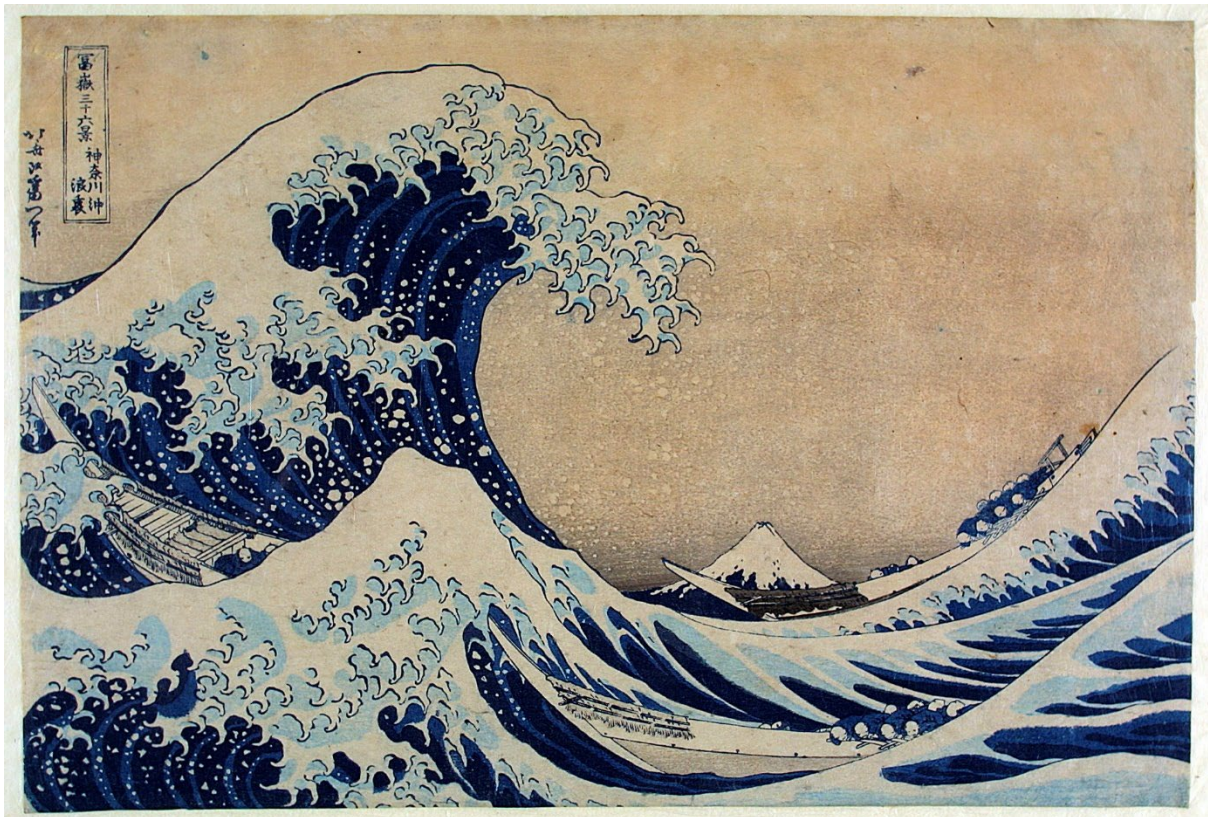


JOURNEY THROUGH JAPAN

MYTHS TO MANGA

Educator Guide



Frist Art Museum

Contents

2	Introduction
3	Curriculum Connections: Tennessee Academic Standards
5	Sky
8	Sea
14	Forest
18	City
26	Book Recommendations
27	Featured Folk Stories

Cover: Katsushika Hokusai. *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*, from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1831. Woodblock print; 9 3/4 x 14 1/2 in. V&A: Given by the Misses Alexander, E.4823-1916. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

About the Exhibition

Designed with our younger audience in mind, yet fun and fascinating for all ages, *Journey through Japan: Myths to Manga* goes on a colorful, atmospheric exploration through Japan to show how popular stories have shaped the country's art, design, and technology across the centuries. Divided into four thematic sections—Sky, Sea, Forest, and City—it presents over 150 historic and contemporary objects, ranging from animated movies, origami, and ukiyo-e woodblock prints to dolls, robots, and youth fashion. *Journey through Japan* celebrates the spirit of playfulness and imagination that is at the heart of Japanese culture.

About the Educator Guide

This educator guide is organized around the four sections of the exhibition which highlight the influence of natural and built environments on Japanese culture:

1. Sky
2. Sea
3. Forest
4. City

Japan bursts with imagination and inventiveness. Its many islands are home to towering mountains, dense forests, deep seas, and bustling cities. These varied landscapes shape beliefs and spark extraordinary creativity. From elegant kimono to cute plushies, and from historical prints to the latest *manga* (graphic novels), Japan makes some of the world's most engaging art and design. Join us on a journey from the sky to the sea, through the forest, and into the city. Explore how these exciting places, together with a sense of playfulness, shape Japan's mythical tales. Discover how these stories inspire art, characters, films, and games loved across the world.

Curriculum Connections for *Journey through Japan: Myths to Manga*

Tennessee Academic Standards

Fine Arts Standards: Media and Visual Arts

- RESPOND: Perceive and analyze artistic work.; Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work; Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
- CONNECT: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to artistic endeavors; Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context.

English Language Arts Standards

Grades K-5

- K.RL.IKI.7: With prompting and support, orally describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear.
- 1.RL.IKI.7: Either orally or in writing when appropriate, use illustrations and words in a text to describe its characters, setting, or events.
- 2.RL.KID.2: Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
- 2.RL.KID.3: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- 2.RL.IKI.7: Use information gained from illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.
- 3.RL.KID.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.
- 3.RL.KID.3: Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- 3.SL.CC.2: Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text presented in diverse media such as visual, quantitative, and oral formats.
- 3.RL.IKI.7: Explain how illustrations in a text contribute to what is conveyed by the words.
- 4.RL.IKI.7: Make connections between the print version of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the same text.
- 5.RL.IKI.7: Explain how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or mood of a text, such as in a graphic novel, multimedia presentation, or fiction, folktale, myth, or poem.

Grades 6-8

- 7.SL.CC.2: Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media formats; explain how this clarifies a topic, text, or issue under study.
- 8.RL.IKI.7: Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from a text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- 8.RL.IKI.9: Analyze how contemporary texts are shaped by foundational texts or literary archetypes and how authors allude to traditional works, myths, or religious texts; describe how traditional elements are rendered anew.

- 8.SL.CC.2: Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media formats; evaluate the motives, such as social, commercial, and political, behind its presentation.

Grades 9-12

- 9-10.RL.KID.3: Analyze how complex characters, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text to impact meaning.
- 9-10.RL.IKI.7: Evaluate the topic, subject, and/or theme in two diverse formats or media.
- 11-12.RL.IKI.7: Evaluate the topic, subject, and/or theme in multiple diverse formats and media, including how the version interprets the source text.

