



Aftershocks: Japanese Earthquake Prints

Gallery Trail

Welcome to ***Aftershocks: Japanese Earthquake Prints***, a new ROM online exhibition.

In 1855 in Edo, Japan (Edo is called Tokyo today) there was a huge earthquake. The earthquake caused lots of damage, especially in places where rich, upper-class people lived and worked.

In Japanese folk belief, a giant catfish called Namazu lived under the Earth, and caused earthquakes when it moved. A deity called Kashima was in charge of keeping Namazu under control. Unfortunately, at the time of the earthquake, Kashima was away at a deity meeting in another city, and he left a lesser deity called Ebisu in charge. That was a mistake!

Many people suffered because of the earthquake, but after the earthquake, certain people made a lot of money because their services were needed.


Aftershocks presents images that artists made to tell stories about what the earthquake did to Edo, and about the way different people responded to the aftermath. Many of these prints show us how the people affected by the earthquake used humour to deal with the strong emotions they were feeling.

Aftershocks explores these three topics:

1. **Shaking Foundations**
2. **A Spectrum of Emotions**
3. **A Fleeting Hope for Change**


You may use **any images you wish** for most of the questions on this Gallery Trail. Work in small groups and focus on the images that interest you.

DIVE IN:

 Take a quick look through all of the prints. Pay attention to the emotions on peoples' faces.

- What emotions do you see?
- What do you think you would feel in their place?


Decoding Symbols

 Different cultures have different ways of sharing information and ideas. Often, we'll use symbols as "short-cuts" for something we mean to say. Understanding these symbols will help you understand the meaning of the prints.

Find five symbols you see often in the exhibition and sketch them. Using the text that goes with the images, add an explanation of what you think they mean.

Symbol	Meaning

LOL


 Humour was an important part of these prints. They would use jokes that were funny to them at the time as a way to deal with heavy emotions. This is still very common today.

Choose one print with a message you find interesting and remake it in a modern style.

You could use:

- Memes
- TikTok videos
- Cartoons
- Snapchat
- Song parody

A Lot in Common


 Even though there are many different kinds of prints, a lot of them share common themes and images.

Choose your three favourite prints. What do they have in common? What is different?

Name, number, or picture of print	What is the same?	What is different?

DIVE DEEPER: What was it about these prints that made you choose them as your favourites?

Once Upon a Disaster

-  Imagine a natural disaster that could happen today. Using the catfish prints as inspiration, create your own story about a supernatural creature that caused the natural disaster.
- Try to use humour in a similar way to the earthquake prints
 - Create your own earthquake/natural disaster print to go with your story.
 - Link to a real-life resource that can help the people affected by the disaster.

Things to think about:

- Where and when does your disaster happen?
- What happened during the disaster?
- Who benefitted from the disaster? Who was affected the most?
- What caused the natural disaster in your story? Why did you choose this?
- The catfish prints show catfish (representing the earthquake) apologizing to the people of Edo, and the people apologizing in turn to the catfish. In your story:
 - Why do the people in your story apologize to the supernatural creature? How do they apologize?
 - Why does the supernatural creature apologize to the people? How does it apologize?
- How do the characters in your story try to fix problems in the environment?
- How do the characters in your story try to fix rifts between groups of people?

Planning notes: