



NATURE of the BEAST

Animals in Japanese Paintings & Prints

BEING BRAVE

Suggested Grade Level: Lower Elementary (Grades 1-2), SRA Open Court Connection

Subject: Language Arts, Visual Arts

Estimated Time: 1 class session

Introduction

Utagawa Kuniyoshi's woodcut (on page 68 of Open Court book 1-2) shows an orange tabby cat threatening to eat four fancy goldfish and two smaller fish. Kuniyoshi (1798-1861) was well-known for his popular woodblock series, "One Hundred and Eight Popular Warrior Heroes," and his print of household pets mirrors his images of humans. Here, the dismayed fish fend off the brazen cat with staffs that appear similar to the cudgels used by fighting samurai. Although the cat's face is frightening and ghoulish, one fish stands up bravely on its hind fins and fights off the attacker.

The Pacific Asia Museum's *Octopus-Samurai and Farmer* also shows an unlikely warrior. An octopus with a samurai hairstyle and sword threatens a farmer, who bravely meets the challenge.

In contrast, *Monkey with Baby and Autumn Flowers* shows a charming and realistic scene from ordinary life: a monkey mother cradling her baby. She may be protecting it from something that frightens it or simply holding it close because she loves it.

Lesson Objectives

Students will connect the artworks with the Open Court Unit 9 "Being Afraid" readings in Book 1-2 to:

1. Understand that fear and bravery are basic emotions felt by animals and by humans.
2. Identify heroes and role models in their own lives.
3. Explore imaginary subjects in artworks.
4. Use an artwork from the Pacific Asia Museum as the basis for understanding these ideas and for engaging student critical thinking and writing.

Key Terms

brave
bravery
hero
imagination
imaginary
samurai

Instructional Materials

- SRA Open Court Reading, Level 1, Book 2, p. 68, Fine Art, *Cat Trying to Catch a Goldfish*, Utagawa Kuniyoshi, c. 1838-1840, color woodcut, Philadelphia Museum of Art
- From *Nature of the Beast* website:
 - ❖ *Octopus-Samurai and Farmer*, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), c. 1839, drawing in ink on paper, Pacific Asia Museum Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Kamansky, 1987.47.1
 - ❖ *Monkey with Baby and Autumn Flowers*, Attributed to School of Sosen, scroll painting of ink color on paper, Pacific Asia Museum Collection, Gift of Dr. George W. Housner, 2001.21.81

Discussion

Display the artwork on page 68 of Open Court Book 1-2 and project or reproduce *Octopus-Samurai and Farmer*. Ask students to describe what they see in both images. Explain that these are works showing imaginary scenes. Ask why an artist might want to do this. Answers might include “to show pictures from stories,” “to show things that are impossible,” and “just for fun!”

Show *Monkey with Baby and Autumn Flowers*. Ask students to describe what they see. Is this a scene from real life? Why or why not? Explain that this is a scene of everyday life in the monkey world. Ask students to point out what makes it realistic. Examples might include the maternal gesture, the monkey sitting on a rock, the young monkey hiding in its mother’s fur.

If appropriate for students’ level of comprehension, explain that long ago in Japan, powerful men had their own armies. Warriors such as the samurai worked for these men. They had strict rules about how they were to behave. Many samurai believed that it was important to be brave at all times, no matter how frightened they were. (Search the Pacific Asia Museum’s collections for images of samurai: <http://www.pacificasiamuseum.org/mweb/>)

In small groups or as a class, ask students to:

Define what a hero is.

What does it mean to be brave?

Do they know any heroes?

Have they ever been brave?

Do they know of any animal heroes? Examples might include seeing-eye dogs, a mother bird keeping her chicks safe, or even a cat that curls up with a lonely child.

Activities

Write a short story describing a time you were frightened by an animal but were brave.

