

# Flowing Lines

Grade 4 – Lesson 3

(*Art Connections*, Level 4, pgs. 36-39)

## Big Idea

*Flowing, calligraphic lines can both describe forms and create visual rhythm.*

## Learning Targets and Assessment Criteria

**Target 1:** Interprets descriptive and visual qualities of calligraphic lines. (Arts EALR 1.1 *Elements of art: Line quality – flowing or calligraphic line drawing; 2.3 Applies a responding process to the arts – art analysis*)

**Criteria 1:** Describes and analyzes how flowing thick/thin lines can describe a variety of forms, and create a visual rhythm.

**Target 2:** Uses calligraphic lines to describe a form. (Arts EALR 1.1 *Elements of art: Line quality – flowing or calligraphic line drawing; 1.2 Skills and techniques: Calligraphic line drawing*)

**Criteria 2:** Paints flowing thick/thin lines to render a variety of forms.

**Target 3:** Uses calligraphic lines to establish a visual rhythm. (Arts EALR 1.1.2 *Principles of organization: visual rhythm*)

**Criteria 3:** Repeats flowing, thick/thin lines throughout composition (describes visual rhythm in writing).

## Local Art Reference



**A Feast**, 2001

*Li Jin*

2003.119

(NOTE to Teacher: See **Art Background** section at end of lesson for more information about this work of art.)

## Looking at Art Questions

(Note to Teacher: Show Hokusai's *Boy with a Flute* and Shen Zhou and Wang Ao's *Ode to the Pomegranate and Melon Vine* from *Art Connections*, Level 4, pgs. 36-37, as well as Li Jin's *A Feast* when facilitating the following discussion.)

1. What kinds of lines did these three artists use in their ink paintings?
2. Where do you see lines that flow from thick to thin in these compositions?
3. In art, we call these kinds of lines **flowing** or **calligraphic lines**. The adjective calligraphic came from the word calligraphy. What does calligraphy mean? (Artistic writing).
4. Artists, especially in Asia, use flowing or calligraphic lines both to write and to draw. Why might you choose to use thick/thin calligraphic lines in a composition? (To describe forms that are thick/thin, to move your eye smoothly over the image, to create a visual rhythm).

5. What effect do the calligraphic lines in Hokusai's (or Wang Ao and Shen Zhou's, or Li Jin's) image create?
6. One of the reasons artists use calligraphic lines is to create a flowing, visual rhythm across the composition. Which parts of these compositions seem most rhythmic to you? How would you describe the rhythm?

## **Art Making Activity**

(See the **Create** section *Art Connections*, Level 4, pg. 39)

### **Make a Calligraphic Line Drawing**

*How can use thick/thin lines both to draw what you see and to create a visual rhythm in a composition?*

1. We are going to make calligraphic line drawings with the same tools the artists we looked at used – bamboo brush and ink. In Japan, this is called *sumi-e*, or “ink painting,” so we often call the bamboo brush a “sumi brush.”
2. Before making a painting, a Chinese or Japanese scholar painter would practice and practice his brushstrokes. Holding the brush straight up and down like a bamboo tree reaching for the sun, practice making brushstrokes that change from thick to thin and back again. Try to make a range of brushstrokes – dry, wet, less ink, more water, etc.
3. Compare your brushstrokes with your neighbor. Find out how your neighbor made his/her most interesting strokes.
4. With members of your group, select the objects you would like to include in your composition. Arrange the objects so that all artists can see flowing lines from their perspectives.
5. In your sketchbook, do some quick sketches of your still life, emphasizing flowing, calligraphic lines. (Remember the way we followed contour lines in and out of a form. Could you do the same thing with thick/thin lines?)
6. Using your sketch as a rough guide, do your finished ink drawing of the composition. Be sure to emphasize thick/thin lines, and try to create a visual rhythm by repeating them in certain parts of your composition.

### **Each Student Needs**

- A sketchbook
- A sketching pencil (2H are good light pencils for sketching)

- One 9x12 piece of rice paper (to practice brushstrokes)
- One 11x17 piece rice paper
- A sumi brush
- Black felt
- A paper towel
- Thin sharpie marker to write name

#### Every Pair of Students Needs

- Some still life objects that have tapering lines – Thick, thin calligraphic line (driftwood, feathers)
- A small container with 2 T of sumi ink
- A container of water

#### Vocabulary

Calligraphic line  
Sumi-e  
Sumi brush

#### Tips for Teacher

##### Before Class

- Prepare small containers (baby food jars work well) with approximately 2 T of drawing ink in them, one for every two students.
- Fill water containers approximately ½ full, ready to distribute.

