Lesson Plan: Manga Dragons

**GRADE LEVEL: 5-8**

**OBJECTIVES**
- Learn about the dragon in Japanese art
- Synthesize elements from different animals to create their own manga dragon

**MATERIALS**
Japanese Style Dragon Manga Worksheet, visual samples of all kinds of animals, such as mammals, reptiles, birds, fish, and insects. Paper, pencils, erasers, manga inking pens, coloring pencils & markers

**Background**
Images of dragons can be found in the artworks of many cultures, ancient and modern. These imaginary creatures were drawn by combining different parts from various animals into strange new monsters. In Japanese culture, the dragon was depicted as a long serpentine body covered with fish-like scales, four lizard-like legs each with four bird-like clawed toes, large expressive eyes, long fangs, and a long swirling moustache. Unlike dragons from other cultures, the Japanese dragons were depicted without wings.

The ancient Japanese people believed their dragons to be gods of the seas and believed that some dragons' breath could turn into clouds and cause rain. Geographically, Japan is a chain of islands, and much of its life is connected to the sea. Most of their food comes from the sea. They often had to travel from island to island by water. And because they live on islands the Japanese were often subjected to dangerous storms. It is easy to see why they gave these dragon deities such a powerful connection to water.

**Interactive Classroom Discussion**
After handing out copies of the *Japanese Style Dragon* (Figure 1), begin a discussion about the artwork. Start by asking a descriptive question; what do you see? As the students begin responding, ask them to clarify what they see that makes them say what they say. Ask them to name any real animal parts in this dragon. Ask them how the artists integrated or blended these parts into this new animal. Then inform them about the role of dragons in Japanese art and culture.

*Figure 1: Manga style dragon.*
**Student Activity**
After passing out the supplies and animal references, have the students draw their own original manga dragons. Below is the sequence for creating a serpentine dragon. If you need to, demonstrate this sequence for the students before they create their dragons.

**Step 1:** Start by drawing two “S-shaped” curved lines for the dragon’s body.

![S-shaped lines](image)

**Step 2:** Referring to the animal samples, choose which kind of head and face to add to the body.

![Head and face](image)

**Step 3:** Referring to the animal samples again, choose which kind of legs, feet, claws, and toes to add to the body.

![Legs, feet, claws, and toes](image)

**Step 4:** Choose different details to add, such as scales, patterns, fins, horns, and teeth. Now you are ready to ink and color your manga dragon!

![Completed dragon](image)

**Conclusion**
Students will gain an appreciation for and understanding of the dragon imagery found in Japanese artworks. They will learn about the influence Japan’s geography and weather had upon dragon imagery.

**NATIONAL STANDARDS**
http://www.education-world.com/standards

**Grade Level 1-4**
NA-VA.1-4.4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
NA-VA.1-4.1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
NA-VA.1-4.2 Using knowledge of structures and functions

**Grade Level 5-8**
NA-VA.5-8.4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
NA-VA.5-8.1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
NA-VA.5-8.2 Using knowledge of structures and functions

**Grade Level 9-12**
NA-VA.9-12.4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
NA-VA.9-12.1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
NA-VA.9-12.2 Using knowledge of structures and functions

*Lesson Plan developed by Manga Start in conjunction with Richard Jenkins, Studio HiJinx*
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