

Art
ToGo

The Cleveland
Museum of Art

Journey to Japan:
A Passport to
Japanese Art

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a. Presentation Evaluation

After the presentation, please fill out the evaluation and return it to the museum. Thank you!

b. Fax Sheet

Already addressed to the proper department of the CMA, this form is for shorter questions or concerns relating to the Art To Go program.

Introduction to the Teacher Preview Packet

This Teacher Preview Packet is intended to prepare you and your class for a brief trip to Japan through the Art To Go program's *Journey to Japan* suitcase. Art To Go is a division of the Department of Education and Public Programs at the Cleveland Museum of Art. The materials included in this packet should help you to become more familiar with the Art To Go program, as well as with the topic of the presentation you requested: Japanese art. Please use this packet in whatever way is most helpful to you, and feel free to share these materials with your colleagues. You are welcome to reproduce the materials in the packet for educational purposes.

At a Glance

The Japan suitcase contains nine works of art. These objects date from the 16th to the 20th century CE, and they give us a good sense of Japanese art from the past five hundred years. Some of the works represent styles and themes that are much older than the objects themselves. Through these objects, we can learn what life was like during different periods of Japanese history. We can also explore Japan's climate, topography, religion, and natural resources. Some of the works in the suitcase demonstrate methods for making art that are particular to Japan, while others feature techniques pioneered elsewhere and perfected in Japan. Although the suitcase objects are considered works of art, many are functional objects that were used in everyday life. During the lesson, the Art To Go volunteer teacher

will introduce the artwork in the Japan suitcase along with ideas about Japanese culture and history. Because students are able to handle some of the works and see them up close, they will be able to better understand Japan's cultural heritage.

Introduction to the Japan Suitcase

For many people, the word Japan instantly brings images of folding fans, rice paddies, women in highly decorated robes, and brave warriors. Although these things are not all easily found in Japan today, it is certainly true that they are familiar symbols of Japanese culture. Yet Japanese might not agree with the above list of cultural symbols. By introducing students to many aspects of Japanese culture through original works of art, the Japan Art To Go presentation is an attempt to broaden views of Japan beyond usual associations. The works of art in the suitcase are the point of departure for this trip to Japan.

In Japan, art has earned such a high status that artistic style is visible in nearly every aspect of daily experience. Food is served with careful attention to colors and shapes that please the eye, and combinations of flavors that satisfy the palate. Even the smallest purchase at a department store is tastefully wrapped for the patron's pleasure, at no extra charge. Such modern conventions are rooted in Japan's extensive artistic heritage. By taking a closer look at Japan through the suitcase, we can better understand the importance of art—and other aspects of Japanese culture—both past and present.

From their island homeland, the Japanese have been able to control the access to their country of both traders and invaders. While exchange with other countries was favored at times in Japan's history, borders were closed to outsiders in other eras. During periods of isolation, artists adapted ideas drawn from other countries and reworked them to suit Japanese tastes. As a result, Japanese art is a distinctive blend of imported styles and native preferences. Many of the objects in the suitcase demonstrate influences from other cultures. These influences include subject matter, methods, and materials.

As an island country, Japan has been particularly dependent on its natural resources. Perhaps this is one reason that human life is seen as inseparable from the natural world in Japan. Innate qualities of materials are often emphasized in Japanese art. Some methods used in Japan, such as the lacquer used to coat and decorate the incense container in the suitcase, have thrived because of the resources available. Nature has been a favorite subject of art as well. Animals, such as the carved monkeys in the suitcase, have been featured in myths and legends as well as in art.

Sensitivity to nature has also been reflected in seasonal themes found in Japanese art. Each season is associated with particular plants and animals. The small screen with a plum tree beginning to blossom in the Japan suitcase is a typical reminder of the beginning of spring. Another work in the suitcase, the sword guard, includes tall grasses that are a familiar sight in autumn. Symbols of the changing seasons remain popular today and seasonal changes are often heralded with festivals.

Japanese art was not intended only to be beautiful. Many objects serve a practical function that can be discovered through close observation. These works can reveal important facts about Japan's history, along with traditional values and changes in society. For instance, the belt buckle included in the suitcase demonstrates the continuing status of writing as an art form, as well as the change in Japanese clothing styles as a result of contact with European and North American countries. In addition, the buckle served as a good luck charm, meant to bring fortune and long life to its owner.

