

Edo Avant Garde

Playing with Perspective

FEATURED ART

[*Tale of Genji* – Unsigned](#)



Tale of Genji – Unsigned

Objective One

Students will be able to compare East Asian and Western approaches to perspective.

Objective Two

Students will be able to discuss the ways in which visual perspectives can differ based on cultural context.

Objective Three

Students will be able to imagine themselves interacting with a work of art.

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to compare East Asian and Western approaches to perspective.

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Image	Tale of Genji – Unsigned
Video	Western Perspective
Worksheet	The School of Athens

Introduce students to two artworks: Raphael's *The School of Athens* fresco on the Worksheet and the unsigned *Tale of Genji* screen. While showing the *Tale of Genji* screen on the board, have students examine the *School of Athens* Worksheet. Ask students to identify some of the key similarities in these two works before describing any differences. Students can make their lists independently or collaboratively in small groups to share with the class.

Watch the video *Western Perspective* and use it to help students compare the artists' use of converging lines, vanishing points, scale, etc., in each work. Discuss the different moods created by approaching a work of art from a human perspective, as we walk up the steps in Raphael's work, rather than from the "eyes of the gods" in the *Tale of Genji* screen. Ask students to describe which approach they find more comfortable and which more intriguing.

Objective Two

Students will be able to discuss the ways in which visual perspectives can differ based on cultural context.

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Images	Tale of Genji – Unsigned The School of Athens by Raphael
Assigned Readings	Yukio Lippit on Folding Screens and Gold Leaf

Explain that both works of art are visualizations of fictional scenes, one based on historical characters (*The School of Athens*) and the other on literary characters (*Tale of Genji*). Ask students to write down three questions that would help them better understand what is happening in these works of art. Partner students and have them share their questions with each other. Ask students to respond to one question asked by their partner, using visual evidence in the artwork to help form and support their answer. Have students share their thoughts on these questions, referencing Yukio Lippit's interview to evaluate student responses.

Objective Three

Students will be able to imagine themselves interacting with a work of art.

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Images	Tale of Genji – Unsigned Willow Bridge – Unsigned
Video	Shifting Perspectives

Explain that students will now be traveling in time as they watch a video that explores a folding screen. As you watch *Shifting Perspectives*, make sure to point out that the position in which a screen is set up also affects how viewers engage with perspective. Ask students to compare this work to the *Tale of Genji* screen and to describe how artists use perspective to create unique landscapes.

Although there are no people in the *Willow Bridge* screen, have students imagine themselves stepping inside this work and what they might see, hear, and smell. Ask students to choose either the *Tale of Genji* screen or the *Willow Bridge* screen and explain which landscape they would prefer to physically explore—the one with more figures in action or the one more focused on nature. Why? Have students summarize their ideas in a written reflection that includes specific visual evidence from the screen they chose and some imaginative ideas.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Language Arts

Watch the *Multiple Perspectives* video and challenge students to describe what the narrator means by “the universe in a folding screen.” Ask students to elaborate on the essay they began to write in Objective Three. Where would they place themselves inside the screen they chose and why? What objects or people would be close to them and what would be farther away? From their perspective, what would they be able to see, hear, smell, and touch? Who else would they invite to join them in this scene and why? What activities are they engaging in while they are inside the scene in this screen?