

Sumi-e Sunrise Surprises!

by Debi West

This month's lesson in this series takes us to the interesting continent of Asia. This unit was a student favorite, as we have a large population of Asian students who were excited to learn about the art and history of their homeland.

This is one of the most important things about this curriculum: it encompasses all of our students, making each one feel like an important part of the school year. They all have information to share and feel inspired to get their word in and make sure their culture is shared. It's empowering as a teacher to know that all of your students are feeling special and appreciated!

Asia was a difficult unit for me to teach in that I have never really done much research in this area and now, after a lot of in-depth research, I am again filled to the brim with lessons to teach our youth!

The lessons I wrote included Japanese 3-D Carp Fish and Lanterns for kindergarten,



The fifth-graders enjoyed using their newly acquired Sumi-e painting techniques.

Korean Egg Art Paintings for first grade, Japanese Gyotaku for the second-graders, Chinese New Year Dragons for grade three, Asian Symbol Scratchboards for the fourth-graders and Sumi-e Sunrise Surprises for grade five, which I elaborate on here.

The students were thrilled to use authentic sumi-e bamboo paintbrushes and tradition inks. They were so entranced in making lines and symbols with these new art media, you could hear a pin drop in the classroom—and with fifth grade, that's unusual!

After some experimentation, we began our discussion about the history involved in this painting technique and

watched a PowerPoint presentation about Japanese artworks. They were so inspired, several students begged their parents for their own sets of brushes and inks to continue this work at home.

On day two, students received several pieces of colored construction paper, scissors, glue, permanent markers, their Sumi-e art materials, as well as a red marker and a white square eraser. They were then shown an example of a Sumi-e artwork with a sun or moon, a bamboo tree with branches and a traditional signature stamp. Not giving them a directed "how-to" lesson, I let the students figure out how to make this on their own, again giving them full ownership and freedom of creativity to make this happen while remaining true to their art and style.

Most figured out they had to use the lighter paper for the background and the brighter or darker color for the moon. So they cut their moons out, either full or crescent, and glued these down first. They then began to paint their trees, using techniques learned in the previous art class. Their trees and limbs were amazing as they used thick and thin lines and got very creative in their work.

Finally, they figured out how to "paint" the eraser with red marker and print it in the corner of their art, and then use Sumi-e paint to create a symbol that became their name. Some students wanted to be very intricate with their symbols, asking if they could use a permanent pen. Just as I hoped, they were logically figuring this lesson out and thinking critically and creatively about their final pieces.

The final exhibit was breathtaking and students were thrilled to have figured it out while using a very unique and traditional art medium. ■

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ASIA
grade level: fifth

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Fifth-grade students will ...

- learn about the art of the Japanese artists, specifically the Sumi-e artists and the art of Sumi-e painting.
- learn about collage techniques, printing techniques and following directions visually.
- learn the vocabulary words: Sumi-e painting, line families, collage, contrasting colors, printing and symbolic art.

MATERIALS

- Sumi-e brushes and inks
- 8.5" x 11" light- and dark-colored construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Permanent markers
- White square erasers
- Red marker

RHYTHM-ONG

Sumi-e painting with strokes of bold, Lines turn to shapes and stories are told!

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ASIA

The following lesson plans are available at www.artsandactivities.com

Kindergarten: Japanese Carp Fish and Lantern Art—3-D Fun!

Grade 1: Korean Egg Art Paintings

Grade 2: Japanese Gyotaku Fish Paintings

Grade 3: Chinese New Year Dragons

Grade 4: Asian Symbol Scratchboards



Go to artsandactivities.com for the link to the additional Asian lesson plans.