Although there are many common qualities in Japanese art, some objects seem rather anomalous. For example, some works are finished in plain earth tones and have uneven surfaces made simply from everyday materials, like the tea bowl included in the suitcase. Other objects, like the lacquer incense container, display elaborate designs and highly polished surfaces created with precious materials. For some, these contrasting Japanese artistic styles are confusing. Yet the two distinct types of works noted above demonstrate the varied social and historical contexts for which Japanese art was made. For example, while wealthy nobles might prefer showy works, tradition requires that simple and humble objects be made for the tea ceremony, even when owned by well-to-do lords. Both kinds of objects have been praised for their beauty and ability to demonstrate special features of Japanese art. As we try to appreciate such art, we must learn to value visual styles that may be foreign to our own tastes.

While striving to understand the meaning of Japanese art, we can expand our knowledge of other places and historical periods. Through the suitcase

objects, we glimpse not only Japanese art, but also Japan's unique history and culture. Explorations of Japan begun through the *Journey to Japan* suitcase can be continued on a visit to the Japanese galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Questions and Answers

Why is nature important in Japanese art?

Japanese art is often concerned with themes and subjects found in nature. In Japan, many people believe today (as they have for centuries) that they must live in harmony with the natural world. While nature is important in art from other areas of the world, rarely are natural themes as prominent as they are in works made in Japan. Regard for nature is also advocated by both of Japan's major religions, Shinto and Buddhism. While Shintoists believe that nature manifests the sacred, Buddhists hold that the natural world is a reminder of the extent to which our human experience is temporary and fragile. Thus the fleeting beauty of nature is often employed in art as a subtle Buddhist message—that life is transient. The Shinto belief that trees, mountains, and rivers are sacred because they are inhabited by gods is evident in works that celebrate the inherent beauty of unadorned natural materials, such as roughly textured clay, or unpainted wood.

How has religion shaped Japanese art?

Even before Japan's earliest recorded histories, religion directed how art was made in Japan. Later, beliefs central to the earliest forms of religion in Japan

were organized into Japan's indigenous religion, Shinto. Shinto texts explained Japan's origins and identified natural elements as inherently sacred. From the third century CE, shrines were erected that recognized the deities thought to reside at specific sites. In effect, Shinto proposes that the Japanese land itself is a holy place. Since much of the art produced in Shinto contexts was buried—and the tombs of the imperial family are still regarded as sacred ground—few such works can be found in collections outside Japan. There are no Shinto objects in the Japan suitcase, but the influence of Shinto beliefs is evident in some of the works. For instance, Shinto beliefs advocate celebration of rites of passage. Boys' Day, a modern festival that continues this tradition, is represented in the suitcase by the carp banner symbolizing hopes for boys' strength and resilience.

The introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century CE changed Japanese art dramatically. Buddhism had a rich visual tradition established in India, China, Korea, and Southeast Asia. In fact, Buddhist ideas were reportedly brought to Japan, in part, through a small sculpture given to Japan's emperor as a gift by a Korean king. Along with images of the historical Buddha, thought to have lived in India over 2,500 years ago, Japanese painters and sculptors began to create images of the many other figures sacred in Buddhist beliefs. One such image is included in the suitcase. Seated figures such as the small bronze Buddha image are not only beautiful objects; they also inspire Buddhists to ponder their existence as they seek the goal attained by Buddha: enlightenment. While many Buddhist images can

be found in temples in Japan, one is also likely to encounter small figures such as the one in the suitcase in homes and workplaces.

How was art displayed in a Japanese house?

Because Japanese houses were (and often, still are) constructed differently from dwellings in the United States, art was often displayed differently as well. Sometimes works of art functioned as a means of separating areas of a room, or providing privacy, like the small screen included in the Japan suitcase. (The screen in the suitcase is much smaller than screens used in houses, which were about five feet tall.) Freestanding screens were originally created as a means of protection from drafts, which could be plentiful in Japanese houses that had been constructed to allow for air circulation during the hot summer months. Screens could also be used to create small compartments out of the expansive reception rooms found in the homes of the wealthy.

Areas suitable for hanging pictures in Japanese homes were often scarce, since the sliding doors used to separate rooms commanded a great deal of space, and were frequently decorated as well. Instead, small niches were (and often, still are) set aside for displaying a special painting or piece of pottery. Traditionally, art objects were changed along with seasonal transitions—in accord with Japanese sensitivity to changes in the natural world—a practice that also allowed a variety of works to be shown.

