

Depicting Birds and Animals

Birds

FEATURED ART

[*An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree by Soga Nichokuan*](#)



An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree by Soga Nichokuan

Objective One

Students will be able to explain why the eagle represents power and authority in a variety of cultures.

Objective Two

Students will be able to identify the use of different values, varying line weight, and how the design principle of dominance/emphasis and repetition are used in the screen *An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree* and the hanging scroll *Eagle*.

Objective Three

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of value, line weight, repetition, and dominance/emphasis by writing a detailed description of their own Zoom background that shows power and authority.

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to explain why the eagle represents power and authority in a variety of cultures.

On [Google Slides Page 1](#)

Images [An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree by Soga Nichokuan](#)
[An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree Detail #3](#)

As students enter the classroom, the teacher should be in the front of the room, positioned in front of the projected image of *An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree*, either to the far right or left, not blocking the eagle. As a group, students should identify the bird as an eagle. Where have students seen the image of an eagle before? Answers will vary, but may include:

- the seal of the American president features an eagle
- the Mexican flag shows an eagle holding a snake
- the Philadelphia football team mascot is an eagle

Students should be asked to consider what it means for someone in a position of power and authority to be standing in front of or close to the image of an eagle. Why is an eagle a symbol for power and authority? Why would a football team choose to have their mascot be an eagle? Answers will vary, but students should understand the eagle is large, powerful, and predatory.

From this discussion, students should begin to take a closer look at the eagle in Soga Nichokuan's paneled screen using Detail #3 of *An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree*. How has the artist conveyed the sense that this is a powerful bird? Answers should include:

- the eagle's eyes appear to be looking at something
- the eagle is still, but prepared to strike, suggesting the eagle is wise enough to wait for the right moment to attack
- the eagle has large talons to grip its prey

Objective Two

Students will be able to identify the use of different values, varying line weight, and how the design principle of dominance/emphasis and repetition are used in the screen, *An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree* and the hanging scroll, *Eagle*.

On [Google Slides Page 2](#)

Images [An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree by Soga Nichokuan](#)
[Eagle by Kishi Ganku](#)

Students should be able to explain that what draws their eyes to the eyes, talons, and feathers of the eagle is that some lines are thicker and darker than others. In certain places, darker ink is

applied to the work. The decisions in how to render the eagle create a clear point of emphasis; these are features of the artwork that the artist wants to be sure the viewer sees. Ask students to consider what other principles of design the artist has used in this work. Show students *Eagle* by Kishi Ganku. Ask students to compare the two images. In addition to recognizing that one is a screen and the other is a scroll, encourage students to explore the principle of repetition.

Objective Three

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of value, line weight, repetition, and dominance/emphasis by writing a detailed description of their own Zoom background that shows power and authority.

On [Google Slides Page 3](#)

Images	An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree by Soga Nichokuan Eagle by Kishi Ganku
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The teacher should return to standing in front of the screen. What was the teacher trying to convey by standing in front of this screen as students entered the room? As most students are familiar with Zoom and Google Meet from remote learning, discuss how using this screen as a background conveys a sense of power and authority. Explain that during the Edo period, screens such as this might have been strategically placed behind a powerful samurai to project his dominance and power. Address the time of year and weather. Here, the snow looks fresh; combined with the sun, it may suggest the New Year, when people are especially ready to embrace new things.

Ask students to write a paragraph or two, describing their ideal background screen that would reflect power and authority using an animal or bird of their choosing. How would the animal or bird be rendered to suggest power and authority? Would students prefer a cropped image like the hanging scroll *Eagle*? Or would they place their subject in an expansive setting, like *An eagle on a snow-laden blossoming plum tree*? What details would be important to include? In their detailed descriptions, students must address the elements of value and line weight as well as the principle of repetition, noting areas of emphasis. Where do they want to direct the viewer's eye first? The instructor should collect and review.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Art and Biology

Students can be paired off to study birds indigenous to their local area and select a bird to focus on. Where possible, students can travel to nature centers to take short films of birds in their natural habitat. Otherwise, students can search the internet for short clips of their selected birds. As examples, teachers can show the following short videos: *Bird Taking Flight*, *Ducks #1*, *Ducks #2*, *Ducks #3*, and *Owl*. After careful study of how the bird behaves and moves, the art student will render the bird in appropriate media to capture its color and texture. The biology student can create a list of its characteristics and research its habitat. The image and the information can be displayed together.

Studio Art

Using their screen background description in Objective Three as a plan, students will render their images through drawing or collage, using a piece of paper to emulate a hanging scroll or folding a piece of paper into a screen. Students can exchange their writings with a peer, and each student can be tasked with designing an image that fits the description provided by their peer.