#### Tips for Teacher

##### During Class

- Before students practice making brushstrokes with the sumi ink, demonstrate both the correct way to hold the sumi brush (vertically at the tips of the thumb and fingers), and some ways to get thick/thin lines (by pressing gently down and then lifting up the brush). You might also demonstrate different effect created with wet vs. dry brush.

### Self-Assessment

After you finish all your contour drawings, please check whether you have accomplished the following tasks:

- I used thick/thin, calligraphic lines to describe the forms in my still life.
- I created a visual rhythm by repeating some of the calligraphic lines in my composition

Then in your sketchbook, please answer the following question about it:

*How would you describe the visual rhythm you created in your ink drawing?*

### Reflecting on Our Art

- **Describe:** Where did you use thick/thin calligraphic lines in your still life?
- **Analyze:** How would you describe the visual rhythm your calligraphic lines create?
- **Interpret:** What kind of mood do you think your ink drawing expresses. How do your calligraphic lines contribute to that mood?
- **Decide:** IF you were going to title your still life, what would you call it? Why?

## **Art Background** (for **A Feast**, 2001, by *Li Jin*)

*A Feast* celebrates abundance and choice in eating, with images of food and utensils arrayed across the length of the sixty-foot scroll. Calligraphy surrounds and fills the spaces between the images, illustrating recipes that are inspired by the images but not directly connected to the dishes the artist depicts.

The scroll begins with an essay, composed by a friend of the artist over email, about the importance of food in Chinese culture, politics and history. Halfway through, the scroll interjects vivid images of Chinese cuisine, utensils and ingredients, which form the core of the scroll. We first encounter cooked dishes--a whole steamed crab served on a plate, prawns with fried eggs, Shaoxing rice wine, a hotpot, a pot of soup, sliced meat--and then find uncooked foodstuff skewered on sticks that is to be cooked in the hotpot. These two parts of the scroll illustrate what a real Chinese feast might entail, but the logic of the feast then gives way to an increasingly random selection of dishes that are sometimes depicted humorously. The chickens' open eyes, for example, suggest that they are still alive, although the birds are dead, disjointed and served on a dish. The presence of the sandwich is also odd because it would never be served alongside cooked dishes that are consumed with chopsticks. With the depiction of a large pig head and entrails (toward the end of the scroll), the images become more graphic and bold. The scroll ends with the second half of the essay and the artist's admonition, "Eat as much as you can."

**Excerpted from the Seattle Art Museum *Close-Ups* online at:**

<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/SAMcollection/code/emuseum.asp?style=browse&currentrecord=10&page=collection&profile=objects&searchdesc=WEB:CloseUps&newvalues=1&newstyle=single&newcurrentrecord=12>

## **Cross-Curricular Connections**

Writing – Do poems in response to the ink drawings. You might use “thick/thin” language, i.e. very descriptive (“thick”) phrases alternating with spare words (“thin”) or images

## Assessment Checklist

Student	Describes and analyzes how flowing thick/thin lines can describe a variety of different forms, and create a visual rhythm	Paints flowing thick/thin lines to describe a variety of forms	Repeats flowing thick/thin lines to establish a visual rhythm for his/her composition (describes in writing)	TOTAL 3
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<b>Total Points</b>				
<b>Percent Comprehension</b>				

*Teacher Notes:*

## Letter Home

*Dear Family,*

*Today we learned that a **calligraphic line** is one that goes from thick to thin. We learned that artists can use calligraphic line both to describe forms and to create a flowing **visual rhythm** in a composition. We looked at calligraphy by 16<sup>th</sup> c. Chinese calligrapher Shen Zhou, and ink paintings by 16<sup>th</sup> c. Chinese painter Wang Ao, 19<sup>th</sup> c. Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai, and contemporary Chinese artist, Li Jin. All four artists repeated calligraphic lines both to describe images and to create visual rhythm in their compositions. We did the same in our still lifes made with drawing ink and brush on rice paper.*