Things to Think About

Below are a few sample questions that may help students to think creatively about Japan. These can be used as focus points before an Art To Go visit, or after the presentation to encourage further explorations of Japanese art and culture.

- If you had a family crest, what would it look like? Where would you want to display it?
- Are there any festivals in the United States that are just for children? When do we celebrate them?
- Which animal would you choose to represent yourself? What are the strengths you admire in that animal?
- If you were an emperor, or a wealthy lord, what kind of fancy things would you have in your home? What would you want your belongings to be made of?
- What kind of symbol would you use to represent fortune or long life? What qualities do we think are important in the United States? (Examples: peace, friendship) What kind of symbols do we use for them?
- Do you think Japanese writing looks like what it means? Can you think of other languages that use symbols or pictures for ideas?
- What colors make you think of nature?
- Is there a special flower or tree that reminds you of one of the four seasons?

- As an island country, Japan was able to close its borders to outside influences and invasions at various times. During other periods, contacts with nearby countries were welcomed. Thus, waves of influence—especially from nearby China and Korea—strongly affected Japanese art, although new ideas were adapted to Japanese tastes.
- Japanese art demonstrates a strong respect for nature. Materials are used in a way that highlights their unique features. For example, the texture of undecorated clay is often visible through the glaze of a ceramic work. Sensitivity to nature has also been reflected in emphasis on seasonal themes, and use of natural resources to create unique techniques.
- Art has been an important form of expression in Japan for centuries. Many methods and styles used in Japanese art have endured for thousands of years. Art plays a prominent role in many aspects of life, and functional objects are crafted with careful attention to design.
- Some aspects of Japanese art may seem strange at first. Since works made in other places are usually symmetrical, the asymmetry of Japanese forms may look unbalanced by comparison. Japanese works are also decorated with patterns that look unfamiliar today, but were understood by most people when they were made. Some Japanese objects are highly decorated, while others look simple and plain. Both styles are important Japanese artistic expressions that are equally beautiful in Japanese eyes.

Note: An Art To Go visit involves personal interaction between a trained volunteer teacher and students. Content and objects selected for discussion may vary, depending upon the instructor and student participation.

- Art has served many different purposes in Japan. There are works in the Japan suitcase that were created for worship, and others intended for games or celebrations. Some of the objects were made for children, while others belonged to wealthy lords or warriors. Even though they were made for different reasons, all of the objects in the Japan suitcase are original works of art that tell us about Japanese life at various times in history.

List of Objects

- Three Monkeys, ivory, late 19th–early 20th c., 1939.395 (monkey holding hands over ears); 1939.396 (hands over eyes); 1939.397 (hands over mouth)
- Cloisonné Belt Buckle, enamel and bronze, late 19th–early 20th c., 1939.366 and 1939.366A
- Round Lacquered Box, lacquered wood with gold (*kinji*), sprinkled gold (*nashiji* and *maki-e*), and metal, late 16th century or later, 1939.420
- Tea Bowl, glazed stoneware, 20th century, 1958.265
- Mask, wood with pigment, lacquer, and hair, 20th century, 1940.73
- Seated Buddha, bronze, uncertain date, 1940.1056
- Small Six-Fold Screen, ink and color on silk, mounted on wood and paper frame, 20th century, 1942.420
- Carp Banner, painted cloth, 20th century, 1935.90
- Tsuba (Sword Guard), iron with inlay of other types of metal, 19th century, 1921.1194d

Note: All of the objects in the suitcase are NOT suitable for handling. However, all works may be observed closely. Supervision of object handling is the responsibility of the Art To Go volunteer teacher. Suitcase contents may be affected by weather and object condition. The Cleveland Museum of Art reserves the right to change the objects included in the suitcase at any time.

Lesson Plan

Focus

Through investigation of original works of art from Japan, students will explore the Japanese cultural heritage.

Purpose

Using artworks as a passport to different times and places can help us to understand how people in other cultures experienced daily life, adapted to their geographic location, and sought to improve their way of living.

Motivation

Storytelling and map reading will be used to introduce the lesson content. Handling objects that were made and used in Japan will strengthen students' sense of Japanese history and culture.

Objectives

Students will learn how Japanese geography, climate, lifestyles, and religion influenced Japanese art and history.

Students will recognize art objects as a means of defining individuals or social groups, and will understand how museum collections serve a valuable purpose by conserving original works of art.

Direct encounters with Japanese art will aid students in thinking critically about Japan and making comparisons between Japan and their own country and culture.

