

Study Guide:

“A Sudden Gust of Wind” (1993) by Jeff Wall

About the artwork: “A Sudden Gust of Wind” (8 feet x 13 feet) is a digital photomontage composed of more than 100 photographs. It is a conceptual photograph exploring “Instantaneity” modelled after Japanese printmaker Katsushika Hokusai’s woodblock print Ejiri in Suruga Province (Sunshū Ejiri), ca. 1830-1832. It is presented as a transparency mounted on a lightbox.



About the artist: Jeff Wall is a photographer living and working in Vancouver today. He is also a trained art historian, and many of his works reference historical artworks and artists. He is considered a pioneer of conceptual photography, a style where the idea behind the piece is the most important part of the artwork. Wall is known for creating large-scale back-lit photographic montages which use the techniques and traditions of cinema including cast, sets, crews and digital postproduction. He is associated with the Vancouver School of artists who were practicing conceptual photography on Canada's West Coast in the 1980s.

Please preview the short film and then share it with your students. Select one or two guiding questions that reflect your curriculum and can guide student research and inquiry connected to the artwork, artists, and the socio-cultural context in which it was created.

Guiding Questions:

- Photography was historically believed to capture truth. Are photographs always truthful?
- What power does truth have? How can we tell what is real and what is not?
- How does Jeff Wall uphold or push against the idea of *instantaneity*, in the artwork and in his process?
- How does the idea of “*instantaneity*” connect with current culture and cultural products?
- How does this artwork reflect the relationship between the past and present?
- Katsushika Hokusai is a Japanese printmaker. Is this artwork by Wall an appropriation or appreciation of Japanese culture?
- What social attitudes past and present are reflected in this artwork?
- In what ways does movement exist in this artwork?
- In what ways is Canadian identity tied to our relationship with other global communities?
- How do traditional cinematic techniques support Jeff Wall in communicating his concept?
- The characters in the work share little sense of connection; Two wear city dress, two do not. What are they all doing here together?

- How might you compose a story, monologue, dialogue, dance, artwork, poem, or song to show what happened just before and/or just after this moment?
- How might you respond to the theme of “*instantaneity*” through a monologue, dialogue, dance, artwork, poem, or song?
- What might Katsushika Hokusai say to Jeff Wall? Explore this conversation through a story, monologue, dialogue, dance, artwork, poem, or song.

Supporting Links:

- [About Jeff Wall](#)
- [Study for ‘A Sudden Gust of Wind \(After Hokusai\)’](#)
- [Ejiri in Suruga Province \(Sunshū Ejiri\), from the series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji \(Fugaku sanjūrokkei\)](#)
- [A History of Photography](#)

Ontario Secondary Curriculum Connections- Overall Expectations

The Arts - Visual Arts

B1. The Critical Analysis Process: demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by examining, interpreting, evaluating, and reflecting on various art works;

B2. Art, Society, and Values: demonstrate an understanding of how art works reflect the society in which they were created, and of how they can affect personal values;

C1. Terminology: demonstrate an understanding of, and use correct terminology when referring to, elements, principles, and other components related to visual arts;

C2. Conventions and Techniques: demonstrate an understanding of conventions and techniques used in the creation of visual art works;

C3. Responsible Practices: demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices related to visual arts.

The Arts - Media Arts

B1. The Critical Analysis Process: demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by using it to monitor the creative process, and by examining, interpreting, assessing, and reflecting on media artworks;

B2. Identity and Values: demonstrate an understanding of how media art works reflect personal and cultural identity, and affect personal, cultural, and community values and their awareness of those values;

C2. Contexts and Influences: demonstrate an understanding of the sociocultural and historical contexts of media arts;

C3. Responsible Practices: demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices associated with producing, presenting, and experiencing media art works.

The Arts - Dance

A2. Choreography and Composition: combine the elements of dance in a variety of ways in composing individual and ensemble dance creations;

The Arts - Drama

A1. The Creative Process: use the creative process and a variety of sources and forms, both individually and collaboratively, to design and develop drama works;

B2. Drama and Society: demonstrate an understanding of how societies present and past use or have used drama, and of how creating and viewing drama can benefit individuals, groups, and communities;

The Arts - Music

A1. The Creative Process: apply the stages of the creative process when performing notated and/or improvised music and composing and/or arranging music;

History:

A1. Historical Inquiry: use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of Canadian history, with a focus on the development of identity and culture (CHI4U)

B2. Significant Interactions: analyse the impact of significant interactions, including interactions with the environment, on the selected ethnic group's country or region of origin

B3. Culture and Identity: analyse ways in which various factors contributed to the development of culture and identity in the selected ethnic group in its country or region of origin

English:

Writing: use a variety of organizational structures and patterns to produce coherent and effective written work;

Writer's Craft:

B: Practising Writing: 1. Exploring Ideas, Forms, and Styles: generate and experiment with ideas about writing content, forms, and styles;

Communications Technology:

A1. demonstrate an understanding of the core concepts, techniques, and skills required to produce a range of communications media products and services;

C2. demonstrate an understanding of the social effects of current communications media technologies and the importance of respecting cultural and societal diversity in the production of media projects.

Communications Technology: Broadcast and Print Production

A1. demonstrate an understanding of the core concepts, techniques, and skills required to produce a range of audio, video, broadcast journalism, graphic arts, and printing and publishing products or services;

C2. demonstrate an understanding of social effects and issues arising from the use of communications media technologies and the importance of respecting cultural and societal diversity in the production of media projects.