

Community



Views Around Town



Explore a series of prints chronicling the people, places, and traditions of nineteenth-century Edo

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Consider different elements, such as nature, the built environment, and human activity, that make up a community
- Look closely at three artworks from Utagawa Hiroshige's *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* to learn about daily life in Edo (known today as Tokyo)
- Draw landscapes of their own town or neighborhood, inspired by Hiroshige

Vocabulary

Landscape

A type of artwork that depicts an environment, either real or imagined

Woodblock print

An artwork on paper made by carving an image into a block of wood, covering the raised parts of that block with ink or paint, and pressing a sheet of paper against that block so the image transfers onto the paper

Composition

The layout of elements within a work of art that form a unified whole

Required Materials

- Blank paper
- Colored pencils or crayons

Included Resources

- [Online exhibition of the entire *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* print series by Utagawa Hiroshige](#)
- [Visual organizer for student observations](#)

For the Teacher

Background Information

Ukiyo-e is a Japanese style of painting and woodblock print that translates literally to “pictures of the floating world.” The floating world refers to the entertainment and leisure scene that thrived in major Japanese cities like Edo (the former name of Tokyo) in the middle of the nineteenth century. For centuries, arts and leisure were reserved for Japan’s aristocracy, but in this period, a larger segment of the population could buy tickets to the theater, an evening at a teahouse, or a woodblock print. In turn, this led to a greater range of artworks inspired by varied aspects of everyday life. Fashion, fun, and fleeting moments were popular subjects in many *ukiyo-e* prints, which celebrated the energy and beauty of urban life.

Artwork Description

This print depicts traditional symbols and activities of the New Year, one of Japan’s most important annual festivals. Buildings to the right and left frame the image; at the far right, a vertical section of a gate pine, a traditional New Year’s decoration, is also visible. At the center of the print, a procession of street performers walks up a sloped hill, coming toward the viewer. A dense group of buildings at the bottom of the hill recedes toward the background, which is depicted gesturally with hatched lines on a gray block of color. At the edge of town is a body of water, and at the horizon the sky is in sunset, transitioning from bright red to off-white (the natural color of the paper) to deep blue. Five kites fly high in the sky, cutting diagonally across the composition.



Utagawa Hiroshige (Ando) (Japanese, 1797–1858). *Kasumigaseki*, No. 2 in *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1st month of 1857. Woodblock print. Brooklyn Museum; Gift of Anna Ferris, 30.1478.2. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

Artwork Description

The site depicted here is said to have been the original mouth of the Sumida, Edo's most important river. A cherry tree frames the right side of the composition, and several large, delicate cherry blossoms, in varying shades of pink, are shown in bloom—a reference to the Japanese pastime of observing cherry blossoms in spring. In the midground, in the bottom third of the composition, is an open green space, with figures leisurely strolling on a path. To the right, a shrine—dedicated to the river itself—is nestled among trees. Boats of varying sizes float across the Sumida river in the center of the composition. In the background, a barely visible town and dense blanket of trees fade into the clouds, from which Mount Tsukuba emerges amid a clear, blue sky.



Utagawa Hiroshige (Ando) (Japanese, 1797–1858). *Suijin Shrine and Massaki on the Sumida River* (Sumidagawa Suijin no Mori Massaki), No. 35 in *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 8th month of 1856. Woodblock print. Brooklyn Museum; Gift of Anna Ferris, 30.1478.35. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

Artwork Description

The “sudden shower” in the title of this print is a heavy downpour of rain over a bridge that spans a river. The rain is shown as dark lines that cross densely and diagonally over the entire print. A few figures on the bridge hunch under hats or other coverings, some even sharing one umbrella or parasol among multiple people. Their legs in motion and windblown clothing suggest the sudden onset of the rain and their attempts to hurry toward shelter. The bridge the figures cross arcs diagonally across the lower third of the composition, while the middle third is devoted to the river with one lone boatman using a pole to guide his raft through the rain. The upper third of this print shows a band of silhouetted trees on the far side of the river, above which is the gray sky and a band of very dark clouds at the top edge.