Participation

Introductory talking points will be used to promote discussion. Art To Go staff will help students to build upon their previous knowledge through questions and responses as the lesson proceeds.

Comprehension Check

As Art To Go volunteers introduce new objects, students will be encouraged to build upon what they have learned earlier in the suitcase presentation. Students will be asked to consider similarities and differences between Japanese art and culture and that of other civilizations they have studied.

Closure

Students will visit the Japanese galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art, where they can continue the visual and cultural explorations begun through the *Journey to Japan* suitcase. Curriculum connections suggested in this packet (see "Webbing") offer useful follow-up activities that enable students to demonstrate and build upon what they have learned from the Art To Go visit.

Getting Ready for the Visit

- Art To Go presentations will take about 40 minutes.
- Anyone who wishes to handle objects from the Art To Go suitcase **must** wear gloves, which will be provided by Art To Go staff. Participants **must not** touch classroom items, skin, or hair while wearing gloves. Dust, oil, and dirt from such surfaces can damage suitcase objects.
- We request that a homeroom teacher or events coordinator be present and attentive during the lesson.

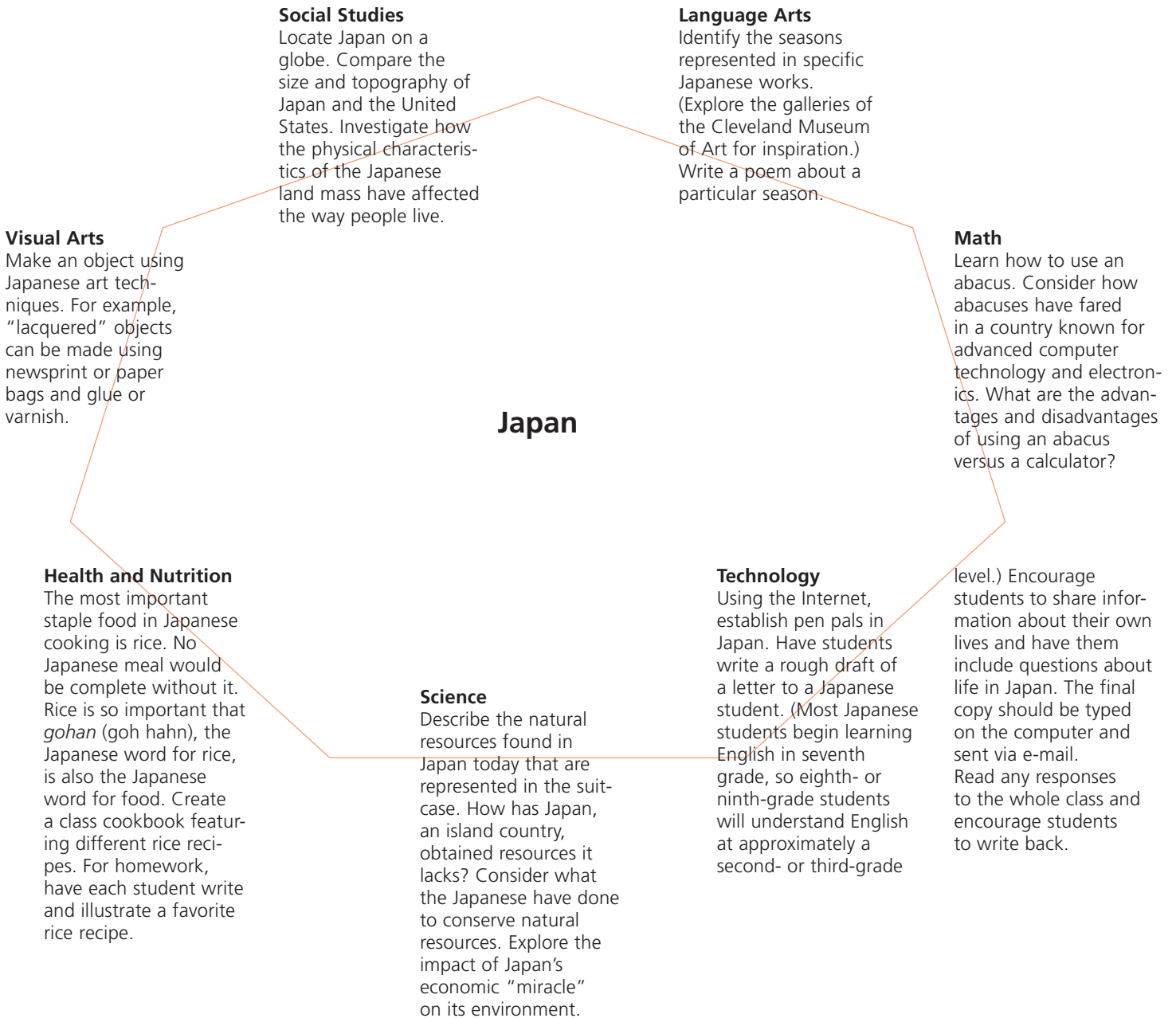
Experience has shown that certain classroom configurations result in a more successful Art To Go visit:

