

A Collaged Story

Essential Question

How can artists tell a story about their community using color and visual art forms?

Grade

4

Time

50 minutes

Art Concepts

Woodblock printing, lettering, stenciling, graffiti

Materials

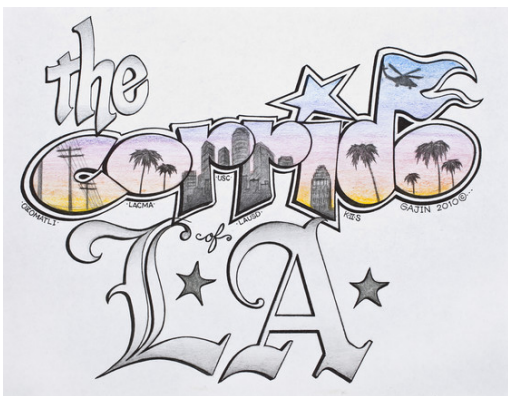
Scissors, glue, white paper base, colored construction paper

Artworks in Focus

[Gojo Bridge, an Episode from the Life of Yoshitsune, 1881 by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi](#)

[The Corrido of L.A., 2010 by Gajin Fujita](#)

[Study of Green Samurai from Street Fight, 2005 by Gajin Fujita](#)



Talking about Art

If you are telling a story, what are the key elements that you should include? Who are the characters, where are they, and what is happening?

Look closely at this artwork that the Japanese artist Tsukioka Yoshitoshi created in 1881. What details does Yoshitoshi include to tell us who the characters are? Where do you think they are? What do you think is happening? What time of day do you think it is in this scene? What in the picture tells you that?

Yoshitoshi is telling the story of two great warriors set under the moonlight. Benkei, on the left, is a fierce warrior monk and Yoshitsune, on the right, is one of the most famous Samurai fighters. In this picture you can see that Yoshitoshi has represented Benkei as a large and fierce figure, built like the mountains behind him. Yoshitsune seems small and floats, almost like a butterfly, in comparison. The story says that Yoshitsune defeated Benkei in this battle, earning his loyalty, and eventually Benkei would go on to fight alongside him.

Look closer at the artwork. What colors and shapes do you see? Yoshitoshi created his artwork using Japanese **woodblock printing**. This type of art is called *ukiyo-e*, which translates to "picture[s] of the floating world". Each part of the picture is layered separately onto the paper by applying ink to the surface of lots of different woodblock prints and then pressing them onto the paper on top of each other. Yoshitoshi was well known for representing stories from Japanese culture in this way.

Now let's look at Gajin Fujita's paintings and drawings. Yoshitoshi's artwork has served as inspiration for Fujita who was born in East Los Angeles, but has Japanese descent. In his artworks, he includes influences from the different cultures in his life.

First, we will talk about *Study of Green Samurai from Street Fight*. What do you notice about this Samurai fighter that is similar to the figures in Yoshitoshi's work? What elements are different? We can see that the figure is wearing similar clothing and holding a weapon like Yoshitoshi's figures, but Fujita has used a different method to create this work. In contrast to Yoshitoshi, he has layered pencil lines with **stenciled** spray paint which is often used in **graffiti** or other types of street art.

In his other artwork called *The Corrido of L.A.*, what do you notice about the letters? Does the style of **lettering** remind you of anything? There is a view drawn inside the letters. Have you seen a view like this before? When the artist was younger, he traveled to school in West Hollywood from East LA everyday, and as he crossed over the bridges, he could see the view of Downtown LA. This is why he added this view inside the letters. Fujita made this drawing as part of a LACMA project that commemorated the Mexican Revolution and invited students to create stories in the form of songs, or corridos.

Corridos are storytelling ballads, often about heroism and struggle that became popular during the Mexican Revolution and, later in the 20th century, as a way to raise social consciousness about civil rights and political justice. Fujita has said that in Boyle Heights (a neighborhood in East L.A.) he was immersed in many different cultures, particularly Mexican culture and the graffiti style of writing. Fujita is a member of

several graffiti groups including KIIS, which we can see written under the word Corrido. Fujita often brings these cultural influences together in his artworks.

Using collage instead of songs, we are going to tell stories about our own cultures and communities. Collage is a type of art where you layer different textured and colored materials, such as paper, on top of one another. Instead of layering prints like Yoshitoshi did, we will use paper.

Making Art

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi represented a famous story in Japanese culture and Gajin Fujita represented Japanese characters as well as views of the city from his home in East LA. Tell a story about your culture or community by using layered collage shapes to represent a setting and characters.

1. Start with your background. Your background will appear furthest away to your viewer. Cut out shapes to represent the setting in your story. Think about how you can set the mood of your scene using color. For example, you could use lighter or darker colors in the sky to communicate the time of day.
2. Create your midground and foreground by layering your characters on top of your background. The foreground is what appears closest in your picture.
3. Cut simple shapes out of paper to represent your characters. Tell your story by thinking about the pose and placement of your characters. Which shapes and colors can you add to show what they are wearing?
4. Add details to your picture by adding more paper shapes and lines. You could add lines around your characters to show movement or add further detail to your setting.

Reflection

These questions can be written or discussion prompts.

Share your artwork with someone. Describe what is happening in your artwork? What details did you include to tell your story?

Where does it take place and why is this story important to you?

In which ways was Gajin Fujita inspired by Yoshitoshi's artwork and how has he included other influences from his life in his work?

Curriculum Connections

California Arts Standards for Public Schools - Visual Arts

4.VA:Re7.2 Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages. 4.VA:Cn10 Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions.

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