



MORSE
MUSEUM

FIDELIA'S FLOWERS



Flowering Apple, c. 1875
Watercolor on paper
Fidelia Bridges, American, 1834–1923
Gift of Theodore E. and Susan Cragg Stebbins
(2020-004:5)

GRADES/LEVEL:

Kindergarten–5th grade/Elementary

TIME REQUIRED:

1 class period

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- learn about the influence of Japanese art on American art of the nineteenth century.
- review or be introduced to primary, secondary, and complementary colors.
- create a two-dimensional artwork inspired by the paintings of Fidelia Bridges.

MATERIALS:

- Mixed-media or watercolor paper
- Acrylic paint
- Watercolor paint
- Paintbrushes
- Paper straws
- Cotton swabs
- Cups for water
- Paper towels

VOCABULARY:

Asymmetry: the lack or absence of symmetry; an image that is not the same on both sides but still maintains artistic balance.

Color: the reflection or absorption of light from a given surface.

Complementary colors: colors on opposite sides of the color wheel; examples include yellow and purple, red and green, and orange and blue.

Line: a mark with length and direction.

Pattern: using an element or elements of art in a planned way.

Primary colors: red, yellow, and blue. With these three colors (and black and white), all other colors can be made; the primary colors themselves cannot be made by mixing other colors.

Secondary colors: green, purple, and orange. These colors are derived by mixing equal parts of two primary colors.

Shape: a two-dimensional area or plane.

Symmetry: something that is even in design and proportion; a well-proportioned, well-balanced work of art that is the same on both sides.

Texture: how the surface of something looks or feels.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Fidelia Bridges (1834–1923) was a well-known female American artist in the nineteenth century, and one of a small handful of women artists at the time who was able support herself by selling her work. She attained popularity with her depictions of flowers and birds, and her work caught the attention of Louis Prang (1824–1909), whom she worked for from 1881–1899. She was also a member of the National Academy of Design and the American Watercolor Society.

Fidelia visited her brother Henry in England between 1879 and 1880. Henry was a tea-taster, a frequent traveler to China, and a collector of Asian art. Some of Fidelity's compositions after this visit have been compared to the *Flower and Bird* series of Japanese woodblock print artist, Hiroshige (1797–1858), but even before this visit, Fidelity clearly embraced the aesthetics of Asian art such as plain backgrounds and asymmetrical compositions.



Kusatsu (from *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido*), 1855
Paper and colored Inks
Andō Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797–1858
(PR-014-92)



Dawn at the Kanda Myojin Shrine
(from *One-Hundred Famous Views of Edo*), c. 1856–58
Paper and colored Inks
Andō Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797–1858
(PR-037-82)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Have students look at Fidelia Bridges' *Flowering Apple* and discuss the lines, shapes, colors, and textures that they see.
 - <https://www.morsemuseum.org/collection-highlights/paintings/flowering-apple>
- 2) Give each student a sheet of mixed-media or watercolor paper, a set of watercolor paints, a paper straw, and paper towel.
- 3) Have students choose and/or mix a color that will become the branches. Review the primary and secondary colors as well as the main three pairs of complementary colors. Encourage students to think about their composition based on this knowledge.
- 4) Have students use a paintbrush to dab a generous amount of the branch color onto the mixed-media or watercolor paper. Have students use the paper straw to blow on the paint to create the lines of the branches. Allow watercolor paint to dry.
- 5) When watercolor paint has dried, give students eight cotton swabs and an assortment of acrylic paints. Have students separate the cotton swabs into two groups of four and explain that they will add flowers to their branches by dipping four cotton swabs as a group into the acrylic paint and then dabbing the paint onto the paper. Two sets will allow for control of color mixing as desired.
- 6) Allow acrylic paint to dry. Add further details to the work with watercolor, acrylic, or other media (colored pencils, pen, ink, etc.) if desired.

ASSESSMENT:

Students should:

- recognize Japanese aesthetics in works of nineteenth-century art.
- name and/or describe primary, secondary, and complementary colors.
- be familiar with the work of Fidelia Bridges as a prominent nineteenth-century female artist.