



# **Haiku and Beyond: A Study of Japanese Literature**

**Denver Public Schools**

**In partnership with Metropolitan State College of Denver**

**El Alma de la Raza Project**



# **Haiku and Beyond: A Study of Japanese Literature**

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**Grade 4**

**Implementation Time  
for Unit of Study: 4–6 weeks**

**Denver Public Schools**  
El Alma de la Raza Curriculum  
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# Haiku and Beyond: A Study of Japanese Literature

## Unit Concepts

- Link geography to literature
- Analyze genres in Japanese literature
- Expand understanding of an Asian culture
- Develop vocabulary through exploration of literary genres
- Develop research skills through reading and the Internet
- Increase oral and written communication skills
- Create a piece of writing in a particular genre
- Use the Internet as a resource for information on geography and literature

## Standards Addressed by This Unit

### Reading and Writing

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

### Geography

Students know how to use and construct maps and other geographical tools to locate and derive information about people, places, and environments. (G1)

Students know the physical and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define and study regions and their patterns of change. (G2)

Students understand how physical processes shape the Earth's surface patterns and systems. (G3)

Students understand how economic, political, cultural, and social processes interact to shape patterns of human populations, interdependence, cooperation, and conflict. (G4)

Students understand the effects of interactions between human and physical systems and the changes in meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources. (G5)

Students apply knowledge of people, places, and environments to understand the past and present and to plan for the future. (G6)

### History

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

### Music

Students will relate music to various historical and cultural traditions. (M5)

## **Introduction**

Everyone loves a story. The legends, myths, and folktales of folklore are universally popular. Listening to these stories forms a part of our earliest education. Every country has such stories that have been shared throughout the ages. These stories impart important lessons and teach the listener or reader about the values, concerns, and culture of the people living in that country. Reading the literature, including the poetry, of a country provides a unique opportunity for the reader to grasp the essence of a particular culture.

The geography of a country shapes the setting of pieces of its literature. All over the world, people have adapted to their environment. The environment shapes the culture of a people, especially in Japan where the land is minimal and the natural resources are few. To study the physical geography of Japan, students will explore maps of Japan and describe its geographic features and prominent land forms.

In this unit, students will see that the physical geography of Japan is closely related to human or cultural geography. Students will see that the physical geography of Japan has affected the daily life of the Japanese and this dependence has, in turn, led to the development of a unique and rich literature.

Using the guidelines in this unit, students will gain knowledge of the geography of Japan within the context of reading, writing, history, and music. Students will receive an overview of several genres of literature including poetry, legends, folktales, and ghost tales. They will analyze these different genres. The students compare and contrast the literature of Japan and explain characteristics of Japanese culture learned from literature. In this way, the literature of Japan is used to teach the history, culture, and geography of this island nation.

## **Implementation Guidelines**

It is recommended that this unit be taught at the fourth grade level, but it could be adapted to sixth grade and used in an integrated language arts class. The focus of this unit is learning geography and social studies through the reading of literature and other materials and writing.

## Instructional Materials and Resources

### Curriculum Materials

*Teaching about Japan: Lessons and Resources* by Mary Bernson and Linda Wojtan, eds.

*The Goblin, the Water Imp and the Thunder God* by Satoshi Kako

*Japan in the Classroom: Elementary and Secondary Activities* by Lynn Parisi Lynn, Jacquelyn Johnson and Patricia Weiss

### Video

*Kwaidan*, directed by Masaki Kobayashi

### Audiotapes

*Favorite Songs of Japanese Children* by Hanako Fukuda

*Ghostly Tales of Japan* by Rafe Martin

### Books

*My Own Rhythm* by Ann Atwood

*Cricket Songs* by Harry Behn

*Easy to Tell Stories for Young Children* by Annette Harrison

*Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Japan* by Virginia Haviland

