

Japanese Folktales



Asian Art Museum of San Francisco Passport to Asia Storytelling Program

Dear Instructor,

Welcome to the Asian Art Museum's "Passport to Asia" Storytelling Program. We look forward to coming to your classroom and presenting to you and your students art distinctive to the culture and traditions of Japan. Stories will be told to help bridge the world that the students know with the world they are entering and to enhance the students' imagination so that they can better connect with what they see.

To ensure that your students gain the maximum advantage of participating in the storytelling program, the enclosed activities are suggested for before and after our visit. The storyteller's presentation will be narrower in concept; however, the information, stories and activities we have prepared will be helpful for developing context relative to our visit. In addition to these suggested activities, we have also included a list of resources for your classroom use.

Thank you for participating in our Passport to Asia Program.

Asian Art Museum Storytelling Corps



Suggested Pre-visit Activities

1. Show the students where Japan is on a globe or a map.

Compare its size to that of the United States. Measure the distance in miles from San Francisco to Tokyo, Japan.

2. Learn some basic Japanese words and expressions to practice.

Good morning	<i>o-hayo gozaimasu</i> (oh hi yo goh zye mu su)
Good afternoon	<i>kon-nichi-wa</i> (kohn nee-chee wah)
Good evening	<i>konban-wa</i> (kohn bahn wah)
Hello	<i>moshi moshi</i> (moh shee moh shee) (telephone)
Goodbye	<i>sayonara</i> (sigh yoh nah dah or sigh yoh nah rah)
Yes	<i>hai</i> (hi)
No	<i>iie</i> (ee eh)
Please	<i>dozo</i> (doh zoh)
Thank you	<i>domo</i> (doh moh)
Child/children	<i>kodomo</i> (koh doh moh)
Teacher	<i>sensei</i> (sen say)
Once upon a time	<i>Mukashi, Mukashi</i> (moo ka shee moo da shee)

3. Count from 1–10 in Japanese

1	<i>ichi</i> (ee chee)
2	<i>ni</i> (nee)
3	<i>san</i> (sahn)
4	<i>shi/yon</i> (shee/yohn)
5	<i>go</i> (goh)
6	<i>roku</i> (doh-koo or roh-koo)
7	<i>shichi/nana</i> (shee-chee/nah-nah)
8	<i>hachi</i> (ha-chee)
9	<i>ku/kyu</i> (koo/kyoo)
10	<i>ju</i> (joo)

4. Introduce and discuss the following words:

Shintoism: A belief system practiced in Japan that teaches us the importance of giving great honor to nature and to those who lived before us and have died.

Buddhism: A belief system that is based on the teachings of Buddha. These teachings are to help a person become truly awake to his or her own joyful and compassionate nature, which one shares with all living creatures.

- Symbol: Something used to represent something else. Some Japanese auspicious symbols are:
- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| crane | long life, faithfulness |
| tortoise | long life |
| lotus flower | enlightenment, purity |
- kimono: A long loose robe worn by men, women and children in Japan for special occasions such as holidays, festivals, weddings, etc. The sash worn around the waist with a kimono is called an obi.
- samurai: Professional Japanese warriors/soldiers.
- shoji: A sliding wall, usually made of wood and rice paper.
- scroll: A painting or writing on silk or paper that is hung on a wall to be seen and then rolled up when not in use.
- calligraphy: The art of writing beautifully, often done with ink and a brush.
- lacquer ware: Objects, made of wood, bamboo, animal hide or paper coated with a lacquer that comes from the sap of a tree found in East Africa known as *Rhus Vernicefula*, which is Latin for Poison Oak.
- ceramic ware: Objects made of clay such as pottery and porcelain.
5. Learn some Japanese proverbs such as:
- “The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.”
- “Even a one inch worm has the guts of the largest animal.”
- “If you prepare, you won’t have difficulties.”
- “People who hurry will get less than others.”
- “Losing is winning.”
- “Even the best can sometimes make a mistake.”
- “Keep your purse and your mouth closed.”
- “Sacrifice oneself for the good of others.”
6. Practice some Japanese communication skills such as:
- Practice greeting each other with a bow instead of a handshake. The bow in the Japanese culture is, at heart, an exchange of respect and humility and the deeper and slower the bow, the greater the respect. Bowing is a part of introductions, greeting friends, leave taking, showing respect, and presenting or accepting gifts and favors.
 - Practice talking to each other with longer spaces of silence than we are ordinarily used to. They say American conversation is like a basketball game. Japanese conversation is more like bowling.
 - When talking, avoid looking at each other directly in the eye, perhaps with face slightly turned to the side or eyes looking down.

- d. Avoid using the word “no”.
7. Read to your students:
 - a. *Grandfather’s Journey*. Awarded the Caldecott Medal, this is a beautifully written and illustrated book by Allen Say which bridges the American and Japanese cultures in time and space. It can be found in local book stores, some libraries and the World Affairs Council Education Program, Bay Area Global Education Project. 312 Sutter, Suite 200, San Francisco, CA 94108, Tel. 415-982-3263. Open 9 am–5 pm, Monday–Friday. You can call to make an appointment and /or request by phone. Books and other learning units may be kept for two weeks.
 - b. *The Terrible EEK: A Japanese Tale*, retold by Patricia A. Compton and illustrated by Sheila Hamanaka, Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1991 (see attached).

The Terrible EEK: A Japanese Tale

Retold by Patricia A. Compton

Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1991

A long time ago, in a certain place in the mountains, it began to rain. The wind shook a small house with a thatch roof. Inside, a boy and his father sat warming their hands over a small fire. Nearby, the boy’s mother prepared the evening meal.

The sounds of the wind and rain battering at the house frightened the little boy.

“Father, are you ever afraid?” the boy asked.

“Yes, my son, there are things that I fear,” the father answered.

“What do you fear most?” the boy asked.

“Among humans,” the father replied, “I am most afraid of a thief.”

It happened that a thief had climbed on to the thatch roof of the house and was hiding up there. When the thief heard the father’s reply, he was triumphant. “I am the strongest and most fearsome of creatures” he said to himself. “I am what they are most afraid of.”

“Among animals,” the father continued, “I am most afraid of the wolf.”

At that very moment, a wolf was sneaking by the side of the house with plans to steal a chicken or two for his dinner.

The wolf sniffed haughtily and said to himself, “I am the strongest and most fearsome of creatures. I am what they are most afraid of.”

“But the most frightening thing of all to me,” the father went on telling his son, “is a terrible leak. I hope there are no leaks tonight.”

The wolf stopped a moment and thought, “What is a terrible leak?” He had never heard of a terri-

ble leak. It must be an awful creature if they are most afraid of it.

A noisy gust of wind blew away some of the sounds of the father's words before they reached the thief on the roof. All he heard was "...the most frightening thing of all is a terrible eek."

The thief wondered what a terrible eek could be. He reached up to scratch his head and lost his balance. Then he slipped on the wet thatch and slid off the roof, landing right on the back of the wolf.

Now the poor thief thought he had landed on the back of the terrible eek. And the wolf thought that the terrible eek had landed on him.

The wolf howled, then ran with all his might toward the woods. He was hoping the terrible eek would fall off. The thief clutched the wolf's neck and hung on with all his might.

As they sped through the forest, the thief saw a low-hanging branch. In one quick motion, he let go of the wolf's neck, grabbed the branch, and swung free.

The thief was so relieved to be away from the terrible eek that he did not notice that the branch was too weak to hold him. It cracked and fell.

It happened that there was a deep hole right under the tree. The thief tumbled into the hole and could not climb up the steep, slippery sides.

The wolf, feeling the weight leave his back, ran to his den. Once there he collapsed, completely out of breath. After the wolf finally caught his breath, he felt very thirsty. He peered cautiously out of his den. Not seeing anything, he went to the water hole for a drink. There he met a tiger.

"Tiger, do you know what a terrible eek is?" asked the wolf. "Humans fear it more than anything. It jumped on my back and nearly choked me to death. Will you help me catch the eek?"

"I have never heard of a terrible eek. I thought I was the strongest and most frightening creature in the world," the tiger said. "Yes, I will go with you to catch the terrible eek."

A monkey sitting in a nearby tree heard the tiger and the wolf talking. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"We are going to catch the terrible eek," said the tiger. "Will you come along and help us?"

"I have never heard of a terrible eek, and I am not strong and frightening like you are," said the monkey, "but I am clever. So I will come and help you catch it."

The tiger and the monkey followed the wolf back to the tree where the terrible eek had jumped off the wolf's back.

The monkey found the big hole and said, "I will put my tail down into the hole and see if the eek tries to grab it."

“Are you there, terrible eek?” cried the monkey, lowering his tail into the hole.

When the thief saw the monkey’s tail, he grabbed tight and pulled.

The monkey became very frightened, and he pulled with all his might. The monkey pulled the thief right out of the hole.

The tiger roared, the wolf howled, the monkey screeched, and the thief yelled. The awful noise frightened them all so much that they ran off into the woods and never ever found out about the terrible eek.

