



materials for the arts

Art & Cultures: Gyotaku (Fish Printing)

Teacher: Kathy Y. Barr

Unit Topic: Gyotaku (Fish Printing)

Grade Level: 6th grade (adaptable to older and younger students)

Objective:

- Students will acquire knowledge of historical aspects of the Japanese art form of Gyotaku.
- They will select a fish, research the anatomical parts of the fish, the habitat of the fish, the commercial value of the fish, whether the fish can be found in the United States, and other countries (if any) where the fish can be found.
- The students will create a recording of the fish using a printmaking method.

Vocabulary:

- Gyo = fish
- Taku = rubbing
- Printmaking
- Rubbing/Burnishing
- Monoprint
- Brayer- (foam)
- Ink Slab
- Texture
- Rice paper/ Newsprint
- Printer's ink
- The Gripper

Background/Key Ideas:

- Gyotaku was developed by fishermen (early 1800's) in order to record their catch.
- The technique came from individuals not scientists out of need.
- These prints of fish were brought home and hung on the walls as conversation pieces and to express the stories of their catch.

Length of Lesson:

- Three (3) 45 (forty-five) minute period classes
- Day One: Research/Demo
- Day Two: Printing

Motivation for Lesson:

- Show examples of Gyotaku (printing with fish) made by previous students. Japanese-fish printing is an ancient technique said to have originated when fishermen wanted to record a catch. Discuss with students the Japanese reverence for nature that is frequently seen in the simplicity of their artwork, gardens and poetry.



materials for the arts

Art & Cultures: Gyotaku (Fish Printing)

Procedure:

1. Choose a fish to print.
2. Apply 1-2 teaspoons(s) of printing ink to the inking plate.
3. Roll the brayer back and forth over an inking plate or one of the “The Gripper” plates until ink is evenly distributed.
4. Place the fish model on “The Gripper.” This will hold the model still.
5. Roll ink over the model. Be sure to get ink around the fin and nose area.
6. Place a sheet of rice paper or newsprint paper over the inked fish. Rub the paper so it moves around the entire surface.
7. Lift the paper off the model and place it undisturbed to dry.
8. The model may be re-inked and printed numerous times. Do not rinse ink from models.

Enrichment Activities:

- The students can create a “fish tale” of how he or she caught his/her fish and then share it with the class.
- After mounting a print from each student, ask the students to write a Haiku poem to be read.

Resources

- Gyotaku/Japanese Fish Printing (VHS) Sax Arts & Crafts
- Life in the Coral Reef by Bobbie Kalman and Niki Walker (Crabtree Publishing Company)
- Sea Sums by Joy N. Hulme
- Catch of the Day- <http://www.catchofthedayorgeon.com/fish>
- Art Works for Kids (Printing)
- Lor Van Kirk Schue

Learning Standards for the Arts

- ✓ Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts. Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute the creation and performance in the arts including dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts and they will participate in various roles in the arts.
- ✓ Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources. Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.
- ✓ Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art. Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.
- ✓ Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts. Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.