Slide #1
Scenes from the Nakamura Kabuki Theater

In the early 17th century, The Tokugawa Shōgunate established Edo as the headquarters of military authority and required warlords and their subordinates to reside within the city. Because the population of the town was comprised largely of males, brothels began to arise. In an attempt to exert control, the government created a pleasure district (Yoshiwara) and designated an area for the popular Kabuki theaters. Moronobu was one of the first artists to depict this subject matter. Such paintings, illustrations and prints became known as *ukiyo-e* (pictures of the floating world).

*Byōbu* are Japanese folding screens with multiple folding sections, painted or designed with calligraphy, often used to separate sections of rooms or interiors.

Slide #2 – Title Slide (Kabuki Theater: Slide Set #1)

Slide #3
Kabuki costume (*furisode*)

Kabuki costumes were designed strategically with color, textile, and contour to designate the class, age, or traits of the characters wearing them, including non-human characters.

Discussion Questions:
1. What type of character would you imagine wearing the *furisode* in slide #3? Explain why.
2. Can you imagine what it would look like when an actor wears this costume? How would the actor’s movements animate the dragon imagery?

Slide #4
Lute (shamisen) and plectrum

A *shamisen* is a plucked string instrument, similar to a banjo or guitar. The body is called the *dō*, the neck called the *sao*, and the strings are raised from the body by a bridge called a *koma*. The shamisen often accompanies dramas like Kabuki.

Slide #5
Kabuki theater program (*tsuji banzuke*)

Kabuki theater originated in Kyoto in the early 1600s and was founded by Okuni, a female dancer. Over the course of the century, Kabuki underwent a number of changes.
In 1629, women were banned from the stage, and in 1652, their successors, adolescent boys, were also banned; this left only adult male actors. In the late 17th century, Kabuki established its content of intricately plotted dramas consisting of emotional conflict. In Edo in the 1690s, a more macho style of acting was popularized. These macho heroes of the stage were the subjects of actor prints (like the one in slide #6) being bought by the merchant class (as well as the heroines- also played by male actors).

The single sheet printing method was also used to make programs for the Kabuki plays. The process of woodblock printing historically involved a number of people. First, an artist drew a design. This design became the basis for the wooden printing blocks carved by a professional engraver. A professional printer then took the blocks to produce the finished works. Typically, an initial printing run resulted in approximately 200 identical prints. If the prints were well sold, a second printing run was repeated.

See “Overview of the Techniques of Woodblock Printing” link on the PDF “Edo Japan Links” to see images, descriptions, and videos of woodblock carving and printing.

Slide #6
Actor Nakamura Shikan as Kajiwara Kagesue

Around the year 1680, woodblock prints became available as single-sheet illustrations. Earlier, they had been available only in bound books. This single-sheet method of printing was an affordable way for the merchant class to purchase original artwork. Typical themes of such prints at the time focused on the hedonism of the floating world, big-city mentality. Prints portraying Kabuki actors were also hugely popular at the time.

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Slide #7 – Title Slide (Art of the Merchant Class: Slide Set #2)

Slide #8
Flourishing Business at a Major Theater

Theater scenes like this illustrate the thriving leisure economy that existed during the Edo period. The fact that people could go to the theater indicates an expendable income. As the population grew wealthier, their desire for lavish and accessible forms of entertainment also increased. However, all levels of society enjoyed Kabuki theater during the Edo period.

Discussion Questions:
1. Can you find any similarities in this picture to an entertainment form you are familiar with? What types of entertainment that you have seen or know about have similar layouts (stage, etc)?
2. Look closely at the picture. Can you identify the various forms of art that Kabuki theater encompasses?
Flourishing Business on the Jewel River

With the rise of wealth in the Edo period, many people went from eating two meals a day to three. During this time, Japanese food culture developed among the wealthy urban middle-class merchants and artisans who economically controlled Edo society. Restaurants started to emerge during the middle of the 18th century, mostly located in the busy cities of Kyoto, Osaka, or Edo. The restaurants served refined dishes that were different from those served at formal banquets of the court and warrior class. These new recipes and techniques of food preparation spread, becoming the base of today's traditional Japanese cuisine.

