

The great wave off shore at kanagawa essay sample

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Katsushika Hokusai's work of art titled "The Great Wave off Shore at Kanagawa" is one of many woodblock prints included in his 1831 series titled Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji. This particular piece of art is representational of a significant event that occurred within a culture's history but is also deemed subjective meaning each individual can interpret the work of art differently. This Edo period woodblock print depicts a view of Japan's Mount Fuji in the background including an intense scene of nature's power with waves crashing against two fishing boats. According to Hokusai: Genius of the Japanese Ukiyo-e (Nagata, 1999), Hokusai's artistic influence has stretched to have affected the Art Nouveau style in Europe, including Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Hermann Obrist, all of whom have themes similar to Hokusai's. Without having background knowledge on the artists or artwork it may be easy to overlook the fact that this particular work contains documentation of a historical event that also holds significant cultural and geographical meaning to the Japanese people.

The three main elements of the work include the crashing waves, the fisherman's boats, and the mountain in the background all of which can be immediately seen right away. Seiji Nagata's study of The Great Wave off Shore at Kanagawa elaborates on the significance of each of these three main elements as well as the idea of the yin and yang. Mount Fuji can be seen in the background of the print and also serves as the central point in the composition of the three elements. The Japanese culture considers Mount Fuji a sacred place as well as a symbol of beauty and national identity (Nagata, 1999).

Among the waves are three boats referred to as 'oshiokuri-bune' used to transport fish, giving example to the cultural significance portrayed in the work. Numerous waves crashing in the sea are the dominant force in the artwork and serve the purpose of creating the element of motion. In particular, the largest wave that is about to crash down forms a circle in the center of the three main elements leading the viewer to notice Mount Fuji in the background (Nagata, 1999). Aside from the three main elements in the print, two signatures can be seen in the upper left corner above the great wave. The writing that does not have a box around it is the artist's signature and the writing that has a box around translates "Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji-Offshore at Kanagawa-Beneath the Wave" which is one of four distinct signatures used throughout the thirty-six views (Nagata, 1999).