



Gyotaku

**A Japanese Art
Technique**

Lesson Plan

**Grades 2nd-12th
10 pages**



BY DEANNA HOLM



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Gyotaku: A Japanese Art Technique Lesson Plan
by Deanna Holm
www.discoverunitstudies.com

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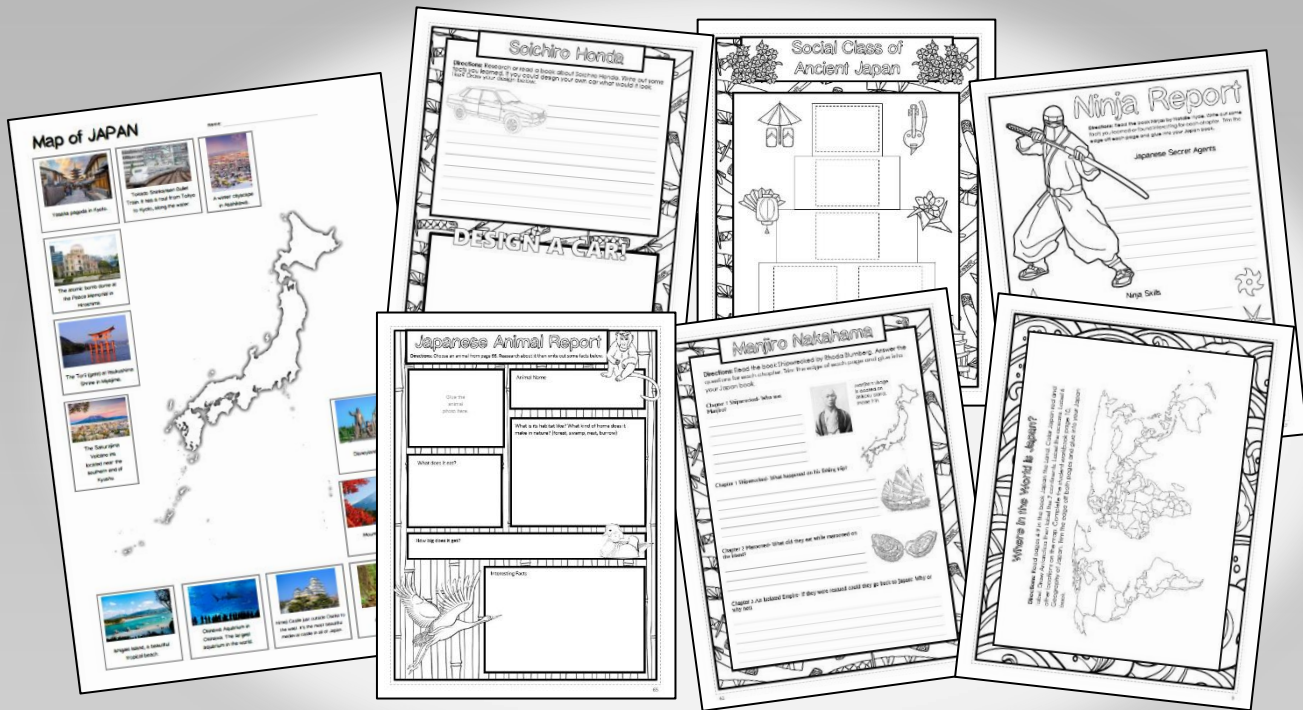
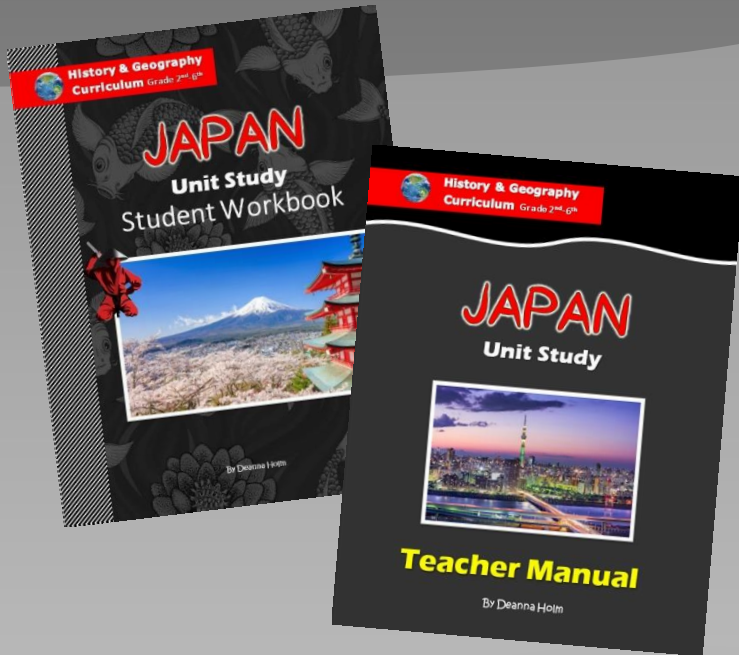
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Gyotaku

