

Painting Nature

Shasei and Painting the Subjective Experience

FEATURED ART

[Puppies by Maruyama Ōkyo](#)



Puppies by Maruyama Ōkyo

Objective One

Students will be able to decode the unique qualities of an artwork using a close-looking activity and questioning.

Objective Two

Students will be able to explain how the artist used specific media and techniques to create different effects and emotions.

Objective Three

Students will be able to understand the function of a poem in a work of art and create an original poem for a selected artwork.

Recommended Readings for Teachers

1. [“Why do Ōkyo’s puppies look so cute? The significance of Edo period artists observing nature to create art” by Brenda Jordan](#)
2. [Excerpts from “The Logic and History of ‘Kawaii, Cute, Art’” by Kaneko Nobuhisa, *Cute Edo Paintings*](#)
3. [“Wildlife Personalities Play a Role in Nature” by Jim Robbins](#)
4. [Introduction to *Puppies*](#)

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to decode the unique qualities of an artwork using a close-looking activity and questioning.

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Images	Puppies by Maruyama Ōkyo
Video	Shasei: Ōkyo's Puppies
Worksheet	See, Think, Wonder, Feel
Assigned Readings	“The Logic and History of ‘Kawaii, Cute, Art’” by Kaneko Nobuhisa, <i>Cute Edo Paintings</i> “Why do Ōkyo’s puppies look so cute? The significance of Edo period artists observing nature to create art” by Brenda Jordan

Introduce students to *Puppies* by Ōkyo with a See, Think, Wonder, Feel exploration using the Worksheet. Guide students through the Worksheet one question at a time: What do you see in this work of art? What does this artwork make you think about or what ideas do you now have? What do you wonder? How does the artwork make you feel? Allow time for students to see, think, wonder, and feel not only about the group of puppies but also about the work’s background. After completing each step, have students share their responses.

Ask students to describe the qualities of the work and to guess what type of materials might have been used to create it (ink and gold leaf on paper).

Objective Two

Students will be able to explain how the artist used specific media and techniques to create different effects and emotions.

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Images	A duck diving by Maruyama Ōkyo Three Monkeys and Wasps by Mori Sosen
Video	Rosetsu's Puppies: A Closer Look

Compare both *Puppies* and *A duck diving* by Ōkyo to *Three Monkeys and Wasps* by Sosen. Compare and contrast the media and techniques used in these works with those in Ōkyo’s *Puppies*.

Referencing Jim Robbins’s article and the lesson’s Introduction, ask students to select a work and describe how an animal in that work is exhibiting one of the five common animal personality traits (boldness, aggressiveness, activity, exploratory tendency, or sociability) as it interacts with its environment. What visual evidence do they observe that helps them to identify and describe that personality trait in the animal?

Objective Three

Students will be able to understand the function of a poem in a work of art and create an original poem for a selected artwork.

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Images	Grasses and Moon by Tani Bunchō Detail #1 Puppies by Nagasawa Rosetsu
Video	Rosetsu's Puppies: A Closer Look

Point out to students that Detail #1 of *Grasses and Moon* highlights a poem by the artist, Tani Bunchō, along with the artist’s stamped seal. Working collaboratively as a class, write and critique an original poem for Rosetsu’s *Puppies*. What would they like to say about this work? What might have inspired the artist? What about the work is inspiring to the viewer?

Challenge students to write their own poem for either *A duck diving* by Ōkyo, *Puppies* by Rosetsu, or *Three Monkeys and Wasps* by Sosen, highlighting some aspect of the animals’ personalities.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Art History

Learn more about cuteness, or *kawaii*, in the art of Japan by reading “The Logic and History of ‘Kawaii, Cute, Art.’” What examples of *kawaii* do you see, think, wonder, and feel are included in either Ōkyo’s or Rosetsu’s *Puppies*? Is the *kawaii* or cuteness in these works of art still popular today, three centuries later? Why or why not?

Art History

Use the information from Brenda Jordan’s “Why do Ōkyo’s puppies look so cute?” and zoom into Ōkyo’s and Rosetsu’s *Puppies* to reveal details about the media used and describe the techniques employed by the artist. Watch the Ōkyo *Shasei* video in Objective One and the Rosetsu *Puppies* video in Objectives Two and Three and discuss what they reveal about each

artwork. Ask students to summarize what the videos reveal while connecting evidence from the artworks.

Language Arts

Enhance the students' experience of exploring *kawaii* and *shasei* in Objective One by examining *Puppies* by Ōkyo and *Puppies* by Rosetsu. In addition to comparing the paintings, you can also watch the video *Rosetsu's Puppies: A Closer Look* to learn more.