

Our Environment

Depicting the *Kami*/Spirits in the Natural World

FEATURED ART

[Crows - Unsigned](#)



Crows - Unsigned

Objective One

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

Objective Two

Students will be able to investigate visual representations of nature and characterize the personalities created by these representations.

Objective Three

Students will be able to use a variety of organic shapes to create a pattern that redesigns the use of space and transforms the mood in a work of art.

Recommended Readings for Teachers

1. [The Intersection of Two Religions in Japan by Brenda Jordan](#)
2. [Excerpts from *Gifts of the Crows: How Perception, Emotion, and Thought Allow Smart Birds to Behave Like Humans* by John M. Marzluff and Tony Angell](#)
3. [Excerpts from Introduction to *The Genius of Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman](#)

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

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

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Image	Nachi Waterfall by Nagasawa Rosetsu
Video	Kami: Nachi Waterfall
Assigned Reading	The Intersection of Two Religions in Japan by Brenda Jordan

Ask students to describe a time in which they might have felt a special connection to an animal, plant, bird, tree, or body of water. Connect those experiences to that of the traveler seen in Rosetsu's *Nachi Waterfall*. Ask students to describe what the traveler in that scene might be feeling. How is the traveler interacting with their environment?

Introduce students to Shintō and the belief in *kami* or spirits in nature, referring to the "The Intersection of Two Religions in Japan" essay. How does the work by Rosetsu show humans living in harmony with nature? How might this scene change from season to season?

Show the video *Kami: Nachi Waterfall*, and ask students to imagine themselves in the gallery, walking up to *Nachi Waterfall*. Where would they stand to get the best view of the scroll? How might they (appropriately) interact with the artwork? What would they see, hear, smell, and feel from that spot?

Objective Two

Students will be able to investigate visual representations of nature and characterize the personalities created by these representations.

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Images	Crows - Unsigned Crows Detail #1
Assigned Readings	Introduction to Crows Excerpts from <i>Gifts of the Crows</i>

Return to the personal connections students made with nature in the introduction. Ask students to describe the personality of the animal or object with which they connected. Using Details of the *Crows* on the Art page, ask students to describe the personalities they see in some of the crows in this work. What are these birds doing? What are they saying? What are the crows feeling?

Share several excerpts from this lesson's Introduction and from *Gifts of the Crows* to help facilitate discussion. How do these crows make the students feel? How could the artist have rearranged these crows to create a different feeling or mood in this work of art? Are there one or two birds in particular that might be expressing the "wisdom" of crows? If so, which ones and how are they displaying that characteristic?

Objective Three

Students will be able to use a variety of organic shapes to create a pattern that redesigns the use of space and transforms the mood in a work of art.

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Images	Crows - Unsigned Crows Detail #1
Assigned Reading	Excerpt from <i>The Genius of Birds</i> by Jennifer Ackerman (Pages 260–61) Excerpt from <i>The Genius of Birds</i> by Jennifer Ackerman (Page 192)

Ask students if they are as smart as crows—why or why not? Share the study in *The Genius of Birds* (pages 260–61) that explains how crows can match patterns, and see if these findings change anyone's opinion. Challenge students to closely examine *Crows* and, working in partners, try to find two crows that are the same. Can students identify any other patterns in this work of art?

Referencing another excerpt from the book about the ways in which crows can match colors and patterns (page 192), have students redesign this screen to create some sort of pattern they feel would make both the crows happy and themselves safe standing among this large group of birds. Students can either hand-draw the images or digitally recreate the screen. For help, direct students to the Detail Images on the *Crows* Art webpage.