Art of Japan: Intro

The first traces of Japanese art date to about 3000 B.C. and a culture known as Jomon. The earliest artworks consist mainly of simple, undecorated vessels, figures, and animals made of red clay. This figure of a seated warrior is a **haniwa** (cylinder), which was used to decorate a tomb.

**Architecture**

**Buddhism** was introduced to Japan in 552 when the ruler of a kingdom in Korea sent a gilt bronze figure of the Buddha to the emperor of Japan. In 594, an empress ordered that **Buddhist temples** be built throughout her kingdom. A **pagoda** is a tower several stories high with roofs slightly curved upward at the edges. Since the Japanese islands were formed from volcanic rock, there was little hard stone suitable for building these temples.

As a result, these and other structures were made of wood. These kind of structures contained sacred relics. One of these ancient wooden **pagodas** that has survived countless earthquakes is the **Temple complex at Horyuji** which still stands today as the oldest wooden structure in the world (616AD).

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1. Approximately when are the first traces of Japanese art dated from? (1)

2. Make a compositional outline sketch of the Haniwa: Seated Warrior sculpture from the 6th century and what was the purpose of such a small sculpture? (2)

3. Explain how the Buddhist religion reached Japan. (1)

4. What is a Pagoda? (1)

5. From what material was the temple at Horyuji made and why? (2)
Art of Japan: The Heian Period: Painting

In 784, Heian (Kyoto) was made the capital of Japan. The name Heian is used to identify a period regarded as a golden age for Japanese art. In 898 artists developed their own unique style of painting known as Yamato-e or painting in the Japanese manner. The term yamato-e means "Japanese pictures."

Artists using the Yamato-e style created decorative wall paintings. This painting from the Late Heian-Early Kamakura period shows the elegantly dressed Benzai-Ten, Japanese goddess of language, music, and eloquent speech.

1. What does the term "Yamato-e" mean? (1)

2. Make a compositional outline sketch of the figure in the Benzai-Ten painting. (1)

3. List two stylistic differences between the figure in the Benzai-Ten painting from the late Heian-Early Kamakura with the figure in the painting of Basil II, from an 11th century Christian manuscript. (2)

   1.
   2.
The Great Buddha at Kamakura was cast in bronze in 1252.

The Rise of Zen Buddhism
During the Kamakura period the growing appeal of Zen Buddhism resulted in the popularity of art forms associated with that religion. Zen's appeal may have been due to the fact that it offered people an escape from the chaos that marked daily life. For example, Soami Kangaku Shinso’s scroll design of a quiet and peaceful landscape.

4. What material is the Great Buddha at Kamakura made from?(1)

5. Compare the facial expression of the Great Buddha and the Christ detail from the church of Vézelay. How do you interpret the mood/feeling of both and why? (2)

Great Buddha expression:

Christ:

6. Look at the Landscape of the Four Seasons: Fall and Winter by Shinso. How does the work make you feel and why? (2)

7. Compare the Western Dutch landscape by Vermeer with the Japanese landscape by Shinso. List one stylistic similarity and one difference between them. (2)

Similarity:

Difference:

Western Dutch landscape:
Jan Vermeer, View of Delft, 1660-1661.

Great Buddha.
Kamakura, Japan, c. 1252.

Christ detail, Tympanum Portal, Vezelay Church, France 1130.

Shinso. Landscape of the Four Seasons: Fall & Winter, 16th century.

The Art of Japan: Sculpture & Painting

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This process involved transferring and cutting pictures into **wood blocks**, inking the surface of these blocks, and printing. Using this technique, an artist could produce as many inexpensive prints as needed. Originally prints were made with black ink on white paper.

In the 18th century a process for producing multi-coloured prints was developed. A separate block was prepared for each colour. Finally the printer inked each block and pressed each one against the paper, being careful to align the print.

**Torii Kiyonobu I**

He was an actor's son who often selected as his subjects actors from the **Kabuki theatre**. His picture of a woman dancer uses a characteristic bold line that flows across the paper to create a complex yet graceful rhythm of curved lines and patterns.

**Katsushika Hokusai**

From about 1825 to 1831 Hokusai published his brilliant Mount Fuji series of prints. "**The Great Wave off Kanagawa**" shows Mount Fuji in the distance, beyond a huge wave that threatens to destroy the fishing boats that are almost lost in the violently churning sea.

1. Why is the woodblock printing process inexpensive? (1)

2. Look at A Woman Dancer woodcut by Torii Kiyonobu I and explain how does the artist create a sense of movement in this work? (1)

3. How does Katsusika Hokusai create a sense of movement in his famous Under the Wave off Kanagawa woodcut from 1823-29? (1)
Ando Hiroshige

Hiroshige used delicate lines and a harmonious colour scheme to give nature a more subdued atmosphere. Much of the beauty of his work comes from his sensitive response to variations in the weather and changing seasons. Hokusai and Hiroshige produced many of the works that were to inspire the French Impressionists in the 19th century. Vincent Van Gogh copied Japanese prints to hone his technique.

4. What kind of compositional cropping and lines does Hiroshige use in his Sudden Rain at Ohashi print from 1857 and what kind of mood does he create as a result? (2)

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5. Who did Hokusai’s and Hiroshige’s work inspire later in the West during the 19th century? (1)

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1.

2.