

TEACHER LITERARY AND CURRICULUM GUIDE

36 VIEWS

By Naomi Iizuka
Directed by Evan Yionoulis

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BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Darius Wheeler, a successful art dealer with more enemies than friends, stumbles upon a rare 11th-century Japanese “pillow book” handled by his trusted assistant, John Bell. His desire to authenticate the work grows as his scholarly friend, Owen Mathiassen, and his love interest, Setsuko Hearn, explain the importance of this discovery to Japanese history and literature. At the same time, Wheeler finds himself defending the authenticity of his own life’s work, which is being challenged by a scheming journalist in desperate need of a big story. The result is a play in which each character comes to question what is real and what is fake – only to discover that the truth is often a matter of perspective.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Identify key issues in *36 Views* including:
 - art and artifice
 - loyalty and betrayal
 - market value vs. sentimental value
2. Relate themes and issues in *36 Views* to their own lives.
3. Analyze the themes and issues within the geographical, historical, and social context of the play.
4. Participate in hands-on activities that enhance understanding of the production.
5. Evaluate the Huntington Theatre Company’s production of *36 Views*.

RELATED WORKS AND TEACHER RESOURCES

Related Works

You might explore other works by Naomi Iizuka, such as:

Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses (1999)

Tattoo girl: A Serio-Comedy (2002)

You may also explore the following books, plays, websites and films as supplements to this literary and curriculum guide.

Books

Diary of a Geisha

Brown, Dan. *The Da Vinci Code*. Doubleday, 2003.

Calza, Gian Carlo. *Hokusai*. Phaidon Press, 2004. Scott, A.C. *The Kabuki Theatre of Japan*. Dover Publications, 1999.

Plays

Iizuka, Naomi. *36 Views*. Overlook Press, 2003.

Leiter, Samuel L. *The Art of Kabuki: Five Famous Plays*. Dover Publications, 2000.

Websites

www.fulcrumgallery.com

(e-gallery including Hokusai prints)

www.globalgallery.com

(e-gallery including Hokusai prints)

www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/ukiyoe/hokusai.html

(e-gallery including Hokusai prints)

www.fix.co.jp/kabuki/kabuki.html

(information about Kabuki theatre)

Films

Sunday in the Park with George (1999), directed by Terry Hughs, with Mandy Patinkin and Bernadette Peters.

Pollock (2000), directed by Ed Harris.

Girl with a Pearl Earring (2004), directed by Peter Webber, with Colin Firth and Scarlett Johansson.

PREPARATION FOR 36 VIEWS

NAOMI IIZUKA:

As an overview, read aloud “Naomi Iizuka: Classics, Myth, and Drama” (P.X.). In groups, ask students to connect what they know about the play with the playwright’s life. How did her professional, educational, and familial background inform *36 Views*? What aspects of the play seem outside her personal experiences and artistic expertise? What questions motivated her to write this play? Ask students to look also at “An Interview With Naomi Iizuka” (P.X) for additional information about the playwright and her writing style. Instruct students to write a paragraph about what the following quotes from the interview reveal about the playwright and *36 Views*:

1. “the mountain is constant, yet it’s never the same”
2. “the truth changes”
3. “I’m interested in investigating ideas, ethical questions or conundrums”
4. “the play relies more than anything on an ensemble of actors to bring forth a story”

Ask students to share their paragraphs with the class. Create a list of themes and main ideas emerging from their work.

KABUKI THEATRE

36 Views blends a variety of artistic traditions – poetry, music, costume and visual art pieces help bring the story to life. Iizuka uses traditional elements of Kabuki theatre to evoke emotion and build a rich atmosphere in the world of the play. Kabuki is a form of Japanese theatre that originated in the 17th century and began as a middle-class art form. Kabuki plays are typically classified as melodramas, focusing less on overall plot and more on climactic moments within the course of the story. Both serious and comic scenes are depicted. Performances included a narrator, who may speak portions of the dialogue and comments on the action of the play; a chorus that provides music and singing; and actors who carry out the action of the story. Usually performances could last up to twelve hours. Characters in Kabuki theatre tend to follow conventional types: heroes, villains, children, etc., all played by male actors.

