



Curriculum Connections



Connecting the Art of Hokusai and Henri Rivière to Local Landscapes

Curricular Themes:

History and Social Science
(Geography of the World, California,
and the United States)

Science
(Biomes and Climate Regions)

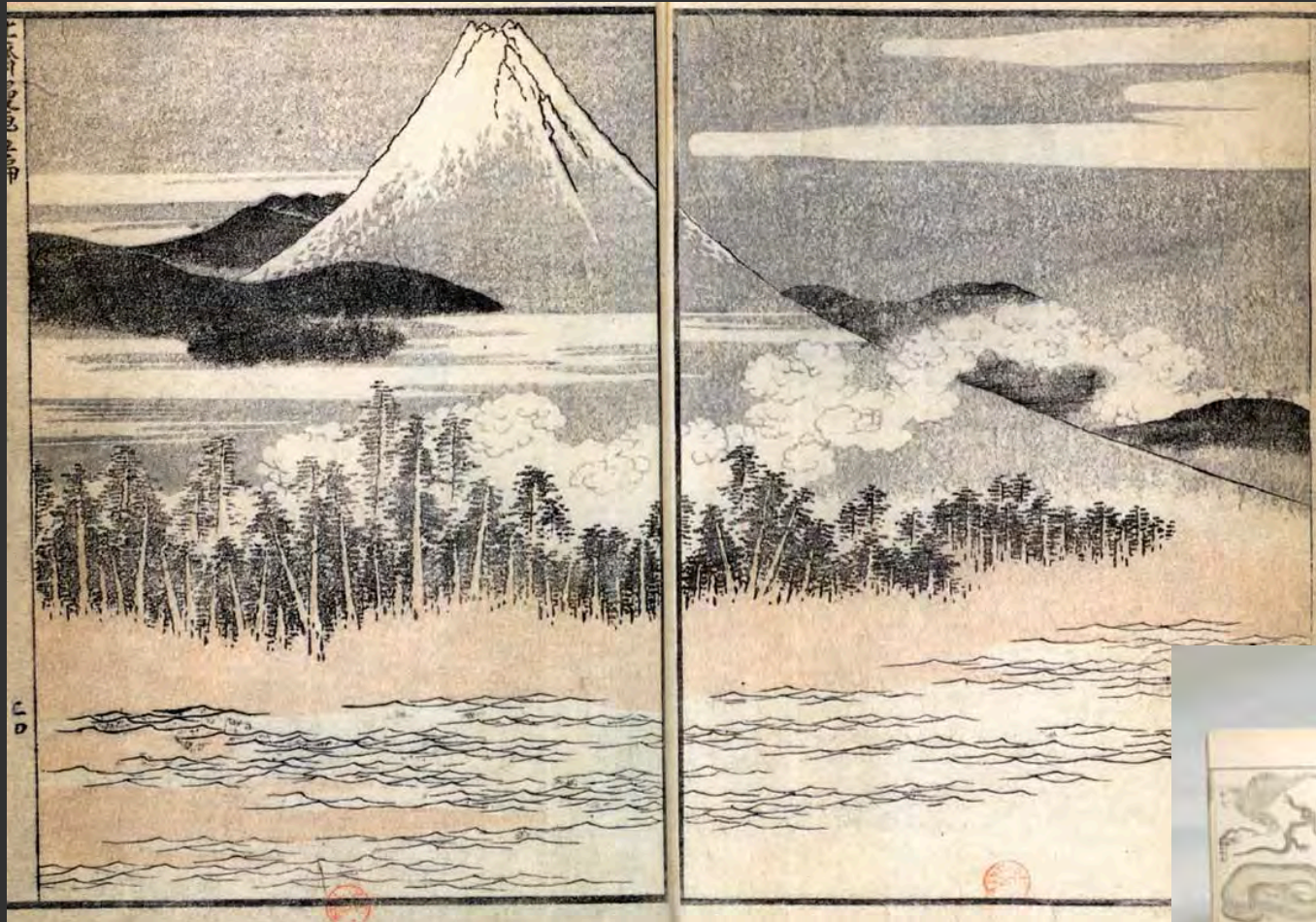


Hokusai and Henri Rivière were both inspired by the beauty of the places where they lived. They sketched favorite locations over and over, never tiring of the view.

