

Our Environment

Depicting the *Kami*/Spirits in the Natural World

FEATURED ART

[Crows - Unsigned](#)



Crows - Unsigned

Objective One

Students will be able to identify the main ideas of Shintō and write a definition for *kami* after reading the article titled "Shintō" by Asia for Educators.

Objective Two

Students will be able to work collaboratively with their peers to emulate the style, format, and information from the video *Kami: Nachi Waterfall* to create their own video commentary for *Kami: Crows*.

Objective Three

Students will be able to explain how the pair of screens *Crows* can be connected to Shintō and the concept of *kami*.

Recommended Readings for Teachers

1. ["Shintō" by Asia for Educators](#)
2. [Introduction to Crows](#)
3. [Excerpts from Introduction to *The Genius of Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman](#)
4. [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](#)

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to identify the main ideas of Shintō and write a definition for *kami* after reading the article entitled "Shintō" by Asia for Educators.

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Image	Crows – Unsigned
Assigned Reading	Shintō by Asia for Educators

Each student will be given a paper copy of the article "Shintō," by Asia for Educators. Give students a few minutes to begin reading independently, and then as a group, help students read through the article, encouraging students to circle words and phrases they feel are significant. The fifth paragraph offers an important explanation of the word *kami* and what is accepted as a *kami*. By the end of the discussion based on the reading, students should be able to identify the main ideas of Shinto and write a definition for the term *kami*, using the margins or the back of the reading.

Objective Two

Students will be able to work collaboratively with their peers to emulate the style, format, and information from the video *Kami: Nachi Waterfall* to create their own video commentary for *Kami: Crows*.

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Images	Crows – Unsigned Crows Detail #1
Videos	Kami: Nachi Waterfall Kami: Crows

Show the video *Kami: Nachi Waterfall* and listen carefully to what Laura Allen, chief curator of the Asian Art Museum, has to say about the work by Nagasawa Rosetsu. Students should pay particular attention to her discussion of the subject matter as well as how this waterfall, “since ancient times, was thought to have the power of a *kami*.”

Divide students into groups no larger than three. Explain that they have been “hired” by the Seattle Art Museum to narrate a video for the work *Crows* in much the same manner as Dr. Allen provided commentary about *Kami: Nachi Waterfall*, linking the work to Shintō. Show the video *Kami: Crows* once without any timing visible; show the video a second time while hovering the cursor over the pause button to show the timing. Students will write commentary to fit in 53 seconds, the length of the video. If students are not familiar with Japanese screens, the instructor may briefly explain that screens were used to demarcate space within an interior, much like furniture. Screens could also be used solely for decorative purposes and were considered works of art. This pair of six-paneled screens were created using ink and gold on paper and measure 61 inches in height and 139 inches in length.

Objective Three

Students will be able to explain how the pair of screens *Crows* can be connected to Shintō and the concept of *kami*.

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Images	Crows - Unsigned
Video	Kami: Crows
Assigned Readings	Excerpts from Introduction to <i>The Genius of Birds</i> Excerpts from <i>Gifts of the Crows</i>

Provide students with two additional readings, excerpts from *The Genius of Birds* and *Gifts of the Crows* to skim. Using these and the “Shintō” article and notes, students will work collaboratively to write the commentary for the video. Students should consider what qualities crows have that would make the viewer consider them *kami*. Student comments will vary depending upon their knowledge of the birds. Crows are very large birds, black in color, and live in large families or flocks. Crows are extremely loud birds. They are also considered very intelligent, curious, and clever. There are stories and folklore that illustrate these qualities and suggest that crows can be pranksters or thieves, stealing objects that attract their attention. Depicting the birds capable of flight and in a large group shows students some of the unique qualities of birds compared to other animals. Students should have access to the video with timing so they can construct their commentary noting the timing after each sentence.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Art or Language Arts

The teacher may read the video copy with timing to evaluate it, or each group can select a student to read the commentary as the video plays for the whole class. To further involve

students, the teacher could work with them to create a rubric addressing both the content and the delivery of the commentary. As students listen to the presentations, they should think about what grabs their attention. Did the commentary follow the sequence of the video, with the moving images versus the detailed stills? Did the speaker seem rushed, suggesting there was too much information? Or was there too little information for the length of the video?