Utagawa Hiroshige (Ando) (Japanese, 1797–1858). *Sudden Shower Over Shin-Ohashi Bridge and Atake (Ohashi Atake no Yudachi)*, No. 58 in *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 9th month of 1857. Woodblock print. Brooklyn Museum; Gift of Anna Ferris, 30.1478.58. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

About the Artwork

Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858) is one of the most famous Japanese print designers, and is particularly well known for his series of prints showing views of landscapes in thematically connected ways. The series these prints are from is called *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, which shows a whole year’s worth of festivals, activities, and popular places to visit around the city of Edo. During the 1800s, Edo was among the largest cities in the world, and served as an economic and political center in Japan; in 1868, under a new emperor, Edo was made the official capital of Japan and renamed Tokyo, translating literally to “Eastern Capital.”

Hiroshige’s images often combine landscape elements with the people who live and work in the communities that are depicted, with extra care taken to capture the spirit of different neighborhoods and regions. These three prints demonstrate some of the variations that are present throughout the series—of weather, of time, of activity. They illustrate how a landscape can be part of daily life. The famous places Hiroshige chose to include are often ones that people would visit throughout the year to celebrate festivals and holidays, do their shopping, or enjoy the view. Through this series, Hiroshige portrays a year in the life of his city.

Lesson

Introduction/Warm-Up

Tell students that you're going to be thinking about the people, places, and activities that make up a community.

Ask them to think about their town or neighborhood, and to brainstorm about this question:

→ What are some of the things that make your community unique?

To help their brainstorming, you can ask them to consider things like neighborhood landmarks, famous places, special events, and everyday activities.

Ask students to share some of their ideas. The teacher should chart students' responses.



Artwork Discussion

Explain to students that you'll be looking at three works of art made more than one hundred fifty years ago by the artist Utagawa Hiroshige and will be thinking about the different techniques he used to represent his community.

Divide students into three groups and have each group focus on one of the three artworks.

Note: You can either project all three artworks side by side or, if the projections are too small for students to look closely, have printouts of each artwork.

Give students five minutes to look closely at their artwork, then have them use the attached worksheet to record their observations.

After students have completed the worksheet, bring the class back together. Project each artwork one at a time, asking for a few students to share a detail they noticed.

Explain to students that all three of the artworks depict a city called Edo, which is known today as Tokyo. Show them the map and contemporary photograph of Tokyo, explaining that the city has been an important center for trade and government in Japan for hundreds of years.

Project the three artworks, side by side, and explain that they are part of a series called *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, which includes more than one hundred different views of Edo. Looking at the works together, ask students:

- What similarities do you notice between the images?
- What differences do you notice?
- Why do you think Hiroshige made more than one hundred artworks showing the same place?

Explain that all of the images in *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* depict special things about the city. The three artworks show a wide variety of different moments: celebration of the annual New Year festival; a group of people getting caught in a heavy summer rain while crossing a bridge; and a close-up view of cherry blossoms, a famous Japanese flower, at the start of spring.





Utagawa Hiroshige (Ando) (Japanese, 1797-1858). *Kasumigaseki*, No. 2 in *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1st month of 1857. Woodblock print. Brooklyn Museum; Gift of Anna Ferris, 30.1478.2. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)



