

Crest in sky



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Normal; hinds hindsThe Edo Period & Ukiyo E
Katsushika Hokusai was born in 1760, half-way through the Edo period (1603 - 1868) in Japan.

He was born into one of the four classes in Japan (Samurai, then peasants, artisans and merchants); Hokusai was destined to become an artist. Ukiyo-e was at the time the most popular form of art in Japan. It involves woodblock printing in a very simple way; excluding such western principles such as perspective. The word Ukiyo-e is a pun on the Buddhist word for 'floating world' which is also pronounced ukiyo. Literally translated Ukiyo-e means 'pictures of a floating world'. Buddhism believes in a world above our own, in which everything is perfect, in the western world it is known as nirvana. This idea was particularly important in the Edo period when Japan was undergoing a cultural revolution.

In 1633 the reigning Shogun, Iemitsu isolated Japan from the rest of the world by forbidding all travel and trade abroad. By 1639 the ban was lifted to a small amount of trade with China and the Netherlands from Nagasaki port. Even after the embargo was loosened, any form of overseas culture such as books, poetry or art weren't allowed into Japan. This caused the Japanese to embark on a cultural upheaval within their society.

The working class were finally given some power and wealth and art became commonplace in many people's homes. Unlike modern society, religion was still extremely important, and the first recorded Ukiyo-e prints came from temples with pictures of deities or sections of sacred sutras. In Edo Japan the Kabuki theatre was the equivalent of movies & TV today. These plays provided an opening for the first mass production of artwork in history.

The posters advertising the Kabuki theatre were rolled off by the hundreds using Ukiyo-e as with printing you can make an unlimited number of prints from one woodblock.

The artists would sit and watch a Kabuki performance and scramble to produce an artwork while the engraver and printer stood close by. The temples, Kabuki theatre and the fact that the prints were cheap to buy (a print cost approximately the price of a bowl of noodles), accelerated the Ukiyo-e prints into mainstream art and eventually dominating Japanese culture. As the prints were cheap to buy for the first time in history, peasants began to buy them. This new market demanded illustrations of a better, perfect world.

Thus the subject matter of Ukiyo-e prints ranged from erotic pictures of beautiful women (??? bi jinga??™) to landscapes to famous battles and wars. Many of the prints were printed on rice paper; except for those who could afford them, they were printed on silk (silk was considered to be extremely rare and valuable in Japan at the time). Other than Hokusai, there were many other famous Ukiyo-e artists of the era. Kitagawa Utamaro (1753 ??" 1806) for instance was best known for his depictions of ??? Beautiful Women from the Tea Rooms??™. He also produced some of the best book covers in the Edo period.

Another example of an artist from the Ukiyo-e period was Sharaku. One of his most famous prints was of Arashi Ryuzo as the servant Ukiyo Matahei and Otani Hiroji III as the servant Tosa no Matahei. Post Modern Frame he term that best describes the Japanese influence on the ??? outside??™ world is

Japonisme. It was created in 1876 by the French journalist and art-critic Philippe Burty.

It describes the west's™ obsession with anything Japanese. The first man to bring Japan to the west was Commander Perry. He represented the USA trying to negotiate the end of the Sakoku (secluded or closed country™) policy.

What he saw when he arrived in Japan were prints being sold in the street and specialized schools such as the Utagawa School set up to teach printmaking. Perry was amazed with this and brought a lot of prints back home to the USA with him. This was the start of the west's™ obsession with Japan and especially Ukiyo-e. The first public display of Japanese culture was at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1867. People came from all around Europe to see what lied on the other side of the Pacific (or Asia, depending on how you look at it). Shops selling woodblock prints, kimonos, fans and Japanese antiques started to appear all over Paris. Many artists such as Edgar Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Gauguin and Claude Monet were inspired by Ukiyo-e.

In 1875 Monet made 'La Japonaise'™ which depicted his wife wearing a Japanese Kimono and holding a fan. Later he called his painting 'trash'™ compared to the real Ukiyo-e. One of the most inspired artists was Vincent Van Gogh. He first saw Japanese prints in 1885 in Antwerp where he bought a few. When Van Gogh moved to Montmartre there was a small shop which sold Ukiyo-e prints below his apartment. It was called the Bing Gallery after its owner Samuel Bing.

