Learning to master sumi`e brushstrokes and transform them into graceful forms of nature.
These plants embody the virtues of modesty, loyalty, purity, and integrity.
The Four Gentlemen

Japanese Sumi\`e Painting Techniques, Examples, & Student Work
The Four Gentlemen

- The Four Gentlemen are the four plants that are needed to be mastered in order to become a master sumi`e painter. To master each plant takes years of study under excellent tutelage.
- They are called the Four Gentlemen because of their style and grace.
- Each plant has certain brush strokes needed to complete it in the sumi`e style. As you complete each plant you build on the brush strokes mastered, and learn new techniques for the next, more complicated plant.
- These brushstrokes are already familiar to you.
- As we have learned, the Japanese style of painting creates asymmetrical balance, thus creating empty space, and simplicity.
- The Four Gentlemen are bamboo, the wild orchid, the chrysanthemum, and the plum blossom branch.
# The Four Gentleman

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<tr>
<th>Bamboo</th>
<th>Wild Orchid</th>
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Bamboo

The First Gentleman

The Father of brush painting, representing simplicity of life and humble spirit.

Bamboo represents Summer and is the most painted subject in East Asia. It represents strength in the face of adversity, and what the Japanese believe to be the virtues of the male - perfect balance, upright integrity, and tremendous flexibility.

Bamboo is the “perfect gentleman” because at its center it is hollow, which suggests modesty, and it is always of service and used on a daily basis.
Real and Sumi`e Bamboo

- www.junglephotos.com/africa/
- www.susanwagnerglass.com

- Bamboo grows in sections and from each section grows new branches and leaves.
- Look and find the simple strokes, and see how the lifting of the brush tip creates the leaves.
Bamboo

- Bamboo is the first of the Four Gentlemen because it employs basic brush techniques. It allows the painter to express most anything in nature.
- By pulling the brush and lifting, you can build the sections of the bamboo stalk. The tip of the brush is then used to accent the breaks in the growth.
- The leaves are drawn by placing the tip down, applying pressure to the brush while pulling, and then lifting up to thin the outer tip of the leaf.
- Additional branches are drawn in the same way but smaller in size and from the growth joints.
Student Bamboo Examples
Professional Bamboo Examples

Courtesy of Nan Rae
Professional Sumi`e Bamboo
The Wild Orchid

The Second Gentleman
The Mother of brush painting, representing grace, beauty, and a happy spirit.

The wild orchid represents Spring and what the Japanese believe to be feminine virtues - beauty and grace, yet fragile and gentle.

The orchid invites you to celebrate life because it symbolizes reviving earth’s energy from the winter.
There are a variety of orchids available but the ones we will focus on are the orchids that have the long fluid leaves and small, fragile petals.
The wild orchid uses the same basic stroke that is used to make most grasses.

The techniques used in creating the wild orchid build on the techniques of the bamboo and its leaves, while the flow of your lines will teach you steadiness and versatility.

To create the beauty of the turning leaves and the gentle petals, we will employ different ways of lifting and turning our brush.

Cleaning the brush and adding a touch of sumi on the tip to change the value of the leaves, truly adding a new dimension to your painting.
Student Wild Orchid Examples
Professional Wild Orchid Examples
Professional Sumi`e Orchids

Takumasa Ono

Nan Rae
The First Two Gentlemen

Student work shown together
Student Work With Bamboo and Wild Orchids
The Chrysanthemum

The Third Gentleman

The chrysanthemum is the imperial symbol of Japan’s royal family.
The chrysanthemum represents Autumn because it is sturdy and it defies the brutality of the frost. It associates fragrant plants with being strong and unwavering with the change of the season.
Real and Sumi`e Chrysanthemum

- In the chrysanthemum, simplicity is used in such a way that it becomes more complex or intricate.
- There are many different varieties of chrysanthemums, each with its own beauty.

Found at Naturgraphics.org
The chrysanthemum is the third of the Four Gentlemen and it builds upon the brush strokes already learned in the previous Gentlemen.

Layering and moving the gentle petals in different directions creates the inner beauty and complexity that is the flower.

Adding water to the brush or less sumi can create beautiful variations in your flowers’ texture and beauty.
Student Chrysanthemums
Professional Chrysanthemums

Found at ClearHarmony.net
Professional Chrysanthemum

Courtesy Nan Rae
The plum blossom is the symbol of hope and endurance. It represents winter because it perseveres with life and beauty within it. The plum blossoms are the first to bloom, signaling the end of winter. The beauty of the plum blossom lies in the contrast of the gnarled, rough trunk and the soft, tender blooms.
Real and Sumi`e Plum Blossom Branch

www.theorientalcaravan.com
The Plum Blossom Branch is the last and most complicated of the Four Gentlemen.

This plant incorporates all the strokes the artist has built on and takes it just a step or two further.

The addition of creating the textured, gnarled branches takes some practice, as well as manipulating the very tip of your brush to create the very center of your blossoms.

The texture in the branch, the delicate flowers, pistols and stamens, they all take advantage of the knowledge you have learned with the previous three Gentlemen.
Student Plum Blossom Branches
Professional Plum Blossom Branches
Professional Plum Blossom Branches

http://studioartcenter2.hypermart.net/wilders_sumi_e_web.jpg
Student Work on Chrysanthemums and Plum Blossom Branches
The Four Gentlemen Project

Using your prior knowledge and additional practice, each student will create a sumi-e painting of their favorite Gentleman.
Your Project

- We will review our sumi`e painting techniques.
- We will try each Gentleman, learning how it builds on to our prior techniques.
- Each student will then choose which Gentleman they will create for a final project.
- We will be periodically critiquing our work so that we fulfill the sumi`e style of painting.
- Final projects will be critiqued and evaluated on how well you mastered the technique.
Special Thanks to the Third Grade Gordon-Bibb Artists

Credits
Music by Steven Pasero

Professional Art Work courtesy of
Susan WagnerGlass  ASIJ High School
Kodomon Inc  Korean Arts.com
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Tietracks.com  Nature Graphics
Majka Broulik  Silver Dragon Studio
Carol Chaplin  The Oriental Caravan
The Sumi’e Book, by Yolanda Mavhall