

Artistic Techniques

The Magic of Water, *Sumi* Ink, and Brush

FEATURED ART

[Horses by Soga Shōhaku](#)



Horses by Soga Shōhaku

Objective One

Students will be able to express in both painted and written form the unique characteristics and individual personalities of animals in Edo art.

Objective Two

Students will be able to identify the Four Treasures of a scholar's studio and explain how each object is used.

Objective Three

Students will be able to describe the characteristics of *kawaii*, or cute art, which became extremely popular in the late Edo period.

Recommended Readings for Teachers

1. ["An Introduction to Japanese Sumi-e Ink Painting" by Brenda Jordan](#)
2. ["The Basics: Background and Essence of Japanese Ink Painting" from *Japanese Ink Painting: The Art of Sumi-e* by Naomi Okamoto](#)
3. [Excerpts from "The Logic and History of 'Kawaii, Cute, Art'" by Kaneko Nobuhisa, *Cute Edo Paintings*](#)
4. [Introduction to The Magic of Water, Sumi Ink, and Brush](#)

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to express in both painted and written form the unique characteristics and individual personalities of animals in Edo art.

On [Google Slides Page 1](#)

Image	Horses by Soga Shōhaku
Videos	Brush Strokes: Shōhaku's Horses Impressions of Nature: Horses #2 Impressions of Nature: Horses #3
Worksheet	Horse Contour 1 Horse Contour 2

Help students work with a brush and ink on paper, demonstrating how to make thick and thin lines, dashes, and other marks and changes in value. Show students Soga Shōhaku's work *Horses*, and ask them to describe the types of lines and values the artist used and the emotions they created. Watch the video *Brush Strokes: Shōhaku's Horses* and ask students to describe how the artist shows personality and "immense energy" in this work.

Show students the videos *Horses #2* and *Horses #3*, asking them to pay close attention to how the animals' heads and eyes move. Print and hand out Horse Contour Worksheet 1 and/or 2, and challenge students to use their brush and ink to fill in their own expressive looks in the animals. Ask students to compare the emotions they expressed in their work to the emotions in Shōhaku's work. How are they similar? How are they different?

Objective Two

Students will be able to identify the Four Treasures of a scholar's studio and explain how each object is used.

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Images	Geese, moon and water-plants by Kano Tsunenobu Moonlit Landscape by Nagasawa Rosetsu
Assigned Reading	"An Introduction to Japanese Sumi-e Ink Painting" by Brenda Jordan Four Treasures of a Scholar's Studio
Worksheet	Project Zero Thinking Routine: Creative Comparisons

Show students *Geese, moon and water-plants* by Kano Tsunenobu and *Moonlit Landscape* by Rosetsu and examine each work with the close-looking activity in Project Zero's Creative Comparison. Ask students to describe what they see in these artworks.

Ask students to make a comparison by describing what these artworks might look like if they were standing by their own home, looking up at the moon. Would there be trees or geese or mountains in their scene? Finally, have students imagine painting the moon from their favorite place in the world. What plants or animals or details would they include in that painting?

Discuss the process artists used to create paintings like these works, referencing the Introduction to Japanese *Sumi-e* Ink Painting. Explain the shared tradition of East Asian painting and calligraphy, showing students the Four Treasures of a scholar's studio. Discuss how each tool is used and how Tsunenobu and Rosetsu might have used them to create their works. Compare these tools to the ink and brushes students used in the first activity.

Objective Three

Students will be able to describe the characteristics of *kawaii*, or cute art, which became extremely popular in the late Edo period.

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Image	Dragon and Tiger by Kaihō Yūsetsu
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Show students Kaihō Yūsetsu's *Dragon and Tiger* and ask them to compare it to the previous works in this lesson. In what ways is this dragon like *Horses*? How is the background similar to *Moonlit Landscape*?

Explain that one of the characteristics of Edo art is the expressiveness visible in this work. While looking at *Dragon*, have students work independently to create a list of words describing the features and expression on the face of this mythological creature. Share the lists to see what characteristics they identified.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Studio Art

Ask students whether they think Kaihō Yūsetsu's *Dragon and Tiger* is "cute." Explain that another feature of art popular not only in the Edo period but also in Japan today is *kawaii*, or cuteness. Challenge students to describe how they would redesign Yūsetsu's dragon to make it fit the description of being *kawaii*. Have students share these new dragons, collaging them for display in a manner similar to Shōhaku's *Horses*.

Language Arts

Introduce the video [How does an ink painting come together?](#), explaining that a painter is recreating a work in the museum's collection. Pause the video at 0:10 (the full image of the ink painting) and ask the class to describe the types of lines they see in this work, collecting their descriptions in a classroom list. Play the video, pausing at the following times: 0:40, 1:07, 2:01, 3:18. Ask students to write their own list of terms describing the types of lines being painted in each step. Have students compare the classroom list from before they watched the video with their own lists. Note how we can better appreciate the details in a work of art when we take the time to examine each brushstroke rather than just looking at the completed work.