The History of Gyotaku Fish Printing

In Japanese, “gyo” means “fish”, and “taku” means “print.” Gyotaku or fish printing was an art form originating in Japan in the mid 1800's. Originally, Japanese fishermen would use this technique to record the texture and proportions of fish they caught. As time went on, these gyotaku prints developed into an art form.



of

How to Pronounce

Gee-o-ta-ku “g” as in goat.

Traditional Supplies Used

Sumi Ink: This is black ink made from a mixture of plant soot and glue solidified into sticks or cakes the ends of which are scraped or ground into water on an ink slab, much used by calligraphers and painters. It is non-toxic, so you can rinse the ink off and eat the fish after you print it. You can make the black ink by watering down black acrylic paint. The sumi ink is water soluble and will wipe up with a wet wash and paper towels. Be sure to cover the tables with plastic table cloths because the ink can seep through.

Rice Paper: This is the traditional paper used for Gyotaku. As an alternative, you can use any white copy paper or craft paper.

Where to Buy Fish for Gyotaku

Most grocery stores will save fresh whole fish that are not sold and place them in the freezer for art so, be sure to ask. Our local grocery store gives them away for free. I found a frozen whole octopus for \$5.99 at an Asian market near us, if you can find one it will be a big hit with the kids!

Artificial Gyotaku: If you don't want to use a real fish for this then use the picture in this lesson plan. Cut out the fish. Let them paint it then stamp their paper with it. Another Idea is to use the Styrofoam printmaking technique as an alternative. You can also get Gyotaku replicas online, also called rubber fish.

Watch Videos

Gyotaku by Naoki 2:03 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkaK48urU8o> This is a great video!

The Art of Gyotaku 1:13 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_bVC6lcTTM

Fish Prints with Rob Choi 3:46 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGaeMtSRSpE>

Preparing Your Fish

If you are using real, fresh fish then here are a few things to know. If you get it fresh and thawed, you can put it in the freezer until you're ready to use it. You will want to thaw the fish out completely

when you're ready to print it. Lay the fish on a piece of cardboard- I found this the best surface for the fish because they didn't slide around plus the cardboard absorbed some of the moisture. Prepare the fish by drying with paper towels- you do not want a wet slimy fish, the dryer the better. You can use a piece of Styrofoam to prop up the tail or fins- I found that we only needed to do this on the rock fish because I needed to pin the tail fin so that it stayed open. Now you're ready to paint and print!

Paint Your Fish

Paint the fish with a light coat of the sumi ink. One dip in the ink can cover an entire fish. If your print is too dark, then get a second print and lay the paper on the fish to print it again without add any more paint- this second one should be lighter and show more detail.

