

Graphic Heroes, Magic Monsters: Japanese Prints by Utagawa Kuniyoshi from the Arthur R. Miller Collection

Glossary & Vocabulary List

chonin “Townsmen,” a class of townsmen that emerged in Japan during the early years of the Tokugawa period (1603–1867) and became an influential and prosperous sector of society.

daimyo Any of the largest and most powerful landholding magnates in Japan from about the 10th century until the latter half of the 19th century. The Japanese word *daimyo* is compounded from *dai* (“large”) and *myo* (for *myoden*, or “name-land,” meaning “private land”).

e “Picture”—used as a prefix or suffix to denote a painting, print or brush drawing.

ehon “Picture book”—a printed book containing mainly pictures.

ga “Picture” or “painting”—when used after a print artist’s signature the term means “designed by.”

haiku (also *haikai*) A succinct verse form of 17 syllables, often on natural subjects relating to the seasons.

han Domain.

hanshita-e “Block-ready drawing”—a neat, detailed brush drawing on thin paper, prepared by the *ukiyo e* artist to be pasted directly onto the cherry wood print block as a guide to the block-cutter.

kabuki A popular type of drama that evolved in the 17th century, featuring a wide range of fantastical, historical and urban themes. Performances generally last all day and are dominated by hereditary acting families, with female roles played by specialist male actors. Spectacular stage tricks are often an important element, along with music and dance interludes.

Key-block (also *line-block*) The printing block cut from the *hanshita e* and used to print the lines of a design, before areas are printed from separate color blocks.

meimeiden “Individual stories”—tales of warriors and their associates who participated in group vendettas, notably “Chushingura,” the story of revenge taken by local retainers of the Ako fief.

mitate-e A type of image that establishes playful, and often tenuous, connections between two apparently unrelated subjects.

musha-e Warrior pictures.

nigao-e “Likeness picture”—a recognizable portrait of a kabuki actor, drawn in accordance with stylized conventions perfected by each leading print artist.

noh A form of drama, developed in the medieval period, on highly poetic ghost and Buddhist subjects. Costumes are of brilliant brocade and the main performers generally wear masks of character types. Narration and music is provided by onstage musicians.

samurai The Japanese feudal military aristocracy, or a professional warrior belonging to this class.

shogun A military dictator who ruled in the name of the emperor.

texture The visual or tactile surface characteristics and appearance of something.

ukiyo-e “Picture of the floating world”—a painting or print, typically showing a kabuki actor, a courtesan, landscape, warrior or comic subject, produced in the period c. 1670–1910; also, the school of popular artists who designed these images.

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