

GREAT ART IDEAS FOR TEACHERS

POSTER DESIGN FOR CHANGE: INSPIRED BY TWENTIETH-CENTURY JAPANESE GRAPHIC DESIGN

YEAR 7–10

OVERVIEW

In this activity, students will analyse and interpret the formal qualities and messages of 20th century Japanese graphic design works. Using these works as inspiration, students develop a design which either advocates for a change that they would like to see in the world or celebrates a change that has made a positive impact on society.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyse and interpret works of 20th century Japanese graphic design.
- Discuss the factors that influenced design decisions in these examples.
- Produce their own piece of graphic design that campaigns for or celebrates change.
- Explain the idea/s they addressed in their work and reflect on how effectively their intentions have been realised in their finished pieces of graphic design.

STUDENT EXAMPLES



RELATED ARTWORKS

(clockwise from top right)

Hisui Sugiura

The first subway in the East 1927

colour lithograph

91.0 x 62.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2018

2018.1504

© Estate of Hisui Sugiura

Kazumasa Nagai

I'm here. Save being, save world (1980s)

colour screenprint

103.0 x 73.0 cm (image and sheet)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Jacqui Thomas, 2019

2019.747

© the artist

Ikko Tanaka

1988 Hiroshima appeals (1980s)

colour screenprint

103.0 x 73.0 cm (image and sheet)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Jacqui Thomas, 2019

2019.716

© Ikko Tanaka



DISCUSS

Works of Japanese graphic design typically employ simplified visual imagery, bold shapes, flat colours and subtle gradations of tone to communicate messages and meaning. These visual conventions and compositional formats were first developed during the Japanese Edo period (1603–1868), and continued to have a strong influence on graphic designers working in Japan throughout the 20th century.

The related examples of Japanese graphic design were created during two distinct periods in Japanese history. The first is a period of rapid modernisation for Japan that occurred between World War One and World War Two and the second is the 1980s when Japanese graphic designers advocated for global social, political and environmental change through simplified and stylised poster designs.

The first subway in the East

Hisui Sugiura's *The first subway in the East*, 1927, celebrates the social progress associated with the opening of Tokyo's first subway line. The poster boasts that the new service between the neighbourhoods of Asakusa and Ueno is the 'only subway in the East'.

I'm here. Save being and save world

Kazumasa Nagai utilised traditional techniques in the peace and environment posters for the Japan Graphic Designers Association (JAGDA). The designer campaigned for animal rights and the conservation of endangered species in the series, including *I'm here. Save being and save world*, 1980s.

1988 Hiroshima appeals

Ikko Tanaka is widely regarded as one of Japan's leading graphic designers from the 20th century. He was one of a number of prominent Japanese graphic designers who created The Hiroshima Appeals poster series to appeal for world peace.

Use the following discussion prompts to explore the works above with your class:

Look at Hisui Sugiura's *The first subway in the East* (1927)

- How can we tell this poster is promoting the opening of a new subway line?
- Describe the people waiting on the platform
How are they dressed? With whom are they traveling? How do you think they might be feeling as the train approaches? Can we see evidence of this in the design?
- What do you notice about the use of colour in this poster? Where has Hisui Sugiura applied brighter colours, and where has he used subtler tones? Why do you think he made this decision?
Note that there are brighter and bolder colours used in the modern clothing worn by the people in the foreground, and more subdued colours used in the background and in the clothing of the more traditionally dressed people further down the platform.
- How is line used to create a sense of depth and perspective in the work? Why do you think Hisui Sugihara used this perspective in the poster?
- Overall, how does this poster promote and celebrate change? How might this poster have influenced Japanese society at the time?

DISCUSS

Look at the two posters produced by Kazumasa Nagai and Ikko Tanaka in the 1980s

- Compare these two posters with Hisui Sugihara's *The first subway in the East*? How are they similar or different?
Consider the posters' aesthetic qualities, their purpose, their audiences and how they reflect the ideas and values of each time period
- Which meanings and ideas are being promoted by each poster? How can you tell?
- What do the ideas being promoted in each poster suggest about society at the time?
- Describe the use of shape in both of the posters from the 1980s.
Simplified, basic, easy to recognise, flat, cartoon-like?
- What do you notice about the use of colour in these posters?
You might observe that the colour palette in both examples is restricted and muted for the most part, but both posters also feature small areas of brighter, bolder colour
- How do these kinds of shapes and colours contribute to an effective and aesthetically pleasing design?
- Which feelings might the designers be trying to evoke through their choice of colour?
- How do you think each designer was hoping to influence society with these designs?

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Coloured A4 paper
- White A4 paper for sketching
- Grey lead pencil
- Scissors
- Glue
- Erasers

CREATE

Students design and create their own piece of graphic design through the following steps:

1. Brainstorm a list of some social, political and environmental issues in contemporary society and some recent changes which have already had a positive impact.
2. Decide whether you would like to create a design that advocates for a change that you would like to see in the world or celebrates a change that has already had a positive effect on society.
3. Carry out some research into your chosen ideas to inspire and inform your design.
 - Is the idea that you want to communicate relevant to a local or a wider, global community?
 - Would it have an environmental, social, or political impact?

- Which symbols or images are already associated with the idea?
 - Is there a common colour pallet associated with pre-existing visual representations of the idea? Describe it.
 - How have artists and designers already responded to the idea? What makes their approach effective?
4. Using imagery from your research as inspiration, sketch some simplified ideas for your design.
You'll be creating your imagery using collaged colour paper, so simple shapes will be easier to work with.
 5. Choose your preferred design.
 6. Create a colour scheme which involves no more than four colours to effectively communicate the ideas and feeling you want to embed in your design.
 7. Collect four coloured A4 paper sheets to create your design.
 8. Sketch or trace parts of your design onto the back of your coloured paper.
 9. Cut them out and take time to play with different arrangements on your background paper.
 10. Once you are happy, glue down your design.
 11. Use an eraser to remove any remaining pencil lines from the design for a clean finish.

PRESENT & REFLECT

Students split into small groups, share their designs with each other and discuss the following questions:

- Is your piece of graphic design advocating for or celebrating change?
- What idea did you choose to represent and how have you expressed your feelings towards it in your design?
- Describe your colour scheme. How does it relate to the idea you chose to express?
- How effective is your work in expressing your feelings around the idea you chose to represent in your work, and why do you think this?
- If your poster was to be displayed somewhere in public where do you believe it would have the most impact? Explain your choice.

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