The use of the flute and clappers highlight key moments in *36 Views*, much like how they would be used as a special effect in Kabuki. Elements of traditional Kabuki costume and boldly painted makeup will also be used symbolically to depict history and stereotype, as well as emphasizing turning points in the play. Before seeing *36 Views*, ask students to research Kabuki theatre in greater depth. After viewing the play, ask them to identify which parts of the production seemed inspired by traditional Kabuki form.

Information about Kabuki theatre taken from “The Art of Theatre” by Dennis J. Sporre, and “The Harcourt Brace Anthology of Drama,” 2nd edition.

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

1. Diane Duyser, a native of Florida, made a grilled cheese sandwich more than 10 years ago. She preserved the sandwich in a plastic bag after reportedly seeing the face of the Virgin Mary on the toasted bread. Duyser put the sandwich up for sale on Ebay and, in large part due to international media attention, the grilled cheese sold for \$28,000. Why did this old piece of bread fetch such a staggering price? The idea of value and what an object (or relationship) is worth plays a central role in the rising action of *36 Views*. Consider how we assign value in our everyday lives – for example, why a t-shirt may cost different amounts depending on its label. Does any object have “real” value, or is it driven solely by the marketplace in which it is bought and sold? Discuss the idea of sentimental value, and the truth of the statement, “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure.”
2. The dramaturg serves as a resource for directors, actors and the company producing a play. The dramaturg provides important background information and other details about the play, which are useful to the artists interpreting the story, be they designers or understudies. If you were assigned to be the dramaturg for a production of *36 Views*, what research and visual stimulation would you provide for the director and actors at the first rehearsal?
3. The question of authenticity or what makes something “real” is repeatedly asked by the characters in *36 Views*. Darius is a master at uncovering fakes. Consider the recent purchase made by The Boston Tea Party Ship and Museum. The museum bought a chest the size of a basketball (for an undisclosed sum) from the descendants of John Robinson. Robinson, at the age of 15, reportedly salvaged the chest from the water the day following the Boston Tea Party. How might you “prove” that the events involving this chest happened as their owners claim? Is it possible that John Robinson lied about the chest to his family or in a personal journal? Might Robinson have stolen the chest from a ship before the Boston Tea Party took place? If this were true, how would this fact affect its authenticity? Why is it important to the museum and museum goers that Robinson’s story is accurate?
4. The artwork at the heart of *36 Views* is an 11th-century pillow book belonging to a woman of the Japanese court. Setsuko says, “For something like this to turn up in this way, it would change everything.” Discuss the importance of journal writing and diaries throughout course of human history. Do you keep a journal? How might this type of documentation help you personally or your descendants? Is it beneficial to keep records in this form? If you do not already keep a diary, try it! You may want to start by jotting down what you do each day in a weekly planner, and then transition into journal writing. Would you be willing to share your (less personal) journal entries with friends?

MASTERY ASSESSMENT

SCENES 1 – 12

1. The play begins with Darius Wheeler telling a story about his experience purchasing art in Asia. How does he describe the people with whom he does business? Do you believe his descriptions to be fair and accurate?
2. Describe the tone of conversation between Setsuko Hearn and Darius? Flirtatious? Business-like? Friendly? What does Setsuko mean when she says to Darius, “You seem to be a man with a weakness for stereotype”?
3. How have Darius and Setsuko met? Why has Darius agreed to host this party? What does Setsuko tell us about the guest of honor?
4. What is John Bell is rummaging around a desk looking for during the party.
5. Elizabeth Newman-Orr introduces herself to Claire. How does she identify herself? Describe the exchange between Elizabeth and Claire. Based on the text, what seems to be Elizabeth’s relationship to the art world?
6. Do you believe that Claire has “expertise” in the art field? Does Claire consider herself to be an expert because of training or instinct? Do you agree with her?
7. Owen Matthiassen, a scholar and friend of Darius, gives Setsuko a proper introduction. What is Setsuko’s area of expertise? Owen, Darius, and Setsuko discuss Utagawa’s work. Why does Darius dislike this artist? Does Utagawa make an appearance at this party being held in his honor?
8. How does Elizabeth introduce herself to Darius? When does she ask to meet with him again? Describe her demeanor during their brief conversation.
9. Owen is excited to show Darius a piece of art he recently bought. What does Owen believe is special about this woodblock print? How does Darius prove that Owen’s print is a fake?
10. Claire works for Darius as a restoration artist. What work does she show John? Despite her professional talents, how does she feel about “art” and her employer, Darius Wheeler?
11. John says that he’s a “jack of all trades, a master of none.” What skills does he have, and how does Claire want him to capitalize on his strengths?
12. When meeting with Elizabeth, to what does Darius attribute his success in the art business? Why does Darius lie to Elizabeth about the screen that Claire has restored?

SCENES 13 – 24

13. What does John tell Darius about the “transcript”? Why has he misled his employer? How does this create a potential problem?
14. Describe the events that unfold during the scene in which Owen, Elizabeth and John read portions of the manuscript. What do we learn about the woman at the center of this pillow book?
15. Why has Darius taken such an interest in the manuscript that John has supposedly been translating? To whom does he first show the translation, and why has he chosen this person? What feelings does Darius seem to have for her?
16. Why has the conversation between Darius and Elizabeth been recorded? Who has done this and why?
17. Owen places a call to Darius regarding the newly discovered manuscript. Who answers the phone and what is the reaction?
18. A press conference, during which Setsuko and Owen speak, is called. Why would scholars, art collectors, and the media have an overwhelming interest in the mysterious manuscript?

SCENES 25 – 36

19. What steps does Claire take in order make the manuscript appear authentic? What repercussion does John fear if Darius discovers his deception?
20. Setsuko has a keen interest in the manuscript. What has Setsuko learned about its presumed author by studying the document?
21. Does Setsuko return Darius’s affection? Point to evidence from the text to support your answer.
22. Darius produces a seemingly identical portrait to the one already hanging in his loft upon Elizabeth’s arrival. How does Darius use the unveiling of this artwork to expose Elizabeth’s true intentions? In his explanation, how does Darius deceive her?
23. John tells Darius that the “owner” of the manuscript is willing to sell. What price is being asked? Does Darius feel the request is fair?
24. Elizabeth and Claire meet again after the confrontation between Elizabeth and Darius. How does Elizabeth compliment Claire? What feelings do they share?

- toward Darius? How does Elizabeth's profession relate to her interest in Darius and the art world?
25. In a conversation with Setsuko, Owen reveals that the manuscript is "fake." How did this fact come to light? Why should Owen and the others have questioned its authenticity?
 26. Setsuko and Darius discuss their family backgrounds. Pick one fact or story about each character and describe how it may have influenced their professional careers.
 27. Why is Setsuko angry with Darius? How does she believe he has betrayed her? What is Darius' defense?
 28. Claire explains how Darius became an art dealer. How does this story explain her dislike for him? Who is the young girl in the story?
 29. Claire and Elizabeth share a kiss. What does this kiss reveal about their relationship? How does it explain why Claire confided in Elizabeth?
 30. What becomes of John's manuscript? How does he defend his actions to Owen?
 31. Who is "Utagawa"? What reasons might she have for her absence at parties held in her honor?
 32. Setsuko, unlike Darius, has read John's novel. Describe the plot in John's version of the manuscript's story. Is it a fair and accurate account?
 33. Darius and Setsuko depart after their brief meeting. Is it likely that they will continue their relationship? Has Setsuko forgiven Darius?

OPEN RESPONSE AND WRITING

Open Response Assessment

Instructions for students: Please answer the following as thoroughly as possible.

Remember to use topic sentences and examples from the text.

