

GYOTAKU [JAPANESE FISH PRINTS]

Teacher: Julien Tomasello
Title: Gyotaku: Japanese Fish Prints
Class Length: 4 class periods (50 min per)
Grade Level: Lower to Middle School

Brief History/Background:

Gyotaku (ghee-yo-tah-koo) from *gyo* “fish” + *taku* “rubbing”, is a traditional Japanese method of printing from actual fish. This type of printmaking originates from the mid 1800’s when Japanese fishermen create Gyotaku prints to record the size of the fish they catch. Gyotaku is a form of **nature printing**. Gyotaku creates **monotype prints**.

Fish are very important in Japanese industry, cuisine, and culture. Japan is an island nation and fishing comprises a major part of the country’s industry. Seafood is the primary source of protein in the Japanese diet. **Sashimi** (sah-SHE-me), or raw fish, and **sushi** (soo-SHE), balls or rolls of raw fish with rice, are very popular dishes in Japan. Perhaps the most important fish in Japanese culture is the **koi** (koy), or carp fish. Koi are associated with great **perseverance**, strength, and courage. There is an Asian legend claiming a carp that swam up a great waterfall was turned into a dragon. Japan celebrates **Tango no Sekku** (tango-no-SEK-oo) or Children’s Day on May 5th each year. On this special day, **koinobori** (coin-o-BORI), or carp streamers, are displayed outside of homes with children. Parents wish for their children to grow strong and brave like the koi.

PA Standards:

- 9.1.8.A. Know and use elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts.
- 9.1.8.B. Recognize, know, use, and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review, and revise original works in the arts.
- 9.1.8.C. Identify and use comprehensive vocabulary within each of the arts forms.
- 9.1.8.K. Incorporate specific uses of traditional and contemporary technologies in furthering knowledge and understanding in the humanities.
- 9.2.8.A. Explain the historical, cultural, and social context of an individual work in the arts.
- 9.2.8.D. Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective.
- 9.2.8.E. Analyze how historical events and cultural impact forms techniques and purposes of works in the arts.
- 9.2.8.G. Relate works in the arts to geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Australia, etc.

Goal: Students will create a series of 5 Gyotaku prints

Objectives: Students will:

- Learn the history and process of Gyotaku
- Understand the definition of nature printing and monotype through hands-on art making
- Comprehend the significance of fish in Japanese industry, culture, and cuisine
- Differentiate how color and pattern choices affect the aesthetic and mood of their prints

Requirements: There are no prior requirements for students.

Resources/Visual Aids: Gyotaku info sheet, Gyotaku exemplars (professional and student), fish images (for identification and color & pattern reference), *'Fish Prints with Rob Choi'* (video).

Supplies/Materials: Rubber fish replicas, various colored rice paper, block printing inks, temperas, cosmetic sponges, brushes, spray bottles, colored pencils, fluorescent pens.

Teacher Preparation: Set-up Gyotaku demo area and materials pick-up station, display Gyotaku exemplars, prep video.

Teaching Class One [Introduction]: Distribute Gyotaku information sheet. Introduce new unit focusing on Asian continent and printmaking. To prompt discussion, ask class series of questions, *"Who has been to Asia?"*, *"Who is from Asia?"*, *"Can you locate Asia on the wall map?"*, *"Can you locate Japan?"*. Discuss fishing industry in Japan. Segway into development of Gyotaku as means of documenting fish. Review Gyotaku information sheet. Play video, *'Fish Prints with Rob Choi'*.

[Lesson]: Demo Gyotaku process with class. Have students participate in each step of demo with you, so they begin to get a feel for the process.

[Conclusion]: Review information covered. Announce goal for next class: students begin printing their series of Gyotaku prints.

Teaching Class Two [Introduction]: Review information covered in class one. Review Gyotaku demo.

[Lesson]: Class begins work on their Gyotaku series. Assist students as needed.

[Conclusion]: 10 minutes before bell: cleanup, place prints on drying racks.

Teaching Class Three [Introduction]: Ask class for feedback (likes, difficulties) with Gyotaku printing. Demo coloring fish eyes and patterns with colored pencils. Remind class that today is the last printing day.

[Lesson]: Class continues work on Gyotaku series. Assist students as needed.

[Conclusion]: 10 minutes before bell: begin cleanup, place prints on drying racks. Affirm to students that next class is partial workday, then critique.

Teaching Class Four [Introduction]: Affirm to class they will only have first 15 minutes to complete work on Gyotaku series.

[Lesson]: 15 minutes: final color-pencil work. 10 minutes: cleanup and hang work. 15 min: critique.

[Conclusion]: Teacher will select 1 – 2 pieces from each student to display. Students can place remaining prints in personal portfolios.

Critique/Evaluation/Assessment:

Elements & Principles of Design (30%): How well does student's finished print demonstrate reproduction of color and design (from actual fish), and use of color and pattern in their own design scheme?

Creativity & Originality (20%): How well does student's finished prints demonstrate reproduction (1 print) and creative exploration (1 print) of colors, patterns, and independent thought?

Effort & Perseverance (20%): Did student work steadily through to project's completion, attempt to resolve problems, and demonstrate any initiative beyond project specifications?

Craftsmanship/Skill/Consistency (20%): Did student demonstrate understanding of Gyotaku printing process? Did student follow directions for producing at least 1 koi print based on actual fish and 1 koi print in color/pattern of their choice? Did student attempt to create finished, quality art pieces?

Group Cooperation/Attitude (10%): Did student participate in class discussions, field trip discussions, and class critique? If so, how involved was student? Did student work well with table groups and with class as a whole?

Homework: There is no homework for this project.

Adaptations/Modifications for ELL and Special Needs Students: For special needs, I will reduce required number of prints, but I want students to work through Gyotaku process to the best of their abilities. For ELL, I will make a point of inquiring if students' cultures include relationship with fish, fishing.

Safety Concerns: General studio safety. All inks water-based.

Bibliography/References:

History

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gyotaku>

<http://japanese.about.com/od/japanesecultur1/a/Japanese-Fish-Proverbs.htm>

<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/explore/calendar/may/children.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koi>

Artists

http://www.jeankigel.com/japanese_gyotaku_fish_series%20jean%20kigel.htm

<http://www.custommade.com/by/fishingforgyotaku/>

<http://www.gyotakuartist.com/9.html>

Gyotaku

<http://www.huntington.org/uploadedfiles/files/pdfs/bgjggoytaku.pdf>