



Hanuman, Artist Not Known, Mithila Region, .

Lesson Plan

SILLINESS, STORIES & SKILLS *Hanuman* MITHILA PAINTING

Overview

Students will learn about Hanuman through stories and the *Hanuman* Mithila painting. They will have an opportunity to develop fine motor skills by cutting with scissors and painting line drawings with watercolors.

Age Group

Early childhood (ages 3–5)

Length of Lesson

One 30–35 minute lesson (plus 8–10 minutes each day for two days prior to the lesson to create anticipation)

Rationale

By engaging children with the stories of Hanuman, as well as a pictorial representation for them to paint, their worldviews and awareness of different cultures and religions increases. The lesson also gives children time to work on fine motor skills, which are rapidly developing at this stage.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- state at least two details from the story of Hanuman;
- identify at least two colors from the *Hanuman* Mithila painting;
- control scissors and a watercolor paintbrush sufficiently to cut out and paint in a line drawing of the *Hanuman* Mithila painting.

Materials

- One teacher copy of at least two Hanuman stories (Refer to the Resources section on the *Hanuman* object page of the *Creativity Resource* website)
- One pair of scissors for each child
- At least one watercolor paintbrush for each child
- Watercolors for children to share or one set for each child
- One small bowl of water for every four children to wash their brushes
- One small towel or paper towels for children to dry their brushes
- Newspaper to protect work space

Included:

- *About the Art* sheet on the *Hanuman* Mithila painting
- One color photocopy of the *Hanuman* Mithila painting for every three to four students, or the ability to project the image onto a wall or screen
- One enlarged black and white photocopy of the line drawing of the *Hanuman* Mithila painting for each child

Two days prior to the lesson

1. Do some mischievous things around the classroom and wonder aloud whom might have done those things (ensure that it would be impossible for any children to have done them or some children might worry). Have fun and focus on the mischievous actions as being silly. A few things each day for two days prior should be sufficient.

Lesson

1. Set up cutting and painting area.
2. In a separate area for reading, have students sit in a circle. Share with them that you think you have discovered who might be behind some of the silly goings-on in the classroom. Tell them you think it might have been Hanuman.
3. Show students the color photocopies/projection of the *Hanuman* painting and read and talk about two Hanuman stories with them. Include repetitive phrases that the children can say aloud when they hear the phrase approaching.
4. Talk about the colors and patterns in the *Hanuman* painting.
5. Move to the art area. Distribute photocopies of the *Hanuman* painting and have children work on cutting out the picture of Hanuman. Assist them as needed with holding and manipulating the scissors.
6. Demonstrate how to wet the paintbrush and paint, as needed. Also show them how to wash and dry their brush in order to change colors.
7. Allow children to paint in the line drawing as best as they are able. Walk around and look at each other's paintings to celebrate their hard work when everyone is done.
8. Finish the lesson with a final story about Hanuman. For older children you may like to have the class write a story about Hanuman.



Hanuman, 1900s, Artist Not Known, Mithila Region, Denver Art Museum: Anonymous gift, 1992.490



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About the Art

Hanuman

Who Made It?

Mithila paintings are traditionally made by women of the Mithila region, an ancient cultural region that sits between the lower ranges of the Himalayas and the Ganges River, covering areas of both India and Nepal. This art is also sometimes known as Madhubani art. Madhubani is an Indian town in the Mithila region. Mithila women are trained in painting as children. Once they start their own families, they teach their daughters to paint as well, passing the tradition from one generation of women to the next. The paintings mark a life transition and pay service to their gods.

Traditionally, these images were painted onto walls and floors, and all of the women in the family would join in. Due to famines and economic pressures in the 1960s, women were encouraged to transfer their paintings from walls to paper to be sold. The painting in the Denver Art Museum collection was created on paper. While the paintings on paper do not hold the same religious purity and power as those on walls, they do help maintain an indigenous tradition. Both the Indian and Nepali governments have encouraged art as a means of livelihood and expression for the people of the Mithila region. Men even began to create paintings on paper when they learned how much they fetched.

What Inspired It?

The majority of Mithila paintings portray one or more gods and illustrate religious epics and common beliefs among the people of Mithila. They depict legends to which the folk turn to pray in their daily ritual. A painting became a sacred space that the god could inhabit briefly, after which the image could be stepped on or painted over for the next painting.

This particular painting portrays the monkey-god Hanuman, who was the son of the wind god. Because air sustains all living beings, he was also called “Pranadeva,” or “God of Life.” Hanuman is a central figure in the great Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*. One well-known story of Hanuman tells of how he helped Rama, one of the most popular Hindu deities, recover his wife from a demon. In his devotion to Rama, Hanuman is upheld as a model for human devotion to the gods. His image reminds the viewer to humbly and devotedly serve god.

Things to Look For



Lines

Distinct lines are used to outline colored forms and create abstract patterns that fill the background. Crosshatch lines cross over one another forming a pattern that looks like a grid. Curvilinear lines are smooth and round, bending in all different directions. Parallel lines all run in the same direction, never crossing each other.

Watercolor

Artists use watercolors that are usually made from commercially available colored powders. Lines are used to fill many of the spaces where watercolor is not used.

Dense Background

The background is filled with flowers and abstract patterns that are painted in bright colors. Every available space is filled so that demons can't find a space to hide within the painting.



Cloak

Hanuman's cloak is open and we can see that the inside is decorated with a pattern composed of small flowers.

Repetition

Patterns are created by repeating a line, shape, or color over and over again.

Body Position

Hanuman's legs are shown in profile and his chest is shown from the front. Mithila painters often position figures in this way so that the viewer is able to see the body from more than one vantage point.



Mountain of Herbs

During one of his heroic exploits, Hanuman took a trip to the Himalayas and carried back an entire mountain of medicinal herbs to restore Rama's wounded army. It is likely that the object he carries in this painting is the mountain of herbs.



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