

KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI

Lesson For Ages 10 - Adult



Step 1 - Introducing the Katsushika Hokusai Slideshow Guide

MOTIVATION

BEGIN READING HERE

Imagine walking through the busy streets of Tokyo, Japan and coming across a man who is sprawled across a huge sheet of paper, painting with a brush the size of a broom! A crowd gathers around him and cheers him on, and you decide you want to see more of this unusual man. Next he astounds the crowd by drawing birds in flight -- on a grain of rice! Amazing!

For his next act he surprises you even more by hanging upside down to paint with the brush first held in his mouth, and then between his toes!

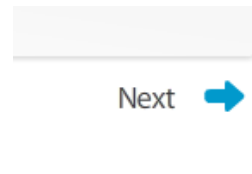
Is he a showman or an artist? Let's meet this interesting man named Katsushika Hokusai.

[Click Start Lesson To Begin](#)

1. SELF-PORTRAIT OF HOKUSAI

Here is Hokusai's self-portrait as an older man, but he started very young as an artist.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)



2. LEARNING BRUSH PAINTING

When he was first given a brush to write in Japan, he immediately started drawing everything he saw. He once wrote, "*From the age of six, I had a madness for drawing the form of things!*" He drew on bits of rice paper, on pebbles, on shavings of wood. He even used the whiskers of a mouse to paint on tiny rice hulls. His family was very poor, and custom was that only a prince was permitted to be an artist. Hokusai was far from being a prince! It took money to go to the special schools to learn brush painting. It took money to buy the special stamps needed to sign your work. Where would Hokusai get that kind of money? Hokusai was determined to be an artist, so he worked anywhere he could and saved every bit of money he earned. He even starved himself to pay for his school bills. As soon as possible, he started selling his artwork to support himself. He drew pictures for calendars. He wrote scary stories and illustrated them. He turned out hundreds of little books, similar to our comic books.

[Click Back](#)

1. SELF-PORTRAIT OF HOKUSAI

How old do you think Hokusai looks in this self-portrait? It's hard to tell, isn't it? See if you can tell from Hokusai's words about age as it relates to art.

[Click Audio](#)

“By the time I was fifty, I had published an infinity of designs, but all I produced before the age of seventy is not worth taking into account. At seventy-three I learned a little about nature, animals, plants, birds, fishes, and insects. And when I am eighty, I shall have made still more progress. At ninety I shall penetrate the mystery of things. At a hundred I shall certainly have reached a marvelous state. And when I am a hundred and ten, everything I do, be it a dot or a line, will be alive.”

[End Of Audio - Continue Reading](#)

After hearing Hokusai's words, how old do you think he was when he did his self-portrait? **(BETWEEN 73 AND 80)** He died at the age of eighty-nine with a brush in his hand. He said, “Give me only ten years more. I will be an artist.”

Do you think he accomplished bringing these lines “to life?” How? Where did he use very thin, delicate lines? **(FACE, HANDS)** Where did he use thick, heavy lines? **(CLOTHING)**

Would you like to see his most famous work of art?

[Click Next Twice](#)

3. THE GREAT WAVE AT KANAGAWA

Is this the biggest wave you've ever seen? That is why it is titled the *Great Wave*. Doesn't it look dangerous? Would you like to be here in a boat? How many boats can you find? **(THREE)** Point to them. What gives action to this exciting picture? **(CURVY, NERVOUS LINES OF WAVE, BOATS AT ANGLES, OVERLAPPING)** What balances the huge, crashing wave? **(MOUNTAIN IN BACKGROUND, CURVE OF WAVE ON OPPOSITE SIDE)**

Look carefully at this picture. Does it look like a painting or a drawing to you? It was a drawing. It was NOT painted on a canvas with brushes and oil paints. But instead of drawing on paper, Hokusai drew all the lines on a flat piece of wood. The wood was sanded smooth and painted white so it looked like paper. After Hokusai was finished with his drawing of all the black lines, the wood block was then taken to the printer who used special sharp tools to cut away all the white wood leaving only the black lines. Ink was rolled over the lines, and then the block was pressed against paper to make a print.

Have you ever used a rubber stamp? Just like a stamp, the woodblock could be used over and over again to make hundreds of prints by adding more ink to the block. These prints were sold on street corners for just a few pennies each and were very popular, because most Japanese people could afford to buy this art to decorate their homes.

WOODBLOCK PRINTING is the oldest form of printing (**making more than one copy**) in the world, but Japanese artists, like Hokusai, were the first to make prints in multiple colors. They used a new woodblock each time they added a new color to the print.

Hokusai mostly created beautiful landscapes of his country of Japan. He showed the ocean, the rivers, and the mountains. The mountain you see here in the background is famous Mt. Fuji, Japan's tallest mountain. Hokusai included this *Great Wave* picture in his book of art prints called: 36 Views of Mt. Fuji. Let's enjoy another of his views.

Click Next To Change Slide

4. 36 VIEWS OF FUJI: MISHIMA

We see Mt. Fuji in the background surrounded by white, fluffy clouds. What big shape is in the foreground? (**PINE TREE**) Look carefully at the base of the tree, and tell me what you see. (**THREE LITTLE MEN**) What are they doing? (**ENCIRCLING OR CLIMBING TREE**) Will they be successful? (**NO**) Does that give you a feeling of how giant this tree is?

Hokusai used simple shapes and simple, limited colors. How many main colors can you find? (**THREE - BLUE, GREEN, WHITE**) Notice the use of simple shapes - triangle of Mt. Fuji, the cylinder of the tree, and the circles of the clouds. Is there a lot of empty space, as we saw in *The Great Wave*? (**YES**) That balances the tree and mountain. In art we call that empty space, NEGATIVE space.

Let's take one more look at Mt. Fuji through Hokusai's artwork.

Click Next To Change Slide

5. FUJI FROM EIJURI

How many basic colors did he use? (**THREE**) Do you see any use of negative space? (**YES - BLACK ON RIGHT SIDE**) What are the weather conditions? (**EXTREMELY WINDY, CLEAR**) He shows travelers struggling against the gale-force winds in the foreground. We look across rice fields to the towering Mt. Fuji, dominating the landscape. Can you find the man whose hat blew away?

Where do you notice lack of detail? (**FIELDS, TRAVELERS**) Asian art is characterized by its simplicity -- color, shape, and lack of detail.

Do you remember that as a small child Hokusai learned to write with a brush? After he could paint his letters well, this is what he was taught to paint next.

Click Next To Change Slide

6. BAMBOO AND ROCK

This is a painting of a bamboo plant. Did you know bamboo grew as a plant? When Hokusai studied art, bamboo is what he painted for practice. He was taught a special brushstroke for each part of the plant. Let's take a closer look at these special brushstrokes.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

7. DETAIL: BAMBOO

First, there is a special brushstroke for the stem. Notice how the stem is in sections. The artist has to stop his brush to show each section.

Next, let's look at the pointed leaves. Are some leaves darker than others? **(YES)** The artist used black ink for his color. To get the leaves pointed and graceful looking, a special stroke is learned.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

8. PHOTO OF BAMBOO PAINTING STEP BY STEP

Do you see those different, special brushstrokes? **(POINT TO PAINTING OF THE STEM SECTIONS)** Are the leaves graceful and light looking? **(YES)**

For your art project you will be painting bamboo like Hokusai and adding something special. When you as an artist finish your work, how do you identify it as yours? **(SIGN IT ON FRONT)** In addition to his signature, an Asian artist needs two more things to make it acceptable to the art world. It must have calligraphy and the artist's STAMP.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

9. EMPEROR'S SCROLL: DETAIL CALLIGRAPHY

We've looked closely at the bamboo. Now I want to direct your attention to the Asian writing. Have you seen Chinese writing before? Does it look harder than our alphabet? **(YES)** Chinese words are written with special signs like you see here. It is very difficult to learn all of them, because there are over 40,000 Chinese signs! To be able to read a newspaper a person must learn 8,000 signs. And we only need to learn twenty-six letters of our alphabet!

In fact, students of Japanese and Chinese painting must learn all the signs before they are allowed to paint pictures. The signs are painted with a brush using black ink. Do you think that would be hard to do?

Have you ever heard of CALLIGRAPHY? Can you tell me what calligraphy is? **(BEAUTIFUL, GRACEFUL WRITING WITH THICK AND THIN LINES)** The materials used for calligraphy are the same as those used for brush painting.

Look carefully at the calligraphy you see in this picture. When you see calligraphy within Asian paintings, it is usually for identification of the artist. It tells the artist's name, birthplace, his school, his address. It may be announcing a special occasion, such as a birthday or holiday.

Do you think it would add to the beauty of the artwork or take away from it? **(ADD TO IT)** Right now you are looking at the artist's signature with his red stamp on it. In fact, the red stamp is considered more important than the signature. Artists cannot use a stamp if they have not gained previous approval of their artwork.

In the Learning From section you will design your own personal stamp that you will later use on your finished bamboo painting.

Let's look back at our *Bamboo and Rock* painting to see how the writing is a part of the picture.

Click Back Three Times

6. BAMBOO AND ROCK

Does the writing fit in with the picture? **(YES)** Does it balance the rock and bamboo? **(YES)**

Besides being a pretty subject to paint, the bamboo plant is very important in many ways in the Asian cultures. For example, it is used as a symbol of how to live.

Do you think the live bamboo plant is light or heavy? **(LIGHT)** Doesn't it look like it would bend in the wind, because it's so light and graceful? **(YES)** But when the wind dies down, the plant stands tall and straight again.

