

# Shoji Screen

(art + social studies)

Japanese homes have walls that are very different from those in the United States. In Japan, many doors and interior walls are actually large, movable screens, called Shoji Screens. They are constructed of thin wooden strips and very strong Shoji paper, which is made from very thin, very strong mulberry fibers. Screens made from these fibers allow the light through but do not allow images to be seen. These dividers and screens are too large and too fragile to withstand the extremes of climate and weather in the United States. A smaller version of a Shoji screen will help children understand how they function in Japan.

In this lesson plan, three small Shoji screens are created to hang on a wall or stand upright on the floor. Children will make handmade papers similar to mulberry paper that are varied in texture and design. You might want to have students compare their handmade paper with White Unryu Paper (11234-1020), which is relatively inexpensive and available in 25" x 37" sheets.

While creating this project, discuss with students the differences between translucent, transparent and opaque. These terms are frequently used in the discussion of art materials. For instance, translucent means that light will travel through the material but



## Materials

**Pre-cut Mat Frames**, Black, for artworks size 9" x 12" (17213-2003), package of 12; need six mat frames per student

**Blickrylic™ Polymer Gloss Medium**, quart (00711-1027); share two quarts across classroom

**Blick® Pure White Tissue Paper**, 20" x 30", (11308-1493), 24-sheet package; need three sheets per student

**Roylco® Rubbing Plate Set**, Leaf (61112-1040); share three sets across classroom

**Sargent® Best Buy Crayons**, 8-color set (20124-1008); share ten sets across classroom

**Elmer's® Glue-All**, 16-oz bottle (23810-1006); share two bottles across classroom

**Stancup® Disposable Containers**, (04918-0100), package of 100; share one package across classroom

**Blickrylic™ Student Acrylic**, Gold, pint (00711-9086); need one to share across classroom

**Dynasty® Fine Sapphire Synthetic Round Brush Set**, (05197-0729); share one 72-piece cannister across classroom

**Foam Brushes**, (06041-0409); share one 40-piece set across classroom

**Wooden Dowel Rods**, 36" x 1/2" Dia, (60448-1236), package of 12; need one per student

**Blick® Construction Card**, Gold, 18" x 24" sheets (11408-4079); need three sheets to share across classroom

**Colored Masking Tape**, Red (23008-3000); share three rolls across classroom

**Hands-On Heritage Activity Book**, Japan (68613-1009)

images aren't recognizable. Transparent means the material is clear and the objects on the other side can be seen clearly.

Opaque materials allow neither light nor objects to be seen.

The handmade paper in this lesson plan contains images of various leaves. Instead of using real leaves, the paper is made using white tissue paper, acrylic polymer medium and rubbing plates. Traditional Japanese leaves like the ginkgo and fern are included in the rubbing plate set. Since there are several steps in this lesson plan, requiring drying time between steps, make sure to write each student's name on a bottom edge of their paper for identification purposes.

#### **Grade Levels** 4-6

*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

#### **Process**

1. The handmade paper is created first so that it has time to dry thoroughly. Lay the three sheets of 20" x 30" white tissue paper on top of one another on a flat work surface. Trim them to 14" x 30" by cutting six inches off the top. Cut all three pieces of tissue at the same time.
2. The sets of rubbing plates contain a ginkgo plate and a fern plate. Any other small leaves are fine to use; however, do not use the oak and holly leaves. Using one plate at a time, place the plate face-up under the top piece of white tissue. Firmly but gently rub a crayon over the surface of the plate to transfer the pattern to the tissue paper. Use different colors and different plates, orienting them at different angles. The entire top sheet of tissue paper should be covered with leaf images.
3. Cover work surfaces with plastic. Place the Blickrylic Polymer Gloss Medium in several Stancups on the table. Using a two-inch foam brush, cover the top sheet of the tissue with medium. Remember, always keep the three sheets of the tissue together! The medium will soak through the first layer of tissue to the other two. Move the tissue to another plastic-covered surface to dry (approximately 30 minutes), then turn it over and apply medium to the back. The paper will now have a textured look much like Unryu paper. When the tissue is completely dry

on both sides, cut it into three 10" x 14" pieces. Hold them up to the light and see how translucent they are!

4. Place one black frame on the table and draw a fine line of glue around the inside edge of the rectangular opening. Place one sheet of handmade paper on top of the glue and press down firmly. Draw a fine line of glue on the next frame around the inside edge of the opening as well as the outside edge of the frame (both lines of glue should be on the same side of the frame). Gently match the second frame to the first frame, which will secure the Shoji paper inside the frame. Press down firmly. Repeat this step to create two more panels. Let dry.
5. Paint the dowel rods with gold paint and let them dry for approximately 20-30 minutes.
6. Review the Hands-On Heritage Activity book. With a brush and the gold paint, draw Sumi-type strokes or designs on both sides of the frames. Let dry.
7. Cover the edges of the frames with red masking tape. Fold the tape over to the back side. Some trimming may be required. This will seal the edges and give the appearance of traditional Japanese binding.
8. Place the three screens side-by-side on the work surface, as close together as possible. Tape the two outside panels to the inside panel using red masking tape. This will allow the screen to fold.
9. Cut the gold cardstock into 1" x 5" strips (six strips per student). Make a loop with each strip, to attach to the top right- and left-hand corners of each frame. Use pieces of red masking tape to attach the loops to the frames on both sides. Press down firmly to secure the loops to the frames.
10. Thread the painted dowel rod through the loops. Hang the screen on the wall or remove the dowel rod to stand it on a floor or a table.

## National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

**K-4** Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

**5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

**K-4** Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places

**5-8** Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

**K-4** Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum

**5-8** Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts