

# Japanese Theatre Unit

Theatre, MS 1: 50-minute classes, two weeks  
Mixed 6th–8th grade students

Stage 1 - Desired Results	
<p><b>TEKS Addressed:</b>            1A: develop characterization based on sensory and emotional recall;            2A: demonstrate safe use of the voice and body;            2F: create environments, characters, and actions.            3A: create character, environment, action, and theme collaboratively through the safe use of props, costumes, and visual elements;            4A: demonstrate the role of theatre as a reflection of history, society, and culture through participation in dramatic activities;</p>	
<p><b>Understanding Goals</b>            Students will understand...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining characteristics of Western theatre</li> <li>• The similarities and differences between Noh and Kabuki theatre</li> <li>• How to use Noh and Kabuki as inspiration while being respectful to the art forms</li> </ul>	<p><b>Essential Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the theatre traditions of other countries?</li> <li>• How does an actor approach Noh and Kabuki performance?</li> <li>• How can we use the techniques of Kabuki and Noh theatre to inspire American performance?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Students Objectives:</b>            Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Aristotle’s Elements of Drama to identify qualities in Western theatre techniques</li> <li>• Identify the defining characteristics between Kabuki and Noh theatre in terms of historical, performance, and technical aspects</li> <li>• Perform in short movement and masked pieces using exercises inspired by Japanese theatre</li> </ul>	
Stage 2 - Assessment Evidence	
<p><b>Performance Task(s):</b>            Students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify defining characteristics in a written assessment</li> <li>• Perform movement pieces inspired by Japanese theatre</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other Evidence:</b>            Students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and contrast in written reflection</li> <li>• Identify differences through discussion and observation</li> <li>• Analyze peers’ work</li> <li>• Apply strategies to rehearsal</li> </ul>

	projects
<b>Stage 3 - Learning Plan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Defining Western Theatre</li> <li>○ Introducing Aristotle's Elements of Drama</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Applying Elements of Drama into a Blank Scene</li> <li>○ Scene Analysis</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Brief overview of Japan</li> <li>○ Introducing Kabuki: historical context, performance techniques and technical elements</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Application of Kabuki: creating mie-inspired performance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Kabuki reflection: Kabuki vs. Western Theatre</li> <li>○ Introduction to Noh: historical context, performance techniques and technical elements</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 6 (40-minute classes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assessment: Noh defining qualities</li> <li>○ Begin creating Noh-inspired masks</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Finish creating Noh-inspired masks</li> <li>○ Performance activity: Noh-inspired scenes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 8: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assessment: Kabuki vs. Noh vs. Western Theatre Quiz</li> <li>○ Begin performance assessment: performance of a classic tale using Noh or Kabuki as inspiration</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rehearse fairy tales</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Day 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Perform projects</li> <li>○ Unit written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

<b>Day 1: Defining Western Theatre</b>	
<b>Understandings Addressed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining characteristics of Western theatre</li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What defines Western theatre?</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Plan:</b>	

- Define Western Theatre
  - Use the map to visualize the differences between Western Theatre and Eastern Theatre (specifically Japanese)
- Historical context: introduce Greek Theatre as the birthplace of Western theatre
  - Note: some 7th and 8th students have studied Greek theatre with me in their 6th or 7th grade year
- Introduce Aristotle's Elements of Drama (plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle)
  - Use turn-and-talk to brainstorm examples of each element
  - Use the plays we read this semester as examples of each element

### Day 2: Western Theatre

#### Understandings Addressed

- Defining characteristics of Western theatre

#### Essential Questions

- What defines Western theatre?

#### Learning Plan:

- Informal assessment: create tableaux to demonstrate each individual Element of Drama
  - Finish defining the elements of drama (if needed)
- Open Scene
  - Using realism as acting style, create characters/objectives in an open scene
- Perform open scenes
  - Have audience members analyze for the elements of theatre and offer suggestions for adding additional spectacle, music and thought

### Day 3: Kabuki

#### Understandings Addressed

- Kabuki is an entertainment style for the people with deep ties to Japanese history

#### Essential Questions

- What is Kabuki?

