

Print a Fish (You Can Gyotaku, Too!)

OBJECTIVES

Student will be able to identify fish body parts and create an impression of a fish.

BACKGROUND

Sometime in the early 1800s fish printing, or *gyotaku*, originated in Japan or China. Fishermen in Japan used fish printing to keep records of their catches. Fish printing has been practiced as an art in the U.S. for about 40 years. (*Use these same directions to make prints of shells, plants, or other objects.*)

MATERIALS

- one or more fresh or thawed fish (*Use a fish with large, visible scales.*)
- nontoxic tempera paint
- small and medium fairly stiff brushes
- modeling clay
- newspaper
- prewashed fabric (a light muslin or other cotton works well), newsprint, or rice paper

ACTION

1. Wash the fish carefully and thoroughly with soap and water to remove the mucus. Pat dry the fish taking care not to rub off the scales. Clip any sharp spines with pliers.
2. Place the fish on several layers of newspaper. Plug the fish's anus (*the opening just in front of the anal fin*) with a small wad of newspaper.
3. Adjust the fish so that it lies the way you want it to look in the fish prints. Spread the fins into a lifelike position and support them with modeling clay to hold them in place.
4. Avoiding the fish's eye and the modeling clay, apply a thin coat of paint to the fish. Brush from head to tail. After the fish is covered with paint, brush from tail to head.
5. Students place paper or fabric carefully over the fish. With their fingers, they press it firmly over the painted fish, head to tail. Warn them not to wrinkle the paper or move it around too much once they've set it in place.
6. Students carefully remove the printed paper or fabric, head to tail. They may print their fish a second time right away (without repainting it) on clean paper or fabric for a better print.
7. On their prints, students paint in the eye with a small brush or marker.



Students create artistic impressions of a fish.