Inexpensive eating-houses and pubs for the less-wealthy working class began to appear in big cities, featuring a menu of noodles, sushi, and tempura. One soba noodle shop and two sushi shops per block was a common sight in the center of Edo in the 18th century, and according to the 1804 census, 6,165 eating houses existed in the city.

Market at Kinryūzan Temple, from the series Perspective Prints

See “Overview of the Techniques of Woodblock Printing” link on the PDF “Edo Japan Links” to see images, descriptions, and videos of woodblock carving and printing.

Discussion Questions

1. How many different colors do you see in this print? How many different inking do you think it took to create this final print?
2. Does this scene remind you of anything you have seen in your life? Explain.
3. What does this scene tell you about the market economy of Japan during the Edo period?

A Peddlar of Potted Plants of the Four Seasons

See “Overview of the Techniques of Woodblock Printing” link on the PDF “Edo Japan Links” to see images, descriptions, and videos of woodblock carving and printing.

Horticulture was widely appreciated during the Edo period. Houseplants became popular as people started to attempt to grow plants in gardens. Shortly thereafter, through the use of pots, the classes who did not own land joined in the enthusiasm for urban gardening. Encouraged by horticultural manuals, which were being published in the late 17th century, as well as the street venders commonly seen in urban environments, nearly everyone enthusiastically enjoyed houseplants.

Kosode

Kosode literally means "small sleeves" and is the traditional Japanese equivalent of a T-shirt. Originally worn as an undergarment for early aristocrats, this precursor to the
kimono became popular among the merchant populations of large cities such as Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto. Men and women, regardless of social class, wore *kosode*. These garments were straight-seamed and crossed left-over-right in the front, then tied at the waist.

Discussion Questions:
1. What type of imagery would you want on a *kosode* if you were to wear it? Floral imagery, geometric patterns, etc?
2. Can you think of fashion traditions in the histories of other countries that began with the aristocracy and eventually spread to the masses?

**Slide #13**

Netsuke: Actor in the Role of a Warrior Lying in Ambush

*Netsuke* are small toggles used to fasten *inrō*, medicine boxes, to the wearer’s sash worn around the waist, generally by men. *Netsuke* are carved out of various materials, such as wood or ivory, into the forms of different objects or creatures.

Discussion Questions:
1. If you were to wear a *netsuke*, what object or creature would you like it to depict? Why?
2. Can you think of anything that seems to be a modern-day *netsuke*, or something that reminds you of them?

**Slide #14 – Title Slide (Literature: Slide Set #3)**

**Slide #15**

Shiohi no tsuto (Gifts from the Ebb Tide)

This ten-page book reinvents the fusion of traditional poetry, painting, and calligraphy. The book opens with an image of people combing for shells on a beach, and with the turn of a page, the perspective is magnified so that the viewers almost become beachcombers themselves. Six shells, each on their own spread, have corresponding poems printed above them. Each shell’s name is written in the poem above, allowing the reader to interact with the words and images simultaneously.

**Slide #16**

Soga Monogatari (The Tale of the Soga Brothers)

The Tale of the Soga Brothers is a Japanese Medieval war tale set in the last half of the twelfth century in Japan. The story begins with the murder of the Soga brothers’ father, which inspires in the brothers a lifelong quest to avenge him. A number of shorter tales about Buddhist saints and historical heroes are scattered throughout the story. The tale was the popular subject of numerous plays, and during the Edo period, with the use of printing technology, it became available to read at home.
Slide #17
The Tale of Genji: The Wind in the Pines (Genji Matsukaze), no. 18 from the series Genji in Fifty-Four Sheets

Written in the 11th century by Murasaki Shikibu, a woman in Heian Kyoto’s noble court society, The Tale of Genji is widely known as one of the world’s great literary masterpieces. It is often considered the world’s first novel. Beloved for centuries, the work or excerpts from it have been adapted to the stage, screen, and even comic book formats. English translations of the work by either Arthur Waley, Edward Seidensticker, or the most recent by Royall Tyler are the commonly read versions in American classroom settings.