After a while, the rain stopped and the moon came out and shone on the little house with the thatch roof. The boy and his mother and father were sound asleep in their dry, warm beds

Suggested Post Visit Activities

1. Language Arts

Haiku

2. Art

Flying Carp Kite

3. Art

Kimono folder

4. Game

Jan, Ken, Pon

5. Story to read

The Crane Maiden

1. Haiku

Introduction:

Discuss with your students the art of traditional haiku—short poems about nature, seasons, and small incidents. Explain that Issa was a famous writer of haiku who lived over two hundred years ago. As Issa looked around him with his poet’s eyes, he saw a hundred things that many of us might miss. And because Issa took the time to look, to listen, and to enjoy the movements of the many small creatures who shared his world—sparrows, crickets, frogs—he had a kindly feeling for all of them, including fleas and flies. Even the common housefly that most of us swat without thinking, Issa felt had a right to live.

Materials:

pieces of butcher paper or construction paper

felt tip pen

glue

stapler/staples

string/yarn

a warm, dry day

Instructions:

1. Instruct students that they will be spending some time outside for a writing assignment.
2. Put these headings at the top of pieces of butcher paper: sky, air, trees, ground, insects, birds, etc. Tape the word lists around the room.
3. Go for a “Haiku Walk.” Ask the children to bring paper, pencil and something hard on which to write. Let the children point out small things that are special or interesting—a flower just beginning to open, the shadow of grass along the sidewalk, an ant climbing a tree, the sound of a dog barking and/or what they notice about the sky, air, trees, ground, insects, birds, etc.
4. Let each child take a few minutes to sit down in a special place to write and/or draw something they liked on the walk or something they notice while sitting still. Remind them that it could be a sight, sound, smell, texture, or feeling.
5. Back inside the classroom write down words about what they experienced under an appropriate category on the papers. Include sounds, smells, feelings, tastes and tactile sensations. Explain that haiku is a Japanese poetry form that consists of seventeen syllables and has nature as its subject. Talk about traditional haiku subjects such a nature, seasons and small incidents. Clap out together the 5/7/5 rhythm of the following haiku:

The least of breezes
Blow and the dry sky is filled
With the voice of pines.

6. Have the children write their haiku and draw pictures to go with them on precut white paper. Glue the haiku and the illustration onto construction paper. Help them roll over the top, staple it, and tie a string through the opening.

2. Flying Carp Kite**Introduction:**

May 5th, which used to be Boy’s Day in Japan, is now celebrated as Children’s Day. Many of the old customs are continued. One of these is the appearance of the carp, flown from tall poles outside of the homes of boys. The carp, made of cloth or paper, are sometimes as long as 30 feet. They are attached to tall poles along with gaily-colored streamers. Because carp are a very strong and spirited fish, parents put up these banners in the hope that the children in their family will be strong and healthy like the carp.

In this activity, children will make a paper carp which may be flown at their own homes on May 5th. Skills reinforced through this activity include: greater understanding of traditions, aesthetic awareness, symbolism, fine motor skills, visual discrimination and awareness, measurement and following directions.

Materials:

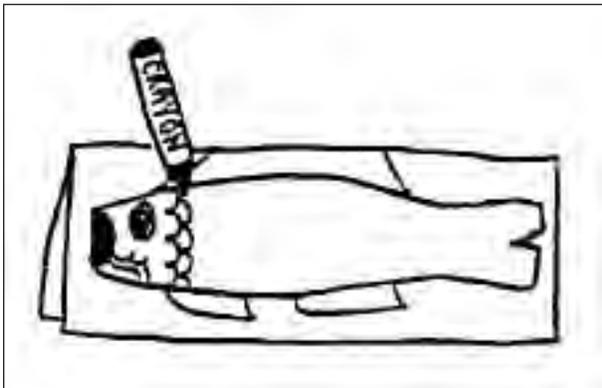
Fish pattern (attached)
Lightweight white paper—shelf paper works very well
Crayons
Watercolor paints and brushes
Glue and scissors
Iron (for teacher use)
String

Instructions:

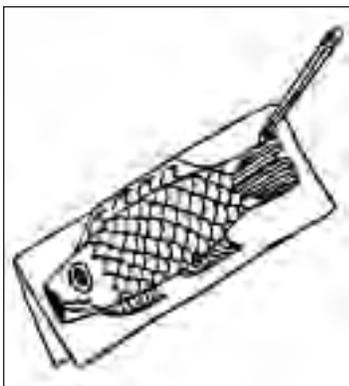
Children trace the fish pattern on their folded paper. Place the fish pattern under the white paper so that the scales show through. Using a dark crayon, trace the scales and the eye onto the white paper. Using watercolor paints, decorate the fish with many beautiful colors. To speed up the drying process, the fish may be ironed between sheets of newsprint. Apply a thin line of glue on the wrong side of the fish, excluding the mouth area. Press the two parts together and let dry. Using scraps of the fish paper, cut narrow strips of paper to glue around the mouth area to reinforce it. Attach a string to the mouth area and the carp is ready to be flown.

