

Ideals of Beauty – Turkish Ottoman Calligraphy and Book Arts

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INTRODUCTION

Students will examine how art has the ability to elevate people's experience of the world, including the way they think and feel. This lesson will address ideals of beauty in art by looking at Turkish Ottoman calligraphy and book arts as examples of works that express the highest spiritual, cultural, and aesthetic principals. This theme will form the foundation for proceeding coursework, giving students a platform from which to observe and create art throughout the year.

This lesson will introduce students to Turkey and major elements of Turkish cultural history such as Ottoman architecture and traditional arts. Students will observe and analyze a variety of images that will introduce them to Turkey's rich cultural heritage. They will also listen to excerpts of traditional and contemporary Turkish music to enrich their experience. In addition, students will look at the Arabic alphabet to get them thinking about the visual shapes of calligraphy in texts and inscriptions. This will give them an opportunity to reflect on other languages in the world that are very different from their own.

Students will also have the opportunity to create their own calligraphic work with pen and ink, and work with monotype printmaking as they explore the art of marbling.

GRADE LEVEL

4th - 6th grades

OBJECTIVES

Students will develop a beginning knowledge of Turkey, and Ottoman architecture and traditional arts.

Students will learn about Turkish Ottoman calligraphy and book arts and how these artistic traditions express ideals of beauty and inspiration.

Students will experiment with calligraphic techniques, paper marbling, concepts of two-dimensional line and composition, and decorative embellishment.

NEW MEXICO ART CONTENT STANDARDS

Standard 1: Learn and develop skills and meet technical demands unique to dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts.

Standard 3: Integrate understanding of visual and performing arts by seeking connections and parallels among arts disciplines as well as other content areas.

Standard 4: Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of the creative process.

Standard 5: Observe, discuss, analyze and make critical judgments about artistic works.

Standard 6: Show increased awareness of diverse peoples and cultures through visual and performing arts

TIMEFRAME

6-7 Fifty-Five Minute Sessions (For two art classes of approximately 20 students each)

MATERIALS

Sketch paper, pencils, watercolor or heavyweight tag board, calligraphy/lettering pens with square or round nibs, India ink, liquid watercolors, shaving cream, two or more 9”x 13” metal cookie sheets (depending upon the number of students who can marble independently), butter knives, bamboo skewers, 12” rubber, wood, or plastic squeegee tool (i.e. plastic rulers), gold tempera paint, small brushes, hot glue gun, gold metallic mat board (optional)

VOCABULARY

Ottoman Empire – a large ruling state founded in 1299 and lasting until 1923

Sultan – a ruler in the Ottoman Empire

Manuscript – a handwritten book

Calligraphy – decorative handwriting

Script – handwriting distinct from print; written characters

Illumination - a manuscript or book decorated with gold paint or gold gilt

Marbling – a method of surface design that can produce swirling patterns similar to marble or stone

Inscription – words inscribed on a monument or in a book

Tughra - a calligraphic monogram, seal or signature of a sultan

Motif – a decorative design or pattern

PROCEDURES

Session 1. Begin discussion about how art has the power to affect our feelings and thinking. Explain that many art traditions around the world use the expression of beauty as a means to inspire us in a positive way. Ask students to think about how their own cultural art traditions express beauty. Introduce Turkey via a PowerPoint presentation. Create a context for the lesson by showing images of Topkapi Palace and Suleymaniye Mosque. Talk about the Ottoman Empire and the development of art forms during this time. Highlight major architectural elements (domes, minarets, pointed arches), tessellated tilework, calligraphic inscriptions, and decorative motifs (arabesque, geometric, and floral designs). Point out the richness and beauty of these forms and elements.

Introduce Ottoman calligraphy and illuminated manuscripts, and show examples. Talk about the kinds of texts inscribed in books: poetry, proverbs, and religious phrases and text. Explain that calligraphy was written using the Arabic alphabet or script. Calligraphy, illumination, and miniature painting were three different traditional forms of art that comprised Ottoman book arts. Manuscripts were books that were hand printed using reed pens and Arabic letters on handmade paper. They were embellished with rich decoration using gold paint or gilt.

Give students a handout of the Arabic alphabet/script. Explain that the Arabic alphabet consists of 28 characters and is written from right to left. Dots above and below are used to distinguish letters, as many letters look similar. Explain that in modern Turkey people use an alphabet that is related to the Latin alphabet that we use.