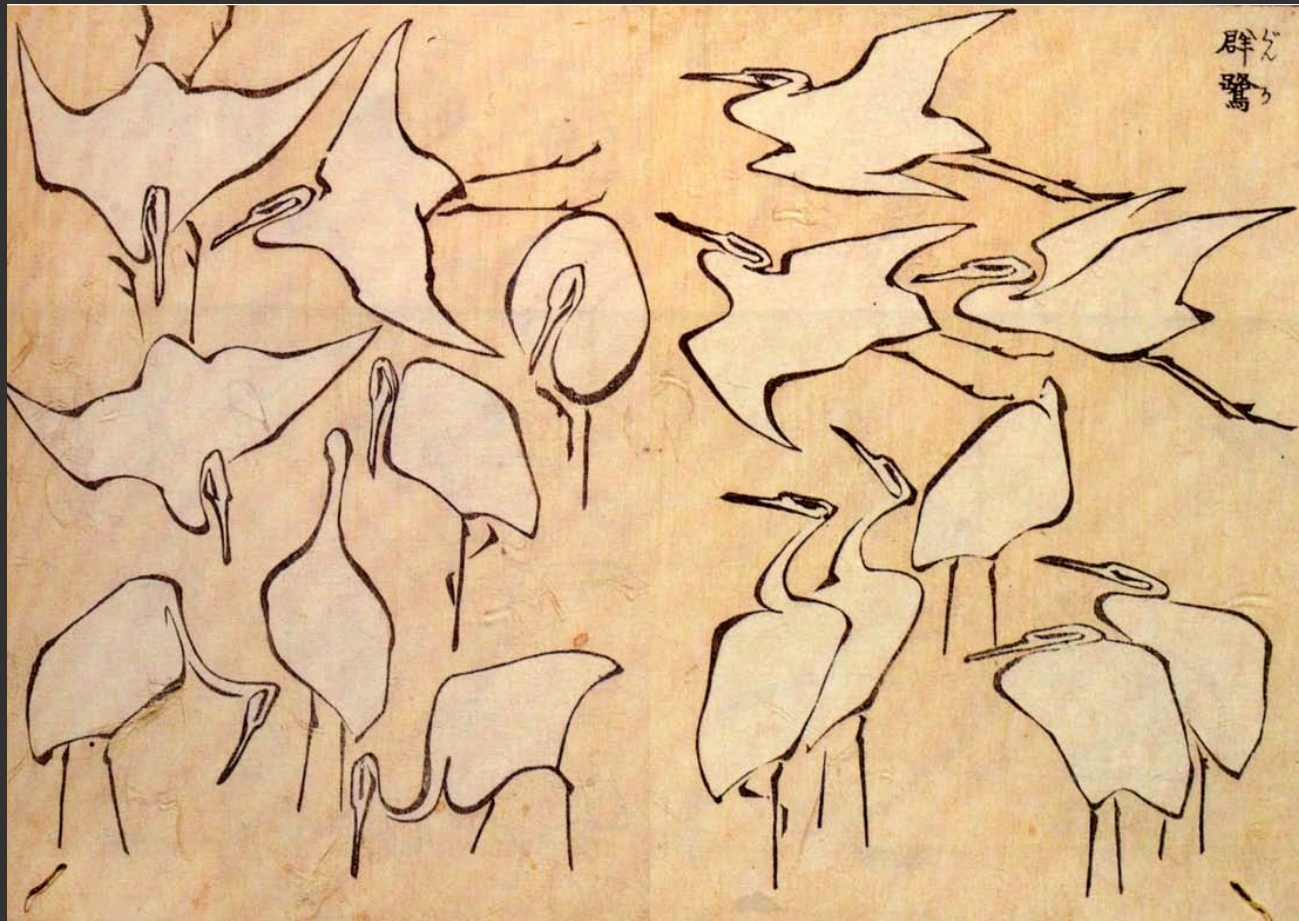
From rough drawings to completed woodblock prints, their observations from nature inspired them to engage in the process of creating art.