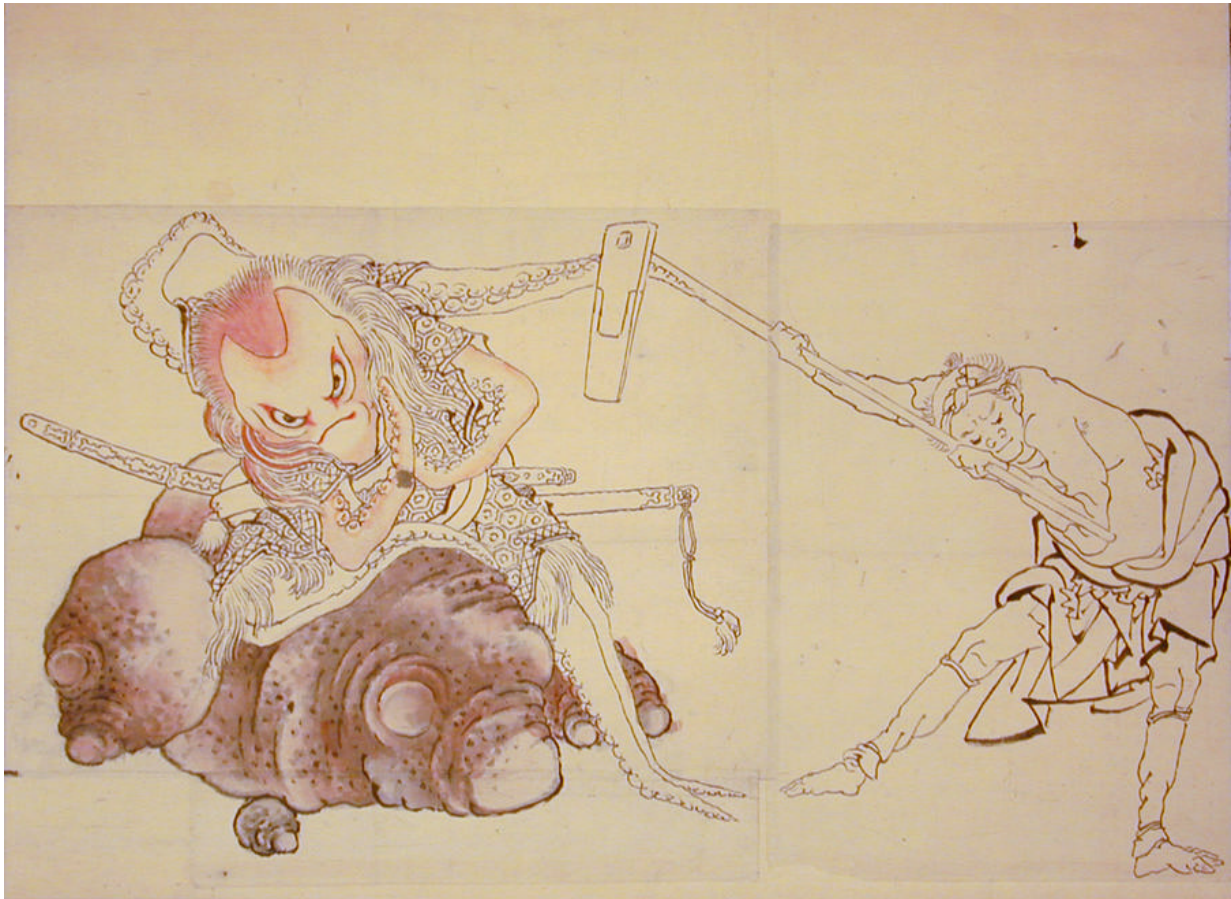
Draw a realistic or imaginary picture of an animal being brave. Use bright colors like Utagawa Kuniyoshi.

Standards

California State Framework for Reading and Language Arts

Reading Comprehension

Literary Response and Analysis



Octopus-Samurai and Farmer
Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)
Japan, c. 1839
Drawing in ink on paper
Pacific Asia Museum Collection
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Kamansky, 1987.47.1



Monkey with Baby and Autumn Flowers
Attributed to School of Sosen
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