FLYING CARP

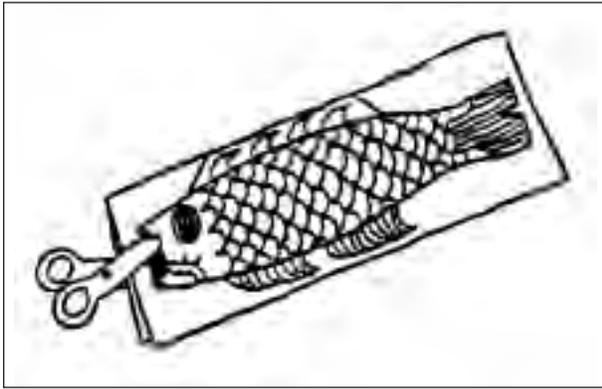
1. Fold a piece of paper. Place the pattern between the folds of the paper. Make sure the top of the fin is placed next to the fold. Using a dark crayon, trace the design on both sides of the carp



2. Draw in the scales of the carp.



3. Cut out the carp except for the top fin.



4. Open up the paper and paint the carp.



5. After the painting has dried, turn the carp over and glue along the outside of the paper. Do not apply glue to the mouth. Glue small strips of paper to the inside of the mouth to add reinforcement.



6. Refold the carp and seal the edges. After it has dried, add string at the mouth to create a kite.



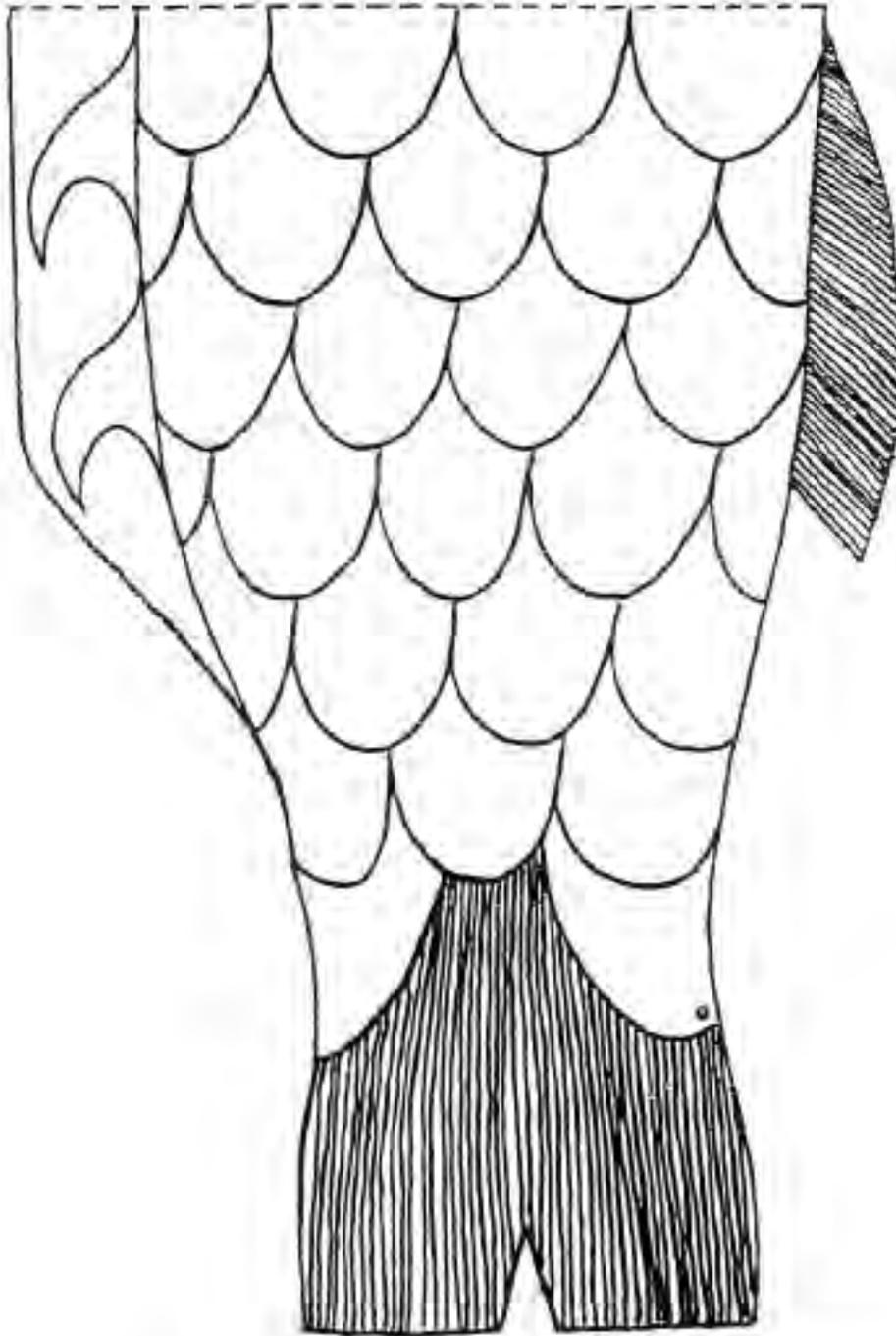
FLYING CARP PATTERN (HEAD)

Direction:
Match this section to the tail on the following page.

