and relationships to sound and performance — are apparent in this survey of traditions dating from the fifth through eighteenth century.

To begin with, sound and performance occupy important positions in Shinto. They have also been integral to the practice and expression of Buddhism. Additionally, the merging of these religions in Japan has contributed to exceptionally strong continuities across the country's performing arts.

According to Shinto belief, divine spirits (*kami*) inhabit all aspects (especially nature) of a single, beautiful universe. In order to invoke these spirits during purification rituals, practitioners employ the voice, percussion, and stringed instruments. Music and performance also figure prominently within the Shinto story of creation that is recorded in the *Kojiki*, an eighth-century historical account of Japan. The legend of the sun goddess, Amaterasu, related earlier in this guide says that a dance lured her from a cave. Stories of the origin of many of Japan's musical instruments (for example *koto* and *shamisen*) indicate that they were also a part of the excitement that drew her outdoors.

From the eighth through the nineteenth century, several branches of Buddhism dominated national religious thought. Despite varied practical and philosophical emphases, all of these share the goal of liberation from suffering through detachment from desire. A key means of accomplishing this is self-discovery of the empty nature of existence through meditation. Minimizing distractions and focusing on the quality of a single entity assist in this process. Meditation can take various forms, including musical practice.

The recordings and detailed liner notes of *The Ongaku Masters, An Anthology of Japanese Classical Music, Vol. 1: Sacred Music (Celestial Harmonies, 2004)* offer a comprehensive overview of Japan's sacred music, revealing some of the ways that Shinto and Buddhism have been blended in Japan. The compilation includes *gagaku* (imperial court music),

shomyo (Buddhist chant with origins in Hindu Vedic hymns), and *shakuhachi honkyoku* (bamboo flute pieces performed for Zen meditation).

Gagaku refers to the musical ensemble that accompanies Shinto, Buddhist, and imperial ceremonies. Korean and Chinese musicians brought the orchestra to Japan in the fifth century. The ensemble is made up of three types of instruments: *fukimono* (“blown things” — such as flutes and mouth organs), *hikimono* (“played things” — such as floor zithers and lutes), and *uchimono* (“struck things” — such as drums and gongs). The extensive *gagaku* repertoire consists of pieces that may be performed with or without dance and works that originate in Japan, China, and Korea. *Gagaku: Gems from Foreign Lands* (Celestial Harmonies, 2002) and *Gagaku: The Court Music of Japan* (University of Oklahoma, 1989) offer greater insight into this rich classical tradition. The former audio recording comes with a booklet that provides an easy-to-understand outline of the art form, while the latter video recording contains some fine uninterrupted performances of the varied *gagaku* repertoire in combination with demonstrations of individual instruments. Particularly relevant to the themes of this guide are the associations between *gagaku* and meditation, the way that musicians “breathe” together as a unit, and the performance of historical narratives.

Japanese Buddhist chants known as *shomyo* also vary widely because of their complex origins (they traveled from India to China to Japan), their performance by various Buddhist sects, and their many functions (such as worship, invocation, meditation, and consecration). *The Ongaku Masters, An Anthology of Japanese Classical Music, Volume 1*, contains several examples of these recitations performed in Sanskrit (referred to as *bonsan*) and Chinese (called *kansan*) with Japanese pronunciation. The liner notes provide translations of the sutras (sacred texts) and hymns. Gongs and cymbals can also be heard in the recording. Additionally, live recordings of Buddhist music incorporating these and other percussion instruments (such as drums, bells, and wooden clappers) are available on *Buddhist Drums, Bell & Chants* (Lyrichord, 1994). This CD also contains *wasan*, chants in Japanese.