For Asian people, the bamboo plant is more than just a pretty thing to paint. It is an important part of their lives. It is used as building material when dried and as food when fresh.

Remember what a showman Hokusai was in addition to his artistic talents? It won't surprise you to learn that Hokusai changed his name more than thirty times during his life. The name he kept longer than most was Hokusai, meaning "Star of the Northern Constellation," in honor of a Buddhist god he especially admired.

He also liked variety in his homes. Notorious for never cleaning his studio, he took the easy way out whenever the place became too disgustingly dirty: he moved. Hokusai

moved a total of ninety-three times -- putting a burden on his family and creating a new set of neighbors for himself at least once a year. He married twice and had seven children.

The older Hokusai got, the harder he worked. Sitting on his heels, hour after hour, he completed over thirty thousand pieces of art -- an average of one a day during the course of his life. He hoped to live forever but made it to age eighty-nine. The inscription on his gravestone shows his final name, which translated means, "Old Man Crazy About Art."

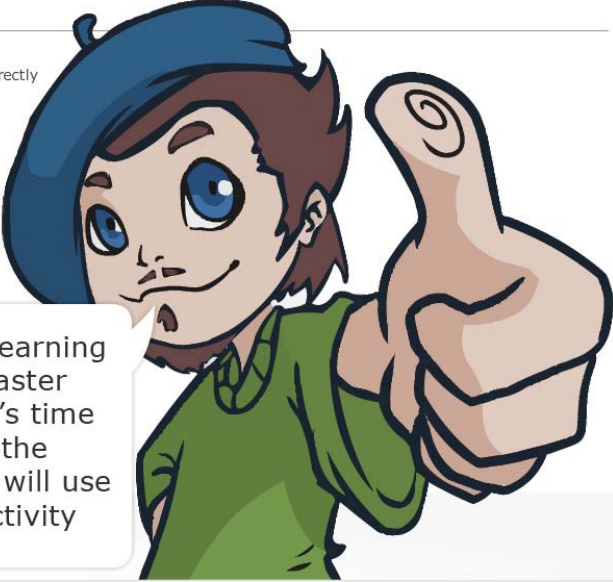
Click Next Four Times To Begin The Review Game.

Quiz Answers


- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Hokusai is a Japanese artist. | TRUE |
| 2. Hokusai is most famous for his portraits. | FALSE |
| 3. Hokusai used simple colors and shapes in his work. | TRUE |
| 4. Bamboo is a very important plant in Asian cultures. | TRUE |
| 5. Hokusai's most famous masterpiece is of a village in Japan. | FALSE |
| 6. Asian writing is done with a special pencil. | FALSE |
| 7. Calligraphy and artwork are used together in a picture. | TRUE |
| 8. There are only twenty-six signs for the Chinese to learn. | FALSE |
| 9. The <i>Great Wave</i> shows Mt. Fuji in the background. | TRUE |
| 10. Hokusai came from a poor family. | TRUE |

Lesson Finished

You have answered
10 out of 10 questions correctly



Did you enjoy learning about our Master Artist? Now it's time to practice the techniques you will use in your art activity

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When complete, click Back To Units

Step 2 - Learning From: Katsushika Hokusai

Save this page for your art activity

Seals

In the Chinese art world the seal is more important than the signature.

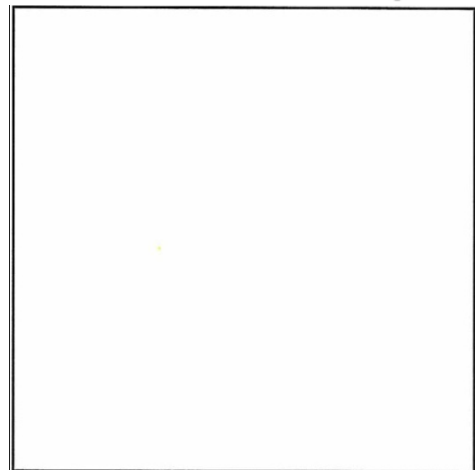
竹	筆	墨	畫	人	印	葉
Bamboo	Brush	Ink	Painting	Man	Seal	Leaves

