

Depicting Birds and Animals

## Fish

### FEATURED ART

[Carp by Shibata Zeshin](#)



*Carp* by Shibata Zeshin

#### Objective One

Students will be able to create a series of quick, gestural drawings to demonstrate their understanding of the shapes that carps make while swimming.

#### Objective Two

Students will be able to identify descriptive words and phrases Kit Brooks uses to analyze Maruyama Ōkyo's *Fish and Turtles* and use them as a tool to compare it to Shibata Zeshin's *Carp*.

#### Objective Three

Students will be able to identify the use of the elements and principles of art in the works shown and consider how artists render their subjects with a sense of personality.

## 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 create a series of quick, gestural drawings to demonstrate their understanding of the shapes that carps make while swimming.

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Image	<a href="#">Carp by Shibata Zeshin</a>
Video	<a href="#">Heron on a Willow Branch and Carp: A Closer Look</a> <a href="#">Swimming Carp</a>

Play the videos *Heron on a Willow Branch and Carp: A Closer Look* and *Swimming Carp*, asking students to focus on the movement of the fish. With pencil and paper, students will record the movements of the fish by creating quick gesture drawings. To help students understand the assignment, the instructor can pause a video and quickly demonstrate by drawing the curvilinear outlines of the fish, such as the yellow carp in *Heron on a Willow Branch and Carp* at approximately 38 seconds. These are quick, gestural drawings using lines to illustrate the shape and form fish create while moving. Ask students to stop drawing after 5 minutes.

### Objective Two

Students will be able to identify descriptive words and phrases Kit Brooks uses to analyze Maruyama Ōkyo's *Fish and Turtles* and use them as a tool to compare it to Shibata Zeshin's *Carp*.

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Images	<a href="#">Carp by Shibata Zeshin</a> <a href="#">Fish and Turtles by Maruyama Ōkyo</a>
Assigned Readings	<a href="#">“Fish and Turtles” by Kit Brooks from <i>Catalogue of the Feinberg Collection of Japanese Art</i> by Rachel Saunders and Harvard Art Museums</a>

While looking at *Carp* by Shibata Zeshin as well as Maruyama Ōkyo's *Fish and Turtles*, give students a printed copy of Kit Brooks's reading. While students take turns reading it out loud, the rest of the class will circle descriptive words and phrases. The instructor should be prepared to explain unfamiliar terms such as *virtuosity* to students. Students can use their understanding of *Fish and Turtles* and the reading to better understand *Carp* by Shibata Zeshin. Ask students to describe how the carp is moving, the shape it's creating, and the mood it inspires, especially

given there was no electrical light available during the Edo era. The instructor should write down the descriptive words and phrases the students use to discuss it.

### **Objective Three**

Students will be able to identify the use of the elements and principles of art in the works shown and consider how artists render their subjects with a sense of personality.

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Image	<a href="#">Carp by Shibata Zeshin</a>
Video	<a href="#">Heron on a Willow Branch and Carp: A Closer Look</a>

Encourage students to think about the elements and principles of art as they study *Carp*. For example, ask students to describe the quality of line, Zeshin's use of color and value, the shape of the fish, and the texture of its scales. The artist uses repetition in many ways. What other principles of design can students identify?

In addition to rendering the carp, fish, and turtles with tremendous anatomical accuracy in both images, the artists have imbued their subjects with a sense of a personality, an inner life. Replay the videos *Heron on a Willow Branch and Carp: A Closer Look* and *Swimming Carp*. What words would students use to describe the personality of the heron? What words might a student use to describe the personality of the fish in *Carp* with its open mouth and wide eyes? Encourage students to support their responses by referencing either the works of art or the videos, pausing as needed. Ask students to consider what changes they could make to their quick gestural drawings to imbue their carp with a sense of personality.

## **CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS**

### **Biology and Art**

*Fish and Turtles* is rendered with such accuracy that the fish can be identified as a male carp, female carp, killifish, and minnows. Pair students to study fish or reptiles indigenous to their local area. Students can collaborate by selecting a single fish or reptile. The art student can render the selection in an appropriate media to capture its color and texture. The biology student can create a list of its characteristics and research its habitat. The work and information can be displayed together.

### **Language Arts**

Before showing the work, students can read Kit Brooks's essay "Fish and Turtles" and discuss how the picture Brooks's essay created in their mind differs from the work. How would they revise it to better match the image it brought to their minds? What other details would they include?

**Studio Art**

Students will explore rendering fish in different media to fully capture their color and texture and explore how to render water. As references, teachers can show *Impressions of Nature* videos [Water #1](#), [Water #2](#), [Water #3](#), [Water #4](#), and [Water #5](#). Students can also experiment painting on silk to emulate the translucent quality of the water in *Fish and Turtles*.