

Japanese Floating Lanterns

(art + social studies)

On a summer evening in Japan, many cities hold particularly beautiful event called Toro Nagashi — the festival of Floating Lanterns. Toro Nagashi is related to Obon, a 3-day period to honor the departed, much in the way we celebrate Memorial Day. Participants inscribe names, messages and drawings on paper lanterns attached to a wood or bamboo base, place a candle inside, and set it afloat in a lake or river. Hundreds of glowing, reflecting lights drift alongside boaters, often accompanied by music and fireworks.

In studying Japanese culture, students can make their own lanterns, either to float or to serve as beautiful interior pieces. Lanterns can be as simple as a rolled cylinder or intricately designed. Using a synthetic paper called YUPO will make them more rigid, durable, heat- and water resistant than paper.

Grade Levels K-12

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

Objectives

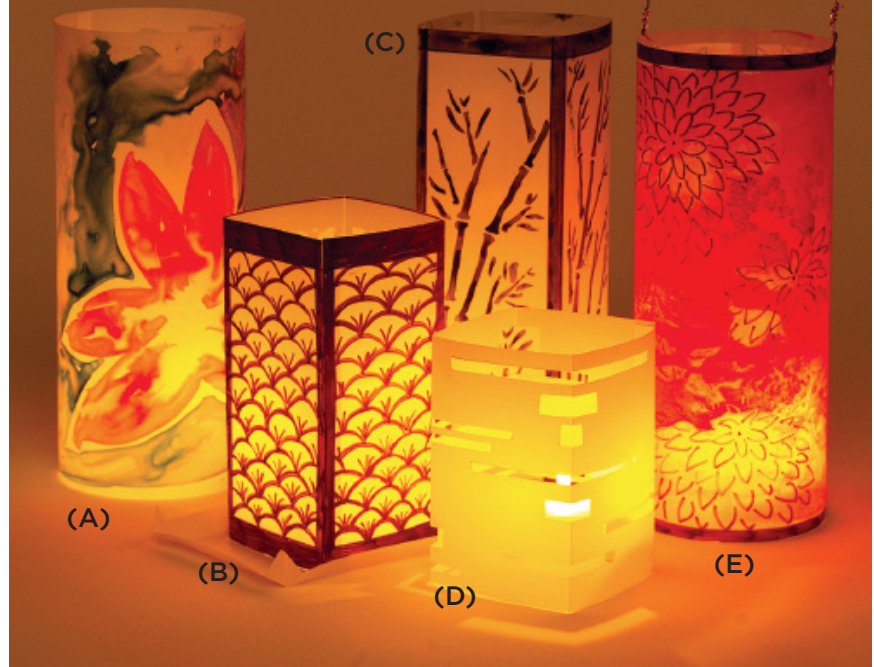
- Students will observe traditional Japanese paintings and be able to describe the aesthetics of simplicity, beauty and reverence for nature
- Students will choose patterns, design elements and subject matter that relate to this historic culture for their own artworks
- Students will create a free-standing 3-dimensional, functional piece from a flat painting

Historical and Cultural Relativity

- In comparison to Western art, traditional Japanese art is very much a part of everyday life and beauty is found in simple, humble things. Use this lesson plan to help students recognize art in their own surroundings.

Media used:

(A) Blick Liquid Watercolor, (B) Sharpie Marker, (C) Black Cat India Ink, (D) Cut-outs (E) Bombay India Ink Colors



- As in Western art, Japan has a history of artists and movements that spans centuries of development. Traditional examples of Japanese paintings on screens, scrolls, fans, fabrics and block prints will be the best examples to view for this project.
- Excellent lessons in Japanese aesthetics, writing, language and more project ideas are available in [Hands-on Culture of Japan](#), by Kate O'Halloran (71836-0002)
- For books with inspiring patterns and motifs, view [Traditional Japanese Designs](#) (71300-1005) or [Dover Pictura Japanese Designs](#), with CD (71310-1008)

Preparation

1. Plan the finished shape of the lantern according to the age group you are working with. Cylinders are easiest for elementary students to form. If folding the lantern, do so before painting it. To create a square lantern, make a 1/2" crease on the short side of the YUPO paper. With crease made, fold sheet in half, then fold both ends in to the center crease (see illus. A)

NOTE: to create a hard crease in YUPO paper, use a burnishing tool such as a bone folder.