Social Studies Standards

Grades K-12: Social Studies Practices

- SSP.01: Gather information from a variety of sources, including: printed materials (e.g., literary texts, newspapers, political cartoons, autobiographies, speeches, letters, personal journals), graphic representations (e.g., maps, timelines, charts, artwork), artifacts, and media and technology sources.

Grades K-5

- K.09: Explain what a map and globe represent.
- 1.13: Distinguish the difference between a lake, mountain, ocean, and river.
- 1.25: Compare ways people lived in the past to how they live today, including: forms of communication, modes of transportation, and types of clothing.

Grades 6-8

- S.07: Describe components of culture (e.g., nonmaterial culture, norms and values, material culture, subcultures).
- 7.08: Describe the origins and central features of Shintoism: Key Person(s): None; Sacred Texts: No sacred text; Basic Beliefs: localized tradition that focuses on ritual practices that are carried out with discipline to maintain connections with ancient past; animism and Kami.

Grades 9-12

- AH.13: Describe the origins and central features of Shintoism: Key Person(s): No singular founder; Sacred Texts: No sacred text; Basic Beliefs: localized tradition that focuses on ritual practices that are carried out with discipline to maintain connections with ancient past; animism.
- CI.03: Analyze how cultural characteristics (e.g., language, religion, ethnicity, gender roles) link, divide, and/or define regions.
- CI.20: Compare and contrast folk and/or traditional culture with popular culture, and analyze efforts to preserve folk culture amid the spread of popular culture.
- S.10: Compare and contrast various cultures of the world.

SKY: Sun, Stars, Moon

From sunrise to sunset and through the night, the skies above Japan are a constant inspiration. Over hundreds of years, people have told and retold legends about the adventures of powerful characters and heavenly beings above the clouds. Some are about how to live a good life, some about love, and some about fiery arguments.

Japanese artists take inspiration from these stories of the moon, stars, and sun. Whether in woodblock prints or videogames, cosmic *anime* (animation) characters or space age design, the sky above is reflected in the world below.

This *uchiwa-e* (rigid fan print) designed by Utagawa Hiroshige depicts a woman walking along the Sumida river in Edo (present-day Tokyo). The Ryōgoku Bridge, which appears in the middle ground behind the woman, was described by the artist as, “the liveliest place in the Eastern capital, with side-shows, theaters, storytellers and summer fireworks; day and night, the amusements never cease” (*Ehon Edo miyage*, vol. 1). The boats pictured in the middle ground are likely passenger boats used for recreation. Aside from a few shadowy figures in the boats, the artist focuses on one figure walking along the river rather than depicting the bridge and its surroundings at their busiest.



Utagawa Hiroshige. *Moonlight at Ryōgoku*, from the series *Famous Places of Edo Compared to Sun, Moon, and Stars*, 1856. Woodblock print; 8 5/8 x 11 3/8 in. V&A: R. Leicester Harmsworth Gift, E.2908-1913. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

This print is one of three in a series, all of which are featured in the exhibition. In this series, the artist is telling a story about a specific place through changes in perspective and time of day and year.

- In the first print, *Sunrise at Susaki on New Year's Day*, the view focuses on a busy scene with many people enjoying *Hatsuhinode* (the first sunrise of a new year).
- The second print, *Moonlight at Ryōgoku*, focuses on a single woman and her surroundings: the full moon, river, boats, and bridge.
- In the third print of the series, *Star Festival at Yanagishima*, the focus is primarily on one woman as she looks at the sky during the Tanabata Festival, or Star Festival.

As in Hiroshige's series of three fan prints, the sun, moon, and stars are the subject of many folktales, festivals, and other cultural traditions in Japan. *Uchiwa-e* like these would have been used to make fans that were as fashionable as they were functional for use in cooling oneself off.

Sun

It is considered good luck to see the first sunrise of the year, known as *Hatsuhinode*. Japan's culture is deeply connected with the sun. The country's name in Japanese, *Nihon*, means origin of the sun. In the Japanese Shintō religion, the most important god is Amaterasu no Ōkami, goddess of the sun. She brings light to the world.

Stars

In East Asian mythology the stars Vega and Altair are a pair of unlucky lovers, the Cowherder and the Weaver Princess. They are separated for eternity by the Milky Way galaxy, able to meet only once a year. In Japan people celebrate the couple's reunion in the *Tanabata* Festival (Star Festival) every summer. They write wishes on colorful strips of paper called *tanzaku* that they tie to bamboo branches. If your field trip includes a scheduled visit to Martin ArtQuest, encourage students to write their wishes down on the *tanzaku* and tie them to the bamboo tree!

Moon

People have always been fascinated by the moon. In Japan there are even special moon-viewing festivals called *otsukimi*. In East Asian mythology the moon is home to a white rabbit that makes *mochi* (rice cakes) for everyone to enjoy. This kind rabbit appears time and again in art, stories, and everyday objects.

Discussion Questions

- How do people in your community celebrate special occasions?
- Can you think of any festivities that celebrate nature or the changing seasons?
- What similarities do you see between prints like *Moonlight at Ryōgoku* and the images in manga books in the exhibition? What differences do you notice?

Activity: Three Scenes—Place, Time, and Perspective

Create a list of your favorite places in your hometown. Think about how different those places look at different times of the day or year, or during certain events. Draw three scenes that show different perspectives of a place at different times like Hiroshige did in this series.

Activity: Festival Design

If you were to create a festival inspired by nature and the seasons, what would you choose as the focus? Give your festival a creative name! Using the questions below, brainstorm ways your festival would be celebrated.

- What kinds of activities do people enjoy during the festival?
Think about . . .
 - Games with imaginative themes.
 - Performances of dance, music, or theater.
 - Toys you play with in particular kinds of weather—while swimming, when it's breezy outside, in the snow, when the sun is bright, etc.

- What food do people eat?
Think about . . .
 - Flavors that remind you of your festival.
 - Foods that grow in certain months of the year.
 - Family recipes used during holidays.

- What do people wear?
Think about . . .
 - Colors that connect to your festival's theme.
 - Unique, functional accessories like fans, shoes, or hats.
 - Costumes that represent stories or animals associated with your festival.

Illustrate a nature-inspired fan or other accessory that someone would use during the festival you created! See below for a link to a fan template to print out or trace.

Use your brainstorming ideas as inspiration. Are there symbols, colors, or patterns that represent your festival? How can you incorporate those in your design?

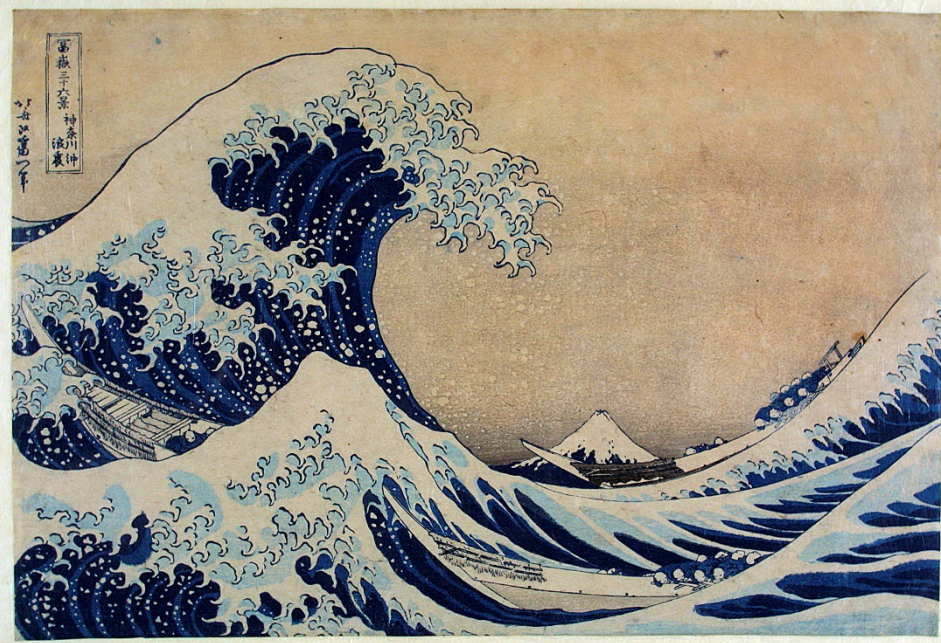
Resources

- Lesson samples and a fan template printout:
Canton Art Museum, "Making an Uchiwa Fan"
https://www.cantonart.org/sites/default/files/kimono_fan.pdf
- Examples of uchiwa-e fans:
RISD Museum, *The Art of the Fan: Uchiwa-e in Japanese Prints*
<https://risdmuseum.org/exhibitions-events/exhibitions/art-fan>
- Examples of Hiroshige's woodblock prints:
<https://www.hiroshige.org.uk/index.html>

SEA

Japan has over 14,000 islands surrounded by deep seas. Below these waters sit active volcanoes and colliding tectonic plates that can churn the seas into giant, destructive waves.

The sea is packed with food, shells, and natural treasures, but it also has many dangers. Its secrets spark stories in peoples' imaginations. In Japan epic tales set both above and below the waves are woven into myths and legends.



Katsushika Hokusai. *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*, from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1831. Woodblock print; 9 3/4 x 14 1/2 in. V&A: Given by the Misses Alexander, E.4823-1916. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

You can see how important the sea is to Japan through its starring role in famous works of art such as Katsushika Hokusai's *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* and films like Studio Ghibli's *Ponyo*.

Katsushika Hokusai was a world-renowned painter and printmaker in nineteenth-century Japan best known for his series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*. *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* is one of the most recognized prints of the series. Printmaking processes such as woodcut, lithography, screen printing, and etching are based on the transfer of an image

from a matrix or original image onto paper or another surface. For woodblock printing, the matrix is carved, and new prints are created by inking the matrix and pressing paper against it. This gives the artist the ability to make several prints of the same image.

In Katsushika Hokusai's iconic print *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*, three boats are rocked about in the turbulent sea. Dwarfed in the curve of the wave is Mount Fuji, Japan's tallest mountain. An active volcano, Mount Fuji is considered sacred.

Discussion Questions

- Japanese writing is read right to left. Visuals, such as those in manga, are also often read right to left. Does the feel or meaning of *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* change if you read the image right to left versus left to right?
- In Japanese culture, there are many tales based on the power of the sea. Do you know any stories about the sea?
- How is printmaking different from a one-of-a-kind work of art like a painting or sculpture?
- Hokusai was inspired to create a series focused on Mount Fuji. What natural landmarks or objects in nature do you find inspiring?

Resources

- Overview of *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*:
PBS Digital Studios: *The Art Assignment*, "Better Know the Great Wave"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1ufFIXIWjA>
- British Museum: "A Timeline of Japanese Artist Katsushika Hokusai"
<https://www.britishmuseum.org/exhibitions/hokusai-great-picture-book-everything/timeline-japanese-artist-katsushika-hokusai>

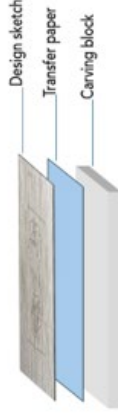
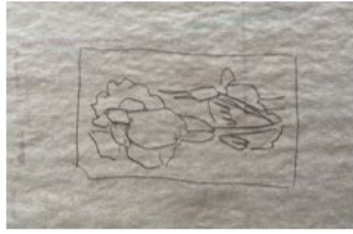
Activity: Hokusai-Inspired Block Printing

Objective

Participants will design, carve, and print an image inspired by nature or natural occurrences in their environments.

Materials

- Block printing paper
- Block printing ink
- Transfer paper
- Baren
- Brayer
- Permanent marker
- Carving tools
- Pencil
- Carving Block
- Watercolor set
- Paintbrush
- Water cup
- Acrylic sheet
- Drawing paper
- Palette knife



1

2



3



Carved object



Carved outline

4



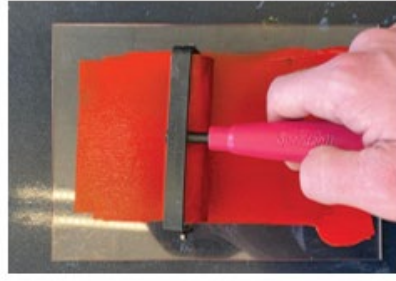
5

6

Steps

1. Begin by thinking of objects in nature that you want to depict in your print. Consider things like flowers, trees, hills, mountains, valleys, etc., and sketch your design on a piece of drawing paper.
2. Once the design is complete, transfer it to your carving block by placing a piece of transfer paper on your block, placing your sketch on top of the transfer paper, and drawing over the lines of your sketch with a pencil.
3. On the block, trace over the transferred design with a permanent marker to darken the lines.
4. Once transferred and traced, the design is ready for carving. Decide whether you want to carve the background around the object, carve away the object itself, or carve the outline of the object.
5. Choose the appropriate cutting tools to carve the design out. Use wide tools for carving out large, deep areas or narrow tools for fine marks.
6. Once the design is carved, use a pallet knife to apply a slab of ink to the upper portion of an acrylic sheet.

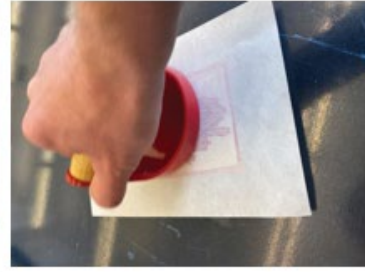
Activity: Hokusai-Inspired Block Printing



7



8



9



10



11



12

7. Roll your brayer over the ink, spreading it across the acrylic sheet until the brayer is covered with ink.
8. Use the inked brayer to roll the ink onto the block evenly.
9. Carefully place a sheet of block printing paper face down onto the block. Use a baren to press the paper against the block, then slowly pull the paper away from the block to reveal a finished print.
10. After completing the print, you may use watercolor paints to add color, starting lightly and building up layers of opacity.
11. Once you complete the watercolor step for each print, place your prints in a designated area to dry.
12. At the bottom of your prints, use a pencil to sign the title of your work, the number of the edition and your name. If you make 5 prints, the first print of the edition will be labeled "1/5," second print "2/5," etc.