Activity: ask students to create a list of inspiring words or phrases that are meaningful to them. Brainstorm ideas with them. Have them choose one and then to write it in decorative calligraphy inspired by the Arabic alphabet. Also, challenge them to try and write a few Arabic characters.

Session 2: Review Turkey and Turkish Ottoman arts from last session. Show additional examples of illuminated pages and calligraphy including short videos on traditional tools and materials and a calligraphy demonstration (from calligraphyqalam.com). Demonstrate how to use a lettering pen and India ink. **Activity:** students practice tracing their calligraphy from the last session using pen and ink.

Sessions 3-5: Show images of Arabic calligraphy on marbled paper. Explain that there are many different ways to marble paper, and that marbling is done in many countries. Demonstrate a technique using shaving cream and liquid watercolor. Set up two work areas for paper marbling – 2 students at a time (assisted by adults) or set up more work areas if some students can work independently. Students will marble two 9”x12” sheet of paper, one of which will be used as a background for their calligraphy.

How to marble paper using shaving cream and liquid watercolor:

1. Spray shaving cream onto a 9”x13” metal pan. Spread the cream flat with a butter knife or other tool that can make an even surface.
2. Set up small jars with eyedroppers, or squeeze bottles, of liquid watercolor. Choose 2 or 3 colors. Apply small drops of watercolor onto shaving cream making sure that whole surface is evenly covered but not drenched. One or two colors may be prominent. The third color may just be an accent with only a few drops.
3. Take a bamboo skewer and make circles (swirls) in the shaving cream in overlapping rows being careful to cover the whole area.
4. Place a sheet of watercolor paper or tag board down on top of the shaving cream. Gently press down on the entire surface of the paper so that the watercolor will be absorbed into the paper.
5. Gently pull the paper off starting from one end. It will be covered with colored shaving cream. Take a squeegee and wipe down the entire surface of the paper removing the shaving cream. A swirled design will be left. Have students pull one more print from the leftover swirled shaving cream. This print may be softer in quality.
6. Allow papers to dry.

While students wait to marble paper, give each of them a piece of 5”x7-1/2” tag board. Using pencil they will write in calligraphy the phrase or word they have previously chosen. This will be part of their final artwork. When finished, they will trace over their lines with India ink using a lettering pen and India ink. Check their work before application of ink. Those that have finished both marbling and calligraphy will apply watercolor to the background of their calligraphy. They will do a wet on wet watercolor technique using two colors from their marbled paper. Demonstrate how to do this.

Session 6: Set up small plates of gold tempera paint and give students small brushes. Have them paint the edge of their calligraphic sheet. They can also add gold embellishments to the calligraphy. Assist them in adhering the calligraphic sheet to the background paper using a hot glue gun.

Final Session: Have a whole class critique reflecting on finished artwork. Students will discuss their experience of creating art using meaningful text, calligraphy, and decorative embellishments to create an object of beauty. Students will also again reflect upon ideals of beauty within their own cultural art traditions.

ASSESSMENT

Student understanding and progress is assessed through group and individual observation, individual meetings and discussion, and artwork.

- Student is engaged and participates in discussions, and understands lesson material and concept.
- Student work process demonstrates problem solving skills and creativity.
- Student successfully uses materials and techniques.
- Finished artwork demonstrates an understanding of project concept.

EXTENSION IDEAS

To extend exploration in marbling techniques and Turkish arts, introduce and demonstrate the art of Turkish Ebru marbling. Using traditional materials (or as close as possible), have students create a 9”x12” example of this art form.

ALTERNATIVE IDEAS

Students write poetry instead of using a word or short phrase for their calligraphy. They could also create an inspired title for an imaginary book so that the final artwork could be a book cover.

SOURCES

<http://www.turkishculturalfoundation.org>

Youtube video: Turkish Islamic Calligraphic Art
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sRa4RgwxFw>

<http://islamic-arts.org>

<http://calligraphyqalam.com>

MUSIC

Excerpts from one or more of the following:

“Global Departures From Istanbul” – East 2 West

“Su“ by Mercan Dede

“The Secret of Nay – Surr-I Nay,” Instrumental Sufi Music by Suleyman Yardim

REFERENCE MATERIAL FOR STUDENTS

PowerPoint on Turkey and Turkish Ottoman Architecture and Book Arts

Arabic Alphabet/Script Handout