NGV

ART ACROSS THE CURRICULUM | LANGUAGES (JAPANESE)

VOCABULARY SKILLS WITH *NOH* THEATRE COSTUMES AND CHARACTERS

LEVELS 8–10

OVERVIEW

This resource introduces students to Japanese *Noh* Theatre. Through scaffolded language activities, students develop their Japanese vocabulary including colours, adjectives and terms for key features of *Noh* theatre. Using Japanese language skills, students communicate their thoughts and interpretations of works from the NGV Collection, and create and describe their own *Noh* inspired character in a short piece of creative writing.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Read and recognise Japanese words for adjectives, colours, basic objects and facial features
- Use Japanese adjectives in a conversation to analyse and interpret meanings and emotions in traditional *Noh* theatre costumes and masks
- Write an imaginary role play which utilises Japanese adjectives and questions
- Create a contemporary character inspired by Japanese *Noh* theatre and describe the design in a short piece of Japanese descriptive writing

VIC CURRICULUM LINKS

LEVELS 7–8

- Interact with peers and the teacher to socialise and to exchange information about self, personal worlds and immediate environment, and to express feelings, likes and dislikes (VCJAC001)
- Locate key points of information in a range of texts and resources and use the information in new ways (VCJAC004)
- Reinterpret or create and perform imaginative texts using modelled language and supporting resources (VCJAC007)

LEVELS 9–10

- Create own or shared texts in different modes and formats to inform or entertain others, or express ideas, attitudes and perspectives, using imaginary characters, places and experiences (VCJAC025)

KEY WORKS

1. TRADITIONAL *NOH* THEATRE COSTUMES AND MASKS

(clockwise from top left)
JAPANESE
Noh mask, Chūjō (17th century–18th century)
(*Nōmen Chūjō* 能面 中将)
pigments, ground shell and animal glue on Cypress (*Hinoki*), silk thread cord
20.0 x 13.2 x 7.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2011
2011.351

DEME Mitsunaga
Noh mask, Shakumi (17th century)
(*Nōmen Shakumi* 能面 曲見)
pigments, ground shell and animal glue on Cypress (*Hinoki*)
21.1 x 14.2 x 7.1 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2011
2011.350

DEME Hidemitsu (attributed to)
Noh mask, Ōbeshimi (17th century)
(*Nōmen Ōbeshimi* 能面 大癋見)
pigments, ground shell and animal glue on Cypress (*Hinoki*), silk (thread, cord)
22.0 x 15.5 x 11.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2011
2011.352

DEME Toshimitsu (attributed to)
Noh mask, Kawazu (18th century)
(*Nōmen Kawazu* 能面 蛙)
pigments, ground shell and animal glue on Cypress (*Hinoki*), gilt-metal
19.5 x 14.8 x 8.5 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2011
2011.349

(right)
JAPANESE
Noh theatre robe, Karaori (1860–1890)
(*Nōshōzoku Karaori* 能装束唐織)
silk
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest in honour of Allan Myers AO President of the Council of Trustees of the NGV, 2012
2012.263

PRE-VISIT WARM UP

2. ABOUT *NOH*

IN SCHOOL

Noh is a form of Japanese masked dance drama that is based on rituals, dance and performance of the Nara and Heian periods. It became formalised during the 14th century (Marumachi period).

Considered to be elegant and refined, *Noh* was favoured by elite members of society such as the Samurai class. Elaborately decorated costumes reflect the opulent and lavish clothing worn by the aristocracy throughout Japanese history, representing formality from the past and maintaining a division between the working classes and the elite. It contrasted greatly to *Kabuki* theatre, which was developed in the 17th century and considered by the upper classes as a vulgar, unrefined form of entertainment for the merchant class. As *Noh* is performed by a cast of male actors, costumes also play an important role in differentiating the characters' gender.

Noh theatre is structured around highly ritualised movement, and song and dance. The themes often relate to dreams and a dialogue between the living and the supernatural world. The main character of *Noh* is often a ghost or spirit. All performers in *Noh* are male. *Noh* is performed on an open stage with a roof supported by four pillars. The staging of *Noh* is a simple and open, using a single backdrop with a painting of a green pine tree. The stage is connected to the backstage by an open walkway called *hashigakari* (or suspension bridge) which represents a path linking the real and spiritual worlds.