Masters of the vertically held, end blown *shakuhachi* flute are distinguished by their ability to produce an astonishing array of tones. Through *shakuhachi honkyoku* (“original pieces”), musicians make otherwise imperceptible relationships between form and emptiness audible. The significance of this concept to the tradition is clear in the title of the piece, *Kyorei* (“Empty Spirit”), track number seven on disc number two of *The Ongaku Masters, An Anthology of Japanese Classical Music, Volume 1*. It is also apparent in performance practice. Originally performed by Zen monks, *shakuhachi honkyoku* focus on particular pitches. Musicians employ diverse breathing techniques with respect to these central notes to create a range of subtle effects, timbres, and dynamics. In addition, the compositions emphasize periods of silence,

known as *ma*, which contrast with the musical sounds. Excellent examples of *shakuhachi honkyoku* also appear on *Japan: Shakuhachi — The Japanese Flute* (Nonesuch, 1977).

Though not exclusively sacred, the *biwa* (a pear-shaped lute related to the Chinese *pipa* and the Persian *oud*), has been closely associated with the spiritual. One type of this instrument has been used in the *gagaku* ensemble since it arrived in Japan. From the eighth century, another *biwa* repertoire was performed for purification rites by blind priests. During the thirteenth century, these traditions overlapped to produce a third genre — *heikyoku* (recitation of *The Tale of Heike*). The ballads became one of Japan's most significant musical and literary creations, setting the stage for future narrative performance genres.

The Heike tales, which recount the ascent and decline of the Heike clan, remained popular through the fourteenth century because of their enduring themes: devotion, courage, elegance, and impermanence. A well-known episode of the tale, *Ogi no Mato* (“The Folding Fan as Target”), is available on *Japan: Traditional Vocal and Instrumental Music* (Nonesuch, 1990) and *Mythical Tunes of the Biwa: Yoshiko Sakata* (Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2004).

The latter video also presents an excellent overview of the *biwa* and its music, placing it within the context of history, religion, fine art, literature, and geography. It even brings viewers to Lake Biwa, the site of one Heike episode in which the protagonist plays the *biwa* for the Japanese deity of the arts, causing her to emerge in the form of a white dragon. In addition, Sakata performs her own version of the Japanese classic folk tale “The Crane Story.”

While the No theater (which combines literature, music, dance, and drama) is not religious per se, the aesthetics and messages it conveys reveal close associations with Shinto and Buddhism. Developed in the fifteenth century as an elite entertainment, it originated as a fusion of popular and religious art forms. A No play takes audiences out of ordinary time, into worlds of the past and worlds of the spirits. A full-length production consists of a cycle of sober, subtle dramas focusing on Shinto or Buddhist deities, ghosts of warriors of the Heike and Genji clans, noble ladies, emotions, and demons. Three lively comic skits, known as *kyogen*, balance the gravity of the production. No borrowed its instrumentation — the high-pitched, *nohkan* flute and three drums (*ko-tsuzumi*, *o-tsuzumi*, and *taiko*) — from the *sarugaku* and *dengaku* theaters, which were fashionable during the Heian era (794–1185). In contrast, the singing of No grew out of the more serious, Buddhist *shomyo* chanting tradition. The sounds of this synthesis are available on *Japanese Noh Music* (Lyricord, 1993).

Nature, a favorite theme of Japanese arts, bridges the secular and the sacred. On one hand, artists and their patrons have identified parallels between human experience and nature; on the other, they have perceived ambiguous connections among the human, natural, and divine worlds. In either case, an appreciation for perpetual motion is evident. The

innumerable depictions of the four seasons that appear in Japan's visual, literary, and performing arts illustrate this well (for instance, see "Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons" page 38). This awareness of the fluidity of experience is further emphasized by the fact that Japanese art forms often refer to other modes of expression (for example, another image presented in this guide, "Boy and Mount Fuji," page 22, incorporates music).