木	治	山	石	水	雲	福
Tree	Govern	Mountain	Rock	Water	Clouds	Happiness

祿	全	大	吉	忠	尊	自
Success	Complete	Great	Lucky	Sincere	Respect	Self

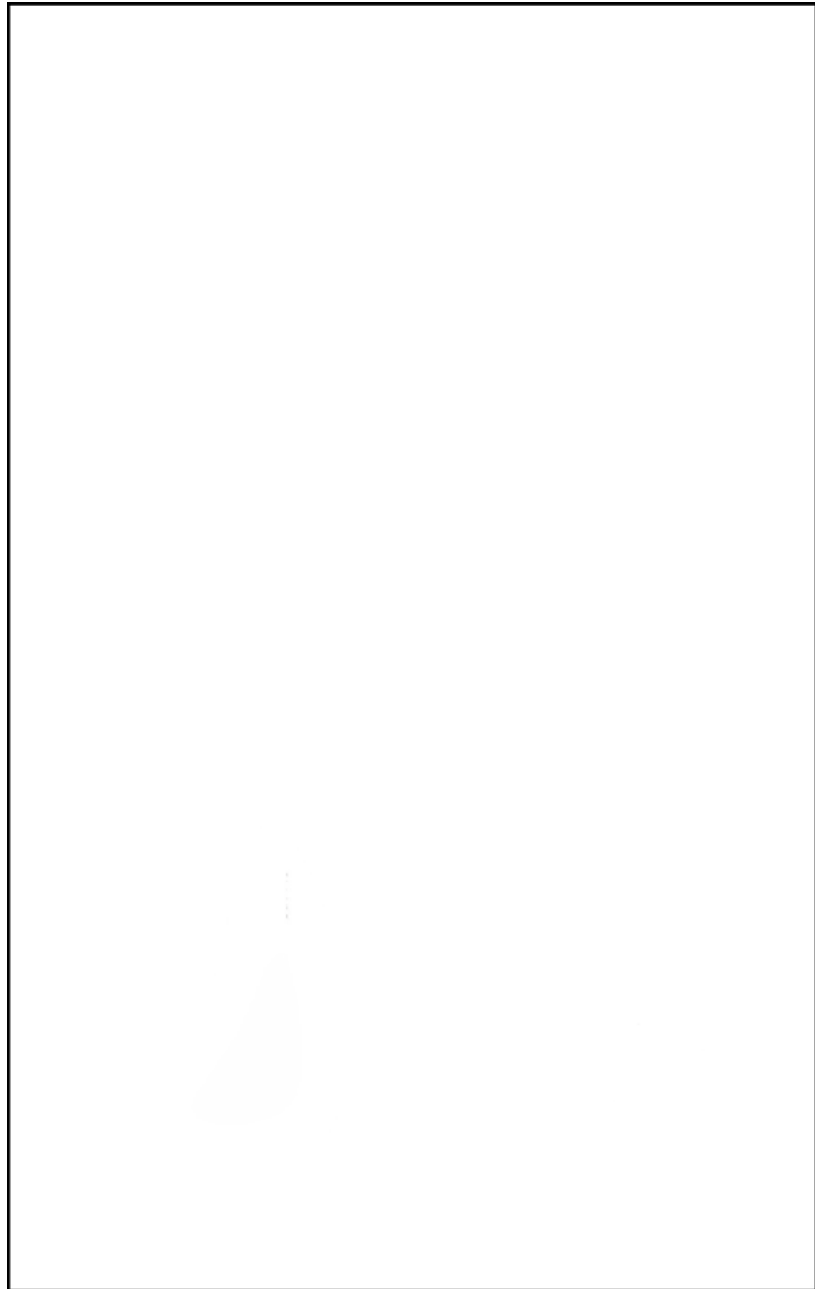
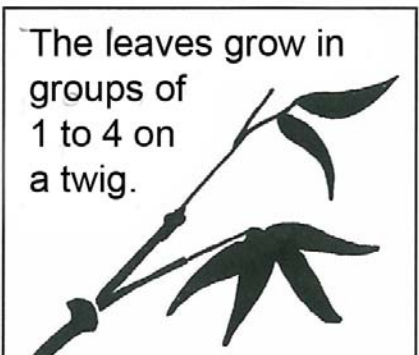
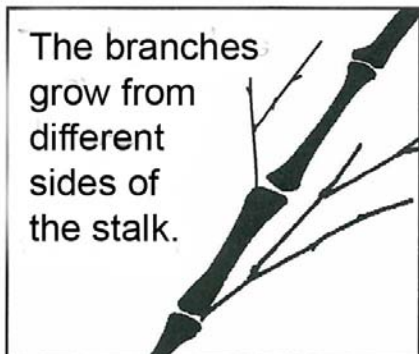
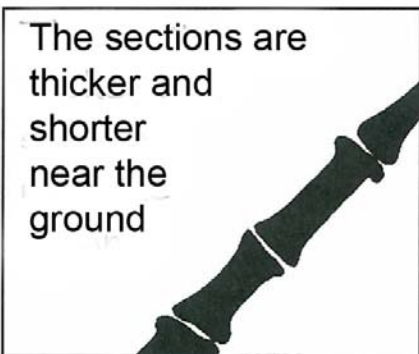
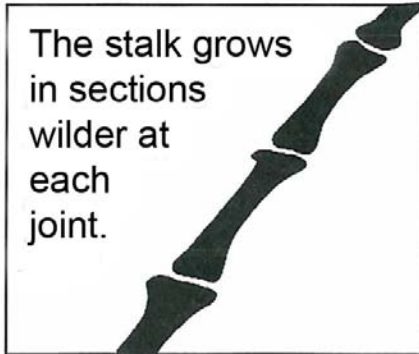
重	秀	韻	心	思	手	明
Important	Elegant	Rhythm	Heart	Thought	Hand	Bright

To design a personal seal for yourself, look at the Chinese characters above. Find two or more that interest you and combine them in this frame. Leave some parts. It is your choice because it will be your personal seal large enough to fill this frame.