In addition to his woodblock prints, Hokusai published a collection of sketches of various subjects, including landscapes, flora and fauna, everyday life, and even the supernatural. This collection of fifteen volumes of sketches is called *Hokusai's Manga*. It is printed in three colors (black, gray and pale flesh), and includes thousands of images.



His *Manga* is a record of all of the things that captured his artistic eye. He often recorded the same subject repeatedly, sketching it in many different poses. For example, this page from his *Manga* shows cranes in several different positions and movements.



In France, Henri Rivière made sketches of scenes from Paris and Brittany. In his series *Thirty-six Views of the Eiffel Tower*, an homage to Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, he created multiple images of Paris.

Both Hokusai and Rivière looked at their respective worlds and found something new in each view.


By changing perspectives, they helped viewers of their art appreciate many different aspects of the geographic locations where they lived.



Think about the geographic area where you live. What are the natural elements? Consider bodies of water (the ocean, rivers, creeks, lakes), land features (mountains, hills, plains, coastline, cliffs, etc.), and vegetation (trees, plants, flowers, etc.). Try sketching several scenes from your local environment.


Here is an example of a scene in a rural area near Santa Barbara:





How are these two images similar and different?

What is different in terms of perspective?

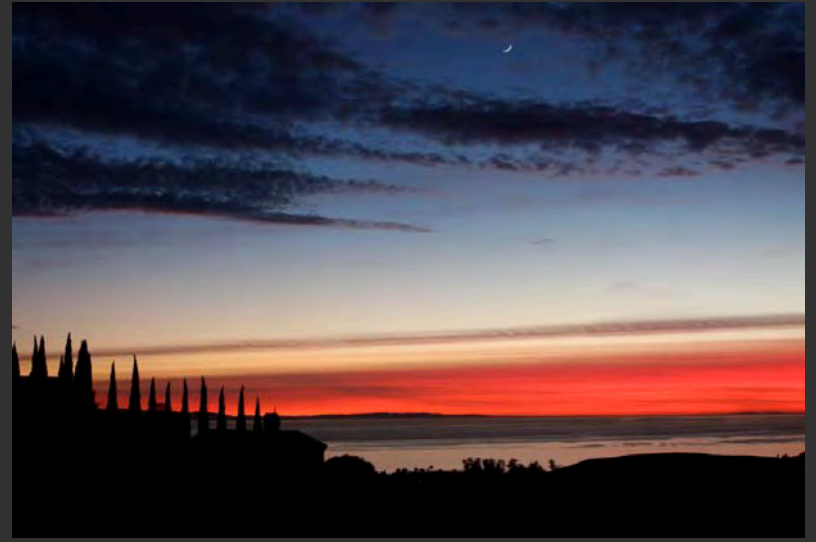


Which image interests you as an invitation to create art?



This student composition features a similar local rural landscape with simplified details and an emphasis on **perspective (vanishing point)**. It was created using three different foam plates (background, foreground, and middle ground).

Look at these images. All the photographs were taken from the same location – it is the exact same landscape, yet each scene is different.



