

Japanese Art

Exploring Hokusai

Learning Objectives:

- To explore the art of Katsushika Hokusai
- To create an artwork inspired by Hokusai and woodblock printing techniques

Curriculum Links:

Art and Design KS1

- Learn about the work of a range of artists, craft makers and designers...and making links to their own work; to use a range of materials creatively to design and make products; to develop a wide range of art and design techniques in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space

Art and Design KS2

- Learn about great artists, architects and designers in history; to improve their mastery of art and design techniques...with a range of materials

The extension activity, *Postcard From Mount Fuji*, can be used to meet criteria for English Curriculum for KS1 and KS2.

Keywords:

Ukiyo-e, woodblock prints, nature, inspiration, landscapes, Edo (modern day Tokyo)

Resources:

Presentation: Exploring Hokusai

Worksheet: Activity 1

Worksheet: Hokusai Prints

Additional Resources

Worksheet: Alternative Activity (For this differentiated version of the main activity, students use the whole tile of polystyrene, rather than cut it into sections, and only 1 colour.)

Website: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/japanese-woodblock-prints-ukiyo-e> Comprehensive ukiyo-e information for teachers, including about the printing process

Website: <https://www.hokusaionline.co.uk/code/mountfuji.html> High quality images of the *Thirty-Six Views Series* for printing)

Website: <https://www.hirokoimada.com/>

Starter Activity

- Display the slide of Under the Wave Off Kanagawa (better known as 'The Great Wave').
- Invite pupils to talk to their partner about the image and if they have seen it before. Ask volunteers to share their thoughts - Do they like it? Why/why not?
- Make sure to highlight Mount Fuji in the background, the three boats and the sailors.
- Now display the image of an artwork by Japanese artist Hiroko Imada. Ask students if they can make connections or see similarities between the previous image and this one. Confirm Hiroko was inspired by Hokusai's work; in this lesson students will make their own work inspired by Hokusai.

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Task 1

- After introducing the learning objectives, use the slide and slide notes to introduce basic facts about Hokusai and ukiyo-e (woodblock prints).
- Explain that The Great Wave is just one image from the series Hokusai made, *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*. We're going to look at other images from the series, explore how woodblock prints are made, and produce our own prints inspired by Hokusai.
- Show the six small images and 4 larger images of Hokusai prints on the following slides. Use the question prompts below to initiate discussion:
 - What can you see in the image?
 - Can you spot where Mount Fuji is?
 - What season do you think it is/could this be?
 - How does each picture make you feel?
 - What colours has Hokusai used? What detail has he included?
 - Why do you think he decided to create a print of this view?

Estimated Time: 5-10 mins

Task 2

- Students should be at their desks for Activity 1 with a copy of the Activity 1 worksheet and a Hokusai print*. There are four prints to choose from on the Hokusai Prints worksheet provided by The Japan Society (all 4 are displayed on the following slides). If you prefer, print just one or alternative images in advance. Make sure to pick image(s) that can be easily simplified into three or four key sections.

- Explain the task is to look closely at the print they have chosen/been given and discuss it with their partner. They should identify the key features and the shapes these make, then draw a simplified version on their worksheet using as few lines as possible. Challenge them to recreate the image using as few as three or four lines – highlighting that it is vital that Mount Fuji is visible in their drawing.

**Teachers intending to use the differentiated alternative activity, please see the end of this lesson plan for instructions.*

Estimated Time: 10 mins

Task 3

- Bring the class back together. Explain that although 'The Great Wave off Kanagawa' looks like a painting, it is not. Ask them: How do you think Hokusai made this image?
- Explain it is a woodblock print. Encourage students to explain what they think that means. Build on any contributions to explain the process. In Edo Japan the basic process was:
 - First the artist would draw an image onto a thin piece of paper.
 - A copy would be made and placed face down on top of a block of wood (usually cherry wood). Using the image as a guide, the design was carved through the paper into the wood block.
 - A different block would need to be made for each different colour the artist wanted in the final image.
 - Ink was applied to the carved block surface and then printed onto a sheet of paper.
- Woodblock techniques are still used today by some artists, as well as by people who create patterns for wallpaper or fabrics. Watch the videos and use the notes on the following slides to see the process of Vincent Desplanche.

Estimated Time: 10 mins

Task 4

- Students will now make their prints. They will need access to all the equipment listed on the slides, as well as aprons and newspaper to cover tables and the floor near them.
- Show students how they will make their print using the step-by-step-instructions and photos show on the slides. Then assist students as necessary as they make their prints.

Estimated Time: 30-45 mins

Alternative Activity

- Use the Alternative Activity Worksheet (see additional resources) and skip ahead to slide 31 for instructions.
- Show students Hiroko Imada's Naruto Whirlpool which was inspired by water.*
- Explain to students they will make an abstract print based on an element of nature in Hokusai's work.

**The Naruto Whirlpools are a real tourist attraction in Japan. There is a famous ukiyo-e print called "Naruto Whirlpools" by Hiroshige – an artist who was particularly influenced by Hokusai's landscape prints.*

Extension Activities

- Students should imagine they have taken a trip to the scene in their print (or another print of your choice) and write a postcard to a friend from Mount Fuji as a creative writing exercise.