Bamboo

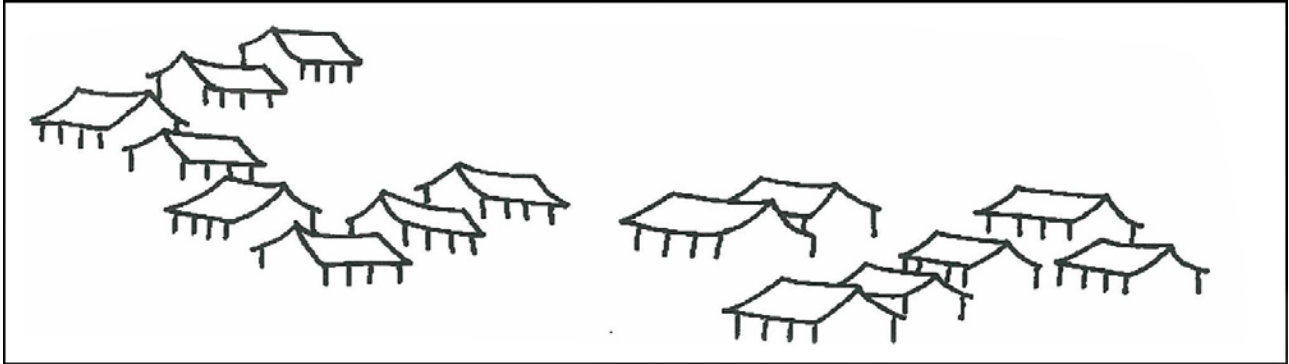
Bamboo is a favorite subject of Asian artists. They study how.



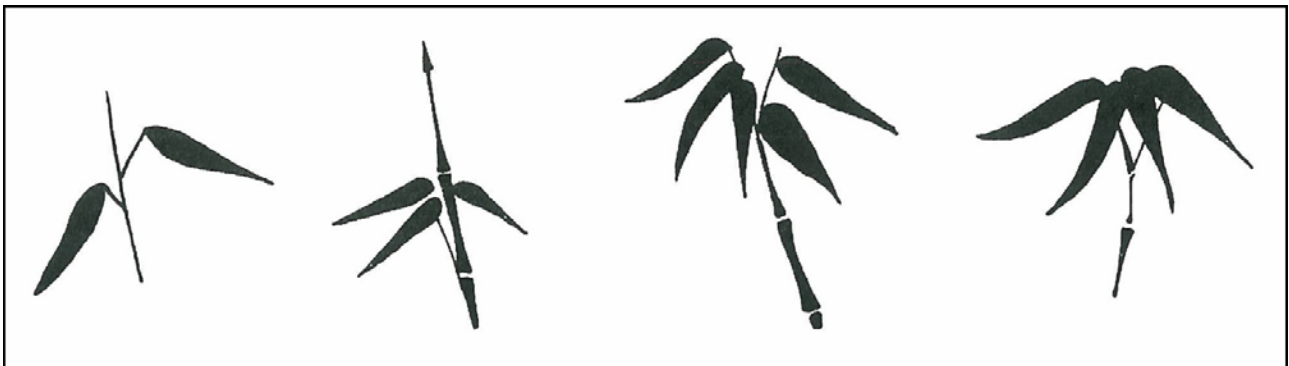
Using what the asian masters have taught us about art, sketch a bamboo branch leaving lots of negative space. Keep your sketch simple.

Simple Composition

Asian painters used very few lines to make their pictures. They liked simple, clean, pictures with lots of negative space.



Simple groups of houses.



Simple groups of leaves.



Draw groups of leaves on these branches.



The last few pages of this section contain the Art Activity for Katsushika Hokusai. This step-by-step outline will be a guide for instructing your child(ren) through the activity. The parent/instructor should review all steps necessary to complete this project before beginning any work.

Cut out the Artist Profile Slip below and attach it to the back of the completed art project.

Katsushika Hokusai

(Hoe-koo-sy) - Asian Brush Painting - Japanese 1760 - 1849

We investigated the importance of Asian art with its unique style. Many of the world's master artists were greatly influenced by Asian art. The children discovered the techniques common to masterpieces of art from both the East and West.