The seventeenth-century composition *Shiki-no-Kyoku* ("Song of the Four Seasons"), track number one on *Nanae Yoshimura: The Art of the Koto, Volume Two* (Celestial Harmonies, 2001), offers an excellent example of how Japanese musicians have layered their impressions of transformation. It cycles listeners through four verses: one each for spring, autumn, winter, and summer. Every stanza includes references to birds and flowers associated with the particular season, and it concludes by directing listeners to reflect upon a single, ecological symbol of that season. The emphasis on the passage of time is heightened still more by immediately quoting at the opening of the piece the eleventh-century classic *The Tale of Genji*. Sung to the accompaniment of the *koto* (thirteen-stringed zither), the piece also illustrates the seasons through a variety of techniques used to play the instrument. Like the *shakuhachi honkyoku* described above, fine *koto* players create an almost infinite number of effects from a limited number of pitches.

The artists and audiences who gave direction to the vibrant secular music and performance scene of the Edo period (1615–1868) merged the worlds of aesthetics, literature, and social life in extraordinary ways. These innovations ranged from setting new standards for musical virtuosity to traversing the realms of dance, theater, puppetry, and literature to entertain an urban clientele.

One of these artists was Kengyo Yatsunami (1614–1685), composer of the piece *Shiki no Kyoku*, described above. He is known as the "Father of Solo *Koto* Music," and his works from the Edo period form the core of today's *koto* repertoire. Among Yatsunami's innovations were new tunings and compositional styles for the instrument. In addition to *Shiki no Kyoku*, the CD *Nanae Yoshimura: The Art of the Koto, Volume Two* (Celestial Harmonies, 2001) contains *Hachidan*, an example of the *danmono* ("stepping pieces") style, which Yatsunami invented. *Danmono* begin with a simple theme that is repeated, elaborated upon, and sped up throughout the duration of the piece. The recording *Midare: Kazue Sawai Plays Koto Classics* (Kyoto Records, 1995) includes interpretations of two of Yatsunami's most famous works, *Rokudan* and *Midare*, by two of Japan's most renowned *koto* performers, Kazue and Tadao Sawai.

The cross-fertilization of the arts during the Edo period is perhaps most apparent in the Kabuki and *Bunraku* theaters, where artists combined music, dance, drama, and literature to delight audiences. In kabuki, human actors express the stories, while in *Bunraku*, puppets

(*ningyo*) are the focus of the drama. Two types of plays form the central repertoire of *Kabuki* and *Bunraku*: *sewamono*, which portray the emotional struggles of everyday life during the Edo period, and *jidaimono*, pieces that dramatize political and historical events prior to the Edo era. Many of the *sewamono*, such as many of the love suicides, are based upon true events that underscore familiar conflicts between personal emotion and social obligation.

Musically speaking, both of these theaters utilized and expanded upon the instrumentation of the No theater described above. In particular, they made novel use of the *shamisen*, a three-stringed lute that entered Japan from China and Okinawa in the sixteenth century. One genre, *nagauta*, is lyrical. It is performed in kabuki, both as an accompaniment to dance and to set the mood of the play. Another style, *gidayu*, is employed to narrate stories. Chanter/vocalist Gidayu Takemoto (1651–1714) first invented it for the *Bunraku* theater, but kabuki artists adopted it when they began to perform plays written for the puppet theater.

The video *Kabuki* (Films for the Humanities and Sciences) traces the links among music, drama, literature, and visual art. (Kabuki literally means “song, dance, and theater.”) It takes viewers behind the scenes to describe how musical sounds create a backdrop for the drama; introduces some of the theater’s most famous plays; draws attention to costumes, visual art, and color symbolism; and presents the role of the *onnagata* (male actor who embodies female characters). The video *Portrait of an Onnagata* (Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1992) explores the latter dimension of kabuki still more, highlighting the significance of transformation, illusion, and ambiguity in Japanese art and culture.

In the *Bunraku* puppet theater, puppeteers, *shamisen* players, and chanter/vocalists (*tayu*) work together to breathe life into delicately crafted and elaborately costumed dolls. The video documentary *Bunraku: Masters of Japanese Puppet Theater* (Films for the Humanities and Sciences) introduces viewers to this process by taking them into the worlds of two master artists: puppeteer, Tamao Yoshida and chanter/vocalist, Sumitayu Takemoto. This focused, personal perspective reveals the subtleties of traditional Japanese artistry, especially dedication, commitment, and perseverance. The video also offers special insight into classical Japanese literature (with English subtitles), illustrating the class system of the Edo period as well as the appeal of the Yoshiwara entertainment district — a place where people could relax and escape from the constraints of that highly structured social arrangement.

