

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 engage in sustained looking at Soga Shōhaku's *Horses* in sections.

Objective Two

Students will be able to understand how seeing sections of a work versus the work in its entirety can change the viewer's perception of how the artist has used the elements of art and principles of design.

Objective Three

Students will be able to discuss how the use of ink and brush create the lines and values in *Horses* and identify the significance of the style of the lines.

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](#)

LESSON PLAN

Objective One

Students will be able to engage in sustained looking at Soga Shōhaku's *Horses* in sections.

On [Google Slides Page 1](#)

Images	Horses by Soga Shōhaku Horses Detail #1
Worksheets	Horses Detail 1 Horses Detail 2 Horses Detail 3

Divide students into three groups, assigning each group a different color marker. Place a poster board in each group, face down. Before starting, tell students to take the marker with their group and assign one person as the scribe. At each poster station, the group will write something they see, adding to the “conversation” with their peers. Give students three minutes at each station as they work their way around the stations, returning to their first image. Students should work exclusively with their group. Write the following prompts on the board, without requiring them to answer all the questions at each station:

- What is the subject matter?
- What media were used?
- What colors and values are used?
- Describe the kinds of lines created by the artist.
- What does the work make you think of or feel?

Students will flip the poster over to view two of the six panels of *Horses* (images printed from the three worksheets). Viewing their image, students will discuss and write down their responses in space on the poster board or on paper. Move among the groups, helping students as needed and monitoring the time. After two to three minutes, move the groups clockwise with their markers to the next poster station. Students will read comments by the first group and add their own, noting how their image is similar or different from the previous panels.

Objective Two

Students will be able to understand how seeing sections of a work versus the work in its entirety can change the viewer's perception of how the artist has used the elements of art and principles of design.

On [Google Slides Page 2](#)

Images	Horses by Soga Shōhaku Horses Detail #2
Worksheets	Horses Detail 1 Horses Detail 2 Horses Detail 3

Instead of answering questions, encourage students to continue to look closely. If students are stuck, they can determine other elements of art and principles of design the artist used. When all groups have viewed the three screen sections, students will be back at their first image. Give them a few moments to read what the other groups have written about the section. What do they think about their peers' comments? Ask the class to consider how seeing the work in its entirety changes their perception of the work and the artist's use of the elements and principles.

Objective Three

Students will be able to discuss how the use of ink and brush create the lines and values in *Horses* and identify the significance of the style of the lines.

On [Google Slides Page 3](#)

Images	Horses by Soga Shōhaku Horses Detail #3
Video	Brush Strokes: Shōhaku's Horses
Worksheets	Horses Detail 1 Horses Detail 2 Horses Detail 3

Show the video *Brush Strokes: Shōhaku's Horses*. Do students agree or disagree with the speaker that the image reminds her of a class of kindergarteners, full of energy and personality? Students can share their own thoughts or read their comments. Pause the video at 0:28, allowing students to see the scale of the work. If students are not familiar with Japanese screens, the instructor may 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. Returning to *Horses* in its entirety, students should consider the weight of the lines and the kinds of lines used throughout the work. Discuss the artist's use of brush and ink and how that influenced the value and quality of the lines.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Studio Art

Video: [Brush Strokes: Shōhaku's Horses](#)

Impressions of Nature: [Horses #2](#) and [Horses #3](#)

Worksheets: [Horse Contour Worksheet 1](#) and [Worksheet 2](#)

Working with a brush and ink on paper, demonstrate 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 two videos of horses, asking them to pay close attention to the how the animals move their heads and eyes. 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?

Art History or Art Appreciation

Video: [How does an ink painting come together?](#)

Worksheets: [Horses Detail 1](#), [Horses Detail 2](#), [Horses Detail 3](#)

Show students the video *How does an ink painting come together?* Pause the video on the completed painting at the end and discuss the mood or feeling of the work. Based on how the artist Sesson Shukei painted him, what kind of person does Jurojin seem to be? Does he seem old or young? Playful or serious? Both *Image of Jurojin* and *Horses* are rendered in ink, and both artists achieve a distinctive style in their brushwork. Give students time to compare and contrast the two artists' styles and the mood each work creates in the viewer.

If you have access to paper, ink, and brushes, hand out printed copies of one of the *Horses* worksheets and instruct students to tape a blank piece of paper over the worksheet on a light table or against a window so they can see the lines below it. Instruct them to replicate the lines in Shōhaku's work as the artist in the video replicated the lines and ink values. Encourage students to try their best rather than be frustrated by this ambitious exercise, as the main goal is to appreciate the artist's mastery of ink and brush.