ART ACTIVITY EMPHASIS: Chinese Writing, Bamboo Drawing, Simple Composition
MEDIA: Black Tempera “Ink” on White Paper

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Step 3 - Working With: Art Activity Instructions

ARTIST

Katsushika Hokusai
(*cot-soo-shee-ka hoe-koo-sy*)
1760-1849 Japanese

ART ELEMENTS

Line, Composition

MEDIA

Black Tempera “Ink”

VISUALS

Print: *Manual of Ink-Bamboo* By Wu Chen

EMPHASIS

Asian Style

TECHNIQUE

Asian Brush Strokes

VOCABULARY

Brush Stroke, Calligraphy, Joint

SUGGESTED MUSIC

Asian

MATERIALS FOR INSTRUCTOR AND CHILDREN

- One 12” x 18” sheet of white construction paper
- One 12” x 18” sheet of newsprint
- Paper Towel
- Artist profile slip
- Watercolor paintbrush (size 6 to 9 round)
- Watercolor paintbrush (fine line)
- Small container to hold about . oz. of black tempera ink
- Red crayon
- Container of black tempera “ink” (for instructor only) (mix 1 part black tempera paint with 3 parts water)
- Container to collect ink (for instructor only)
- Stamp design page from Learning Packet

PREPARATION

Practice with the ink as you construct an example to become familiar with the procedure. Place the print where it can be easily seen. Place your demonstration papers on your workspace and arrange materials nearby.

SET-UP [5 minutes]

Distribute the following materials to each child:

SUPPLIES: Paintbrushes, container with ink

PAPER: Newsprint, paper towel, artist profile slip

(Pass out white paper after practicing brush strokes on newsprint.)

ORIENTATION [5 minutes]

Who remembers some of the things that are special about Asian painting? (NO SHADING, LACK OF DETAIL, FLAT SHAPES, CALLIGRAPHIC LINES) They created a special stroke of the brush for each part of a bamboo plant. Today you will learn some of those strokes and how to use them to paint a bamboo branch of your own. Let's get organized so we can begin!

DEMONSTRATION AND ACTIVITY

Have the students repeat each step immediately with their materials.

ORGANIZE YOUR WORK AREA [3 minutes]

1. Put your newsprint vertically (DEMONSTRATE) in the center of your workspace.
2. Put your container of ink on the paper towel at the top left corner of your workspace and your artist profile slip at the other top corner. (Reverse for left handed students.)

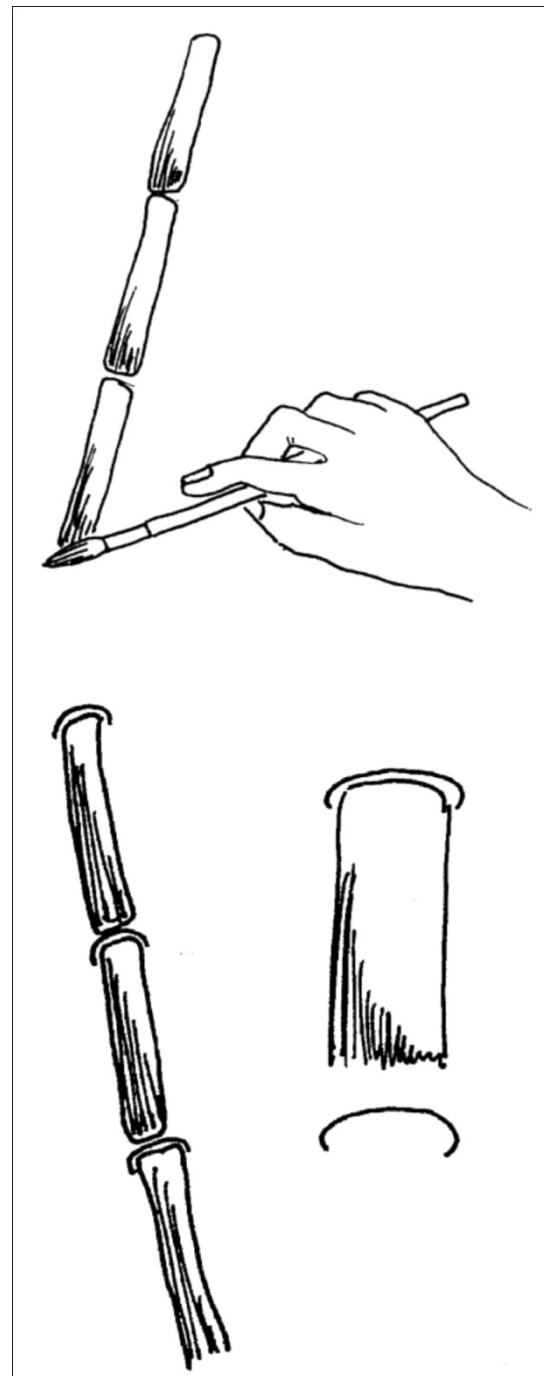
HOLDING THE PAINTBRUSH [1 minute]

Place your paintbrushes on your newsprint horizontally with bristles pointing to the left. (Reverse for left-handed students.) Pick up the larger paintbrush, holding it flat with all four fingers behind the handle and the thumb in front.

