

Frank Lloyd Wright and Utagawa Hiroshige: Connections and Influences

By: Jennifer Lee

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Students will be introduced to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Utagawa Hiroshige. They will understand how Japanese culture and Hiroshige influenced Frank Lloyd Wright's designs. Students will collaboratively compile a visual analysis on artworks by both artists. Students will analyze compositions by both artists and make diagrams to break down their geometric structures. They will then compare artworks by Frank Lloyd Wright and Utagawa Hiroshige. Students will create artwork inspired by these compositions for their Exhibitions.

GRADE LEVEL

This lesson is designed for 11th and 12th grade, though portions could be adopted for other grades and subjects. This lesson will be used in International Baccalaureate (IB) Visual Arts to introduce the concept of the Comparative Study. Students will also make an artwork that may be used as part of their Exhibition and will create entries for their Process Portfolio.

CLASSROOM TIME

Approximately 9 class periods: The lesson can be taught on consecutive days or broken up throughout the school year.

RESOURCES

Andō, H., Trede, M., & Bichler, L. (2016). *Hiroshige: One Hundred Famous views of Edo*. Taschen.

Asian Art Museum. (October 13, 2015). *Looking East: How Japan Inspired Monet, Van Gogh, and Other Western Artists (with open captions)*. [Video]. Youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oD9pB8ObVg>

Asian Art Museum. (November 23, 2015). *Looking East: How Japan Inspired Monet, Van Gogh, & Other Western Artists*. [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jvXfux6mTM>

Brooklyn Museum. (September 9, 2021). *Hiroshige's One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*.
<https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/hiroshige-s-one-hundred-famous-views-of-edo-brooklyn-museum/QQ7n-PQc?hl=en>

Bungalø. (April 15, 2020). *Why Frank Lloyd Wright Was a Genius Architect*. [Video]. Youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upNT0OFyErM>

Center for East Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison. *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*.
<https://eastasia.wisc.edu/eaum/frank-lloyd-wright-and-japan/>

Honolulu Museum of Art. (April 11, 2016). *Exhibition spotlight: 'Hiroshige's City: From Edo to Tokyo'* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRriNcgiDso>

McReynolds, Heather. (2017). *Visual Arts for the IB Diploma*. Cambridge University Press.

Nute, Kevin. (June 8, 2017) *Frank Lloyd Wright Credited Japan for His All-American Aesthetic*.
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/frank-lloyd-wrights-japanese-education-180963617/>

Wright, Frank Lloyd, (1910). *Wasmuth Portfolio* - Volume 1, 1910,
<https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=204349>

BACKGROUND

Japanese woodblock prints were an economical and easily transportable form of art. They often depicted landscapes of famous places. The woodblock prints are characterized by their use of flat shapes, diagonal lines, cropping, patterns, and bold colors. Utagawa Hiroshige is one of the most famous Japanese artists. His landscape woodblock prints inspired many artists around the world. The look of the prints was very new and radical to the Western audience.

Frank Lloyd Wright is one of the most famous and influential architects. He had an obsession with Japanese Woodblock prints, especially prints by Hiroshige. Wright was influenced by the style and composition of the prints.

Students will start this lesson already having a general understanding of the International Baccalaureate Visual Art Curriculum. They will have already started the Exhibition and Process Portfolio sections of the course. The visual analysis and comparisons will be used as introduction and practice for the Comparative Study.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Analyze primary and secondary documents
- Compare and contrast artworks, resources, and texts
- Use collaboration to expand the creative process
- Learn how knowing the contexts, histories, and traditions of art forms help us create works of art and design
- Explore how to “read” and analyze a work of art as text
- Investigate how knowing and using visual arts vocabularies help us understand and interpret works of art

STANDARDS

California Art Standards for Public Schools

- *Acc.VA:Pr6* Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.
- *Adv.VA:Re7.1* Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life.
- *Adv.VA:Re7.2* Determine the commonalities within a group of artists or visual images attributed to a particular type of art, timeframe, or culture.
- *Acc.VA:Cn11* Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary, local, and global contexts.

LESSON

Day 1

Students will be introduced to the Comparative Study part of IB curriculum. Teachers will model how to do a visual analysis of a Japanese Woodblock Print using the elements and principles of design.

In small groups, students will work on and present a visual analysis by annotating a Hiroshige image on a shared Google Slide.

Day 2

Teacher will introduce contextual information about Japanese woodblock prints and Frank Lloyd Wright. Teacher will emphasize the importance of diagonal lines, cropping, framing, etc. Students will research their prints using the book.

Students will work in their small groups to create visual and contextual comparisons between their woodblock print and a Frank Lloyd Wright drawing.