The Seven Gods of Good Fortune (*Shichifukujin*) reflect syncretic aspects of religious traditions, by which beliefs and stories from several religions are combined and adapted. The individual gods seen here originated in India's Hindu, China's Taoist-Buddhist, and Japan's Shintō traditions, but eventually they came to be seen as a collective in Japan.

From the Muromachi period (1392-1573) in Japan, the Seven Gods of Good Fortune became a common subject in art and literature. Many believe the Seven Gods of Good Fortune ride across the waves to bring good luck and success. Stories say that the seven gods sail into harbor at new year on their treasure ship, *takarabune*. They bring good fortune to young and old. This print is filled with symbols, many of which represent wishes for long life, including a crane, a seaweed-adorned turtle (*minogame*) and pine branches. The Japanese character seen on the ship's sails, *ju*, even means longevity. As part of new year's festivities, some people used to place a picture of the treasure ship under their pillow, hoping it will bring them good dreams and luck for the year ahead.



Utagawa Hiroshige. *Treasure Ship*, 1847-52. Woodblock print; 10 3/8 x 14 7/8 in. V&A: E.3461-1886. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Discussion Questions

- What symbols do you know that represent good luck and fortune?
- Do you practice any rituals before important events or times in hopes they will bring you luck?

Activity: Close Looking and Writing a Haiku

1. Before reviewing the story and background of *Treasure Ship*, look closely at the artwork. Ask questions such as:
 - What's going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?
 - Where do you think these characters came from? Where are they going? What do you see that makes you say that?

2. Write a haiku from the perspective of characters or animals in the print. The word *haiku* comes from the Japanese words *haikai*, a light-hearted form of poetry, and *hokku*, a short opening verse. Haiku poems have seventeen syllables in three lines: five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. Haiku often focus on natural wonders and seasonal references.
3. Share your haiku with a partner or in small groups.
4. View the print again and discuss: Did you notice anything new about this artwork after reading or listening to the haiku? What new things do you wonder about this work of art?
5. In closing, share the story of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune and what they represent. Make connections to themes or ideas expressed in your group discussions or haiku!



Unidentified maker. Fisherman's festival robe, 1900-1930. Cotton, stencil paste-resist dyeing; 55 1/2 x 52 in. V&A: FE.102-1982. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Treasure ships carrying two of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune decorate this robe. It is called a *maiwai*, meaning "a thousand congratulations." Japanese fishermen wore *maiwai* when celebrating a big catch.

Discussion Questions

- If the characters pictured in this robe could talk, what might they be saying here?
- Before revealing the title fisherman's festival robe, ask: What type of person do you think would wear this robe? When and where might they wear it?
- After discussing the story of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, ask: Why might the maker have chosen to include these images on a robe worn to celebrate a big catch?

Activity: Fashion Design for Celebrations

Sketch a design for a unique piece of clothing you would wear to celebrate a special occasion or accomplishment. Consider what fabrics, techniques, and embellishments would add to the meaning of your design.

Activity: Experimenting with Stencils and Resist Techniques

Materials: stencils, glue, painter's tape, water, watercolor paper, watercolor paints, brushes

1. Reflect on stories, personal memories, and symbols that represent good luck to you, then choose a stencil to symbolize good luck.*
2. Use painter's tape to secure the stencil to the paper. Then, using a foam or paint brush, carefully fill in all areas inside of the stencil with a thick layer of glue, making sure not to miss any spots.
3. Brush glue around the edge of the stencil, being mindful not to let it seep underneath the edge of the stencil.
4. After brushing glue on, slowly peel the tape and stencil off the paper. If you'd like, you may also paint additional patterns around the stenciled design.
5. Let the glue fully dry.
6. Once dry, fill in the background with watercolor—the glue will function as a resist.

*Optional: If time, supplies, and skill levels permit, students could create their own stencils using thick paper and scissors or exacto knives.

Resources

- Informational resource and Japanese resist-dye lesson plan:
Teachers Network, "Japanese Textile Dyeing"
https://teachersnetwork.org/CBE/barbara_ledig.htm
- Video demonstration of *katagami* (hand-cut stencils) and *katazome* (resist-dying silk):
Cooper Hewitt Museum, "Katagami & Katazome Demonstration" with Isao Uchida and Masao Aida
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGfnXGpz8iA>
- Process video of creating a maiwai-like garment:
"Katazome Start to Finish" with John Marshall
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyXpkiMir3o>

FOREST

Much of Japan is covered by trees. Its ancient forests are places where people can find peace and quiet. Out of these woods come tales of mystery and enchantment.

As a home to woodland animals, the forests inspire mythical stories of shape-shifting creatures like *tanuki* (raccoon dogs) and *kitsune* (foxes) and heroes with superhuman qualities, such as Princess Kaguya and Momotarō. These stories reflect our complicated relationship with wildlife and emphasize the need to live in harmony with nature. Japanese art, design, and film draw on the magic of the forest and highlight its many wonders.

In *Basket Ropeway in Hida Province*, people in large green baskets appear to float across a dramatic gorge and rushing river, surrounded by forests. The absence of a visible pulley system used to operate this ropeway adds a magical quality. This lends to a feeling of harmony between humans and the natural environment.

This print was created by Utagawa Hiroshige II, a student of Utagawa Hiroshige, whose print *Moonlight at Ryōgoku* was featured earlier in this educator guide.



Utagawa Hiroshige II. *Basket Ropeway in Hida Province*, from the series *One Hundred Views of Famous Places in the Provinces*, 1860. Woodblock print; 13 1/4 x 8 1/2 in. V&A: E.3243-1886. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Discussion Questions

- Compare Utagawa Hiroshige II's *Basket Ropeway in Hida Province*, depicting rural Japan, with Utagawa Hiroshige's *Moonlight at Ryōgoku*, which illustrates city life.
 - What do these prints suggest about life in the provinces versus the city?
 - How do the artists use perspective to tell a story about these places?
- How would the feel of this artwork change if the artist zoomed out and included a depiction of the pulley system at each end of the gorge?



