

Word Art

Essential Question	How can art made with words evoke a feeling?
Grade	3rd
Time	50 minutes
Art Concepts	Text-based art, calligraphy, composition
Materials	Pencil, pen, or marker, scrap paper, unlined paper (can be white copy paper, colored copy paper, or construction paper) Optional: markers, colored pencils
Artworks in Focus	<u><i>Oyakōkō: Love for One's Parents</i>, 18th century by Hakuin Ekaku</u> <u><i>Dragon</i>, 17th century by Kitamuki Unchiku</u>
Talking about Art	<p><u>Hakuin Ekaku's <i>Oyakōkō: Love for One's Parents</i></u> and <u>Kitamuki Unchiku's <i>Dragon</i></u> are examples of Japanese calligraphy, called <i>shūji</i>. Calligraphy is artistic writing of a language. The calligraphy examples we see here consist of Japanese words and poetic phrases that the artists painted on paper with ink. After the ink dries, artworks such as these are glued to a piece of fabric or a stiff backing so that they can be hung and displayed.</p> <p>Take some time to look at the two artworks; let your eyes explore the lines that the words create on the paper. Notice how the words form a composition, or visual arrangement. How would you describe the artists' representation of each word or phrase ("dragon," "love for one's parents")? What do you think the artists were feeling when they were creating these pieces? What do you see that makes you say that? How are the calligraphic styles different in each artwork?</p>
Making Art	For this activity, you will create an artwork using only words—of your choosing. First, gather together your materials. Ask an adult for permission to use the materials, as well as assistance with the art-making process. Through calligraphy, the artists we looked at tried to reach the very essence of the word they were writing in order to create an "awakening." They sought this awakening to bring them into contact with the original creative effort of the human mind to give form to an idea in a word.

1. Start your art-making process by writing down some of your favorite words or phrases, or think of “big” ideas like “Earth” or “happy,” or poetic phrases such as “My smile is a window” or “The sun, a friend to everyone.” Try not to use proper nouns, your name, anyone else’s name, or place names.
2. Once you have decided on a word or phrase, look at your blank paper and plan how you will write on it. Will your word or phrase be centered? Will it be written horizontally, vertically, or in a loop? Think about how you will compose on the paper ONLY your word or phrase.
3. When you draw your word, feel free to stand up, or put the paper on the floor. Try to use your whole arm when you write the word—think big! Draw your word or phrase, and if you have coloring supplies, feel free to add colors to your composition.

Reflection

What kind of things were you thinking about or feeling while you were creating your artwork? How were those feelings expressed through the words you selected and how you drew those words?

Curriculum Connections

California Arts Standards for Public Schools—Visual Arts

3.VA:Cr2.1: Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials. 3.VA:Re7.2: Determine messages communicated by an image. 3.VA:Re8: Interpret art by analyzing use of media to create subject matter, characteristics of form, and mood.

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