

Gyotaku-Fish Printing Activity



Gyotaku – Fish Printing! – An Activity

Key Concepts:

Fish are fun to catch. Fish are good to eat. Fish are fun to print....Waaaaaait a minute! Print a fish? That's right - you can actually make colorful prints of the fish you catch! And now that the fish are biting, it's a great time to try your hand at fish printing. This process allows you to record your catch in an artistic way. You can make a print with most any fish, but those with larger scales and bodies such as salmon, carp, bass, bluegill, rock fish or flounder, will give the best results.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to classify animals as fish or non-fish.
2. Students will name the external features of a fish.
3. Students will describe functions and adaptations of the external features of a fish.

Materials:

- Fresh, frozen or rubber fish
- Newspaper
- Modeling clay, straight pins
- ½" stiff bristle brush, small paint brush
- Water based ink (linoleum block ink is best; liquid tempera paint also can be used)
- Rice paper, newsprint or other moisture-tolerant paper (since rice paper is expensive, you might prefer to start with newsprint. After you gain experience you might want to try making a print on a tee-shirt.)

Background:

The art of fish printing is called gyotaku (pronounced ghio-ta'-koo) has been used in Japan for more than a century to record catches of sport fish. The Japanese technique is also used by scientists.

Methods:

1. Use soap and water to clean the outside of the fish as completely as possible. The cleaner the fish, the better the print. Dry the fish well.
2. Place the fish on a table covered with newspapers. Spread the fins out over some clay and pin them in this position. Allow the fish to dry further.
3. Brush a thin, even coat of ink or paint over the body and fins. Leave the eye blank.
4. Carefully place a piece of rice paper or newsprint over the inked fish. Use your fingers to *gently* press the paper over the surface of the fish. Be careful not to change the position of the paper or a double impression will result. Also, do not press too hard, or it will all blur together. *You will get better detail if you press lightly!*
5. Remove the paper from the fish quickly, lifting up one end and peeling it off. Often the second or third print from one inking or painting comes out the best.
6. Use a small brush to paint the eye on the finished print.