*Japan the Land* by Bobbie Kalman

*Mysterious Tales of Japan* by Rafe Martin

*The Samurai's Daughter* by Robert San Souci

*Oni Wa Soto* by Cathy Spagnoli

*Grass Sandals* by Dawnine Spivak

*Bamboo Hats and a Rice Cake* by Ann Trompert

*The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folktales* by Yoshiko Uchida

### Teacher Background Reading

*An Introduction to Haiku* by Harold Henderson

*The Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Share and Teach Haiku* by William Higginson

*Japanese Mythology* by Juliet Piggott

### Internet Sites

Children's Haiku Garden

<http://www.tecnet.or.jp/~haiku/>

Absolutely Whootie: Stories to Grow By

<http://www.storiestogrowby.com>

Aaron's Storybook

<http://www.aaronshp.com/stories>

Kids Page Japan: Japan Information Network

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/folk.html>

Ask Asia: Asia Society

[http://www.askasia.org/for\\_educators/fe\\_frame.htm](http://www.askasia.org/for_educators/fe_frame.htm)

Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/japan/i.html>

Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network  
<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/language/lab1-1.html>

Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network  
<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/games/puzzle/puzzle.html>

Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network  
<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/calendar/calendar.html>

**Other Materials**

Globes and atlases

Classroom dictionaries

Classroom encyclopedias

One or two computers with Internet access

Maps of Japan

Tape recorder

VCR

## Lesson Summary

Lesson 1	Introduction to Japan ..... 6 Prior knowledge of this Asian country is assessed.
Lesson 2	The Geography of Japan..... 10 Geography provides a special setting for the literature of a country.
Lesson 3	The Poetry of Japan ..... 12 Haiku is inspired by the geography and beliefs of the Japanese.
Lesson 4	Introducing the Folklore of Japan ..... 15 Students receive an overview of the genres of legends, folktales, myths, and epics.
Lesson 5	Setting a Story Geographically ..... 18 Students identify details of a story that are geographical.
Lesson 6	Continuing an Oral Tradition ..... 21 Students learn to use storytelling techniques.
Lesson 7	Using Literature to Learn History ..... 25 Students study the medieval period of Japanese history.
Lesson 8	Customs and Calligraphy ..... 27 Students learn about festivals and kanji.
Lesson 9	The Mystery of Myths ..... 29 Students learn to appreciate the myths of Japan.
Lesson 10	The Play's the Thing ..... 31 Students combine folktales and music in a dramatic performance,

## LESSON 1: Introduction to Japan

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students know how to use and construct maps and other geographic tools to locate and derive information about people, places, and environments. (G1)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students make connections between prior knowledge and what they need to know about a topic before reading about it.

Students use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and language usage.

Students know how to use maps and other geographic tools to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

#### OBJECTIVES

The students will assess their prior knowledge about Japan using a KWL chart.

The students will learn to access information from an atlas and websites on the Internet.

The students will identify vocabulary related to the geography of Japan.

#### SPECIFICS

Japan is made up of four main islands and thousands of smaller ones. It is located in the Pacific Rim and is subject of earthquakes and volcanic activity. It is a crowded nation with 123 million people in the space of California.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Brainstorming

Cooperative grouping

Research

Note taking

#### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Understanding the geography of Japan is crucial to comprehending the folktales of this country. Read a book such as Kalman's *Japan the Land* so you can give students some background on the geography of Japan.

Make an overhead of the geographic features the students must include on their maps or write the list on the chalkboard.

Use a KWL chart to introduce Japan. On the first day of the unit, students dictate what they know and what they want to know about Japan. As progress is made through the unit, add what is learned.

### ACTIVITIES

Students use an atlas or encyclopedia to find a picture of the Japanese flag, and on the Internet, find a map of Japan. The Kids Web Japan “Nature and Climate” and “Regions” sites on Kids Web Japan offer good maps. Students make a unit folder using the flag and map as cover decorations.

Students work in cooperative groups with maps, atlases, books, and the Internet to get information on the geography of Japan, and keep notes in their unit folders.