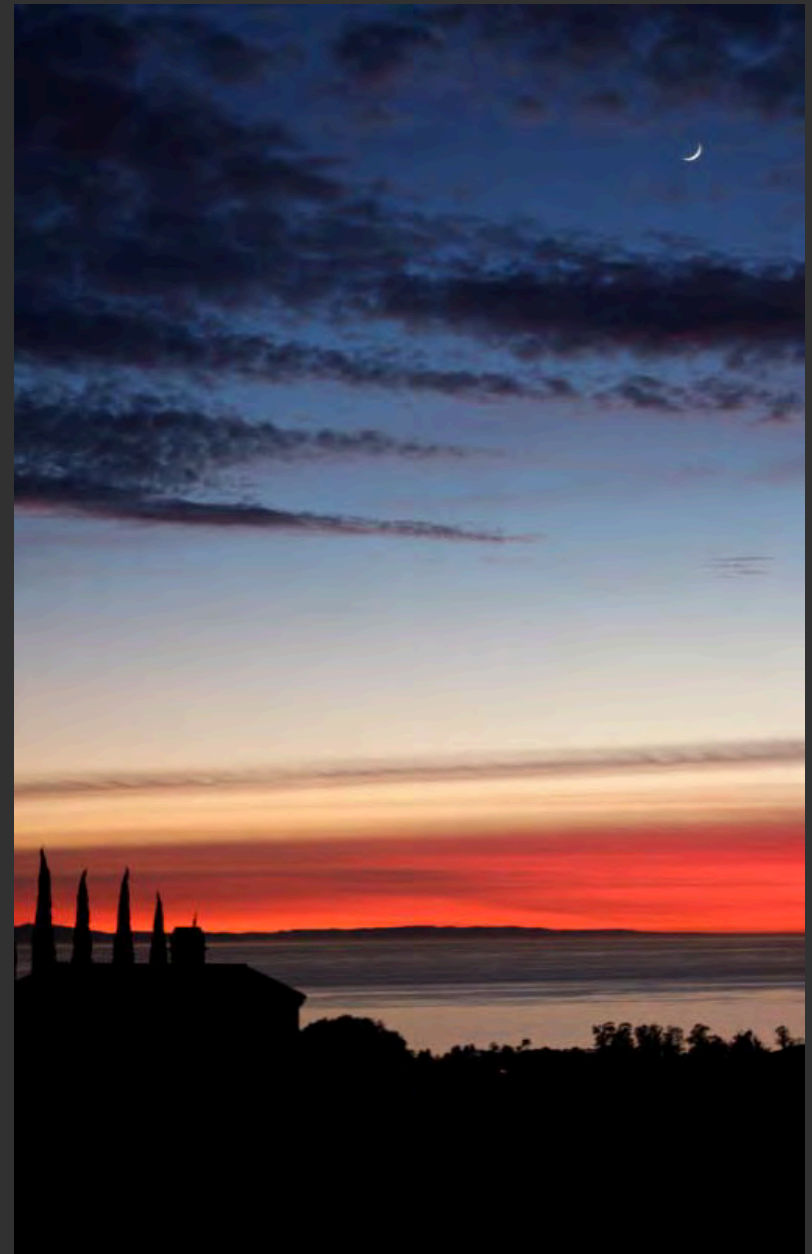
Both a scientist and an artist would be equally interested in thinking about the differences in these scenes. What are the weather conditions? What time of day is represented? What season of the year is it? What phase of the moon is visible in one of the images? Can you find the moon?

