

**Teaching and Learning  
with Living Heritage**

**A Resource kit for  
teachers**

# **Japanese *Hanga* printing in art and mathematics classes in Belgium**

**Age of students:** 13 to 14 years old

Campus Comenius is a young school striving for innovation in education, where traditional methods are combined with self-regulated learning. Through an online survey, teachers found that their 140 students have family ties in 37 countries around the globe. An exhibition dedicated to the pupils' living heritage showcased the school's cultural diversity. Among the different elements shared, the *Hanga* printing technique from Japan was selected to be integrated in art and mathematics classes.

**See the film** [↗](#)

# Learning objectives

## Online survey and school exhibition (school project):

- ▶ Mapping the students' cultural backgrounds and practices;
- ▶ Fostering intergenerational dialogue between students, parents and grandparents;
- ▶ Encouraging discussions between students and parents about their living heritage.

## Art:

- ▶ Expanding students' vocabulary and capacity of expression: *Hanga* and stamp printing techniques, popular *Hanga* themes, the names of specific tools and materials such as graphite paper;
- ▶ Broadening students' understanding of the cultural significance of *Hanga* in Japan and its influence on European art and culture;
- ▶ Learning the relief printing technique step by step: developing, transferring and safely cutting a printing pattern with a gouge;
- ▶ Demonstrating respect: delivering quality work within a given deadline; showing a positive and respectful attitude towards classmates and the teacher; taking care of the materials and the classroom during and after the activity.

## Mathematics: Geometric transformations

- ▶ Recognizing the properties of transformations (reflection, translation and rotation) on a two-dimensional image on a plane;
- ▶ Using a personalized *Hanga* stamp, printing a pre-image and its image after transformation (reflection, translation and rotation) using a point or a line as reference;
- ▶ Describing the characteristics of reflection, translation and rotation;
- ▶ Reading and writing the symbols used to express properties and relationships.

## Objectives related to the ICH element:

- ▶ Discovering the meaning and value of the *Hanga* printing technique for practicing Japanese communities;
- ▶ Identifying elements that represent students' own cultural backgrounds.

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# Preparation

## Description of the ICH element and the way it is practised today:

The selected ICH element was *Hanga*, which was presented at the school exhibition by Maori, a Belgian-Japanese student. *Hanga* is a woodblock printing technique practised in Japan by famous artists as well as amateurs. It has been transmitted from masters to apprentices since the seventeenth century and has had a major influence on the arts across the globe. Nowadays, Japanese people can also learn it in special courses; most are aware of

at least some famous *Hanga* pieces. *Hanga* employs water-based ink, simple carving and rubbing tools, beautiful Japanese paper and fine-grained wood.

## Linkages between the ICH element and the school subject:

The students and art teacher decided jointly to study the *Hanga* printing technique. Indeed, the craft provided a clear entry point for the art class. The resulting prints offered interesting opportunities for use in the geometry class.

### **Involvement of learners in the preparation of the activity:**

One of the students, Daoud, developed and organized an online survey for the students in order to obtain a broad picture of their cultural backgrounds and practices.

After the online survey, the students contributed to the school exhibition by bringing a selection of objects from their homes that reflected, in their opinion, their own cultural background and that of their family.

Maori's grandfather, who lives in Japan, is a *Hanga* artist and has passed the *Hanga* printing technique down to his granddaughter. Maori was thus keen on bringing the tools and prints that her grandfather had given her to school. She also took pride in talking about her grandfather in front of her classmates and sharing her knowledge about this art form. Although Maori and her grandfather live on different continents, the *Hanga* prints and

printing technique provide them with a strong connection to each other and to Japan, offering a sense of belonging.

### **Involvement of bearers and local community in the preparation and/or implementation of the activity:**

The selection and preparation of the school exhibition gave students and their parents the opportunity to exchange and discuss their family cultural ties and to reflect on what previous generations have passed on to them.