Epoch Co. Ltd for Tomy. Sylvanian Families camping set and animal figurines, 1987-95. Flocked plastic; dimensions variable. V&A: Given by Tomy UK Ltd., A: B.49, 69:1, 70:1, 78:1, 85:1-1998. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

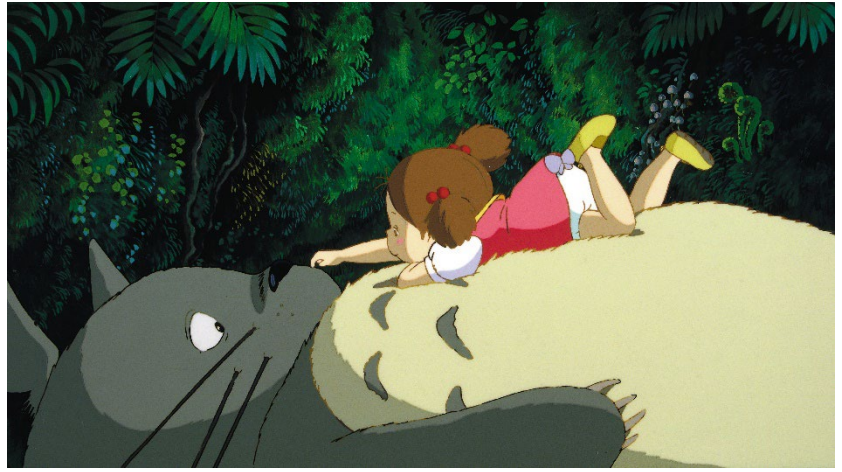
Launched over thirty-five years ago in Japan, Sylvanian Families takes inspiration and its name from the English word *sylvan*, which means “living in the forest.” Sylvanian Village is home to diverse animal families ranging from pandas to frogs and is based on an imaginary village in 1950s Britain. In the United States, these toys are known as Calico Critters.

Though the materials and intended use differ greatly between the Sylvanian Families toys and the traditional woodblock print *Basket Ropeway in Hida Province*, both reflect a common theme in Japanese art and culture: harmony between living beings and the natural environment.

Discussion Questions

- Would the animals represented in this toy set interact in the real world?
- Why might a toy designer create an imaginary world where a variety of animals live together in harmony?
- If you were to choose an animal to represent you, which would you choose and why?

In the animated film *My Neighbor Totoro*, the young sisters Mei and Satsuki move from the city to the countryside with their father while waiting for their mother to recover from an illness in a local hospital. While exploring the peaceful countryside, the sisters meet and befriend playful spirits in their new home and the surrounding forest, including the gentle and whimsical Totoro.



Studio Ghibli, directed by Hayao Miyazaki. Still from *My Neighbor Totoro*, 1988. © 1988 Studio Ghibli

Totoro is reminiscent of traditional mythical beings in Japanese folklore.

The film reflects many elements of Shintō spiritual beliefs and a deep respect for nature that has been a core aspect of Japanese culture for centuries. Shintō teaches that gods are present in all aspects of nature, with deities known as kami representing the spirits of the forest.

My Neighbor Totoro encourages reverence for nature and reminds viewers of the harmony that can exist between humans and natural environments.

Born in Tokyo in 1941, Hayao Miyazaki is one of the founders of Studio Ghibli and the screenwriter and director of *My Neighbor Totoro*. He started his career as a manga artist and animator. Part of the process for creating an animated film is creating a storyboard. A storyboard is a series of rough sketches used to plan the visual details of each scene. While the majority of modern animation films are created using digital tools, Studio Ghibli still uses hand-drawn animation, with only some carefully integrated digital techniques.

Discussion Questions

- Watch clips from *My Neighbor Totoro* or screen the whole film. Which characters do you relate to? Why?
- Compare clips from Studio Ghibli's hand-drawn animation to clips from other films with digital animation. How does a hand-drawn animated film look different from a digitally animated movie?
- What are some myths and legends associated with your local or regional community?
- How do mythical stories help people make sense of the world around them?

Activity: Leaf Creatures and Practicing Mindfulness in Nature

In this activity, practice being mindful while connecting with nature and your own imagination, a key lesson from *My Neighbor Totoro*.

1. Go out for a walk somewhere with trees. This could be in front of the school, in a neighborhood, or in a park. Collect a few interesting leaves.
2. When you get to the classroom, notice the shapes and interesting lines of each leaf. Play with different compositions and see how many you can fit on one page. Overlap leaves if you wish to create new shapes.
3. Once you have settled on a composition, carefully trace the outer edge of the leaf-shape with a pencil.
4. Use your imagination to turn those outlines into a forest friend! Add a face and other body parts to your leaf creature. If time, add details to the background to show where your creature lives.

Next time you go on a walk outside, be mindful of the beauty of nature, even in small things like a leaf! Can you imagine any magical spirits like Totoro and your leaf creature when you look at the rocks, tree bark, or wild animals you encounter?

Modification: If you do not have trees or falling leaves near your school, collect leaves from a park ahead of time. Choose from your selection in the classroom.

Alternative version: Collaboratively draw a forest on a large poster or long piece of butcher paper. After creating the creatures in the activity above, cut out the figures and glue them to the forest background so the creatures can play together.

Adapted from Healing Forest's "Mindful Art in Nature" activities:
<https://healingforest.org/2023/01/30/mindful-art-nature-art/>

CITY: Home and Street

Japan is home to lively and rapidly transforming megacities. Just over four hundred years ago, Tokyo was a small fishing village, but today it is home to fourteen million people—that's about seven times as many as live in the greater Nashville area!

Japan's urban streets inspire fantastical tales. Ghosts and other supernatural beings step out of these stories to pop up in place names, as shop front mascots, and at PokéStops in the popular smartphone game Pokémon Go.

This playful spirit fuels the nation's creativity. It drives the culture of *kawaii* (cute) and is central to *anime* (animation), *manga* (graphic novels), and gaming technology now found in homes worldwide.

Home

Japanese cities may be huge and sprawling, but for those who live there, space is in short supply. Among the crowds, it is important for people to feel like they belong. Communities of fans share their interests and proudly display their collections and creations in their homes. Living in cities can be stressful for some. Their homes can provide an escape when filled with friendly items. Even objects such as robots and home appliances are designed to be cute and joyful.



In Japan you can find cafés, shrines, and temples dedicated to animals. Beckoning cats known as *maneki-neko* greet passersby from shop windows. Many Japanese households have creatures to keep them company. As well as the usual furry friends, electronic pets such as Tamagotchi sit in homes alongside carefully trained Pokémon, while friendly characters like Hello Kitty brighten up everyday appliances.

Hello Kitty was created in 1974 by Sanrio, a Japanese merchandising company. Her biography says that she is a little girl who lives with her parents and twin sister, Mimmy, in London. Sanrio emphasizes that Hello Kitty is a girl, despite her resemblance to a cat. Though the character first appeared on children's products, she grew in popularity worldwide and is embraced by many adult fans too. In the 1990s Sanrio began marketing Hello Kitty products to adults. Hello Kitty's success across generations coincided with the rise of Japanese *kawaii* (cute) culture.

Sakar International, Inc. Hello Kitty rice cooker, 2014. Plastic, metal, electrical components; diameter: 8 5/8 in. V&A: FE.19-2015. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Discussion Questions

- Why do humans make objects not just for function but also for beauty or to spark joy?

Resource

Additional information on Hello Kitty:

Britannica, "Hello Kitty"

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hello-Kitty>

Streets

Japan's megacities are places of contrast. Gleaming new skyscrapers soar above old family homes. Shintō shrines and Buddhist temples are nestled within shiny shopping districts, and people dressed in *kawaii* (cute) fashion inject color into the crowds of dark-suited commuters.

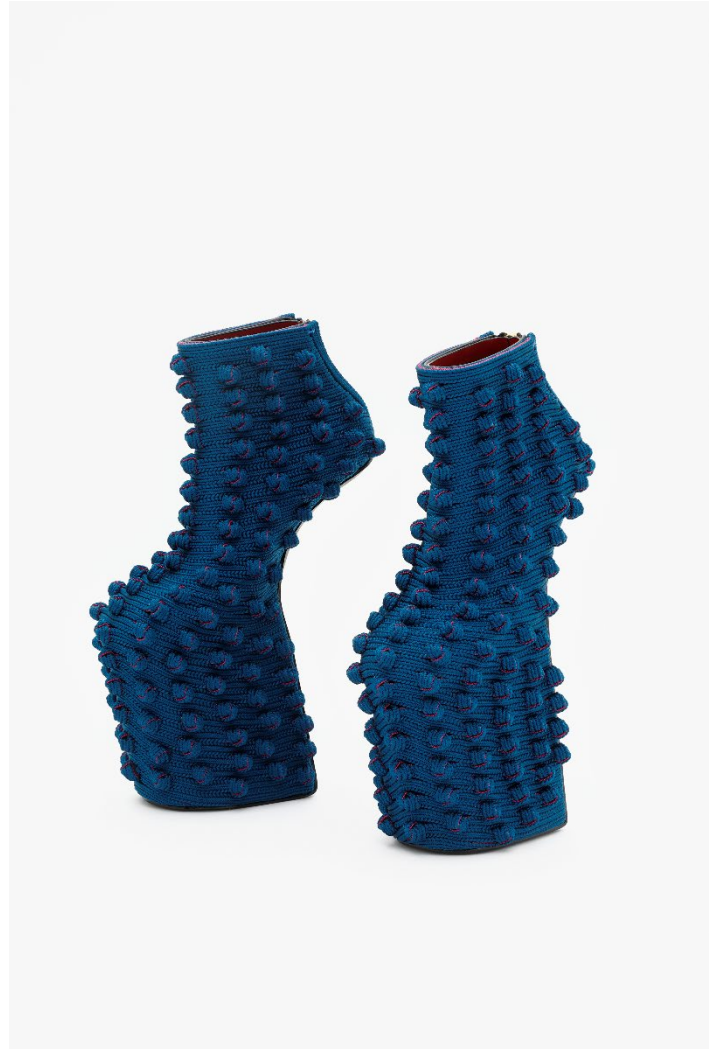
Within these apparent extremes, cities like Kyoto, Osaka, and Tokyo are the setting for an eye-popping variety of spooky folklore. Storytellers have long told tales of demons (*yōkai*) taking to the streets at night to cause mischief and mayhem.

The 134-year-old company Ryūkbō collaborated with acclaimed artist Noritaka Tatehana to incorporate their traditional silk-braiding skills into modern, eye-catching designs. Cord braiding, also known as *kumihimo*, is a Japanese craft that involves hand-braiding threads into cords.

Tatehana's handcrafted shoes bring together attributes of high-heeled shoes with their exaggerated arches and Japanese geta, clogs with wooden risers on the bottom. Keep an eye out for another mention of geta in the Kitarō manga later in this guide!

Discussion Questions

- Take a moment to consider how these shoes were created. Notice the shape, color, and various materials used. What types of craftspeople might have been involved with designing and making these shoes?
- Imagine you are wearing the heel-less shoes. How would it alter the way you walk? How might you feel walking in them?
- Imagine a character in a story who wears these shoes. What does the rest of their outfit or costume look like? Where would they wear these shoes?



Noritaka Tatehana in collaboration with Ryūkbō. Heel-less shoes, 2021. Leather, silk, metal; 13 x 4 3/8 x 8 3/4 in. V&A: Given by Noritaka Tatehana, FE.43-2023. Photo: Keizo Kioku. © Noritaka Tatehana K.K. Courtesy of Kosaku Kanechika

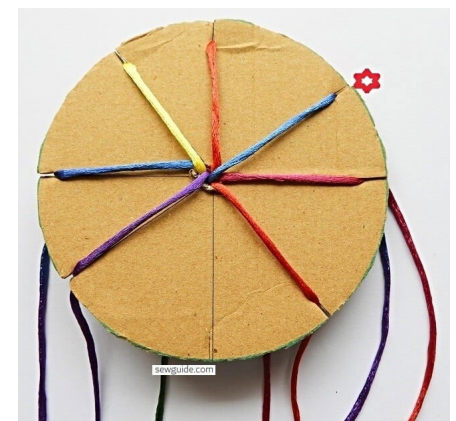
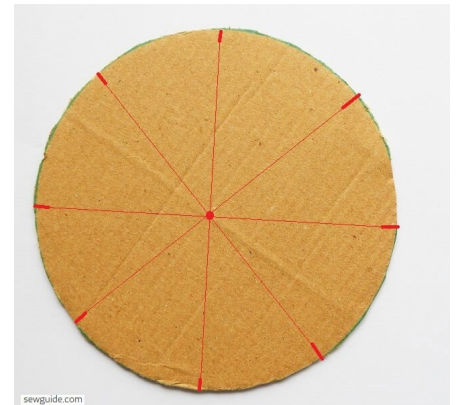


Activity: Braided Cord Inspired by Ryūkōbō

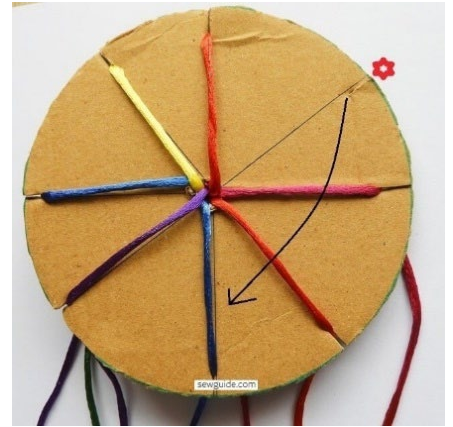
Photos and Directions Adapted from this Sew Guide Lesson: <https://sewguide.com/make-braided-cord-circular-cardboard-loom/>

Materials: Cardboard for the loom and yarn, cord, rope, or thick string for braiding

1. Cut out a small circular piece of cardboard about 7 inches in diameter. A little smaller or larger works fine too.
2. Draw 4 lines evenly across your cardboard so that you end up with 8 evenly sized triangles.
3. Cut 1/2-inch slits along these lines along the periphery of the circle. Make a small hole in the middle.
4. Cut 7 separate pieces of yarn (all the same length) and tie them together at the top. Make sure to cut the yarn at the length you want your finished cord to be.
5. Insert the yarn through the hole so that the knot is at the back. The knot should prevent the yarn from being pulled out.
6. One by one, take each piece of yarn from the middle and place it in the slits cut around the periphery of your circle. Because you have 8 slits and 7 pieces of yarn, you should be left with one slit without any yarn.
7. Orient the cardboard so that the vacant slit is facing downward, toward your body. Remember that throughout the braiding, you should always move your loom so that the slit without yarn is always in this position closest to your body.
8. Identify the third piece of yarn up from the vacant slit on the right side—the one with the flower symbol in this image. Bring it down and place it in the vacant slit.



