

Artistic Techniques

Tarashikomi—Wet on Wet Ink

FEATURED ART

[*Dragons and Clouds* by Tawaraya Sōtatsu](#)



Dragons and Clouds by Tawaraya Sōtatsu

Objective One

Students will be able to analyze *Dragons and Clouds* through sustained and careful looking, determining the subject matter, the culture, and time in which it was created.

Objective Two

Students will be able to define the term *tarashikomi* and identify its use in *Dragons and Clouds*.

Objective Three

Students will be able to explain how the use of *tarashikomi* creates a sense of mood in works of art from the Edo period.

Assigned Readings for Students

1. [Yukio Lippit interview, *Dragons and Clouds*](#)

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to analyze *Dragons and Clouds* through sustained and careful looking, determining the subject matter, the culture, and time in which it was created.

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Images	Dragons and Clouds by Tawaraya Sōtatsu Dragons and Clouds Detail #1
Video	Tarashikomi: Dragons and Clouds

Show students Tawaraya Sōtatsu's *Dragons and Clouds*. Ask students to create a series of questions based on the prompt "I wonder" while looking closely at it. This can be done independently, as a small group, or collaboratively as a class, with the teacher scribing the questions and students copying them down. Examples include:

- I wonder why the subject is dragons?
- I wonder who the artist is?
- I wonder when and where this artwork was made?
- I wonder if the dragons are about to fight?
- I wonder how this was made?

Show the video *Dragons and Clouds* in which James Ulak discusses the work. Students will get a sense of the size of the screens and be introduced to the term *tarashikomi*. Students may not be familiar with Japanese screens, and the instructor may need to 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. Return to the "I wonder" questions and have students collaborate to answer as many questions as possible from the information in the video.

Objective Two

Students will be able to define the term *tarashikomi* and identify its use in *Dragons and Clouds*.

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Image	Dragons and Clouds by Tawaraya Sōtatsu
Video	Tarashikomi: Falling Rain

Tarashikomi is the technique of wet-on-wet painting in which the artist drops charcoal ink or color pigments onto an area with wet ink before it dries, allowing it to mingle. Show the video

Tarashikomi: Falling Rain, which addresses how the desire to replicate the natural world may have led to innovative uses of ink, along with close-ups of *Dragons and Clouds*.

Objective Three

Students will be able to explain how the use of *tarashikomi* creates a sense of mood in works of art from the Edo period.

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Images	Dragons and Clouds by Tawaraya Sōtatsu The Ivy Way through Mt. Utsu by Sakai Hōitsu
Video	Tarashikomi: The Ivy Way through Mt. Utsu
Assigned Reading	Yukio Lippit Interview, Dragons and Clouds

Students will read the excerpt from the Yukio Lippit interview on *Dragons and Clouds* and be encouraged to circle, underline, or highlight phrases that they feel are significant. Ask students to consider how *tarashikomi* creates a sense of mood in *Dragons and Clouds*. Ask students to study *The Ivy Way Through Mt. Utsu* and identify where *tarashikomi* is used. What kind of mood was the artist trying to create? Why? Show students the video *Tarashikomi: The Ivy Way through Mt. Utsu*. Lippit notes that the screen depicts a scene “somewhere between reality and the dream world.” Ask students to supply evidence from the screen that supports his assertion.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Art History or Language Arts

Before showing the videos or sharing any information about *Dragons and Clouds*, assign a close examination of this artwork and strengthen students’ research techniques by having students answer their own “I wonder” questions. Students can also exchange their questions with peers to research them. Students should be encouraged to determine how the subject matter relates to the artist’s culture and the time in which it was created. For example, the significance of dragons in East Asia and in Western Europe is very different, so simply Googling the title or artist is not sufficient. Ultimately, students should understand the significance of the style, medium, culture, and time that *Dragons and Clouds* was created in. Students can also write a brief essay detailing their findings with a resource bibliography and/or make a presentation to the class.

Studio Art

Students will use the *tarashikomi* technique to render the subject or atmosphere of any two-dimensional work of art. Given the challenges of working with ink this way, students should be able to use other kinds of drawing media to complete their work.