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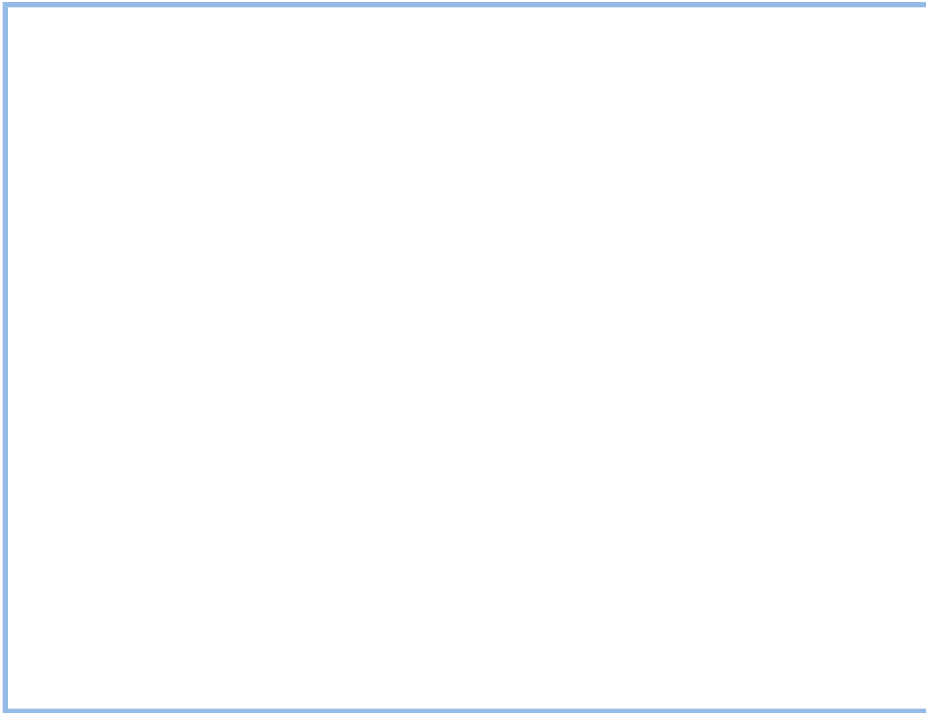
Map of Japan showing location of Tokyo.
(Photo: TUBS, courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Tokyo skyline. (Photo: Morio, courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Observation Guide

Here is some space to record what you notice about the artwork!

Sketch one detail that stands out to you:



If you could step into this landscape ...

→ What's something you'd hear?

→ What's something you'd feel?

→ What temperature would it be?

→ What's one natural detail you see in the environment?

→ What's one man-made detail you see in the environment?

→ Do you see any people in the landscape? What do you think they're doing?

Activity

Tell students they're going to draw their own landscapes that will be views of different places and activities in their town or neighborhood. Encourage them to think about what it looks like when they're in the places they brainstormed. If a student is stuck, they can refer back to the list generated during the warm-up or simply look out the window for inspiration.

Before passing out drawing materials, remind students of some of the strategies Hiroshige used in *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, such as showing a combination of natural and man-made details, depicting people doing different kinds of activities, and choosing a specific season for each artwork. Ask students to consider these elements in their own artworks.

Pass out drawing materials and give students time to draw on their own.

When students are done, they can share, in pairs and table groups, what places they drew. If time allows, hang the artworks all together and have a few students share about their artworks.

You can also create a portfolio of all the drawings, by either printing copies or scanning them digitally, to make a shareable "One Hundred Famous Views" of their own neighborhood!



Extension Activities

ELA Connection—Haiku Poetry

Tell students that Japanese art and Japanese poetry were closely connected when *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* was made. Explain that one form of poetry in Japan is called haiku, a style of poem that has three lines (line 1 has exactly five syllables, line 2 has exactly seven syllables, line 3 has exactly five syllables). Try sharing an example, like the one below, with students, and then counting the syllables together:

Line one has five beats
The second line has seven
Line three, five again

Tell students that, since haiku poems are so short, they are usually focused on one mood or feeling in a place. Invite them to pick one feeling connected to the place they drew and make their haiku about that feeling.

Arts Connection— Different Perspectives

Remind students that there are lots of different ways to represent the same place, depending on your perspective. Explain that perspective means a particular point of view. You can use Hiroshige's prints to illustrate the concept (the bridge print is looking down at people far away; the cherry blossom print is looking at a flower up close; the New Year scene is looking up at kites high in the sky, etc.). Then, choose an object and ask students to try drawing it from all different perspectives. Encourage them to try drawing it up close and from far away, from down low and up high, and from different surrounding positions.

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Cover:

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