HEARING AND SEEING MORE IN JAPANESE MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS

The tiers of sounds, sights, and movements presented in this brief introduction to Japan’s musical and performing arts from the fifth through eighteenth century demonstrate an ongoing enthusiasm for creativity and innovation by both artists and their patrons. Yet,

simultaneously, references to and adaptations of subjects and aesthetic principles from previously existing art forms abound. As one looks at and listens more and more closely to any of the related art forms of Japan, this ebb and flow between the traditional and the novel becomes wonderfully apparent in increasingly intricate ways. While this condensed synopsis of Japan's traditional music and performing arts cannot communicate all of these marvelous relationships, we do hope that it will inspire teachers and students to learn more about these rich art forms, beginning with the Freer Gallery of Art's collection of Japanese art and the resources recommended here.

Resource List

AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDINGS

Buddhist Drums, Bell & Chants. 1994. Lyrichord Discs, Inc. #7200. (Available through www.lyrichord.com)

Bunraku: Masters of Japanese Puppet Theater. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

Eastwind: Japanese Shakuhachi Music, Masayuki Koga. 1988. Fortuna Records. (Available through <http://www.harmonies.com>)

Ensemble Nipponia. 1990. Japan: Traditional Vocal and Instrumental Music. Nonesuch. Catalog #72072. (Available through amazon.com)

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Malm, William. *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2001.

Websites

International Shakuhachi Society <http://www.komuso.com> Contains a wealth of information about traditional Japanese music, performers, and recordings.

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“Samurai.” *Calliope* (January/February 1993)

“Shinto.” *Calliope* (March 1998)

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A lively and funny adaptation of the Japanese folktale “Smells and Jingles,” about two neighbors who learn to cooperate after coming into conflict. Appropriate for ages 3–10.

Hoobler, Dorothy and Thomas. *The Ghost in the Tokaido Inn*. New York: Puffin Books, 2001.

An engaging mystery set in Edo period Japan — full of cultural and historical information. The first in a series. Appropriate for ages 9–14.

MacDonald, Fiona. *Step into Ancient Japan*. New York: Lorenz Books, 1999.

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National Educational Resources

Asia for Educators
East Asian Curriculum Project/Project on
Asia in the Core Curriculum
afe.easia.columbia.edu

Asia Society
Education Department
725 Park Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021
Tel: (212) 327-9227
Fax: (212) 717-1234
www.asiasociety.org/education/

Asian Art Museum
Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and
Culture
Education Department
200 Larkin Street
San Francisco, Calif. 94102
Tel: (415) 581-3663
Fax: (415) 581-4706
www.asianart.org

East Asia Resource Center
Jackson School of International Studies
University of Washington
Box 353650
Seattle, Wash. 98195-3650
Tel: (206) 543-1921
Fax: (206) 685-0668
earc@u.washington.edu
depts.washington.edu/earc

Five College Center for East Asian Studies
Smith College
69 Paradise Road
Northampton, Mass. 01063
Tel: (413) 585-3751
Fax: (413) 585-3748
www.smith.edu/fcceas

Freer Gallery of Art and
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
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Washington, D.C. 20013-7012
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www.asia.si.edu

Japan Information and Culture Center
Embassy of Japan, Washington, D.C.
Lafayette Center III
1155 21st Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036–3308
Tel: (202) 238–6949
Fax: (202) 822–6524
jicc@embjapan.org
www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/

Japan Society
333 East 47th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017
Tel: (212) 832–1155
www.japansociety.org

National Association of Japan–America
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733 Fifteenth Street, N.W.
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Wyckoff Teacher Resource Center
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