

# Asian Odyssey

A National K-12 Interdisciplinary Curriculum Model

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## Heart (and Arm) of Darkness 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Ghost Tales

This lesson intends to draw on several ideas that appeal to 6-7-8<sup>th</sup> grade students. One of these ideas is ghost tales and horror stories, which exist in almost every culture. The students truly connect with these stories as they have grown up with them. This lesson was developed to connect a genre (ghost tale) across different artistic mediums and cultures. Students will have the opportunity to analyze two Japanese hanging scrolls that depict ghost tales, then they will read a ghost tale in the form of a story. Students will take each medium and attempt to translate it into the other (written-visual and visual-written). It is the hope of this lesson to draw on the students' interest in ghost tales and promote visual, written, and artistic expression of their interpretations of these different ghost tales.

### Grade Level

This lesson is intended for an 8th-grade Language Arts class. It can be adjusted to meet the needs and abilities of grades 6-8.

### Objectives

To investigate the role of Japanese scrolls as portraits of Japanese culture and folklore.

- To introduce the role of Hannya in Japanese art and culture.
- To understand the role of art and literature in portraying the dark side of humanity.
- To interpret a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese hanging scroll that depicts a ghost tale and to translate it into a written ghost tale.
- To read and translate a 19<sup>th</sup>-century American ghost tale into a Japanese hanging scroll.

### Concepts

- 19th-century ghost tales – Japanese (art) and American (written)
- Forms of artistic expression
- Japanese hanging scrolls

Hannya – Japanese warrior legend (folklore) that morphs and eats children. The story of Hannya is a legend told about the Rashomon Gate.

There was a dreaded demon, which lived by the Rashomon Gate. This demon preyed on passers-by in the night. A member of the court was asked to rid the city of this scourge. While this poor courtier told his friends that he could accomplish this feat without any problem, he was in fact quite scared. He went down to the gate before nightfall. The courtier steeled up his courage and waited. Sure enough, when the sun finally disappeared, the demon came out. The courtier pounced, but managed only to get the demon's arm. With the arm in hand, he returned to the court to show that he had been victorious against the demon.

His lie would not come back to haunt him until later. He was at home, and there was a knock at the door. He looks out to find a very old woman. She says she is a traveller, and he invites her in. He offers her tea, and after much cajoling she obliges. When he

turns to boil the water, he hears a thud. Turning, he sees that the woman has grabbed his prized possession, the demon's arm. This image reveals that moment as the old lady runs away from his house: the little old lady was in fact a demon.

- Visual, verbal, and written analysis skills
- Connecting artistic mediums: visual-written and written-visual

### **Key Ideas**

- Ghost tales and horror stories play an important role in portraying the dark, morbid side of both Japanese and American cultures.
- Japanese culture often used artwork, such as hanging scrolls, as a medium for telling ghost stories, while American culture depicts ghost tales through the written word.
- Similarities and differences exist between the purpose of Japanese ghost tales and American ghost tales.
- The ability to analyze different mediums and work in both mediums creates different interpretations of art, literature and their themes, and ideas.

### **Materials**

*Hannya Retrieving Her Arm*, c. 1840, CMA 1990.6

*Ghost and Oil Lamp*, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, CMA 1992.71

“The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe (including audio version) *Heath Middle Level Literature – Purple Level*. Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1995. pp. 808-15.

Poster board, paint, crayons, markers, colored pencils, paper

### **Procedures – 4-Day Lesson**

#### **Day 1 – Japanese Hanging Scrolls and Ghost Tales**

1. Students will be introduced to the technique of a Japanese hanging scroll and discuss the different purposes for which it was employed – teaching, story-telling, portraying folklore.
2. Students will be introduced the legend of Hannya in Japanese folklore, including the role, abilities and importance of Hannya in ghost tales.
3. Students will view the two CMA hanging scroll images – *Hannya Retrieving her Arm* and *Ghost and Oil Lamp*.
4. Students will take notes regarding the pictures, including characters, colors, imagery, and themes.

