

Edo Avant Garde

Playing with Perspective

FEATURED ART

[*Tale of Genji* – Unsigned](#)



Tale of Genji – Unsigned

Objective One

Students will be able to identify and define linear perspective, atmospheric perspective, vanishing point, foreground, and background.

Objective Two

Students will be able explain the concept of a “bird’s eye view” as well as continuous narrative.

Objective Three

Students will be able to discuss the role of the viewer in Edo-period art as well as multiple kinds of perspectives in *Tale of Genji*.

Assigned Readings for Students

1. [Yukio Lippit on Folding Screens and Gold Leaf](#)

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to identify and define linear perspective, atmospheric perspective, vanishing point, foreground, and background.

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Image	Tale of Genji – Unsigned The School of Athens by Raphael
Video	Western Perspective Shifting Perspectives

Instruct students to fold a sheet of notebook paper in half lengthwise, labeling the left side “European/Western Art” and the right side “Japanese Art.” Show the video *Western Perspective* and then pause it on Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* to ask students where the viewer is in relation to the subject of the work. This is an excellent example of linear perspective; students should write its definition from the video on the left side. Students should also define atmospheric perspective, vanishing point, foreground, and background.

Resume the video and ask students to determine if Raphael’s *School of Athens* is another example of linear perspective. Where is the vanishing point? Is there a clear foreground? Background? Show the video *Shifting Perspectives*. Students should compare the Western works of art to the concepts about Edo-period folding screens presented in the video.

Objective Two

Students will be able explain the concept of a “bird’s eye view” as well as continuous narrative.

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Images	Tale of Genji – Unsigned
Video	Multiple Perspectives

Show the video *Multiple Perspectives* and have students write down ideas they find significant on the left or right side of their paper. Students should define “bird’s eye view,” a view that does not exist per se, as the image is rendered as if seen by a bird flying overhead. Students should also create a definition for continuous narrative, when multiple things are happening in an image, but not necessarily at the same time.

Show the video a second time so students can absorb all the information presented. Students may also note the scale of Edo-period folding screens versus Western artworks, as well as how light and shadow are used in European art and in Edo-period art.

Objective Three

Students will be able to discuss the role of the viewer in Edo-period art as well as multiple kinds of perspectives in *Tale of Genji*.

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Images

[Tale of Genji – Unsigned](#)

Assigned Reading

[Yukio Lippit on Folding Screens and Gold Leaf](#)

Explain that folding screens were used to demarcate space within an interior, much like furniture, and were also considered works of art that could be used solely for decorative purposes. Assign Yukio Lippit's interview and have students underline or circle words and phrases they feel are significant. Using this source and their notes, students will explain how the *Tale of Genji* screen illustrates the use of multiple perspectives. Students should also comment on other aspects unique to viewing Japanese screens, such as being viewed from a seated position creating a more immersive experience than Western art, which often places the viewer in a specific, standing position.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Language Arts

The concept of differing points of view also applies to literature. Have students find examples of texts in a first-person narrative, third-person narrative, etc., and give them an opportunity to rewrite sections of the text from a different point of view.

Studio Art

Students can apply what they learned about perspective to create their own art by establishing the role of the viewer in their work. The subject matter could emulate the folding screens, focusing on nature and animals, approached in a hyper-realistic or abstract style. Students can also create a non-linear or simultaneous narrative of an event or memory. Smaller pieces of paper can be accordion folded as preparatory sketches or considered the final work depending upon available time and resources.

Technology Education

Students can take photos with their cellphone to illustrate their comprehension of foreground, background, etc. Students can create a collection of images of a single subject taken from a variety of vantage points (lying next to the object, climbing on a ladder, etc.) and use Photoshop or other software to create a visually cohesive collage.