Flying Carp Pattern (Head)



Flying Carp Pattern (Tail)



3. Kimono Screen or Kimono Folders

Introduction:

There are four seasons in a year. The seasons and other cycles of nature have a great influence on Japanese culture. When the season changes, kimonos often reflect this change. In the summer, a person might wear a kimono showing a pattern of morning glories. In the fall, the robe could display chrysanthemums or maple leaves. A winter kimono is sometimes made of material with a snowflake pattern, and early flowers might decorate a kimono in the spring. In this way, Japanese people can wear the same patterns that decorate nature.

Materials:

Kimono pattern (attached)

large pattern for $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$

small pattern for $4\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$

Colored construction paper

Crayons or watercolor paints/brushes

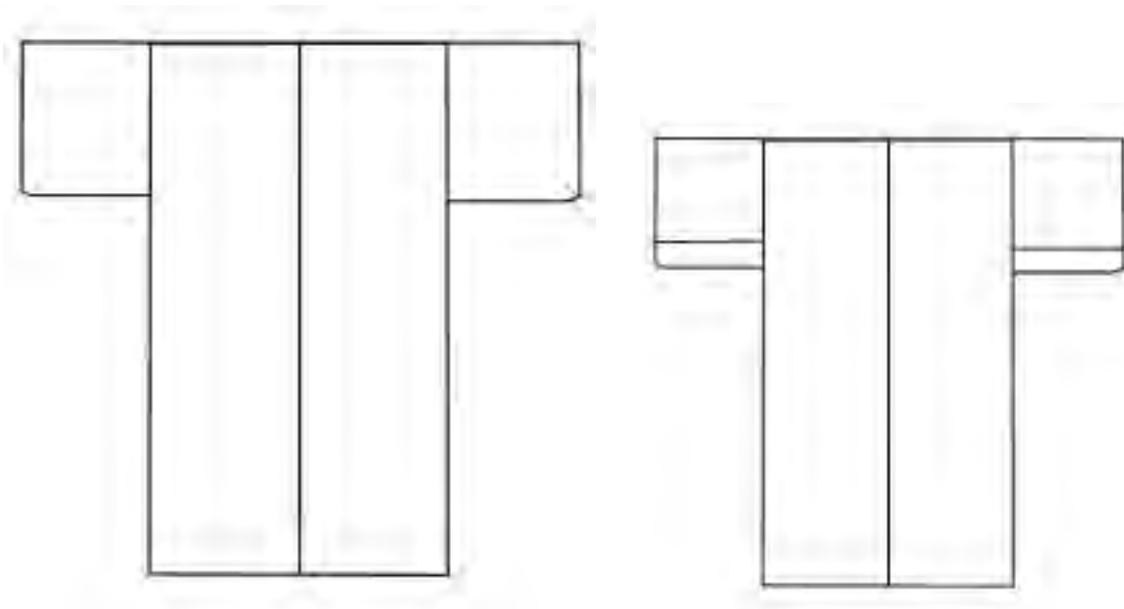
Glue and scissors

Yarn or string

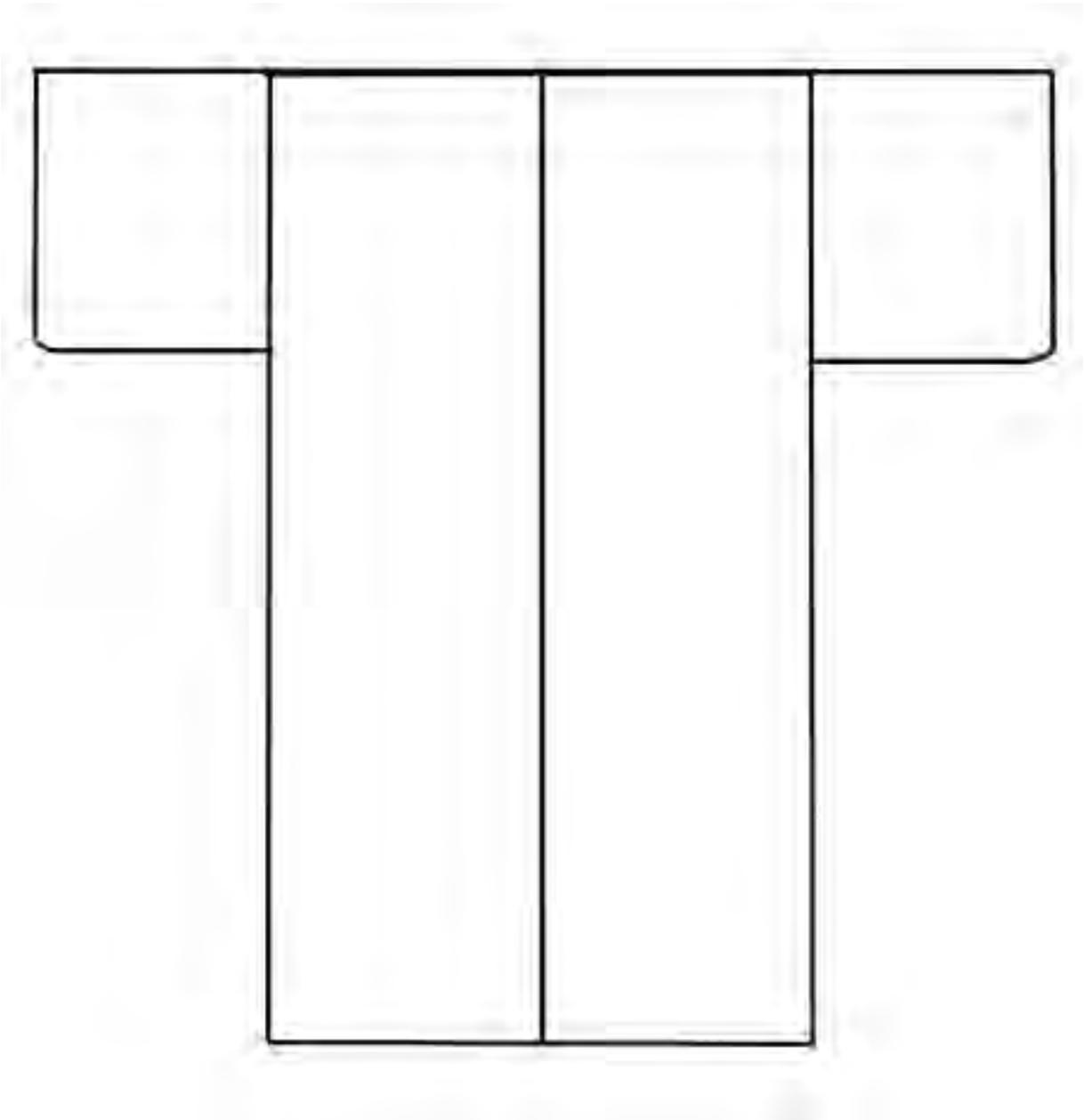
Hole punch (for teacher's use)

Instructions:

Have two copies of large or small patterns on which the children can paint or color. After brief discussion of possible motifs, children paint /color the designs on their kimono patterns. Cut out finished pieces. For larger kimono size, glue backsides of 2 pattern pieces and place on two pieces of $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ paper. Punch hole at top/neck and pull yarn through and tie together. For smaller kimono size, glue backsides of two pattern pieces and place one on front of folded $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ construction paper and other on back . Write story/letter and put inside.



Kimono



4. Jan, Ken, Pon (2–40 players, any ages)

Introduction:

This is a counting game used all over Japan, even by adults, to decide who is IT or to choose sides; or sometimes it is used as a “peacemaker” as well. In almost any argument or quarrel, the decision of “Jan, Ken, Pon” is accepted without question. Two players, or three, or a whole group may take part in the game.

Instructions:

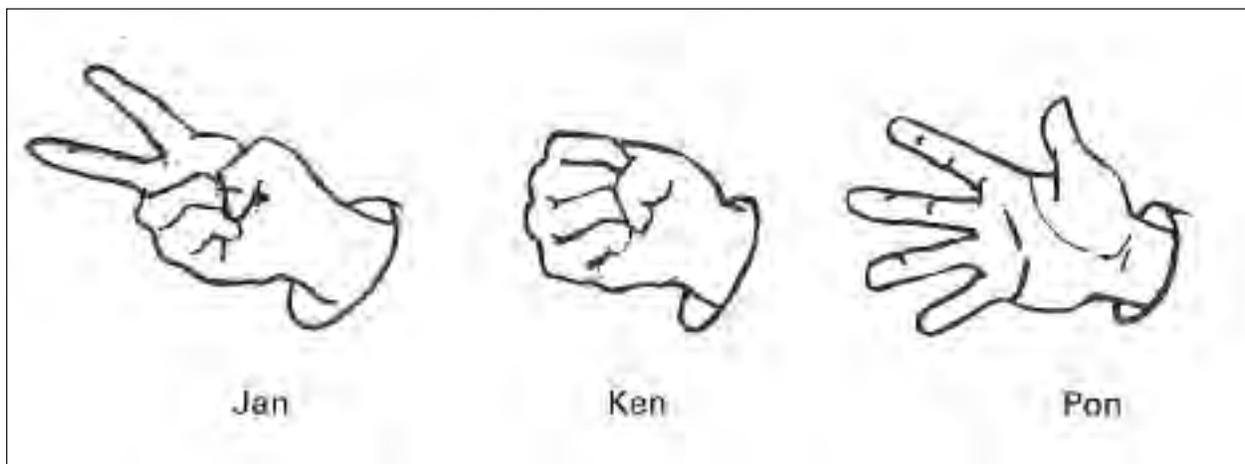
The two players stand opposite each other and extend their right hands with the fist closed. As they say together the words “Jan and Ken” they pump their right hands up and down. At the word “Pon,” each forms his hand in one of three positions. He can leave it as it is, a closed fist, to represent a Stone. He can open it out flat to present Paper. Or he can extend the first two fingers to represent Scissors. Each sign has a definite value with relation to the other two. Stone dulls Scissors, so Stone wins over Scissors. Scissors cut Paper, so Scissors win over Paper. Paper wraps Stone, so Paper wins over Stone.

If both players make the same sign, it is a tie, and the process must be repeated until one wins over the other.

When three people are playing, the stronger sign wins even though there are two of the weaker, that is, one Scissors would be stronger than two Paper signs. If all signs are different, it is a tie and should be done over.

When two sides are playing, the leaders of each side make the signs to see which shall have the first turn. “Jan, Ken, Pon” may also be played as a game, the purpose being to eliminate all but the final winner. The group divides into couples, each of which repeats, “Jan, Ken, Pon,” and makes the signs.

The winner of each couple then turns to the winner of another couple and the process is repeated. Again the winners play against each other until eventually all are eliminated but one. He is declared victor and the others raise their arms above their heads and shout, “Banzai!” which means “Hurrah!”



5. The Crane Maiden

By Miyoko Matsutani

Long years ago, at the edge of a small mountain village in the snow country of Japan, there lived an old man and his wife. They had little in this world that they could call their own, but they were happy in their life together. Now one winter morning the old man set out for the village, with a bundle of firewood fastened to his back. It was bitterly cold, and he knew he would have little trouble selling the wood. Then with the money, he would buy some food so that he and his wife could have a good supper.

As the old man trudged through the falling snow, he was suddenly aware of a fluttering sound, and a pitiful cry of “Koh, Koh.” Turning from the path to investigate, he came upon a great crane frantically trying to free herself from a trap. The old man’s heart was touched with pity for the magnificent bird, and while he tried to soothe the crane with tender words, his hands released the cruel spring of the trap. At once the crane flew up, joyfully calling, “Koh, Koh,” and disappeared into the snowy sky. With a lighter step, the old man went on through the snow, and when he sold his wood, he returned once more to his humble house. While his old wife busied herself with preparing supper, he told her about rescuing the crane.

“That was a good deed,” she said. “Surely the gods will one day reward you for your kind heart.”

As she spoke these words, there came a tapping at the door. The old wife hastened to see who was there, and upon opening the door, beheld a beautiful young girl standing in the swirling snow. Her delicate face glowed like a peach beginning to ripen in the summer sun, and her dark eyes sparkled in the dancing firelight from the hearth.

“Forgive my knocking at your door,” she said in a soft voice. “but I have lost my way in the snow. May I share the warmth of your fire tonight?” Then bowing low before the two old people, she said, “My name is Tsuru-san.”

“Oh, you poor child!” cried the old wife. “Come in at once before you freeze.” They sat the girl down close to the hearth, and the old wife piled more wood on the flames so that the girl would soon be warm. The old couple shared their simple supper of hot porridge with Tsuru-san, all the time feasting their eyes on her great beauty. Then they gave her their bed with its warm quilts to sleep on, while they spent the night huddled on a pile of straw. In the morning when they awoke, the old man and his wife were surprised to see a good fire already burning in the hearth; the water urn was filled with fresh clear water; the floors had been swept, and all the rooms were clean and tidy. Tsuru-san, the sleeves of her kimono neatly tied back with a red cord, was busily stirring a pot over the fire.

“Good morning,” she said, bowing to the old couple. “If you will wash your hands we may eat breakfast, for the porridge is cooked and ready.”

“In our old age we have a daughter!” said the old man laughing.

“It is the gods smiling on us for your good deed of yesterday,” replied his wife happily.