THE STROKE FOR THE STALK [6 minutes]

Using the larger brush, paint the stalk in sections, because that is how it grows. (REFER TO PRINT.)

1. Holding the brush as directed, DIP ONLY THE TIP INTO THE INK. Then slide the bristles up the edge of the cup to remove extra ink and to make the tip pointed.
2. Practice the stroke on the newsprint paper. Start at the top, hold the brush sideways (DEMONSTRATE), press the bristles against the paper and move the brush downward (about the length of a crayon). Stop and then lift the brush up from the paper.
3. Dip the tip of the brush into the ink again. Press the bristles against the rim of the cup. Now you are ready to make the next section.



4. Rest your brush on the paper so it is almost touching the end of the last stroke. Draw it down, about a crayon's length and stop. Lift brush up.
5. Continue stalks to the bottom of the paper. Sections are shorter and thicker as you go down the page.

THE JOINTS [2 minutes]

While the sections are still wet, paint the joints between the stalk sections:

1. The joint stroke looks like a frown. (DRAW A LARGE SAMPLE.)
2. Use the small paintbrush to create the joints between the stalk sections.

THE STROKE FOR THE BRANCHES [6 minutes]

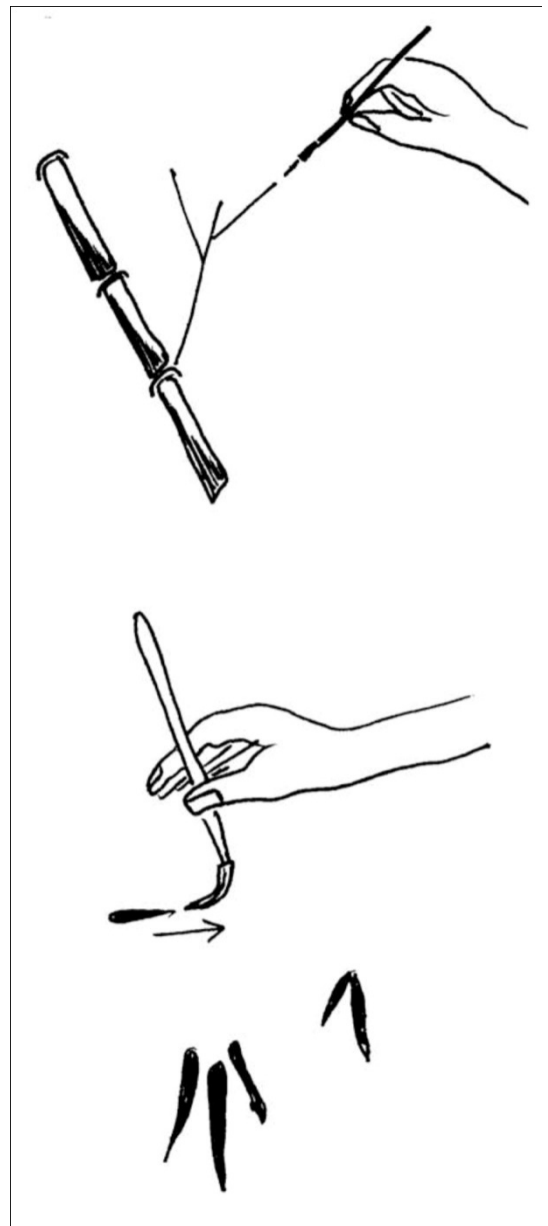
Using the small brush, paint the branches with very thin lines.

1. Begin the branch stroke at the joint. Pull it up and away from the stalk with a short quick stroke.
2. Make another stroke at the end of the last stroke.
3. Keep making these short strokes, shorter and thinner each time, until your branch is long enough.
4. Add other thinner branches coming off the joints with your brush.
5. Branches grow from alternate sides of the stalk. (From the old Chinese saying that the young shoots respect their elders by not blocking their sunlight.)

THE STROKE FOR THE LEAVES [6 minutes]

To make the leaf stroke:

1. Hold the large paintbrush straight up and down, with the bristles down (the little finger is closest to the bristles).
2. Slowly lower the brush until it rests on the newsprint paper.
3. Then, very quickly, turn your wrist (not your arm) and lift up and out at the same time. (Pretend there is a crumb there, and you must sweep it off toward you with the brush!) It might help to give the brush a little twist as you pull it off the paper to make that point.
4. You can make two or three leaves with each dip.
5. Practice adding leaves to your bamboo branches.
6. Paint the leaves growing downward in groups of two or three, as you drew in your Learning Packets.



7. It is best to start adding the leaves in the center of the page and work out. Remember, less is better! Try to keep it simple!
8. Re-ink the brush only as often as necessary, so that it doesn't get too wet. Leaves need very little paint on the brush.