#### **Homework - Translating a Hanging Scroll into the Written Word**

- Students will draw on their observations from class to create individual written stories to accompany one of the two CMA pictures. The stories must be relevant to the picture that is selected and must include reference to the different objects and imagery found in the picture itself. Student stories may include reference to cultural notes on Hannya and hanging scrolls. Stories must be completed by Day 5 of mini-project.

#### **Day 2 – Ghost Tales in American Literature**

1. Distribute copies of Edgar Allan Poe's “The Tell-Tale Heart.”

2. Students will read the story and then listen to an audio version that includes sound effects, voice resonations, and other additional effects to enhance the story and its themes and imagery. Marginal notes will be taken during the reading concerning questions, important words that the students come across during the reading.
3. After reading the story, students will discuss the story's characters, themes, imagery, tone, events, etc. Students will analyze the relationship between the caretaker and the old man, what really happened in the story, madness, insanity, and other relevant themes. Students will take notes during this portion of class.

### **Day 3 - Translating an American Tale into a Japanese Hanging Scroll**

1. Have students review their notes about "The Tell-Tale Heart."
2. Students will be given poster board, coloring utensils, and floor space to create a hanging-scroll artwork visually portraying "The Tell-Tale Heart." Simply, students will capture Poe's story in a typically Japanese art form.
  - a. Hanging Scroll must capture themes, colors, images, etc. relevant to Poe's story.
  - b. Artwork must follow guidelines of hanging scroll technique as established on Day 1.
3. Hanging scrolls must be completed for homework.

### **Day 4 – "Sitting Around the Campfire - Ghost Stories Artistic Tales"**

1. Teacher will create an atmosphere conducive to ghost tales, including, dimmed lighting, candy, candles, pumpkins, and eerie music.
2. Students will read and show their ghost tale interpretations.

### **Evaluation**

1. Students will discuss, compare, contrast, debate the different interpretations of "Hannya Retrieving Her Arm," "Ghost and Oil Lamp," and "The Tell-Tale Heart." Students will discuss the feasibility of multiple interpretations of the same text, how these interpretations differ, and what factors may lead to different versions of the same story or work of art.

### **Enrichment Activity**

- A. Students will research and study the similarities and differences between Japanese and American holidays or festivals. Students will analyze and discuss ways that the different cultures celebrate, decorate for, and commemorate different holidays, events, and time periods in their respective cultures and history. Some areas of concentration for the students' research include decorations of self and home, traditional activities, and history of the holiday (what is being celebrated and why).

Some holidays to research and use in comparing/contrasting include the following:

#### **American**

- Hannukah
- Halloween
- Christmas
- Easter

#### **Japanese**

- Nenmatsu (Year-end holiday)
- Toji
- Seibo
- 7-5-3

**State Standards – Language Arts (8th Grade)**

1. Apply reading comprehension strategies, including making predictions, comparing and contrasting, recalling and summarizing and making inferences and drawing conclusions.
2. Monitor own comprehension by taking marginal notes during reading.
3. Identify and explain various types of characters and how their interactions and conflicts affect the plot.
4. Explain how authors pace action and use climax.
5. Explain ways in which the author conveys mood and tone through word choice, figurative language and syntax
6. Examine symbols used in literary texts.
7. Use precise language, actions verbs, sensory detail, colorful modifiers and style as appropriate to audience and purpose (fictional writing).
8. All writing conventions apply.
9. Produce informal writings for various purposes.
10. Prepare writing for publication (for display or sharing with others).
11. Write narratives that:
  - sustain reader interest by pacing action and developing an engaging plot
  - use literary devices to enhance style and tone
  - create complex characters in a definite, believable setting
  - Generate writing ideas through discussions with others and from printed materials.
  - Use organizational strategies to plan writing.
12. Select an appropriate structure for organizing information in a systematic way (e.g., notes, outlines, charts, tables and graphic organizers).

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