Finishing Touches

Add some finishing touches to give your fish a finished look. Do this by painting the eye with the ink and paint a line around the fish to define the edges. Have your students write Gyotaku in Japanese somewhere on their paper and add their Hanko (and their English name). Glue their artwork to a large piece of black construction paper- I found some large sizes available on Amazon.com. Only add glue to the corners. We found that the rice paper does not lay flat after we did the printing, adding the glue in the corner would have been much easier for us. I placed a copy of the student directions on my students' tables so that when they were done printing their fish they could get right to work adding the finishing touches to their art.

Write it in Japanese: This is how you write Gyotaku in Japanese:

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Complete List of Supplies

- Sumi ink or use watered down black acrylic paint
- Small cup or container to pour ink into
- Black construction paper
- Rice paper or white paper
- Cardboard to set the fish onto
- Baby wipes- because kids will get ink on their fingers...and the table 😊
- Large paintbrush for painting the fish
- Small paintbrushes that taper into a point for adding details to the fish and writing "Gyotaku" in Japanese
- Paper towels
- Foam and pins for the fins- I used white craft foam block and cut it to size
- Fresh fish
- Small piece of white paper and red marker for making their Hanko.
- School glue
- Plastic table cloths from the dollar store

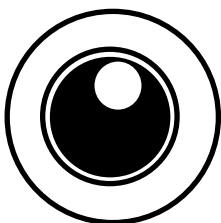
That's it!

I have to say, this was such a joy to do with my students and was worth every effort.

Student Directions If You Are Teaching A Class

When your done with your fish print follow these steps:

1. Paint the eye and paint around the edge of your fish.
2. Paint Gyotaku in Japanese somewhere on your paper.
3. Write your name on the bottom corner.
4. Add your Hanko (Japanese signature).
5. Glue your Gyotaku painting onto black construction paper.

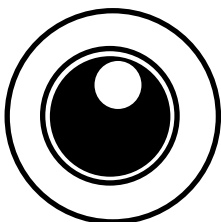


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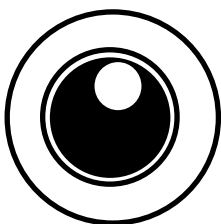