- Please have a small table or desk available at the front of the room, facing participants, and ensure that the table or desk is clear when the Art To Go staff arrive.
- If possible, arrange the students in a semicircle facing the presentation area at the front of the room. The Art To Go staff will pass objects among the students, and this is more easily accomplished in a half-circle or line than in rows of desks or chairs.
- Please have students display their names clearly either on desks or on themselves.

We realize that it may not be possible for all teachers to rearrange the presentation space for an Art To Go visit. However, the students' experience may be greatly improved by following these recommendations, wherever possible.

Webbing

Suggestions for making art the center of student learning.



Sixth Grade Proficiency Connections

The *Journey to Japan* suitcase has been designed to facilitate the sixth grade proficiency goals listed below.

Language Arts

- Use word choices appropriate to discussion of Japanese culture and daily life at various points in time. Formulate additional questions based on new information learned.

Citizenship

- Compare the gender roles, religious ideas, and values in Japanese society with at least one Western society.

Mathematics

- Measure time using the eras “BCE” and “CE.” Understand the difference between these eras and how much time has elapsed since a given historical date.

Science

- Describe simple cycles of the earth, sun, and moon. Utilize time zones to compute differences in time between the United States and Japan.

Vocabulary

(in order of discussion in the lesson)

Words you may wish to explore with your class that may be used during the Art To Go lesson.

Shinto “shin-toe”

Buddhism “**Bood**-ism”

symmetry

asymmetry

samurai “sah-moo-rye”

netsuke “net-su-kay”

obi “oh-bee”

saru “sah-roo”

cloisonné “kloy-son-nay”

kanji “kahn-gee”

mon “moan”

Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598)
“Toe-yoh-toe-me He-day-yoh-she”

Buddha “**Bood**-dah”

Shaka “shah-ka”

mudra “**mood**-rah”

Tengu “ten-goo”

byōbu “beeyoh-boo”

tsuba “tsue-bah”

koi “coy”

Suggestions for Further Reading

Note: Slide packets and other teacher resources are available for purchase or loan through the **Teacher Resource Center** in the museum's Department of Education and Public Programs. For further information and a list of resources, please call 216-421-7340 x 469.

Especially for Students and Young Readers

Coatsworth, Elizabeth Jane. Illustrated by Lynd Ward. *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.

Ages 9–12. Winner of the 1931 Newberry Medal, this tale features a poor artist in Japan commissioned to paint a picture of Buddha's death, and his cat. Providing a little background on Buddhism and the concept of reincarnation, the story introduces children to these topics without confusing terms and also offers an interesting plot.

Galvin, Irene Flum. *Japan: A Modern Land with Ancient Roots*. Exploring Cultures of the World Series. New York: Benchmark Books, 1996.

Ages 9–12. An introduction to Japanese civilization geared toward younger readers.

Haugaard, Erik Christian. *The Samurai's Tale*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990.

Young Adult. Set in turbulent 16th-century Japan, this is the story of an orphan boy taken in by a general who is serving the great warlord Takeda Shingen. Ironically, the boy, Taro, later becomes a samurai and fights for the enemies of his dead family.

Kimmel, Eric A. *Sword of the Samurai: Adventure Stories from Japan*. San Diego; New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999.

Ages 9–12. This anthology of traditional samurai stories demonstrates the ideals of a proud social group.

Kroll, Virginia L. Illustrated by Katherine Roundtree. *A Carp for Kimiko*. Watertown: Charlesbridge Publishing, 1996.

Ages 4–8. This story aims to introduce very young readers to Japanese customs and traditions, such as the Children's Day and Doll's Day celebrations mentioned in the story. Readers will recognize one of the objects included in the *Journey to Japan* suitcase when they read the book.

Thurley, Elizabeth Fusae. *Through the Year in Japan*. London: Batsford, 1985.