1. What is *36 Views* about? How might today's young people relate to the story?
2. Choose one key relationship in the story and discuss how it evolved from the beginning to the end of the play.
3. Why do you think Iizuka titled this play *36 Views*? Explain the significance of the title as it relates to the production's performance style.
4. What role does being "artistic" (creating art, finding art, restoring art, researching art) play in the key moments of the play, and how do the characters' gifts affect the course of the story?
5. In an attempt to please Setsuko and deepen his relationship with her, Darius takes a keen interest in the pillow book, a piece of art outside his area of expertise. Does his desire for romance jeopardize his career? If so, do you think the pay off was worth the price?
6. Why does John Bell betray Darius? Did his loyalty seem questionable at the beginning of the play? What influences gave John the inspiration and courage to go forward with his forgery?
7. How did Darius know that Elizabeth was an impostor? Contrast his business savvy instinct with regard to Elizabeth, a journalist in desperate need of a story, with his failure to recognize the forged manuscript.

Writing Assignments

1. Although the "discovered" pillow book ultimately disappoints artistic scholars and historians because it is not an ancient document of major cultural significance, John Bell's work becomes a piece of "art." Do you agree with this assessment? How would you define "art"? What qualities or characteristics must a creative work have in order to be classified as "art"?
2. Use one of the following lines from *36 Views* as a topic for a short essay:

Setsuko:

"What I believe is that there are words – And then there are the feelings and thoughts behind the words, and that the relationship between the two is neither reliable nor precise."

Claire:

“You spend all your time surrounded by all this ‘art,’ and it’s affecting your brain. Strip it all away, and all you have is money jazzed up to make you think it’s something more than money – which it’s not. That is has some kind of deep, spiritual aura because it’s ‘art’ – which it doesn’t.”

Darius:

“You know, there are fakes, and then there are fakes. Some fakes are obvious, and some are pretty good.”

Owen:

“It’s fascinating, isn’t it, how the human mind works, how it spins yarns, its infinite capacity for fabrication.”

Setsuko:

“They questioned the motives of the antiquities dealer, his desire to own and appropriate a culture outside his own.”

3. Claire Tsong says of Darius Wheeler, “He’s ... a liar, a con artist, and a thief.” Do you agree with this assessment? Make a case for your position, citing examples from the text. In your response, discuss whether or not Claire’s feelings and actions toward Darius are appropriate.
4. The use of traditional Japanese music, clothing, and theatre styles helps to create the atmosphere in *36 Views*. Do you believe that without these elements the play would be less effective? Or do you find the sound of wooden clappers and stage pictures distracting from the main action of the story?
5. How do you feel at the end of the play? Do you feel that each of the characters “got what they deserved”? Who are the victims in this story, and why should they be classified as such? Who ultimately wins? Write an epilogue in which you describe the whereabouts of each character ten years later in their respective careers.
6. Choose one of the main characters in *36 Views*, and write a journal entry from the point of view of one of these characters, expanding on what we already know about them. Place them at key moment in the play, a time critical to propelling the action of the play forward.
7. *36 Views* happens during the course of 36 scenes or key moments. Does this symbolism seem forced or does this division of action seem natural? Between which scenes do you think the Huntington should break for intermission?
8. Write a critical review of the Huntington Theatre Company’s production of *36 Views* and submit it for publication in your school newspaper. Be sure to send the Huntington a copy!

MEDIA ASSESSMENT

These questions and hands-on exercises are interactive challenges in Drama, Music, Dance, Visual Arts and Design that inspire further consideration or understanding of the play.

Creating Characterization

Have each of your students choose a character from *36 Views* to portray. As if they were preparing for the role in rehearsal, have them answer the following questions about their characters:

- a. What do I want in the play? What is my overall objective?
- b. What stands in the way of what I want? What or who are my obstacles in the way of achieving my objective? Does what I want change throughout the course of the play? How?
- c. Does my character change during the course of the play? What is my character's journey or plot transformation?
- d. What are the contradictions inherent in my character?

Role Playing/Improvisation

- a. Ask students to improvise an important moment from *36 Views*. Students should test the effects of changing something about the performance – tone of voice, a character trait, or a vital remark. How does such a change affect the selected moment? How does the pacing or posturing of an actor affect the comic timing of the piece? Is it possible that a change in the tone of voice can turn a serious moment into a humorous one?
- b. Ask students to improvise a scene after the conclusion of the play. What happens to Darius and Setsuko? Claire or John? This exercise will help students to understand that creating a work always involves an interrupted process or a decision to stop what could be endlessly revised.
- c. Divide the students into three groups and assign each group to represent one scene or key moment the play. Students should create a tableau or stage picture that represents the characters during that moment of the play.

Acting

Ask students to act out a scene from *36 Views*. They should use props and costume pieces if possible to enhance the experience. Students should carefully consider their placement on stage, blocking (who moves where and when), gestures, vocal tone, and the intended emotional impact of the scene. If there is time, ask students to memorize the scene in which they will perform.

Visual Art

1. Students should look at and research Hokusai's "36 Views of Mount Fuji." After studying his work, ask students to create their own "36 Views" of any subject they choose. Subjects could include but are not limited to: Fenway Park, a local bus stop, the Boston Public Garden, a friend's backyard, or the "Big Dig."
2. Ask students to create a poster design for the Huntington Theatre Company's production of *36 Views* using the media with which they feel most comfortable (photography, paints, collage, etc.). Encourage students to consider texture and color when making decisions about how best to represent this play. Suggest to students that this poster will be used to advertise the production in and around the Boston area. How might you catch a prospective audience member's eye? What images or pictures would be appropriate to use in this advertising campaign, symbols that reflect *36 Views*? After students have completed their design, ask them to share their work with the class.

Music/Dance

Students should research 11th-century Japanese music and dance styles. Ask students to create a dance in which Darius and Setsuko, Claire and Elizabeth, or other pairings of characters, move with the 36 shifting paintings as the play ends. Students should select an appropriate piece of music and traditional choreography. Allow time for students to talk about the process they used in creating, rehearsing, and performing their dance.

The Design Process

Students should research present-day American clothing and 11th-century Japanese costume styles and create costume designs that are appropriate for a production of *36 Views*. Encourage students to gather pictures and renderings from both time periods, and to choose colors, textures, and materials that reflect the trends, styles, and symbolism inherent in the play. How would a designer create costumes for Setsuko that transition easily from contemporary to traditional styles? Students should be able to defend their choices and explain how each design reflects the historic and cultural context of the production.

LESSON PLANS

Teachers' note: Choose activities that are appropriate for your classroom period. All assignments are suggestions. Only a teacher knows his or her class well enough to determine the level and depth to which any piece of literature may be examined.

ONE-DAY LESSON PLAN introduces students to the context and major themes of the production.

DAY ONE – Introducing the Play

1. Distribute **Mastery Assessment** (P. X) for *36 Views* for students to read before, and to review again after attending the performance.
Optional: Distribute Vocabulary Handout and ask students to define each word. A vocabulary test could be administered after viewing the play.
2. Read the “Synopsis” (P.X) of *36 Views*. Discuss other works students have studied with similar themes and issues.
3. Copy and distribute “Naomi Iizuka: Classics, Myth, and Drama” in the literary guide (P.X.) In groups or individually, ask students to underline key information about the playwright and share their ideas with the class.
Optional: To save time, narrate highlights for students.
4. If time allows, discuss further pages from the literary guide, including “The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon” (P.X).

FOUR-DAY LESSON PLAN introduces students to the production and then, after viewing the performance, asks them to think more critically about what they have seen. Includes time for class discussion and individual assessment.

DAY ONE – Introducing the Production

Same as Day One above; completed before seeing the production.

DAY TWO – The Production

Attend the performance at the Huntington Theatre Company.

Homework: Students should answer the **Mastery Assessment** questions.

DAY THREE – Follow-up Discussion

Discuss **Mastery Assessment** answers in class.

DAY FOUR – Test

Individual Assessment: Choose either several questions from the **Open Response Assessment** or one question from **Writing Assignments** (P.X) for students to answer in one class period.

*Optional: Students may choose one of the **For Further Exploration of Media Assessment** tasks to complete for extra credit.*

SEVEN-DAY LESSON PLAN completely integrates *36 Views* into your schedule. Within seven school days, you can introduce the play, assign reading and vocabulary, and assess your students on both a group and individual level. Students will ideally view the play after completing **Mastery Assessment** questions.