Mr. Bing kept thousands of Japanese prints in stock. Van Gogh spent days in the shop and became an avid collector of Ukiyo-e. Van Gogh's love of Ukiyo-e led him to copy two famous designs from Hiroshige. Vincent added frames and added what he considered to be Japanese characters. Also his use of colour wasn't keeping with the original; he used complementary colours such as dark red and green. I envy the Japanese artists for the incredible neat clarity which all their works have.

It is never boring and you never get the impression that they work in a hurry. It is as simple as breathing: they draw a figure with a couple of strokes with such an unflinching easiness as if it were as easy as buttoning one's waistcoat. When Van Gogh moved to Arles in 1888 he was astounded by the strong colours and the light of the landscape. In the many paintings he produced in this time the Ukiyo-e influence was obvious: the use of black contours is typical of woodblock prints.

Theo [his brother] wrote that he offered you Japanese woodblock prints. That is certainly the best way to understand which direction the light and colourful paintings has taken. Here I need no Japanese woodblock prints, because I am here in Japan [he was in Arles]. This is why I only have to open my eyes and paint the impressions that I receive.

He shot himself several days later on October 19th, 1890. [Include pictures of The Wave and South Wind, Clear Dawn] Biography of Hokusai was such a great artist it is difficult to describe his life and works in a mere 1/2 page. One of the great artists of the Ukiyo-e period, he is said to have made over 30,000 prints, drawings, and paintings. His subjects

include; landscapes; beautiful women; kabuki actor portraits; legendary figures and historical tales; still life; nature, including birds and flowers; porn; surimono; sketch books; illustrated albums, books, poetry, and novels; and instructional painting manuals. He sometimes described himself as the ??? mad painter??™ as he changed houses over 95 times.

Hokusai was born in the autumn of 1760 at Honjo Warigesui, in Katsushika of Shimosa Province, very close to old Edo, now Katsushika ward of the city of Tokyo. In later years, Hokusai called himself ??? the farmer of Katsushika??? and often used Katsushika in place of his family name. Details surrounding his earliest years are uncertain. He was first given the personal name of Tokitaro, but at the age of ten this was changed to Tetsuzo. Even at that age he was learning woodblock carving. He was soon apprenticed to a book-lending shop, and continued his study of painting and drawing from the picture books he found in the shop. At the age of nineteen, he was enrolled in the school of Katsukawa Shunsho, one of the leading woodblock artisans of the time, who specialized in portraits of popular actors. At this time, he was given the name Shunro.

While using this name he was mainly engaged in doing book covers and actor portraits. After the death of Katsukawa Shunsho, the Katsukawa school headmaster, in 1792, Hokusai left the establishment because of a disagreement with the master??™s successor, Shunko. Though reduced to poverty, he continued his studies, concentrating on the techniques of the schools of Kano Yusen, Tsutsumi Torin, and Sumiyoshi Naiki.

He was also greatly interested in the examples of Western art that filtered into Japan through the Dutch trading establishment in Nagasaki. He frequently changed his artistic name, in fact, more than thirty times in his career. He settled on landscape painting around 1798, apparently much inspired by engravings brought in by the Dutch. It was at this time that he gave the name Sori to his most promising pupil and took for himself the name of Hokusai. From about 1823 to 1831, he was engaged in creating and publishing the epoch-making series of woodblock prints known as The Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji (even though there were 48 prints). These became masterpieces in the history of Japanese landscape pictures, and were considered to be most typical of this style of pictorial representation. This series was accomplished when Hokusai was between the age of 64 and 70. He was at the height of his creative powers during this period, and in addition to The Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji, he also put out such masterpieces as the series Chie no Umi (One Thousand Seas, 1826), Shokoku Taki Meguri (Journey to the Waterfalls, 1883), and Ryukyu Hakkei (Eight Views of the Ryukyus, 1829). Even after reaching the age of eighty, he was busy producing many prints.

