

Sumi-e Painted Fan and Haiku
NCTA (Teaching about East Asia)
Julia Holt, Art Specialist
Dan Mills Elementary School
Nashville, Tennessee

Genres: Art
Social Studies

Grade Level: Third Grade

Time Period: Two to Three 50-60 minute class periods

Narrative: *Sumi-e* is a Japanese style of brush painting. “*Sumi*” translates as black ink brush painting. The “*e*” translates as picture. Simplicity is the main characteristic of *Sumi-e* painting. These artworks are simple, elegant, and serene. The philosophy of *Sumi-e* is contrast and harmony. The art of brush painting, or *Sumi-e*, is to capture the “life spirit” of the subject, rather than the semblance of the object itself. Sometimes, *Sumi-e* is confused with calligraphy, because the art tools are the same. However, calligraphy is the representation of written characters, while *Sumi-e* is painting a scene from nature.

Objectives: Students will learn about an East Asian style of brush painting, also known as ink and wash-painting, or by its Japanese name, *Sumi-e*. Students will learn about the Japanese form of poetry, *Haiku*. Students will paint their *Sumi-e* style of painting based on subject matter having to do with nature. Finally, students will compose their own *Haiku* that reflects their painting.

Procedure: Students will be introduced to an East Asian type of ink and wash painting style. Students will have the opportunity to see many examples of *Sumi-e* paintings via the internet and projector in my classroom. Each student will be given a copy of a *Sumi-e* practice page of brushstrokes. This will help them learn to imitate certain brushstrokes used. Students will spend the majority of the first class period practicing these brushstrokes on white watercolor paper with black tempera paint. This is also a time to experiment with the different values of the paint, by diluting it with more or less water. *Sumi-e* painting is generally said to be done in three generations. The first lines in the painting represent the grandparent, and are of the lightest value. The next generation, the parent’s “brushstrokes,” will be painted in a darker gray, and the third and youngest generation, the child, will be represented by the darkest value, black.

Students are encouraged to think about what subject matter in nature they want to paint. Brainstorming together as a class can help give students more ideas. Some possible paintings could be of trees, birds, frogs, butterflies, ponds, streams, rivers, or even waterfalls. Students will also be informed about the techniques of *Sumi-e* painting. Students will be instructed to hold the paintbrush at the middle of the handle. The brush should be at a 90 degree angle or

perpendicular to the paper. The entire arm should move when painting the brushstrokes, not just the wrist.

By the second class period, students should know what subject they'll be painting, and should be prepared to paint it in the *Sumi-e* style. After completing their artwork, students will compose a *Haiku* poem. It too is connected with nature. *Haiku* has seventeen syllables in its three stanzas of 5, 7, and 5 (syllables). These lines are absolute.

Students will be given a third class period to complete any part of their *Sumi-e* painting and reflecting *Haiku* poem. Afterwards, these third grade projects will be displayed in the hallway for all to enjoy.

Assessment: Students will be assessed informally as we always help critique each others artwork to receive any constructive criticisms, and what we might choose to have done instead.

Materials: Disposable paint palettes
Black tempera paint
Round #4 paintbrush
Water and water containers
Glue
Wooden craft sticks
Pre-cut cardstock fans
Sumi-e Practice page of brushstrokes
White watercolor paper
Newspaper
World map
Nature pictures (magazines, calendars, etc)
Haiku examples

References: www.wikipedia.org/wiki/ink_and_wash_painting