DAY ONE – Introducing the play

Same as Day One above. In class, read scenes 1 through 6.

Optional: Distribute Vocabulary Handout due on Day Four.

Homework: Read scenes 7 through 24 in *36 Views* and answer **Mastery Assessment** questions for scenes 1 through 24.

DAY TWO – Part Two

Discuss scenes 1 through 24 and answers to **Mastery Assessment** questions.

Homework: Read scenes 25 through 36 and answer corresponding **Mastery Assessment** questions.

DAY THREE – Part Three

Discuss the end of the play and answers to **Mastery Assessment** questions.

DAY FOUR – Attend Performance

Optional: Vocabulary Handout due!

DAY FIVE – Group Work

Divide students into groups to work on Activity #1 from Handout 2, **Looking at Art: Viewing With Purpose**.

Group Assessment: After discussing the artwork, students will share summaries of their findings with the class.

Homework: Students should complete, on their own, Activity #2 from Handout 2.

DAY SIX – Presentations

Students will present their piece of original written work to the class.

Homework: Students should prepare for the test on the following day.

DAY SEVEN – Test

Individual Assessment: Choose either several questions from the **Open Response** or one question from the **Writing Assignments** for students to answer in one class period.

*Optional: Students may choose to complete one of the **For Further Exploration or Media Assessment** tasks for extra credit.*

Handout 1
VOCABULARY IN *THE RIVALS*
Define the following terms

Woolly
Rendezvous
Inscrutable
Wilt
Parched
Gilt
Translucent
Hemorrhaging
Memoir
Courtesan
Ineffable
Anachronistic
Recluse
Loathe
Masochist
Existential
Narcissist
Provenance
Scant
Oblique
Proprietor
Magnate
Interpolation
Syntax
Diction
Ambient
Inchoate
Impostor

HANDOUT 2

LOOKING AT ART: VIEWING WITH PURPOSE

Activity #1

In groups of 3-4, students will look at a piece of visual art with themes that relate to the play 36 Views. Using the questions below as a guide, students should discuss the artwork.

Teachers' Notes: Teachers may select but should not feel limited to Hokusai's 36 Views of Mount Fuji for student viewing. Also, the questions below may be modified to explore works of art from other genres, including music, poetry and literature, theatre, and dance.

Describe it.

What kinds of things do you see in this painting? What else do you see?

What words would you use to describe this painting? What other words might we use?

How would you describe the lines in this picture? The shapes? The colors? What does this painting show?

How would you describe this painting to a person who could not see it?

Relate it.

Does this painting remind you of anything?

What things do you recognize in this painting? What things seem new to you?

How is this painting like others you have seen? What are some important differences?

How is this picture different from real life?

What interests you most about this work of art?

Analyze it.

Which objects seems closer to you? Further away?

What do you notice about the colors in this painting?

What color is used the most in this painting?

Does this painting look crowded or empty?

What do you notice about the person/animal/plant/object in this painting?

What do you notice about how this person/animal/plant/object lived?

What do you think is the most important part of this picture?

How do you think the artist made this work?

What questions would you ask the artist about this work, if s/he were here?

Interpret it.

What title would you give to this painting? What made you decide on that title?

What do you think is happening in this painting? What else could be happening?

What sounds would this painting make (if it could)?

What do you think this painting is about? How did you come up with that idea?

Pretend you are inside this painting. What does it feel like?

Why do you suppose the artist made this painting?

Evaluate it.

What do you think is good about this painting? What is not so good?

Do you think the person who painted this do a good or bad job?

Why do you think other people should see this work of art?

What do you think other people would say about this work?

What grade would you give the artist for this work? How did you arrive at that grade?

What would you do with this work if you owned it?

What do you think is worth remembering about this painting?

*These questions were modified from those found on Eyes on Art Web Site
<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/art2/guide/index.html>*

Activity #2

Naomi Iizuka's play, *36 Views*, was inspired in part by Hokusai's *36 Views of Mount Fuji*. Following group discussion, students should individually create a written piece inspired by the art they have viewed. Students may free write or explore poetry, playwriting, lyrical composition, or journalism. Students are encouraged to share their work with the class.