Materials

YUPO Translucent Paper (10162-1023), one 9" x 12" sheet per lantern, may also be cut in half for small lanterns. Optional: add another 1/4 sheet per lantern to make a floating base

Delta Sobo White Glue (23820-1004)

Media for Indoor Lanterns:

Crayola® Educational Watercolors (00309-), assorted colors

Blick Waterbased Markers (21224-), assorted colors

Blick Liquid Watercolor (00369-), assorted colors

Media for Outdoor Lanterns and Floats:

Sharpie® Fine Point Markers, (21316-), assorted colors

Blick Black Cat Waterproof India Ink (21101-2006)

Dr. Martin's® Bombay™ India Inks (21122-), assorted colors

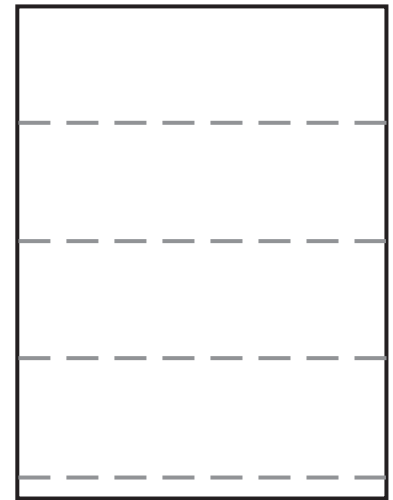
Options:

Round Aluminum Palette (03006-0010), share between 2 students

564 Bamboo Brush, size 2 (05409-1002), one per student

Bone Folder (12964-0001), one per student

Light Source, see Step 3



A.

Preparation, continued

Prepare preliminary drawings on a separate sheet of newsprint paper. The transparency of the YUPO paper allows the option of placing the preliminary drawing beneath for tracing. Allow 1/2" on the edge of the design for gluing.

Process

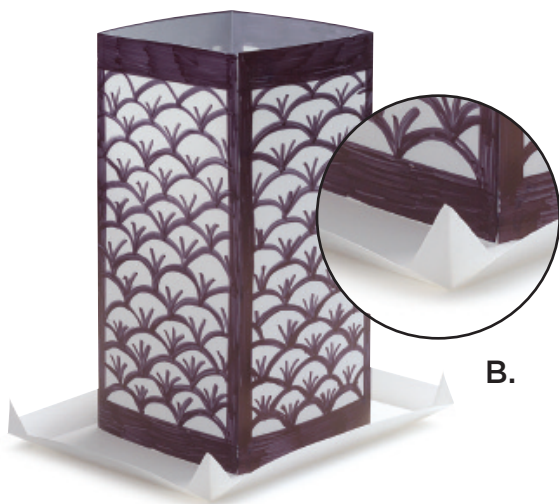
1. Decorate the lantern with paintings or patterns. YUPO paper works with many different art mediums, select one that works best with your age category. Watercolors and water-based markers work well for lanterns that will be used for indoor purposes. If lanterns will be used outdoors or as floats, it will be necessary to use permanent ink or markers to avoid water damage.
YUPO has a smooth, polypropylene surface that won't absorb watercolor in the same way as traditional paper. Fluid applications of color will move and flow freely. Dry time will be slightly increased. Artwork must be dried flat.
NOTE: fingerprints on the YUPO surface may leave oils that interrupt watercolor or ink coverage. Use clean, dry hands and avoid touching the surface as much as possible.
2. Fold or roll the lantern and place a small amount of glue on one edge of the paper to join. Paper clips are helpful in securing the seam while it is drying. Avoid using excessive glue and keep it away from the painting, especially if using water-based media.
3. The safest way to illuminate the lantern indoors is to use a battery-operated candle with a low-wattage bulb. Votive candles (1-1/2" high) may be used with caution. Place votive in a glass holder at least 2" high and position the candle so that the sides of the lantern are not touching.

Important! Do not allow the flame to come in contact with the lantern and never leave unattended.

For outdoor use, place the lantern in a bowl and fill the inside with 2" of sand or pebbles to weight. Place the votive inside.

To make a floating lantern, follow directions below for a base. Place votive directly on the floating base.

4. To make a waterproof float for the lantern, cut a sheet of YUPO paper into 4.5" x 6" pieces (4 per sheet). Make a 1/2" crease on all 4 sides. Pinch corners into an inward fold (see illus. B). Secure lantern to the base with transparent tape.



Options

- Add a handle to the lantern by punching a hole on either side and twisting a 12" piece of wire through the holes
- Create cut-out shapes in sides of lantern with scissors or craft knife.

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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

9-12

Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

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 analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

9-12

Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places

Content Standard #5 — Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

K-4

Students understand there are various purposes for creating works of visual art

5-8

Students compare multiple purposes for creating works of art

9-12

Students describe meanings of artworks by analyzing how specific works are created and how they relate to historical and cultural contexts