

CAEA Lesson Plan Format

LESSON TITLE: *Suminagashi*: Japanese Paper Marbling

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Grade Level: Elementary MS HS University Special Needs

Background Information:

Suminagashi is a marbling technique that dates back to 12th century Japan. The word *suminagashi* translates as “floating ink”. Ink is floated on the water surface, and then paper is lowered onto the ink to make a unique print. *Suminagashi* was originally done with black ink, but colored inks gradually were introduced. This lesson focuses on paper marbling, but the technique can also be applied to fabric, as seen in some Japanese silk kimono. This lesson teaches two *suminagashi* techniques: the first is the traditional style and uses concentric rings to form a pattern, and the second uses small paper circles that float on the surface of the water to stop the ink from sinking in the water.

Content Standards:

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

2.1 Solve a visual arts problem that involves the effective use of the elements of art and the principles of design.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

3.1 Identify similarities and differences in the purposes of art created in selected cultures.

Common Core Content Standards addressed with the lesson:

7.5 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Medieval Japan.

Learning Objectives/Goals/Essential Understandings:

To create a variety of *suminagashi* monoprints by applying ink to the surface of water and printing the resulting designs on paper.

Vocabulary:

Suminagashi (“floating ink”, a traditional Japanese art), unsized vs. sized (sized paper has a coating that causes ink to be absorbed more slowly; for paper marbling, unsized paper works best), concentric, marbling, print

Materials:

Aitoh Boku–Undo Suminagashi Marbling Kit (Set of 6 Colored Inks, with punch–out paper circles. One set of inks is enough for a class of 30 students.)

Copperplate etching paper (Unsized, 22” x 30”, cut to desired size)

Palettes with at least 6 wells (each shared by 2 students)

Small brushes (Size 3 or smaller, 2 per student)

Pan or tray larger than size of paper to be marbled

Paper towels

Water

Motivation:

Although the *suminagashi* process is fairly simple, it may be helpful for students to see a video of the process from start to finish before attempting it themselves. A range of how-to videos can be found on the Suminagashi website <http://www.suminagashi.com>. Another good resource is Dick Blick Art Supplies, where the materials listed in this lesson plan can be found: <http://www.dickblick.com>. The Blick website also has a *suminagashi* lesson plan and video. Once students watch the videos and see how quickly and easily beautiful *suminagashi* prints can be made, they will be eager to try it themselves!

Procedure:

Fill clean pan with $\frac{1}{2}$ inch water. Cut paper to desired size for project (bookmarks, cards, book covers, et cetera). In place of Copperplate etching paper, watercolor paper can be used (unsized papers work best). Drawing paper works (at least 80-lb weight), but not as well as the unsized etching paper. Copy paper does not work well.

Technique 1: Concentric Ring *Suminagashi*

1. In Japan, *suminagashi* prints were traditionally made by carefully floating many concentric rings of ink on the water surface. To try this technique, use 2 brushes, each loaded with a different color of ink. Gently touch the tip of the first brush to the surface of the water (only to a depth of $\frac{1}{8}$ ") to create a circle of ink. Touch the tip of the second brush inside the circle of ink formed by the first brush. Repeat, alternating colors, until a "target" of concentric rings is formed. The resulting ink design can be left as is, or can be altered by blowing on it gently, or dragging the handle of a brush through the ink.
2. Make a print by carefully laying a piece of paper flat onto the ink design on the water surface. The paper will absorb the ink quickly, as long as unsized paper is being used. Lift the print and blot between paper towels, and set aside to dry.

Technique 2: Paper Dot *Suminagashi*

1. The Aitoh Boku-Undo Suminagashi Marbling Ink set listed under Materials contains re-usable, coated paper dots that can be floated on the water surface. Ink is applied on top of these circles, either with the brush or directly from the bottle. The ink floats around the paper dot. This technique works well with smaller children, or if students are having trouble with the ink sinking to the bottom, rather than floating on the water surface. If the ink continues to sink to the bottom of the tray rather than floating, try using bottled water rather than tap water, as tap water may contain additives.
2. Make a print by laying a piece of paper flat onto the ink design on the water surface. The paper will absorb the ink quickly, as long as unsized paper is being used. Lift the print and blot between paper towels, and set aside to dry.

Assessment and/or Evaluation:

Sample questions (to be used for appropriate grade levels):

1. What techniques did you learn that helped you to float the ink on the surface of the water, rather than allowing it to sink to the bottom?
2. What color combinations do you feel made the best prints, and why?
3. What other materials might you try in place of the inks and papers used in this lesson?
4. How did you use the elements of art and the principles of design in your prints?

Extensions:

Follow-up lessons could involve learning more about 12th century Japan and the development of *suminagashi*. Students could also research other traditional art forms that arose in Japan (or other cultures) during that period. In an art class, this lesson could be one in a series on the various ways to make prints.