Brief synopsis: The Tale of Genji recounts the life of Hikaru Genji (“Shining Prince”), the second son of a certain ancient emperor. A sage predicts that Genji will have a brilliant future, which causes his mother to suffer from jealousy, become ill, and die. The emperor, distraught with sadness, eventually finds a new concubine who reminds him of his old love. The emperor makes Genji a commoner, since he lacks court backing, and the emperor’s eldest son is made crown prince. Genji grows up to become exceptionally handsome and gifted. He is greatly admired by all, though feared by the crown princess and her family. The beginning of the tale tells of Genji’s amorous affairs, his arranged marriage to his best friend’s sister, the birth of his son, and his budding romance with another woman. His father passes away, and the crown prince takes his place as emperor. Due to the scandal of his affairs, Genji is forced to leave the capital for several years. After his return, the story continues with the remainder of Genji’s life in the capital, and then with the lives of Genji’s son and grandson, who experience adventure in the wild mountain area of Uji.

Slide #18 – Title Slide (Tea Ceremony: Slide Set #4)

Slide #19
Two Women - tea ceremony. Series: Shogei Sanju-roku (Tsuzuki).

Though there are several different schools of tea ceremony, each with their own idiosyncrasies, the basic tea equipment during tea ceremony is generally the same. Thus, the host tries to create a specific mood and chooses to express him/herself with different designs and prints on the objects. Some of the things taken into consideration when planning the tea ceremony are:

- Which objects go together aesthetically? Historically?
- Which ones are seasonally appropriate?
- How can I surprise or delight the guest?

Discussion Questions:
1. After studying the slides and related resources (found on the PDF “Edo Japan Links”: Enshu Style Tea Ceremony & Kenjutsu Demonstration) on tea ceremony, can you tell what the women in the picture are doing?
2. What do you think the words around the picture say?
3. After looking at the related resources on woodblock printing, how many different inkings do you think are involved in this print?
Slide #20
Tea Bowl

Discussion Questions:
1. Now that you know that a tenet of the tea ceremony is to use seasonal-specific pieces, during which season do you think this tea bowl would be used? Why?

Slide #21
Box for tea utensils

Tea boxes were made in various styles. During the Edo period, when the tea ceremony became a practice of popular society and not just of the elite class, the tradition of tea was often taken out-of-doors in the warmer months. For this less formal purpose, tea boxes were often created in portable baskets, like at a picnic. The tea box shown in this slide, however, would be used for a more formal tea ceremony.

Slide #22
Flower holder, in form of basket with cicada

The tradition of *ikebana*, over 600 years old, evolved from the Buddhist practice of making ritual offerings to the spirits of the dead. By the mid-fifteenth century, it achieved the status of an art form, independent from religion, though still encompassing a strong tradition and philosophical component.

Slide #23
Practicing Flower Arrangement on New Year's Morning (Haru no ashita ikebana keiko)

The practice of *ikebana* was originally male-dominated, but during the late Edo and early Meiji period, women began to participate.

Slide #24
Peonies

Along with *ikebana*, hanging scrolls such as this would be hung in the tea room’s tokonoma, an alcove decorated to match the season. Often, treasured tea utensils are also displayed here. The selection sets the mood for the ceremony, and guests pause to admire them before the tea is served.

Peonies were introduced into Japan at the start of the eighth century. Artists quickly began incorporating images of the peony into paintings, ceramics and tapestries. The peony also became the popular subject of poetry in Japanese literature.
There are two types of hanging scrolls, the ‘standing scroll’ which is a hanging scroll where the width is shorter than the height. The Japanese word for this type of scroll is Tatejiku. The other type is called a side scroll, where the width is longer than the height. The Japanese word for this type is Yokojiku. Yokojiku is not appropriate for the tea ceremony. Tatejiku can have visual images, calligraphy, or both.

Japanese architectural spaces designed for the tea ceremony are called chashitsu (literally, “tea rooms”). Typical features of a chashitsu include a tokonoma, sliding doors made of wooden lattice covered in translucent paper, and tatami mat floors.

You can see from this photograph that horticulture and the maintenance of gardens were important aspects of Japanese culture and teahouses. Ideal teahouses have a surrounding garden, called roji, with a path leading to the door.