のう　にほん　でんとうえんげき　せかい　いちばんふる　えんげき
能 は、 日本 の 伝統 演劇 です。 世界 で 一番 古 い 演劇 といわれ
よーろっぱ　おぺら　おな　のう　ぶよう　おんがく
ています。ヨーロッパのオペラと 同 じように、 能 は 舞踊 と 音楽 が
ちゅうしん　のう　ないよう　ふる　ものがたり　ざいりょう　おお
中心 です。 能 の 内容 は 古 い 物語 を 材料 にしたものが 多
せりふ　ふる　にほんご　つか　い　まわ　どくとく
く、セリフも 古 い 日本語 がそのまま 使 われていて、言い 回 しも 独特
ひと　しゅやく　やくしゃ　のうめん
です。もう 一 つのとくちょうは、 主役 の 役者 が「 能面 」という
かめん　えん　のうめん　じぶん
仮面 をつけて 演 じられることです。 能面 はふだんの 自分 とまったく
ちが　やく　へんしん　どうぐ　やくしゃ　たいせつ
違 う 役 に 変身 するための 道具 で、 役者 にとってはとても 大切 な
ものです。

Here are some true and false statements about *Noh*. Match the Japanese explanation to the English and then identify the true statements.

1. お寺のなかでのうをしました。
2. がっこうでのうをしました。
3. ステージの背景(はいけい)はいつもまつの木の絵です
4. のうか(farmer)はのうをよく見ました。
5. さむらいはのうをよく見ました。
6. やくしゃはみんな男の人です。
7. やくしゃはみんな女の人です。

a *Noh* was performed in schools
b *Noh* actors are all men
c A *Noh* stage always has a background picture of a pine tree
d *Noh* actors are all women
e *Noh* was performed in temples
f Farmers often attended *Noh* performances
g Samurai often attended *Noh* performances

ACTIVITY

3. *NOH* THEATRE ROBE

IN THE GALLERY

IN SCHOOL

Noh robes (*shozoku*) consist of multiple layers of costume that create an effect of resplendent elegance but also a bulky, massive figure. While everyday textiles were made using new dyeing techniques, *Noh* robes were made from traditional techniques such as weaving, embroidery or *surihaku* (metallic leaf designs). *Noh* actors wear the robes along with masks, wigs, hats, and carry a prop (such as a fan) which may be used to represent an object such as a sake cup or a lantern.

The robe pictured is in the style of *karaori* (唐織), a highly admired type of *Noh* robe. The term *karaori* (Chinese Weave) describes a type of *Noh* costume as well as a type of fabric. *Karaori* are almost always used as an outer robe in women's roles, and can be worn either as an inner or as an outer robe, either straight or tucked up. *Karaori* which include red are worn by younger female characters, while those that do not include red are used to represent older characters.

のう　つか　　いしょう　　のうしょうぞく　よ　　のうしょうぞく
能 に 使 われる 衣装 を、 能装束 と呼びます。 能装束 は、

でんとうてき　いろ　ししゅう　つか　　ゆうが　けんらんごうか　いしょう
伝統的 な 色 や 刺繍 を 使 った、 優雅 で 絢爛豪華 な 衣装 です。

のうやくしゃ　　のうしょうぞくいがい　　のうめん　　ぼうし　こどうぐ
能役者 は、 能装束 以外 に、 能面 、かつら、 帽子 や 小道具

せんす
（ 扇子 など）もつけています。

しゃしん　なか　いしょう　　のうしょうぞく　だいひょうてき　　じょせいやく
写真 の 中 の 衣装 は、 能装束 の 代表的 なもの、 女性 役

いしょう　　もち　　からおり
の 衣装 として 用 いられる「 唐織 」です。

JAPANESE
Noh theatre robe, Karaori
(1860–1890)
(*Nōshōzoku Karaori* 能装束唐織)
woven Silk
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest in honour of Allan Myers AO President of the Council of Trustees of the NGV, 2012
2012.263

1. 何色ですか Which colours can you find? Practise saying the colours below and identify them on the image of the *karaori*.

COLOURS	
緑	みどり
黄色	きいろ
紫	むらさき
オレンジ	おれんじ
赤	あか
白	しろ
金色	きんいろ
青	あお

2. 日本語で書いてください Write in Japanese in full sentences.

   a. 何ですか What is this?

   b. 何できましたか When was it made?

   b. なにでできましたか What is it made from?

3. 何が見えますか What can you see? The *karaori* robe is decorated with many different species of flowers and plants including chrysanthemum, pine trees, bell flowers and clover. Find the following objects in the *karaori* print and practise saying the words aloud.

   a. 花 (はな) flower

   b. 家 (うち) house

   c. 松の木 (まつのき) pine tree

   d. 菊 (きく) chrysanthemum

JAPANESE
Noh theatre robe, Karaori
(1860–1890) (detail)
(*Nōshōzoku Karaori* 能装束唐織)
silk
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest in honour of Allan Myers AO President of the Council of Trustees of the NGV, 2012
2012.263

4. どうおもいますか What do you think?

a. Have a conversation with a partner about your impression of the *karaori*. Use at least two of the adjectives from the table below in your response.

b. Write your conversation as a short dialogue. Try to use more than one adjective in one sentence if you can as in the example.

ADJECTIVES	
色がきれい	colours are beautiful
かわいい	cute, beautiful
すてき(な)	lovely
はで(な)	gaudy, showy
じみ(な)	plain, subdued
おもい	heavy
おおきい	big
たかい	expensive
ふるい	old

EXAMPLE

A: これは何ですか。
What is it?
B: これは　からおり　です。
It is a robe.

A: 何が見えますか。
What can you see?
B: (花)と___と___と___が見えます。
I can see (flowers) and __ and __ and __.

A: (きれい)でおおきいですね。
It's (beautiful and big) isn't it?
B: そうですね。or そうですか。_____だとおもいます。
Is that so? I think or is that so?

EXTENSION

A: このからおりはどんな人がきますか。
What kind of person would wear this robe?
B: _____がきるだとおもいます。
_____ would probably wear it.

A: どうしてそうおもいますか。
Why do you think that?
B: _____からです。
Because it is _____

ACTIVITY

4. *NOH* MASKS

IN THE GALLERY

IN SCHOOL

Noh masks, or *nomen (*能面), tell the audience what kind of character is being portrayed. The masks are carved from blocks of Japanese cypress. *Noh* masks are made with expressions which allows skilled actors to induce a variety of emotion with changes in head orientation. There are six basic types of *Noh* masks:

1. おきな(翁): 長いひげ (beard) のとしより
2. じょう(尉): としより
3. 女: 女の人
4. 男: 男の人
5. きしん (鬼神) :おに (fierce deity) と かみ (god)
6. おんりょう (怨霊) : うらみをいだく(vengeful) ゆうれい(ghosts and spirits)

Chūjō is a warrior of imperial linage, a reputed poet and romantic, who appears in the roles of gallant general and nobleman. *Shakumi* is a middle-aged woman with worldly experience who usually appears in the role of a mother. *Kawazu* is an *Onryō*, a ghost or spirit who returns to the world of the living driven by desire for vengeance. *Ōbeshimi* is a tengu, a mythical goblin that lives in the mountains and possesses supernatural powers and military skills. Masks that represent fierce deities, gods, ghosts and spirits can be identified by their metallic eyes.

1. JAPANESE
Noh mask, Chūjō

2. DEME Mitsunaga
Noh mask, Shakumi

3. DEME Toshimitsu (attributed to)
Noh mask, Kawazu

4. DEME Hidemitsu (attributed to)
Noh mask, Ōbeshimi

1. どれですか Which one is which? Read the list above again and look carefully at the four *Noh* masks from the NGV Collection. Identify which of the six main categories each of them belongs to.

2. ディスクライブしましょう。Let's describe:

    a. Choose a *Noh* mask which you find interesting.
    b. Write a short description it using different adjectives.
    c. Read your description aloud to a partner without telling them which mask you chose. Can they guess which one you are describing?