9. Rotate the cardboard so the new vacant slit is in the down position. Now repeat step 8.
10. Repeat step 8 again and again to braid your cord. Keep repeating until you've used all your yarn or until your cord is the length you desire.
11. You can use your cords as drawstrings for clothes or bags, as shoelaces, as a belt, and even for making jewelry. If you use sturdy nylon fibers, you can also employ your cords for outdoor purposes, similar to store-bought paracord.



Resource

Additional braided cord lesson and video tutorial:

<https://amslerartroom.com/student-work/kumihimo-japanese-yarn-braiding/>

Yōkai are important characters throughout Japanese folklore. They are shape-shifting supernatural beings that include creatures, demons, and spirits. Sometimes friendly, sometimes vicious, yōkai are an inspiration for many Japanese manga artists, as seen in Shigeru Mizuki's series *GeGeGe no Kitarō*, pictured here. Yōkai also appear in anime, video games, and even fashion accessories.

With a dizzying array of characters, fonts, images, and plots, manga series attract a global following and cater to readers of all ages and interests. One of the most influential and popular manga artists is Shigeru Mizuki. *The Birth of Kitarō*, a manga book featured in the exhibition, is a translated collection of seven stories from Shigeru Mizuki's spooky but silly series *GeGeGe no Kitarō*. The stories in this volume were originally published in Japan between 1966 and 1968 and focus on the origin story of Kitarō, a boy who is part yōkai and part human. Also included in the book are essays on the history of Kitarō, a guide to yōkai, and yōkai-related games. The page pictured at right is from the *Makura Gaeshi* story, based on a traditional yōkai spirit who haunts people in their homes, often while they sleep. In this excerpt, Kitarō and his father, the small eyeball-like yōkai, are trying to save a boy from Makura Gaeshi and recover Kitarō's geta shoes, which have special powers.



Shigeru Mizuki. "Makura Gaeshi" in *Kitarō's Yōkai Battles* (Drawn and Quarterly, Japan, 2019), 151

Resources

Informational resource on yōkai and lesson plans:

Museum of International Folk Art, "Yōkai: Ghost and Demons of Japan"

<https://www.internationalfolkart.org/learn/lesson-plans/yokai-ghost-and-demons-of-japan.html>

Informational resource on manga, lesson plans, and worksheets:
Japan Society, "Introducing Manga to the Art Classroom"
<https://www.japansociety.org.uk/resource?resource=28>

Activity: Learn to Draw Manga

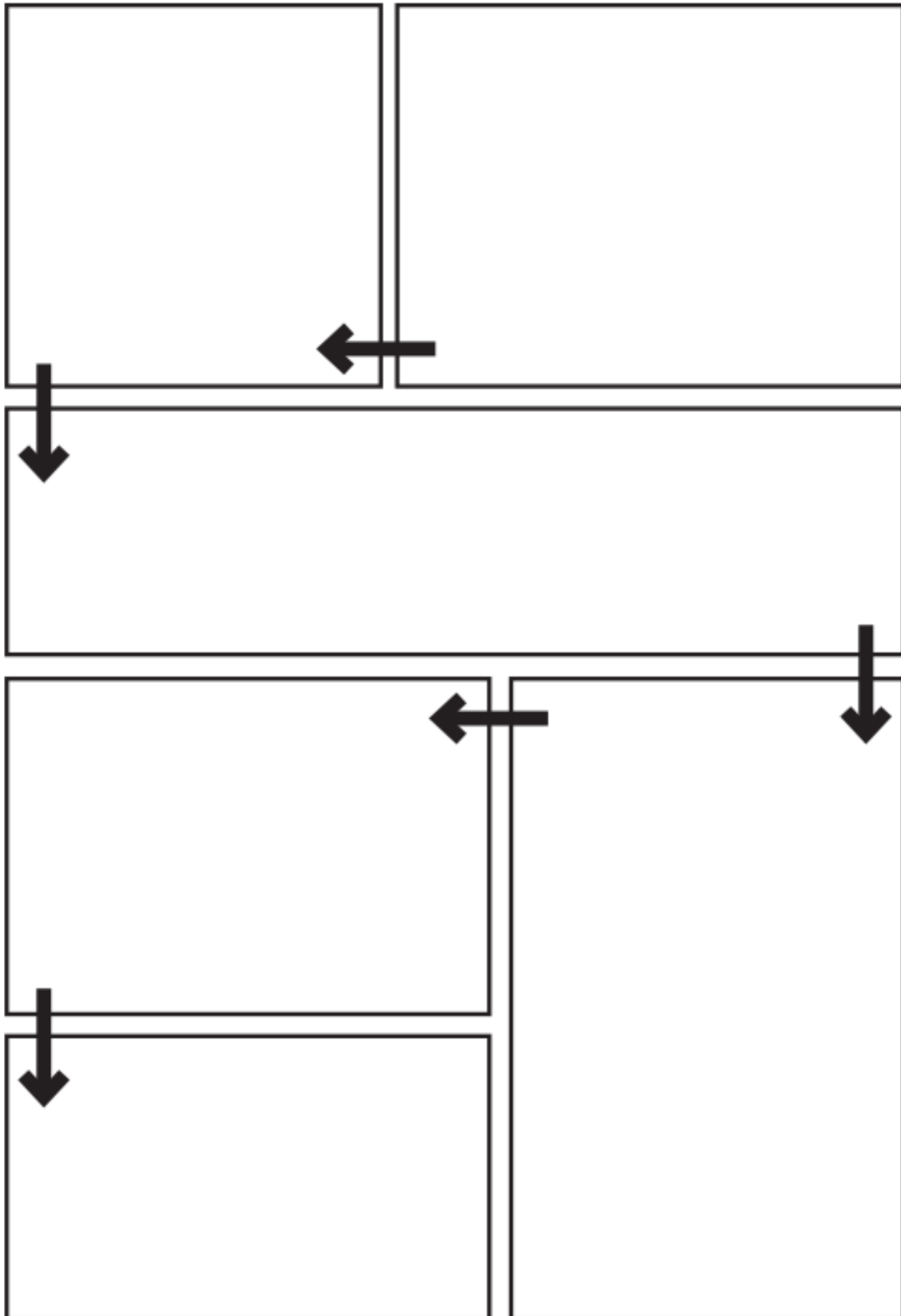
The Japan Society resources linked in the previous section include sample lessons that may be useful for teachers who wish to take a deeper dive into teaching manga.

