



Japanese culture influenced by Zen Buddhism

Lesson plan by: Mariko Barnes, Lafayette High School, NCTA 2021 (The Ohio State University Seminar)

Title: Japanese culture influenced by Zen Buddhism

Theme/Topic: Japanese art

Introduction (2-3 sentence summary of lesson):

The students will be able to recognize some characteristics of Japanese Zen art, describe what those characteristics make them feel or think, and relate the art to themselves. In the spirit of Zen aesthetics, “to use less to suggest more,” the students are going to learn and practice a short form of the verbs “Ta-form” and “Te-form.”

Subject(s)/Grade level(s): 10th through 12th grade (Japanese 3 class)

Duration of lesson: 12 classes

Connection to standards/common core (2-3 standards):

I can write briefly about most familiar topics and provide information using a series of simple sentences.

I can identify common patterns in the products and practices of a culture.

Essential Questions (2-3 questions):

この庭にいるとどんな気持ちになりますか。それはどうしてですか。 -How do you feel while you are staying in the garden and why?

この絵を見てふしぎに思うことはありますか。それはどうしてですか。 -What part is mysterious about this painting and why?

Learning Objectives (2-3 objectives):

The students will explore the artist’s thoughts about the painting after they discuss their own thoughts with their classmates.

The students will keep questioning for themselves why and how the particular arts were created based on the history, geography, and the traditions of East Asia.

Materials Needed: Sumie, tea bowls, and other cultural materials influenced by Zen Buddhism



Japanese culture influenced by Zen Buddhism

Pre-Assessment of Prior Knowledge: *How will students show what they already know about the topic of this unit? What activities will be used?*

(1) Basic vocabulary words in Japanese. I will check whether the students can communicate about a topic relating to art such as colors, sizes, shapes (“it looks like ~” expression), feelings, and key question words (what, when, where, why, and how.) If the students do not remember these basic vocabulary words and expressions, we will review in class before we jump into the topic.

(2) The concepts of “Wabi” and “Sabi.” You can feel the experience of “Wabi” and “Sabi” wherever you are. The students will find some art form, such as paintings, poetry, or pictures of scenery which make them notice “Wabi” and “Sabi.” Next, they will describe where they can see “Wabi” and “Sabi” in a particular art form.

Lesson Activities/Instructional Strategies (5-7 steps):

Step 1: Reviewing basic vocabulary words we often use in this unit.

Step 2: Introducing the concepts of “Wabi” and “Sabi”

Step 3: Observing some Sumie brush paintings.

Step 4: Asking and responding to some questions about the paintings.

Step 5: Sharing their observations with their classmates.

Resources:

“Zen Past and Present” by Eric Cunningham

“Zen and Japanese Culture” by Daisuke T. Suzuki

“A Flower Does Not Talk” by Zenkei Shibayama

Closing/Reflection Activity: *How are students engaging with ideas from another culture? What it means for them?*

We will discuss whether the students feel the experience of “Wabi” and “Sabi” in the Sumie paintings.

Post-Assessment: *How will students demonstrate what they have learned about the topic from this unit? What activities will be used?*

I will ask whether the students can see “Wabi” and “Sabi” in their daily life. They can take pictures to share the beauty with their classmates.



Japanese culture influenced by Zen Buddhism

Extension Activities/Extending the Lesson/Cross-Curricular Connections (2-3 ideas):

At the end of the unit, I wanted to take my students to the Japanese garden in Louisville, KY. However, I learned that the botanic garden has just started fundraising for the Japanese garden. The garden could be completed in 2023 earliest. I went to a fundraising event last Saturday and talked to the campaign director. I believe he has some ideas for students in the community to get involved in this Japanese garden project. This hands - on experience would be a wonderful opportunity for my students. Although they have to wait to see the completed Japanese garden, they can be part of the process of the Japanese garden.