EXAMPLE

Using mask 3, *Kawazu,* you might write:

男の人です。
目が大きいです。
まゆけ (eyebrows) がないです。
ひげ (beard; moustache) が短いです。
おどろい (shocked) たそうです。
怖いです。

ACTIVITY

5. VISUAL GLOSSARY

IN THE GALLERY

IN SCHOOL

1. Find an artwork in the NGV Asian Art Galleries on level 1 of NGV International which matches the adjectives from the following table and write at least one sentence to describe it.
   If you can't visit the Gallery you could also search the NGV Collection Online. The Asian Art section is a good place to start.
   https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/curatorial/asian-art/

ADJECTIVES	
こわい	scary/frightening
はで(な)	bright/gaudy
くらい	dark/gloomy
たかい	expensive
カラフル (な)	colourful
さびしい	sad/lonely
すてき(な)	lovely/fashionable
ふるい	old
あたらしい	new

EXAMPLE

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

せんはまっすぐです。(The lines are straight)
ようふくはすてきでカラフルです。(The clothing is fashionable and colourful)

2. Find five more interesting artworks from the NGV Collection. Write 3–4 sentences to describe each work using a variety of adjectives.
This time you could explore a different section of the Collection such as Contemporary art or Photography.

EXAMPLE

カラスがこわいです。(The crows are scary)

ゆきがしろです。(The snow is white)

ひつじがさびしいです。(The sheep is sad)

そらがくらいでこわいです。(The sky is dark and frightening)

3. Write a brief dialogue about one of your chosen works or practise with your friend. Give detailed answers and try to use more than one adjective in a sentence.

EXAMPLE

A: これは何ですか。

What is it?

B: _____です。

It's a _____

A: 何が見えますか。

What can you see?

B:____と____と___がみえます。

I can see ___and____and_____

A:どうおもいますか

What do you think about it?

B: _____だとおもいます。

I think it's (adjectives)_____

August Friedrich Albrecht SCHENCK
Anguish (c. 1878)
(Angoisse)
oil on canvas
151.0 x 251.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1880
p.307.6-1

POST-VISIT PROJECT

IN SCHOOL

6. DESCRIBE AND DRAW: CREATE YOUR OWN *NOH* CHARACTER

1. Read the following description of a *Noh* character and draw the character.

つちぐも　せい　　つちぐも
土蜘　の 精　from the Noh play, 土蜘蛛（つちぐも）

　　ば　　こわ　　かみ　け　　なが　　あか
ぐも（spider）のお化けです。怖 いです。髪 の毛は、長 くて 赤 いです。

せなか　くも　す　　きんいろ　あかいろ　はで　ふく
背中 にクモの巣があります。 金色　と　赤色　の派手な 服 をきていま

　かれ　にんげん　きら　　ひとびと　びょうき　　く
す。 彼 は　人間　が 嫌 いので、 人々　を　病気　にしたり、苦しませたり

　　いか　　しろ　いと　な
します。怒 るときには、白 い 糸 を投げます。

2. 描きましょう Let's draw! Create a *Noh* character for your own play. Draw a picture of your character and write a detailed description:
   a. キャラクターデザイン Give your character a name and a story.
      - What role will they have in your play?
      - What are your character's personality traits? Use a dictionary and write down some Japanese words which describe your character's personality.
   b. 能面 (のうめん) Draw a mask for your character.
      - How does your character's mask reflect their personality and story?
      - Which of the six categories does your *Noh* mask fit in to? Include features which convey your choice of category.
      - Write a description of the mask in Japanese.
   c. Draw your character's robe and other props they might need.
      - Use symbols relevant to their story and personality traits.
      - Use colour to represent their age and gender according to Japanese tradition.
      - Write a description of the robe and props in Japanese.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Wayne Crothers, Bushido: Way of the Samurai, NGV Online Essay, 2014
www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/bushido-way-of-the-samurai/

Wayne Crothers, Deme Hidemitsu: Noh Mask, Ōbeshimi, NGV Online Blog, Work of the Week 2014
www.ngv.vic.gov.au/deme-hidemitsu-noh-mask-obeshimi/

Wayne Crothers, Japanese Noh Theatre Robe, Atsuita (Nōshōzoku Atsuita) late 18th – early 19th century, NGV Online Blog, Work of the Week 2015
www.ngv.vic.gov.au/japanese-noh-theatre-robe-atsuita-noshozoku-atsuita-late-18th-early-19th-century/

Wayne Crothers, Bushido: Way of the Samurai, NGV Online Labels, 2014
www.ngv.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/BUSHIDO_Wall-Texts.pdf

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