For a simple activity exploring drawing manga and writing graphic novels, please feel free to copy and print the manga template on the next page specially designed for *Journey through Japan!*

If you need guidance building a story, the following guidelines can help:

1. Set the scene in the first box.
2. In the second and third boxes, develop your story.
3. In the fourth box, introduce a twist!
4. In the fifth and sixth boxes, wrap your story up with a funny ending.

Draw manga following the arrows



Book Recommendations

The books and stories listed below feature themes, characters, and artists that connect with *Journey through Japan*.

Manga Recommendations

Please note that teachers should preview manga before using it in class. Though the below were written for children, some include storylines or images which may not be appropriate for all students.

- *Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter* by Atelier Sento
- *One Piece* by Eiichiro Oda
- *Children of the Sea* by Daisuke Igarashi
- *Pokémon Adventures* by Hidenori Kusaka and Mato
- *Sailor Moon* by Naoko Takeuchi
- *Yokai Watch* by Noriyuki Konishi
- *Astro Boy* by Osamu Tezuka
- *The Birth of Kitaro* by Shigeru Mizuki
- *The Great Tanuki War* by Shigeru Mizuki
- *The Summit of the Gods* by Yumemakura Baku and Jiro Taniguchi

Children's Picture Book Recommendations

- *Anna's Kokeshi Dolls* by Tracy Gallup (author and illustrator)
- *Ten Oni Drummers* by Matthew Gollub (author) and Kazuko G. Stone (illustrator)
- *The Star Festival* by Moni Ritchie Hadley (author) and Mizuho Fujisawa (illustrator)
- *Pikachu's First Friends* by Rikako Matsuo (author and photographer)
- *Tokyo Night Parade* by J. P. Takahashi (author) and Minako Tomigahara (illustrator)
- *Luna and the Moon Rabbit* by Camille Witcher (author and illustrator)

Featured Folk Stories

The Rabbit and the Moon

In Japanese folklore the moon is home to a rabbit. How does it get there? Taishakuten, the ruler of heaven, visits Earth in disguise. He asks a monkey, a fox, and a rabbit to help him get food. The monkey brings fruit, and the fox brings fish, but the rabbit finds nothing to share. Wanting to help, the rabbit offers himself as food instead. In thanks Taishakuten places the rabbit on the moon for everyone to see and remember.

The Cowherder and the Weaver Princess

A young man who herds cows and a heavenly princess who weaves fine silk cloth fall in love and get married. They spend so much time together that they stop working. Cows run all over the sky, and the cloth is left unwoven. Angry that the couple have forgotten their duties, the princess's father splits them up, separating them across the Milky Way. The couple can only be together again once a year, when the stars Vega and Altair meet.

Amaterasu and the Sun

Amaterasu no Ōkami is the goddess of the sun who brings light to the world. When her brother behaves badly, Amaterasu is frightened and hides in a cave. But when she seals herself in, darkness falls on everything. Eight hundred gods and goddesses gather at the cave. They hang up a mirror, sing, dance, and drum. Curious about the noise, Amaterasu peeks out. Quickly the gods close the cave behind her, and the world becomes bright again.

Seven Gods of Good Fortune

In Japan it is believed that there are Seven Gods of Good Fortune who ride together in a glittering treasure ship. Each god brings good luck to people in different jobs. Dancers, farmers, fishermen, and warriors can each pray to one—or all—of the seven gods for wealth and happiness. One of these gods, Ebisu, is the god of fishing. Fishermen pray to Ebisu in the hope that he will reward them with a good catch.

The Tale of Urashima Tarō

One day a fisherman called Urashima Tarō saves a turtle. In thanks the turtle takes him to the underwater palace of the dragon king. There she magically transforms into a princess. She gives Urashima Tarō a beautiful box but tells him never to open it. Homesick, he returns to dry land, only to discover that many years have passed. Despite the princess's warning, Urashima Tarō opens the box. The missing years catch up with him and in an instant, he becomes an old man!

The Tale of Momotarō

One day an elderly couple finds a giant peach in the river. They cut it open. To their surprise, a small boy is inside! The couple names him Momotarō, "Peach Boy," and raises him in their woodland home. He grows up to have superhuman strength. As a teenager, Momotarō leaves the forest to fight a band of thieving demons with his friends—a monkey, a dog, and a pheasant. Together they defeat the demons and return home with their stolen treasures.

The Tongue-Cut Sparrow

A good-natured woodcutter befriends a sparrow. One day, the sparrow mistakenly eats the woodcutter's wife's laundry starch. In anger she cuts out the bird's tongue, and the sparrow flies into the forest. Concerned, the woodcutter seeks out the bird, who offers him two boxes for his kindness—one small and one large. He chooses the small one and discovers it is full of treasure.

Annoyed with her husband, the wife goes to get the big box. She opens it, but finds it is full of terrifying demons.

The Tale of Princess Kaguya

One day a woodcutter cuts into a glowing bamboo stalk in a forest and finds a small girl inside. He decides to raise her as his own. Every time he cuts bamboo afterward, he finds nuggets of gold and becomes rich. As the girl grows up, she attracts many admirers. Unimpressed by their declarations of love, she sets them impossible challenges. None succeeds. Eventually, she reveals she is a moon princess, Princess Kaguya, and returns to the sky.

The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons

Do you always do what you're told? Young Tsuneyuki doesn't. Despite his parents' warnings not to go out at night, Tsuneyuki enjoys city life. One night, Tsuneyuki sees a large group up ahead. Not wanting to be noticed, he hides. The noise of the crowd grows louder. Peeping out, Tsuneyuki sees they are no ordinary people, but a night parade of demons, singing, dancing, and wreaking havoc! Protected by a good luck charm, Tsuneyuki lives to tell the tale. Not everyone is so lucky.

The Wonderful Teakettle

One day a poor priest buys an old kettle. He fills it with water and puts it on the fire to boil. Suddenly, the kettle sprouts legs and transforms into a *tanuki* (raccoon dog)! Shocked, the priest gives it to a street vendor. The tanuki begs its new owner to never put it on the hot coals again and to treat it kindly. In return, the tanuki says it will help the man earn money by performing circus tricks. Together, they create a circus act that goes on to bring them success and riches.

October 25, 2024–February 16, 2025

Created by the V&A – Touring the World



Supported in part by
Sandra Schatten Foundation
The Anne and Joe Russell Family

Support for Spanish translation provided by the
**Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and
Latinx Studies at Vanderbilt University**

The Frist Art Museum is supported in part by



Connect with us @FristArtMuseum
#TheFrist #FristJourneythroughJapan