Ages 7–18. An exploration of daily life in Japan, focusing on festivals and other seasonal celebrations.

For Adult Readers

Bernson, Mary Hammond, and Betsy Goolian, eds. *Modern Japan: An Idea Book for K–12 Teachers*. Bloomington: The National Clearinghouse for United States/Japan Studies, Indiana University, 1992.

Ages 5–18+. This book includes lesson plans for a variety of subject areas including writing skills, the arts, and social studies. Lessons were developed by classroom teachers who went to Japan as part of a project sponsored by the East Asian Resource Center at the Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington.

Contemporary Japan: A Teaching Workbook. 3rd ed. New York: Columbia University, 1988.

Ages 12–18+. This comprehensive 620-page resource will complement any unit on Japan at the secondary level and provide valuable background information for all teachers. Thirteen units discuss various aspects of Japanese history and culture: geography, language, religion, traditional history, modern history, society, government and politics, economy and trade, defense and foreign policy, literature, drama, and culture.

De Ore, Joellen, and Marjorie Williams. *Screens, Noh, and Tea: Japanese Style*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1991.

One of a series of slide packets prepared by the Department of Education and Public Programs. Written primarily for junior high and high school students, this packet features 18 slides of Japanese objects in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art along with a thorough written discussion that places the works in a cultural context. *Screens, Noh, and Tea* focuses on Japanese art from the 15th through the 17th centuries, thus complementing the works in the *Journey to Japan* suitcase. Packets may be purchased through the CMA Teacher Resource Center for a nominal fee.

Learning With Enjoyment: Activities about Japan for Elementary Students. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1980.

Ages 5–12. This basic guide for teaching about Japan at the elementary school level includes units on geography, trade, artifacts, abacus, cooking, folktales, arts, games and exercises, and clothing. Units are intended to work with a variety of subjects, such as social studies, math, science, English, art, and physical education.

Roth, Peter. *Warlords of Japan*. Lakeside: Interaction Publishers, Inc., 1990.

Ages 12–15. This unit, a simulation of the *shogun* history of feudal Japan, includes 28 student handout booklets and a teacher's guide. The activities span 10 days and include math, reading and writing, art, geography, history, and spelling lessons with an emphasis on cooperative learning.

Tora no Maki I (1996), *Tora no Maki II* (1997), and *Tora no Maki III* (1998). Published by the National Council for the Social Studies and ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/ Social Science Education.

Ages 5–18+. These booklets consist of recently published lesson plans designed by teachers who have been recipients of Japan's *Keizai Koho* Center fellowships. Each *Tora no Maki* includes complete lesson plans pertaining to Japanese society, culture, business, government, and technology, both past and present. Recent topics include contrasts between department stores in Japan and the United States, technology, and consumer culture.

Traditional Arts and Culture. *Teaching Japan Through the Arts*, Book 2. Seattle: East Asia Resource Center, University of Washington, 1987.

Ages 5–15. The activities in this unit help students to create original patterns using Japanese motifs, create and perform an original drama presentation based on the Kabuki tradition, use movement and pantomime based on sumo wrestling, and enact "*Momotaro*," a popular Japanese folktale, using reader's theater techniques.

Additional Resources

Monographs and catalogues on Japanese art and culture may be found by consulting bibliographies in the volumes listed above.

Website

We encourage teachers and students of all ages to visit the museum in person. In addition, we hope you will investigate our website. Information about the Cleveland Museum of Art's collections and educational programs can be obtained at www.clemusart.com.

Cover: After *Beauty before a Screen*, Kyosai. The Kelvin Smith Collection, given by Mrs. Kelvin Smith 1985.268

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Journey to Japan: A Passport to Japanese Art

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Journey to Japan: A Passport to Japanese Art



Seated Buddha
Unknown date
Bronze
1940.1056



Tea Bowl
20th century
Glazed stoneware
1958.265



Round Lacquered Box
Late 16th century or later
Lacquered wood, gold, metal
1939.420



Cloisonné Belt Buckle
Late 19th- Early 20th century
Enamel and bronze
1939.366, 1939.366a



Tsuba (Sword Guard)
19th century
Iron with metal inlay
1921.1184d



Three Monkeys Netsuke
Late 19th- early 20th century
Ivory with pigment
1939.395, 1939.396, 1939.397



Six Fold Screen
20th century
Ink and color on silk
1942.420



Carp Banner
20th century
Painted cloth
1935.90