He often expressed his desire to live beyond the age of ninety, and just before he died on April 18, 1849 at the age of 89, he sighed and said his last words: "If heaven gives me ten more years," he paused, then continued, "or an extension of even five years, I shall surely become a true artist." Imagery & Meaning of *sushika Hokusai's* *The Wave* depicts a giant wave, forming from the left, cowering over 3 boats. In the background of the picture is Mt.

Fuji, as this picture appeared in Hokusai's 36 Views of Mt. Fuji. In the air next to the wave is some sea spray as well as some subtle clouds. There is about 8-10 men in each boat but you cannot tell what they are doing. There is a second smaller wave in the foreground of the picture. Judging by the slope to the right it seems that the boats have just rolled off the back of a yet unbroken wave.

There aren't many possible meanings to be interpreted from this picture. The most obvious, that man is dominated by nature, isn't true because the boats fit quite harmoniously into the picture, almost bending with the waves. I think the picture was just to show the stunning waves that Japan gets. Japan is very prone to Tsunamis as it is facing the Pacific Ocean and on the edge of a continental plate. At Hokusai's time there were many natural disasters including an eruption of Mt. Fuji, in the late 1600s. The feeling that I get is a thrilling rush as the wave is just at the edge of crashing down on the boats, yet Hokusai has captured the moment just before it breaks. It looks like all three boats are going to get dumped upon as the large wave is breaking in two places, both conveniently over each boat, and a crest is just beginning to form on the smaller wave.

The appearance of the large wave is that the crest at the top is almost like talons reaching out trying to grab the boats out of the water. If you could think of the wave as a bird with its claws, the boats are almost like splinters compared to the great wave. The wave in the foreground looks quite like Mt. Fuji and the boat is trying to climb it. This could have represented Katsushika's aspirations as an artist, or the boatpeople's struggle up

the wave. I think that Hokusai might have been quite scared of Tsunamis or astounded by them. Because it looks like the wave is about to crush Mt.

Fuji, which was a pinnacle of religion and achievement to the Japanese, he might be trying to express that nature, or the wave, is even more powerful than humans, religion, and society. But on the other hand, he could have been impressed with the waves because, as this was the ??™ 36 Views of Mt. Fuji??™, he might have thought that a Tsunami would have been a great way to portray Mt. Fuji. Either approach it shows that Hokusai (and the Japanese public as he was directing the picture at them) regarded Mt. Fuji and Tsunamis very highly. Formlthough this is a very simple picture, the form that Hokusai uses is technically extremely complicated.

The colours that he uses represent his views towards the subject matter. The underbelly is a dark blue, almost like a black hole about to engulf the boats. The crest of the wave is white like a glacier about to ??? ice??™ over the boats. The colour of the boats is almost ironic because in the Western world yellow is a sign of cowardness and fear, i. e. yellow bellied, but in this example the boats are the opposite, they are brave and courageous. Hokusai has used shading on the wave, the sky and the white tops of the wave to give the picture a sense of depth. One use of colour that earns respect from fellow printers is the gradient going from black to yellow inthe background of the picture.

This must have been difficult to do as woodblocks tend to have single blocks of colour, not smooth flowing colours like in today??™s paintings. Generally Hokusai has used very few colours, which adds to the complexity of the

shapes. The basic shapes that Hokusai uses are mainly circles. Circular shapes appear in the crest of the wave (the 'talons') the white of the wave (a wispy effect), in the boats and in the clouds. Generally as the grain in woodblocks flow horizontally, it is very difficult to engrave circular shapes. This picture has a unique use of line that you will only find in Japanese artwork: the black outlining of all the important features (in this case the wave, Mt. Fuji and the boats). This is typical of Japanese art and you'll even find this being used in today's manga comics or anime animation.

The composition of this picture can be broken up into 2 vertical sections and 3 horizontal sections. A simple compositional plan of the picture goes like this: Wave Crest Sky Smaller Wave Mt. Fuji & boats Sea & boats Having such a simple composition like this contrasts the complexity of engraving. Many of Hokusai's details all add up towards a fantastic final picture, but without very close inspection, most of it would go unnoticed.

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