Maori's grandfather creates beautiful *Hanga* calendars every month, which he gives to his family and friends. To maintain the continuity of his art, he has shared his passion with his grandchildren during their holiday visits. Prior to the art class where she presented this artform and her family tradition, Maori interviewed her grandfather on Skype to gather additional information on his work.

## **Description of the activity**

In the Campus Cornelius school, cultural diversity is a daily reality and, sometimes, a challenge. The school's 140 students speak 35 different languages and have grandparents from 37 countries around the world. So, when it came for teachers and students to select an ICH element to integrate into lessons, the main question was: whose living heritage?

An online survey developed by one of the students, Daoud, and a school exhibition brought to light the rich cultural diversity present in the school community. In consultation with their parents, students selected over a hundred items: objects that represented practices, customs and know-how that were very close to their hearts and that were usually passed down from generation to generation. One student brought coffee beans from Indonesia, another a small figurine from his grandfather's community in Congo. Other items included a delicious orange cake from Portugal, Polish traditional Christmas songs, Syrian soap, Brazilian cheese bread, many beautiful Jellabas and Moroccan dresses. The exhibition was

organized on a parent-teacher day so that students and parents could experience and enjoy it together. Pupils showed great interest in learning about their classmates' cultural backgrounds. Given the event's overwhelming success, the teachers decided to continue it on a yearly basis, ideally accompanied by an introductory module on identity, culture and living heritage. Each year, new possible links with the curriculum will be examined, maintaining a continuous input from students' cultural backgrounds.

This exhibition led teachers to choose the *Hanga* printing technique for integration in art and math classes, making it part of the curriculum. It was selected because of its applicability in these classes, but also because **the relationship between the student and her grandfather exemplified the principles of transmission and continuity of living heritage.**

In the art class, Maori introduced her classmates to the *Hanga* technique and showed them examples of her grandfather's beautiful work. The art teacher

complemented this presentation with historical and technical information, as well as displayed famous artworks to provide a broader context. Students then carved print block in linoleum tiles, bringing in their own cultural references. The activities were more time-consuming than expected and the students found it difficult to complete the assignment in the given time. Yet, they worked with pleasure. The resulting colourful prints reflected the rich diversity of the school: from Moroccan tajine dishes and clothes to carpets and locally meaningful motifs like the Albanian eagle. In this lesson, **students learned a new technique from a culture different than their own while at the same time producing prints that reflected their own identities.**

In mathematics, the students had the opportunity to use their *Hanga* tiles again. Instead of points and geometric shapes, they printed their artwork in various positions on their worksheet to explore

the properties of reflection, translation and rotation. Geometric transformations are part of the curriculum and this exercise complemented the theoretical approach. The task was challenging and students were allowed to work in groups, but using their own design made the math lesson much more concrete and allowed students to **feel a connection between their cultural heritage and the mathematical concept.**

“““  
I really liked that we could practice the transformations with our own designs.

– UNESCO-EU pilot project student

## Learning outcomes

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This project **brought the entire school closer together.** It showed learners and parents that the school embraces the cultural diversity of its students; indeed, the school sees **cultural diversity as an opportunity to enrich the learning environment.** It encouraged more appreciation of other cultures. As one student put it, ***‘I liked that we were given the opportunity to bring something of our own identity and culture to school.’*** Continuing to raise awareness about intangible cultural heritage and the importance of its safeguarding is likely to improve the project’s outcomes in the future and encourage students to reflect more deeply about their heritage and identity.

While it required additional time and commitment, listening to students’ ideas and having them participate were key elements of success. **Collaboration among teachers was also essential.**

Having the opportunity to create their own artwork, which became a pedagogical support in other classes, not only helped to involve students in the lesson but also encouraged them to work hard

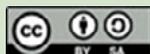
on the demanding assignments. In the words of one pilot project student, ***‘The best part was that we could choose our own design reflecting our own identity and cultural background.’***

Overall, this project was very successful. It will be repeated in years to come and expanded to engage more students and include more living heritage elements. It showed that, rather than being a challenge, cultural diversity provides meaningful opportunities to inspire and to promote positive values.



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