#### Learning Plan:

- Introduce Japanese theatre: generally, less realistic and more stylized than Western theatre, accompanied by music, with deep historical origins
- Brief overview of Japan - location, culture, relation to USA

- Use student knowledge of Japan when possible and applicable
- Introduction to Kabuki
  - Provide slideshow of images from Kabuki theatre.
  - Students will identify what they see and learn about how their observations apply to Kabuki theatre
- TED-ED Video: about Kabuki:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oidE2SSDczw&t=2s>
- Mini-Lecture
  - Historical context
  - Performance techniques
  - Technical elements
- Kabuki on Stage: a Solo Performance video
  - Discussion of these qualities while watching this video
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVDUcFOnVKk&t=1s>

#### Day 4: Kabuki

##### Understandings Addressed

- Kabuki is an entertainment style for the people with deep ties to Japanese history

##### Essential Questions

- What is Kabuki?
- How does a mie compare to tableaux

##### Learning Plan:

- Warm-up: using laptops, find 3 photos of Kabuki from the internet and label 1 distinctive feature for each photo
- Video: Kabuki for Beginners
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xjkgVjZzk0&t=41s>
- Performance Activity: Mie-inspired movements
  - Define mie (*me-eh*)
  - Walk around space using different emotions (mad, glad, sad, and afraid) combined with distinctive ages (young, same-age, and old). Integrate tableaux of those emotions with the same age
  - Assign each student a mie (distinctive character with specific emotion). Repeat activity with their own character.
  - Share mies as a class
  - Using percussion instruments, add music and sound effects to the mie walk and frozen mies. Share the new movements.

#### Day 5: Noh

<b>Understandings Addressed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noh is a reflective, historical Japanese theatre style using masks</li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is Noh?</li> <li>How does Noh contrast to Kabuki?</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Plan:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kabuki reflection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journal: comparing Kabuki to Western theatre and reflection on creating the mies</li> </ul> </li> <li>Introduction to Noh: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide slideshow of images from Kabuki theatre.</li> <li>Students will identify what they see and learn about how their observations apply to Kabuki theatre</li> </ul> </li> <li>Video: Behind the Scenes in a Noh Theater  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVGrq8TdzOc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVGrq8TdzOc</a> </li> <li>Mini-Lecture on Noh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historical context</li> <li>Performance techniques</li> <li>Technical elements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

<b>Day 6: Noh (40-minute class)</b>	
<b>Understandings Addressed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noh is a reflective, historical Japanese theatre style using masks</li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is Noh?</li> <li>How does Noh contrast to Kabuki?</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Plan:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informal Assessment: Noh defining qualities</li> <li>Noh masks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the specific qualities of Noh masks</li> <li>Brainstorm different archetypes and defining features of these archetypes</li> <li>Begin making masks (supplies: cardstock, marker, pencil, elastic, staples)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

<b>Day 7: Noh</b>	
<b>Understandings Addressed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noh is a reflective, historical Japanese theatre style using masks</li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is Noh?</li> <li>How does Noh contrast to Kabuki?</li> </ul>

**Learning Plan:**

- Finish creating Noh-inspired masks
- Performance activity: Noh-inspired movement pieces
  - Explore moving using masks
  - Create small movement pieces, exploring everyday movements, in the masks
  - In small groups, add music and sound to masked movement pieces

**Day 8: Begin Final Assessment****Understanding Addressed**

- Defining characteristics of Noh and Kabuki theatre
- How to use Noh and Kabuki as inspiration while being respectful to the art forms

**Essential Questions:**

- How does an actor approach Noh and Kabuki performance?
- How can we use the techniques of Kabuki and Noh theatre to inspire American performance?

**Learning Plan:**

- Assessment: Kabuki vs. Noh vs. Western Theatre Quiz
- Begin performance assessment: performance of a classic tale using Noh or Kabuki as inspiration
  - Assign students to small groups. Each group will perform a classic tale using either Noh or Kabuki as inspiration
  - Students must use the movement styles, mies/masks, music and images as inspiration for the story-telling

**Day 9: Rehearse Final Assessment****Understanding Addressed**

- Defining characteristics of Noh and Kabuki theatre
- How to use Noh and Kabuki as inspiration while being respectful to the art forms

**Essential Questions:**

- How does an actor approach Noh and Kabuki performance?
- How can we use the techniques of Kabuki and Noh theatre to inspire American performance?

**Learning Plan:**

- Rehearse classic tales
- Groups using the same performance style will watch each others' performances and provide feedback to make the styles clearer

**Day 10: Performance****Understanding Addressed**

- Defining characteristics of Noh and Kabuki theatre
- How to use Noh and Kabuki as inspiration while being respectful to the art forms

**Essential Questions:**

- How does an actor approach Noh and Kabuki performance?
- How can we use the techniques of Kabuki and Noh theatre to inspire American performance?

**Learning Plan:**

- Perform projects
  - Informal reflection after each performance: audience must look for moments that are inspired by the Kabuki/Noh style
- Unit written reflection
  - In journals, fill out reflection describing how students used the style as inspiration and their contribution to the work.