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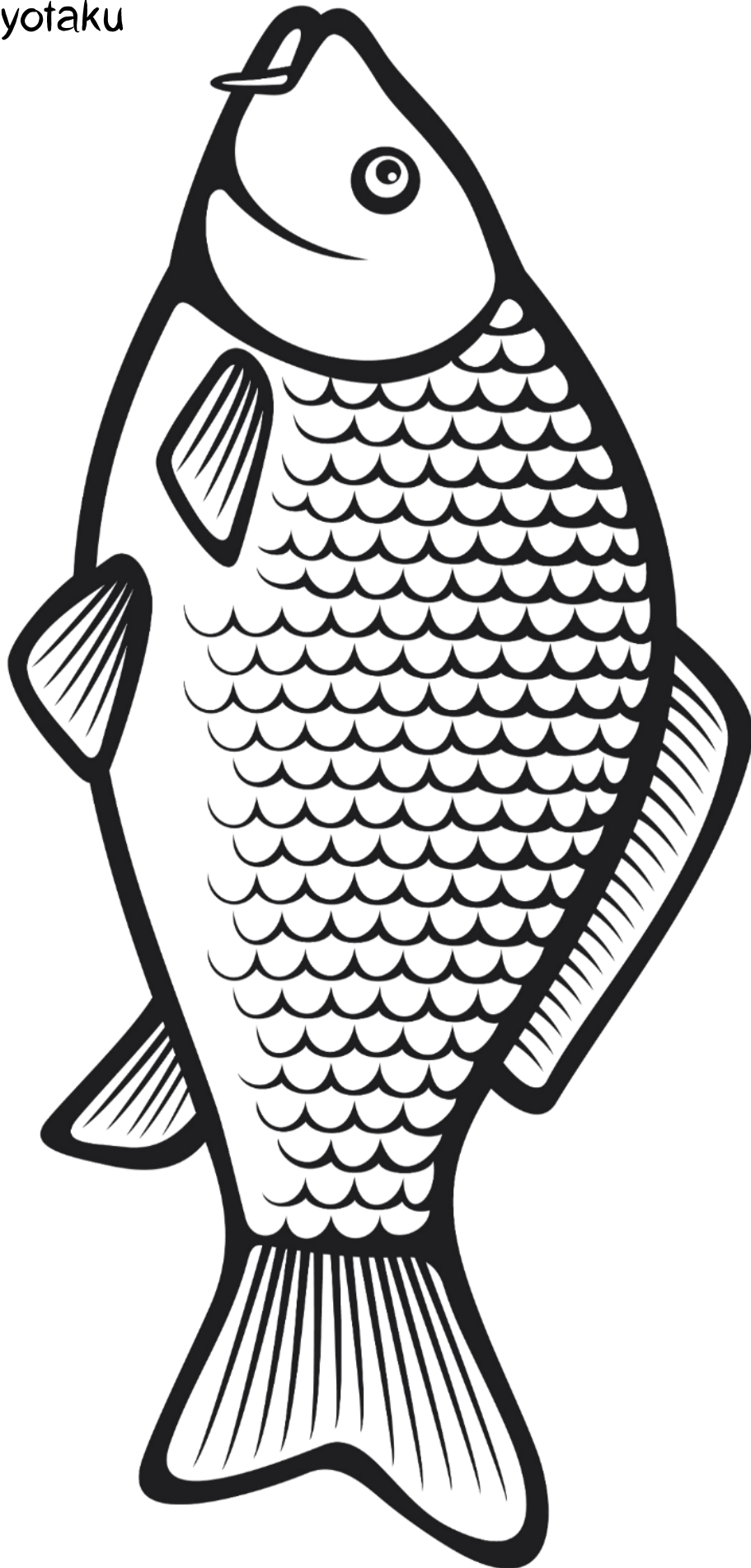
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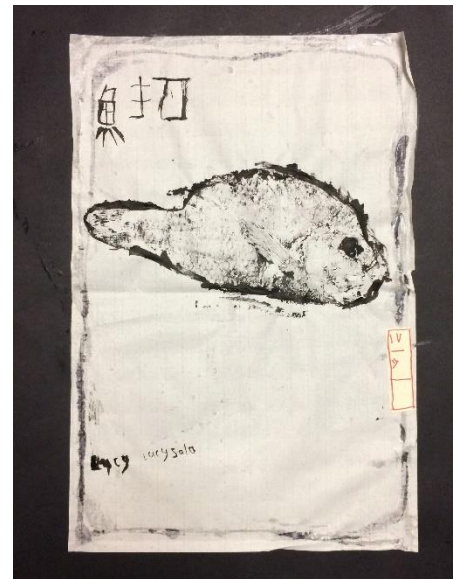
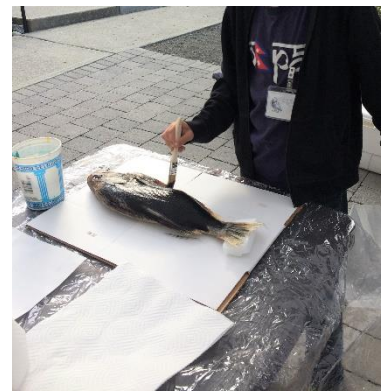
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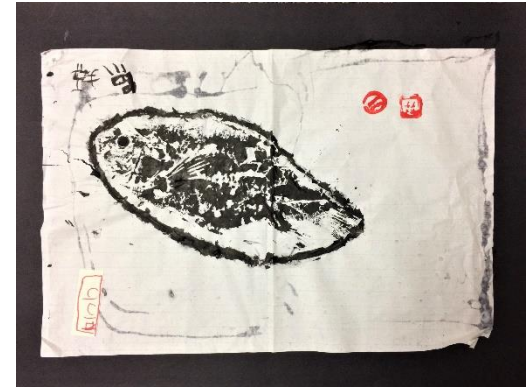
Artificial Gyotaku



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Samples



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