The snow and bitter cold continued for many days, and so Tsuru-san stayed in the shelter of the

old couple's home. As she had neither mother nor father, it was at last decided that she would remain as a daughter to these people. The children of the neighborhood were soon attracted to the house as the girl was such a delight to be with. The house rang with happy laughter, and the hearts of the old man and his wife were filled with joy at the sound. The days of early winter passed, and soon it would be time for the Great New Year celebration.

The old man spoke to his wife saying, "Tsuru-san has been such a delight to us. If only I could give her the gift of a new kimono."

"Or if I could make her a rice cake for the New Year," his wife added.

But alas, the winter had been hard. The old man had not been able to cut wood to sell, so there was no money to buy even rice, much less a kimono. Now Tsuru-san had overheard them talking, and it grieved her that these good people should be so poor.

Coming before them she bowed low and said, "Dear parents, I know there has been no wood to sell, but perhaps I can help you and repay your great kindness to me. There is an old loom in the back room. I will weave cloth on it for you to sell in the village. Only you must promise that no one shall look at me while I am weaving." The old man and his wife thought this was an odd request, but they readily agreed. Tsuru-san locked herself in the room, and soon they heard the sound of "Tin kola, kola, pon, pon, tin kola, kola, pon, pon..." as the shuttle sped back and forth and the fabric grew in length.

For three days this continued, and Tsuru-san paused for neither food nor rest. Then at last the door opened, and she stepped out holding in her hands a bolt of cloth such as the old man and his wife had never seen in all their lives. They gasped at its beauty and marveled at its incredible softness.

"Dear Father," said the girl. "Take this cloth into the village and sell it. It will be but small payment for the happy home you have given me. Remember this, however, do not put a price on this cloth, and you will fare better than you can imagine."

Without wasting a moment, the old man hurried into the center of the village, and when people saw the beautiful cloth he was carrying, a crowd soon gathered.

"I will pay you ten gold pieces for your cloth," said one man.

"No, No!" cried another. "Sell it to me for twenty gold pieces."

"You would be a fool to sell it for such a price, old man," said another. "This is a bolt of rare twilled brocade. I will pay you fifty gold pieces for it."

And so it went, with each man offering more than the last, until the old man finally sold the cloth for 100 pieces of gold. Pausing only long enough to buy rice for rice cakes, a kimono for Tsuru-san, and a few delicacies for New Year's Day, the man hurried home with his pockets jingling.

"Tomorrow, tomorrow is the New Year's Day," he sang. "The New Year is a happy time, eating rice cakes whiter than the snow, drinking sake that is smoother than oil."

Then such a hustle and bustle there was, as the old man and his wife prepared for the feast. As he pounded the rice, his wife made it into fine white cakes. And on New Year's Day all the children came in for a great party with their friend, Tsuru-san.

Still the cold days of winter followed one after the other, until at last one day Tsuru-san said to the old couple, "It is time for me to weave another bolt of cloth for you so that you will have money to live until the spring returns. But remember what I told you. No one is to look at me while I am working."

Again they promised that they would not, and the girl once more locked herself in the room and began weaving. "Tin kola, kola, pon, pon, Tin kola, kola, pon, pon..." went the loom. One day passed and then the second. Still the sound of the loom filled the house. By now the neighbors had grown curious.

"Is Tsuru-san weaving again?" asked one.

"Ah, soon you will have more gold pieces to hide under the floor," said another with a smile and a wink.

"The loom makes such an interesting sound," remarked the first one. "I would love to see what Tsuru-san is doing."

"We have promised not to watch her while she works," said the old man.

"What an odd request," cried one of the people. "I would not make such a promise to my daughter, you can believe me. What harm could there be in taking one look?"

Now in truth, the old woman had been most curious about Tsuru-san's weaving, and encouraged by her neighbor's remarks she stepped up to a crack in the door.

"Stop, stop," cried her husband when he saw what was happening. "Tsuru-san has forbidden it!" But it was too late. His wife had already peeked through the crack.

What a sight it was that met her eyes! There, sitting at the loom was a great white crane, pulling feathers from her body and miraculously weaving them into cloth. The woman stepped back from the door, and before she could relate what she had seen, the door opened. Out stepped Tsuru-san, thin and pale, holding in her hands a half-finished bolt of cloth.

"Dear parents," she said in a weak voice, "I am the crane you rescued from the trap. I wanted to repay your kindness by weaving you another bolt of cloth." Then her eyes filled with tears. "But now that you have seen me in my true form, I can no longer stay with you."

With this she kissed the man and the woman tenderly and walked out of the house. Instantly she became a crane and once more, with a great swish of her wings flew up into the sky. Slowly she circled overhead, then with a single cry of "Koh" as if to say good-bye, the crane maiden was gone forever.

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