FINAL PROJECT [12 minutes]

Students will paint three stalks on the white construction paper.

1. Students may save or throw away newsprint practice sheets.
2. Pass out 12" x 18" sheet of white construction paper to each student.

Now that you have practiced your special strokes with your brushes and ink, you are ready to make your bamboo stalks on your white paper. Start at the top on either side. Remember, the Asian masters tried very hard to keep their paintings simple, so be aware when you have enough leaves and then stop! Let's start with three stalks. (Demonstrate how to hold the brush and proceed step-by-step... three stalks... joints... branches... leaves.)
(Play the Asian music.)

THE STAMP [6 minutes]

The personal stamp of the artist was very important to Asian painting. You have designed your own stamp in your Learning Packets to use today. What color were the stamps of the Asian masters? (RED)

1. Using a red crayon, heavily color the back of your character.
2. Place your stamp design right where you want it on your white paper (cut it off the page if you need to).
3. Go over your design with a pencil. Press firmly, and make sure you hold your paper to keep it from moving.
4. Lift the paper ONLY when you are sure you have traced over every part of the design.

MOUNTING THE ARTIST PROFILE SLIP [2 minutes]

(Profile slips for each artist are provided. They give a brief description of the artist, the technique, and the media used in the art activity. They should be mounted on the back of each art project after it is completed.)

1. Write your name on the front of the artist profile slip.
2. Using glue, mount the profile slip on the back of your artwork.
3. Encourage students to discuss their artwork with others using this artist slip of information.

GUIDANCE

Encourage the students to make each stroke masterful: The Asian masters took great care in mixing ink. They had special stones for grinding ink with water to make the right shade. They treated their brushes with exceptional pride. Every stroke was meant to be masterful, or as Hokusai said, "Every stroke must be alive."

EXTENSION

Extra practice and brush control may be gained by copying Chinese characters.

CONCLUSION

Remember how Asian people show respect when they say hello and goodbye? (BOW WITH HANDS TOGETHER) That's right, they bow and put their hands together. Please join me in bowing and saying "Sayonara" (Goodbye).

THE STROKE FOR THE STALK [7 minutes]

Using the larger brush, paint the stalk in sections, because that is how it grows. (REFER TO PRINT.)

1. Practice the stroke on the newsprint paper. Start at the top, hold the brush sideways (DEMONSTRATE), press the bristles against the paper and move the brush downward (about the length of a crayon). Stop and then lift the brush up from the paper.
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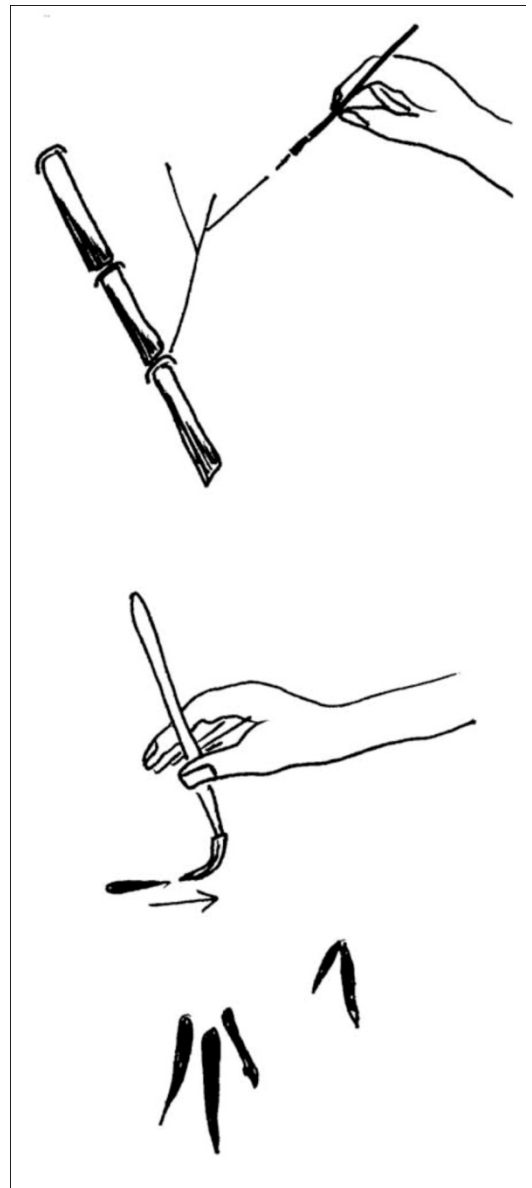
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FINAL PROJECT [15 minutes]

Students will paint two stalks on the white construction paper.

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Remember how Asian people show respect when they say hello and goodbye? (BOW WITH HANDS TOGETHER) That’s right, they bow and put their hands together. Please join me in bowing and saying “Sayonara” (Goodbye).

THIS CONCLUDES THE KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI UNIT.