

Depicting Birds and Animals

Fish

FEATURED ART

[Carp by Shibata Zeshin](#)



Carp by Shibata Zeshin

Objective One

Students will be able to closely examine a work of art to create a list of terms that describes the work's details and unique features.

Objective Two

Students will be able to work collaboratively with classmates to write a persuasive argument.

Objective Three

Students will be able to explain the ways in which artists work to accurately represent fish in their natural environment.

Assigned Readings for Teachers

1. [“Fish and Turtles” by Kit Brooks from Catalogue of the Feinberg Collection of Japanese Art by Rachel Saunders and Harvard Art Museums](#)

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to closely examine a work of art to create a list of terms that describes the work's details and unique features.

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Image [Carp by Shibata Zeshin](#)

Video [Swimming Carp](#)

Introduce students to the idea of a fish story, defined as “an extravagant or incredible story.” Using Zeshin’s *Carp*, ask students to describe the fish and to imagine what this carp might be saying and doing.

Show the video *Swimming Carp*. Ask students to describe how the carp appears in the water. How would they describe the movements of these fish? How are the carp in the video different from the carp in the art? Why do they think these carp are gathering? How might they be communicating? What are they saying?

Objective Two

Students will be able to work collaboratively with classmates to write a persuasive argument.

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Images [Carp by Kuroda Toko](#)
[Fish and Turtles by Maruyama Ōkyo](#)
[Carp by Maruyama Ōkyo](#)

Randomly divide the class into three groups by assigning each student one of three works of art. Ask students to independently examine their fish and create a list of words they would use to describe their creature's unique features.

Then, have students get up and without showing their picture, use only verbal descriptions of their fish to try and find the other students who examined the same work of art. Can they find a match? What made some fish easier to identify and describe than others? Check that students have found classmates with the same painting and divide matching students into several groups.

Challenge students to work together to create a three- to four-sentence description of their artwork that would persuade others that their fish is the biggest and best of them all. Each

student should contribute a sentence using their list of visual descriptions. Although they may embellish their fish story a little, the goal is to accurately represent the painting. Have groups select a representative to read their fish story to the entire class in an attempt to “sell” their fish as the best.

Objective Three

Students will be able to explain the ways in which artists work to accurately represent fish in their natural environment.

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Images	Carp by Shibata Zeshin Carp by Kuroda Toko Fish and Turtles by Maruyama Ōkyo Carp by Maruyama Ōkyo
Video	Swimming Carp
Assigned Reading	“Fish and Turtles” by Kit Brooks from <i>Catalogue of the Feinberg Collection of Japanese Art</i> by Rachel Saunders and Harvard Art Museums

Show all four artworks side-by-side and review the fish story activity by asking students to identify some of their similarities. Note that each work depicts the fish underwater. Ask students to describe how artists represented water in their art.

Read excerpts from Kit Brooks’s description of *Fish and Turtles*, noting the tools and techniques used by these artists to accurately represent fish in their natural environment. Ask students to recall what they saw in the video of carp swimming in Objective One. Have students pick one of the four paintings and complete a quick-write response explaining which fish gets their vote as the most accurate representation of a fish swimming in water and why.