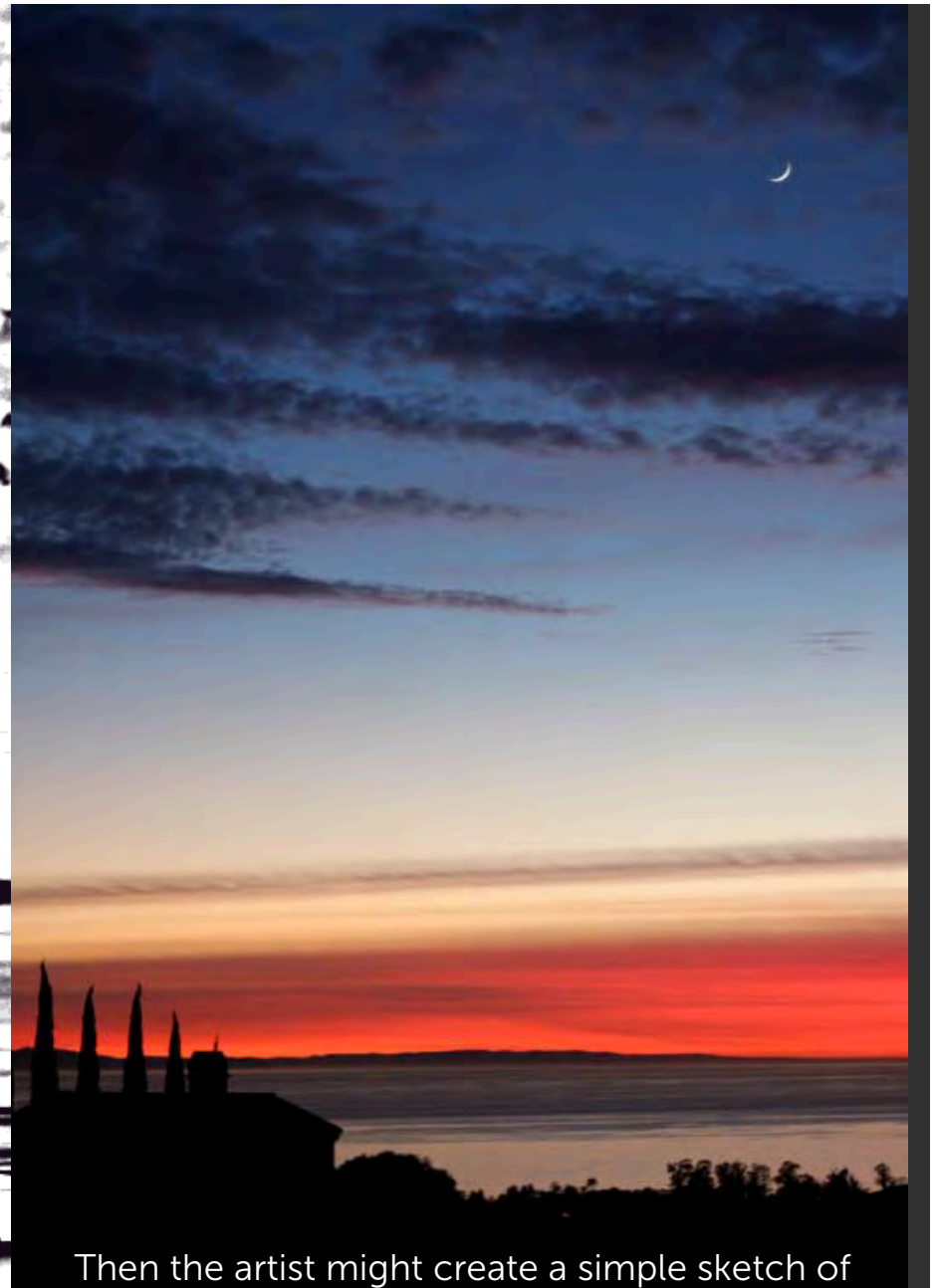


How would Hokusai or Rivière render this scene in a woodblock print? How might they represent the clouds? What proportions would they give to the background, foreground, and middle ground? How would they depict the moon? What colors would they use?



Perhaps the artist would choose to depict the scene in a rectangular panel, featuring the cypress trees to the left, the house, the islands across the channel, and the foliage in the foreground.





Then the artist might create a simple sketch of the contour lines of the scene, and transfer the sketch to a plate for printmaking.

Take a look around the geographic locations where you live. Bring a sketch book or camera along...what do you see? Try changing perspectives, and look at the same view at different times of the day. Look at the scene from a low position (crouch down near the ground), and also when standing up. How is it different? Which view interests you?



The poet Mary Oliver wrote:
The world offers itself to your imagination.



Take the world up on that invitation... and then create some art.

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