Day 3

Teacher will introduce the art assignment. Students will create three thumbnails that have compositions inspired by Japanese woodblock prints and/or Frank Lloyd Wright.

Day 4

Class will have a critique where students will share their thumbnails. Students will explain how they were influenced by the compositions of the other artworks. Other students will comment on the work of their peers to ask questions and give feedback. Students will get points for participation.

Day 5- 8

Students will work on the projects. The teacher and students will have informal critiques on their progress.

Day 9

Students will submit their assignments to the teacher. Students will post images of their projects on a shared Google Slides presentation so that the other students can see and comment on their peer's projects. Students will get points for participation.

ASSESSMENT

- Process Portfolio: Students will get credit for their group slides. Process Portfolio pages will be graded based on the IB rubric categories below.

| | |
|--|----------|
| Skills, techniques and processes | 6 points |
| Critical investigation | 3 |
| Communication of ideas and intentions | 3 |
| Reviewing, refining and reflecting | 3 |
| Presentation and subject-specific language | 2 |

-Artwork: Students will be graded for their participation in critiques and showing their work in progress. Final Projects will be graded based on the IB rubric categories below

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Technical competence | 40 points |
| Conceptual qualities | 40 |

Lesson Resources

Day 1- VISUAL ANALYSIS

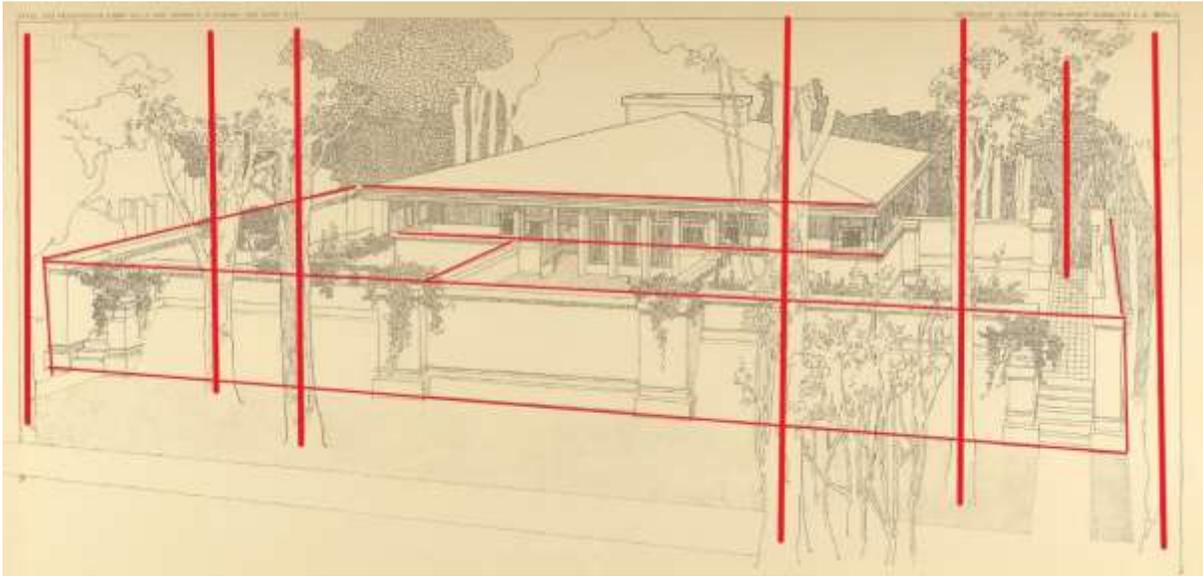
- Chose a print from Hiroshige's *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (not ones used in class examples)
- Draw an analysis of the main parts of its composition. Discuss how the image is composed using geometric structure and lines.
- Choose a few elements and principles of design that stand out in the work. Analyze and annotate to explain how the artwork uses them. (line, shape, form, space, texture, color, value, time; unity, variety, rhythm, movement, proportion, scale, balance, emphasis, contrast, repetition)

Examples (annotations by author)



Left: Hiroshige, Utagawa. (1857). *The Maple Trees at Mama, the Tekona Shrine and Tsugihashi Bride (Mama no momiji Tekona no yashiro Tsugihashi)*, No. 94 from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*.

Right: Hiroshige, Utagawa. (1856). *Inside Kameido Tenjin Shrine (Kameido Tenjin Keidai)*, No. 65 from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*.



Wright, Frank Lloyd. (1903). *Edwin Cheney house, Oak Park, Illinois.*

Day 2- CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

- Research your print. What new information did you learn? What details of the picture do you now notice?
- Repeat this process with one of the drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright buildings from the *Wasmuth Portfolio* (focus on rendering of structures, rather than the architecture plans)