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

#### Books

*Japan the Land* by Bobbie Kalman

Encyclopedias

#### Internet

Kids Web Japan “Nature and Climate” — <http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/japan/g.html>

Kids Web Japan “Regions” — <http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/japan/f.html>

### ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the completeness of the map of Japan on the folder cover. Students should have included these labels: Pacific Ocean, Sea of Japan, Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu.

## Japan KWL Chart

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**K** What I *know* about Japan:

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**W** What I *want* know about Japan:

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## LESSON 2: The Geography of Japan

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students know how to use and construct maps and other geographic tools to locate and derive information about people, places, and environments. (G1)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students make connections between prior knowledge and what they need to know about a topic before reading about it.

Students use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and language usage.

Students select relevant material for reading, writing, and speaking purposes.

Students paraphrase, summarize, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Students know how to use maps and other geographic tools to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

#### OBJECTIVES

The students will assess their prior knowledge.

The students will learn to access information from different resource materials.

The students will identify vocabulary related to a specific content area of geography.

Students will label a map appropriately.

Students will collect information from electronic sources.

#### SPECIFICS

The four main islands of Japan are Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku, which are surrounded by the waters of the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan. They lie between the 30 and 45 degrees latitude, which is the same as southern Maine to northern Florida. The red circle on the flag of Japan symbolizes the sun, since “Japan” means the land of the rising sun.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Summarizing

Predicting

Oral presentation

Research

Note taking

Defining

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

In this lesson, students will learn more about the geography of Japan and use blackline maps of Japan to learn its major geographic features. Helpful information on Japanese geography and blackline maps can be found in *Teaching about Japan*. Make a list of guidelines for what is required on the blackline map worksheet.

Review prior knowledge on Japan using the classroom KWL chart. Discuss how geography affects a nation. Lead a discussion on the literature of Japan and how this literature may be affected by Japan's unique geography.

### ACTIVITIES

Student groups take turns presenting the main islands of Japan, the climate, the general topography, and interesting geographical features. Note information on the classroom KWL chart under "What We Learned," or use the independent KWL included in this unit. Discuss geographic vocabulary.

Students summarize the geographical information and make predictions about the kinds of stories they might expect from this island nation. Note that Japan is a volcanic land filled with mountains, hot springs, and rivers, and is subject to earthquakes, typhoons, and tidal waves.

Students look up unfamiliar vocabulary words and write the definitions in their folders.

### VOCABULARY

climate	The kind of weather a place has
earthquake	A shaking of the ground caused by changes far below the surface
hot spring	A stream of water from the earth that has been heated to a high temperature
tidal wave	A large, destructive ocean wave produced by an earthquake or a storm
topography	The geographical features of a region, such as mountains and rivers
typhoon	A violent storm; a hurricane in the Pacific Ocean
volcanic	From or caused by a volcano
volcano	A mountain having an opening through which steam, ashes, and lava are released

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*Teaching about Japan: Lessons and Resources*, edited by Mary Bernson and Linda Wojtan.

### ASSESSMENT

Have students label a blank map with the names of the four main islands (Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu), the large cities (Kyoto, Tokyo, Osaka, and Okinawa), the bodies of water (Pacific Ocean and Sea of Japan), and Mt. Fuji.

Give a quiz on the vocabulary words discussed.

## LESSON 3: The Poetry of Japan

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students know the physical and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define and study regions and their patterns of change. (G2)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students expand vocabulary development using a variety of methods.

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students write and speak to peers, teachers, and the community.

Students plan, draft, revise, proofread, edit, and publish written communications.

Students use a variety of literary devices such as figurative language, symbolism, and precise vocabulary to convey meaning.

Students will demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students will identify the purpose, perspective, and historical and cultural influences of a speaker, author, or director.

Students know and use literary terminology.

Students know the physical and human characteristics of places.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will make a connection between the geography of a country and its literature.

Students will expand their literary vocabulary.

Students will complete a written composition in a specific genre.

#### SPECIFICS

Haiku poetry is a very important genre in the literature of Japan and has been an extremely popular form of literary expression for centuries. Haiku is a 17-syllable poem about a particular observation on or event in nature. Haiku paints a word picture that appeals to two of the five senses. It is deceptively simple in form, but offers profound insights into the beauty and wonder of nature. The royal courts of Japan used haiku as a polite form of communication, and even today, newspapers in Tokyo have weekly haiku contests.

Because this style of poetry reflects the love the Japanese have for nature, it is important for the students to know about the flora and fauna found in Japan. The trees and plants in Japan are very similar those found in the United States, since our lines of latitude coincide with those in Japan. A notable exception is bamboo, which grows in the moist areas of Japan, but does not grow naturally in the United States. Japan does not have many large animals such as bear and mountain lions, but it does have snow monkeys, which are not found in the United States.

## What will be done to help students learn this?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Predicting

Teacher read aloud

Defining

Vocabulary acquisition

Discussion

Poetry writing

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Students will begin their study of literature by attending to the importance of nature to the Japanese through an analysis of haiku poetry. Background information can be found in *An Introduction to Haiku* by Henderson, and for helpful information on how to teach haiku, consult *The Haiku Handbook* by Higginson.

Gather the resources that will be needed for teaching this lesson. Haiku poetry that can be read to the class can be found in *Cricket Songs* by Behn. *My Own Rhythm* by Ann Atwood has stunning pictures of nature for inspiration for haiku, *The Haiku Handbook* has a list of seasonal words that can be used in student's poetry, and the Children's Haiku Garden website has examples of haiku written by students. Become familiar with *Grass Sandals* by Spivak, which is about one of Japan's greatest haiku poets.

### ACTIVITIES

Review the geographical information from Lesson 2. Discuss topography and climate. Lead a discussion about the physical characteristics of Japan: its size, its formation from many islands, the mountains, and the proximity to the ocean. Guide students in predicting what animals and plants might be found in Japan because of its geographic location. Think about the animals and plants that might live in Japan. Tell students they are going to use what they know about Japan's geography to help them study the literature of Japan.

Discuss the word *literature* and ask students to suggest definitions for it. Students should have an idea that literature includes all different kinds of writing, including poetry, stories, and music.

Begin the literature study of Japan with haiku, a unique form of poetry that is considered to be a traditional Japanese style. Read a number of haiku poems from *Cricket Songs* to the class. Students will note the *who*, *what*, and *when* of the poems in their graphic organizers. Discuss the form, style, and subjects of haiku. Emphasize to the students that the word picture of the haiku includes language that appeals to two of the five senses to create a unique feeling.

Next, read Spivak's *Grass Sandals*, the story of Basho, one of Japan's greatest haiku poets. Students should pay attention to the subject matter and the words of the book, as well as the illustrations, which are done by Japanese masters. Discuss Basho's life and his poetry.

Make a tree bark hat like Basho's. Put it on and take a walk around the school. Note the elements of nature. Pick up specimens — leaves, feathers, rocks, blades of grass. After the walk, make a nature collage. Help students write their own haiku using the nature collage or pictures of nature for ideas. Have the students read their poems slowly to the class so that the word pictures can capture the imagination. Have students illustrate their poems by recalling

images from *Grass Sandals* and *Cricket Songs*, which includes pictures by Japanese masters. Make a haiku collection to share with other classes. Students may also e-mail their poems to be included in the Children's Haiku Garden.

#### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

##### **Books**

*Cricket Songs* by Harry Behn

*An Introduction to Haiku* by Harold Henderson

*The Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Share and Teach Haiku* by William Higginson

*Grass Sandals* by Dawnine Spivak

##### **Internet**

Children's Haiku Garden

<http://www.tecnet.or.jp/~haiku/>

#### ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the students' notes on haiku in their graphic organizers. Evaluate the quality of the students' haiku poetry and oral presentation.

## LESSON 4: Introducing the Folklore of Japan

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARD

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will know and use literary terminology.

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

Students will read classic and contemporary literature, representing various cultural and ethnic traditions from throughout the world.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will recognize different genres of literature.

Students will recognize that each genre has a certain style.

#### SPECIFICS

The folklore of Japan reflects some of the universal themes, such as kindness is rewarded and greed is punished. Often there are poor old people who are childless or who interact with the many gods and spirits in the stories of Japanese folklore. This folklore also features monsters (*oni*) and shape-changing beings.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Discussion

Defining

Research

#### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

See Bernson and Wojtan (page 51) for further introductory information on literary genres. Make copies of the “Vocabulary Focus” worksheet for the students.

#### ACTIVITIES

Review elements of style that students learned from doing haiku. Introduce another genre of literature by discussing with the students various familiar folktales such as the *Three Little Pigs*, *Snow White*, and *Little Red Riding Hood*. Remind the students that these tales were originally oral and were passed down to children to illustrate important aspects of history and culture.

Discuss the setting and characters and the morals of these stories in preparation for learning about the folklore of Japan.

Discuss other kinds of folklore stories that students might be familiar with, such as legends and fairytales. Talk about folklore as being the traditions and customs of a group of people that have been orally transmitted through the ages as legends, myths, and epics. These different styles of writing are called genres. Ballads and songs are musical forms of literature.

Complete the “Vocabulary Focus” worksheet included in this unit to wrap up the introduction to other types of literature.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*Teaching about Japan: Lessons and Resources* edited by Mary Bernson and Linda Wojtan

ASSESSMENT

Check the “Vocabulary Focus” worksheet for accuracy.

## Vocabulary Focus

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the definition of literature?

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2. Explain the meaning of genre and give examples.

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3. What are the elements of haiku poetry?

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4. Describe the difference between a folktale, a legend, and a myth.

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5. Identify the typical characters in a fable.

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6. How is a fairy tale different from other genres of literature?

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## LESSON 5: Setting a Story Geographically

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read and understand literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students know the physical and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define and study regions and their patterns of change. (G2)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students will adjust reading strategies for a variety of purposes.

Students will use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to gather data, define the problem, and apply problem-solving skills.

Students will identify the purpose, perspective, and historical and cultural influences of a speaker, author, or director.

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

Students know the physical and human characteristics of places.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will connect the setting of a piece of literature to its geographical location.

Students will identify how the message of the story relates to a different culture.

Students will increase their reading comprehension by using a questionnaire.

#### SPECIFICS

All stories have a setting that defines where the story is taking place, and the literature of a country can tell about its geography.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Teacher read aloud

Note taking

Research

Questionnaire

#### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Make copies of the “Setting a Story Geographically” worksheet for the students.

### ACTIVITIES

Help students understand that the literature of a country tells about its geography, its people, and their culture by reading the classic Japanese folktale “Momotaro: The Peachboy” from the collection by Uchida.

Have students listen for details in the story that tell them about the geography of Japan. Students should understand that the location and geography of a country help determine what kinds of plants, animals, and foods are found there, as well as the clothing the people wear and the type of houses they build. Look up Japanese homes in the encyclopedia, and discuss a traditional Japanese home to clarify this geographical way of thinking.

The following questions will help students analyze the literature for geographical content and general comprehension:

*Where is the story taking place?*

*What are the physical features (mountains, plains, rivers, etc.) of the story location?*

*What is the climate like?*

*What natural resources are available?*

*What are the plants and animals called in the story?*

Do a “picture walk” through the story to help the students see the cultural elements. Following are some questions to ask during the picture walk:

*What foods are eaten?*

*What kind of clothing do the characters wear?*

*What construction materials are used in the houses? What is the style of the house?*

*What is the method of travel used by the characters?*

*What contacts do the people have with others outside their area?*

*What is the native language of the characters?*

*What is used as fuel for fires?*

*How is food preserved?*

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Setting a Story Geographically Worksheet

*The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folktales* by Yoshiko Uchida

### ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the “Setting a Story Geographically” worksheet for comprehension.

## Setting a Story Geographically

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Genre: \_\_\_\_\_

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Characters

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Climate/Physical Features

---

Plants/Animals

---

Food/Clothes

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Travel

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Houses/Architecture

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Beliefs/Morals

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Other

## LESSON 6: Continuing an Oral Tradition

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW 5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students know the physical and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define and study regions and their patterns of change. (G2)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students use comprehension strategies.

Students adjust reading strategies for a variety of purposes.

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and language usage.

Students know how culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will compare and contrast folktales to comprehend style, content, and characters.

Students will understand the purpose of folktales and increase their vocabulary and knowledge of this genre.

#### SPECIFICS

The oral tradition of storytelling has kept the customs of many cultures alive through the centuries, as well as the stories of legends, myths, and ghost tales. Today, the art of storytelling still entralls an audience and is a great tool for learning the literature of a country. *Kamishibai*, which are large, illustrated storytelling cards with pictures on the front and the words on the back, have been used by wandering storytellers in Japan since the fourth century.

This lesson introduces students to many of the characters and figures in Japanese mythology. Some of the figures common to Japanese mythology and folklore are shape changers and spirits called *kami*, who inhabit objects in nature. This mythology also has many monsters, one of which is *oni*, a fierce ogre found in many traditional Japanese stories.

“Ho-Ichi the Earless” in *Mysterious Tales of Japan* is a special story in Japanese folklore because it tells about an actual event — a battle — from Japan’s medieval period. This story is also included on the Aaron’s Storybook website, where it is called “The Man Who Sang to Ghosts.” This story was told by the storytellers of old Japan who play the *biwa*, a kind of lute, while they recounted the tale.

## What will be done to help students learn this?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Paraphrasing

Note taking

Discussion

Cooperative grouping

Storytelling

Reader's Theater

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

In this unit, students will be introduced to many common characters found throughout Japanese folklore and will learn to use storytelling techniques. Consult the website on Allen Say and the discussion of folktales for more background.

Gather the folktales and folklore that will be read in this lesson. The website on folktales by Kids Web Japan offers several popular folktales. Other stories can be found in *Mysterious Tales of Japan* by Martin, which includes the story "Ho-Ichi the Earless," several ghost tales, and stories that feature shape-changers, and *The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folktales* by Uchida.

Other collections of folktales can be used in a unit extension. *Easy To Tell Stories for Young Children* by Annette Harrison, *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Japan* by Virginia Haviland, and *Oni Wa Soto* by Cathy Spagnoli have stories and folktales that can be used to continue and extend teaching the concepts in this lesson.

### ACTIVITIES

In cooperative groups, students continue to read Japanese folktales noting the geographic features, cultural aspects, and central themes. Put this information in a Genre Graphic Organizer sheet included in this unit.

Introduce this worksheet to the students and complete it as a group using "Momotaro: The Peachboy." Throughout this lesson, use the graphic organizer to compare and contrast the folktales to get a feeling for the style, content, and the characters that are common in a traditional piece of Japanese folklore.

Continue reading the Martin book to introduce students to the shape-changers of Japanese folklore. In the story "Green Willow," a young woman is really a tree. "The Snow Woman," "The Crane Maiden," and "Kogi" are also about shape-changing spirits of nature. These tales can help children appreciate the great feeling of respect that the Japanese have toward nature.

Listen Rafe Martin's audiotape of "Ho-Ichi the Earless" and several other stories for a delightful experience with a wonderful storyteller. Have the storyteller group model their presentations after the tape and travel around to other classrooms to tell their stories in true Japanese style.

"Ho-Ichi the Earless," "The Snow Wife," and several other ghost tales are very effectively portrayed, complete with Japanese music, on the *Kwaidan* video. Viewing this video also will give students an experience with *koto* (lute) and *shakuhachi* (flute) music.

*The Goblin, the Water Imp and the Thunder God* is a good story for the kamishibai. This story is unique because it features several legendary characters of Japanese folklore all in one story. After reading the story, have the students use it as a script for Reader's Theater.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*Easy to Tell Stories for Young Children* by Annette Harrison

*Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Japan* by Virginia Haviland

*The Goblin, the Water Imp and the Thunder God* by Satoshi Kako

*Mysterious Tales of Japan* by Rafe Martin

*Oni Wa Soto* by Cathy Spagnoli

*The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folktales* by Yoshiko Uchida

*Kwaidan* video, directed by Masaki Kobayashi

*Ghostly Tales of Japan*, audiotope by Rafe Martin

**Internet:**

Kids Web Japan

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/folk.html>

Allen Say

<http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/author/say/index.html>

Aaron's Storybook

<http://www.aaronshep.com/stories>

ASSESSMENT

Have students retell their favorite Japanese legend. Check for the accuracy of the story line, development of characters, and authenticity of setting and customs.

## Genre Graphic Organizer

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:**

**Genre:**

**Characters:**

**Climate/Physical Features:**

**Plants/Animals:**

**Food/Clothes:**

**Travel:**

**Houses/Architecture:**

**Beliefs/Morals:**

**Other:**

## LESSON 7: Using Literature to Learn History

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

Students know the general chronological order of events and people in history.

Students use chronology to organize historical events and people.

Students use chronology to present historical events and people.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will recognize the genre of historical fiction.

Students will make a time line to record the history of Japan.

Students will read several sources for experience in studying historical fiction.

#### SPECIFICS

A time line comparing the history of Japan with the history of the United States gives the reader a clearer understanding of the chronological changes of the culture.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Teacher-directed reading

Research

Determining importance in text

#### ACTIVITIES

The story “Ho-Ichi the Earless,” covered in Lesson 6, takes place during the medieval period in Japan. Read *The Samurai’s Daughter* to further familiarize students with the medieval period of Japanese history. See the Kids Web Japan for a historical overview of Japan and a time line.

Have students make their own time line using information from the website. See *Japan in the Classroom*, pages 35 to 38, for a source of chronological history that compares Japan, Europe, and the United States.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*Mysterious Tales of Japan* by Rafe Martin

*Japan in the Classroom: Elementary and Secondary Activities* by Lynn Parisi, Jacquelyn Johnson, and Patricia Weiss

*The Samurai's Daughter* by Robert San Souci

Internet:

Kids Web Japan

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/japan/i.html>

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the time lines for neatness and accuracy.

## LESSON 8: Customs and Calligraphy

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will select relevant material for reading, writing, and speaking purposes.

Students will use information to produce a quality product in an appropriate format.

Students will read classic and contemporary literature, representing various cultural and ethnic traditions from throughout the world.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will use literature as a research tool for learning about the customs of Japan.

Students will identify Japanese holidays and festivals and explain their celebration.

#### SPECIFICS

Looking at the holidays and the picture writing (calligraphy) of Japan tells the reader more about the way of life of the Japanese people.

The Japanese have four different writing methods. Two methods, called *katakana* and *hiragana*, are phonetic. Another alphabet, called *romanji*, is used for foreign words. The final method of writing is called *kanji*, but we know it as calligraphy. This method of beautiful picture writing originated in China and was adapted by the Japanese.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Shared reading

Class dialogue

Collaborative learning

Resource person

#### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Read the books and materials used in this lesson.

### ACTIVITIES

In three groups, students will study the customs of Japan and calligraphy (*kanji*). Use chart paper to record information. The groups report back using their charts so that other students can learn from your findings.

**Group one:** Use the book *Bamboo Hats and a Rice Cake* to research holiday celebration customs and the beauty of Japanese character writing. This book teaches about Japanese holidays and includes calligraphy examples in the illustrations.

**Group two:** Consult the Kids Web Japan calendar site for information on the celebrations of holidays. This website offers clear explanations of the various holidays and the customary manner of celebrating each one.

**Group three:** Use the resource book *Japan in the Classroom* (page 111) for information on writing in *kanji*. Take notes on the specifics of how and why characters are formed.

Invite a resource person to the class to share *kanji* with students. Have the speaker write the names of the children in this beautiful character writing style. Then have the students practice writing their name in *kanji*, making the brush strokes in proper order.

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*Japan in the Classroom: Elementary and Secondary Activities* by Lynn Parisi, Jacquelyn Johnson, and Patricia Weiss

*Bamboo Hats and a Rice Cake* by Ann Trompert

Internet:

Kids Web Japan

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/calendar/calendar.html>

### ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on the quality of information shared during class reporting and discussion.

## LESSON 9: The Mystery of Myths

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW 6)

Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history. (H6)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students select relevant material for reading, writing, and speaking purposes.

Students read classic and contemporary literature, representing various cultural and ethnic traditions from throughout the world.

Students know how various forms of expression reflect religious beliefs and philosophical ideas.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will value the mythology of Japan as an expression of cultural beliefs and ideas.

Students will recognize mythology as a unique genre of literature.

#### SPECIFICS

Myths explained to early peoples why many things, including natural phenomena such as lightning, volcanoes, and ocean tides, happened. Often, gods and goddesses were thought to have caused these phenomena by using special powers. The mythology of Japan is populated with gods and goddesses and shape-changing beings. The myths the students will read in this lesson tell how the imperial jewels came to be and why the ebb and flow of the tides occur.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Teacher read aloud

Discussion

Note taking

#### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Japanese mythology is full of intrigue and can be difficult for elementary students to understand. The Piggott book is an excellent source of background information for the teacher.

In this lesson, students will read “The Eight Headed Dragon,” which tells how the imperial jewels came to be, and “The Jewels of the Sea,” which is about the ebb and flow of the tides. These stories are in *The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folktales*, and are accurate and easier for elementary students to comprehend.

For a fuller appreciation of the myths, students should know that in the original versions, the princes are gods and the number eight has a mystical significance.

### ACTIVITIES

Discuss the definition of *myth*. Elicit from the students that a myth is a traditional story, usually about a superhuman being such as a deity or a special event, that often involves the creation of the world and its inhabitants. Students should note this definition in their folder.

For exposure to the creation stories in Japan's mythology, students read "The Eight Headed Dragon" and "The Jewels of the Sea."

Discuss the myths with the class. Brainstorm the themes of the stories and the phenomenon or a special part of history that they explain.

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*Japanese Mythology* by Juliet Piggott

*The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folktales* by Yoshiko Uchida

### ASSESSMENT

Check the accuracy of note taking and the quality of participation in the class discussion.

## LESSON 10: The Play's the Thing

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students will relate music to various historical and cultural traditions. (M5)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will write and speak to peers, teachers, and the community.

Students will prepare written and oral presentations using strategies.

Students will identify how elements of music are used in examples of various cultures.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will determine what genre of literature is most appropriate for a play.

Students will write a folktale, legend, or myth to create a play.

Students will present their play to a variety of audiences.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Class discussion

Shared reading

Modeling

The writing process

Play production

#### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Collect the folktales and legends that have been read as a class to choose one that could be turned into a play. It is also effective to obtain an audiotape such as *Favorite Songs of Japanese Children* and incorporate a song or two into the final production. The song, "The Sparrow's Singing School," works well, but there are many other songs that illustrate the culture of the Japanese that could be used to accompany other stories.

Kimonos are easy to make or robes can be worn as costumes.

#### ACTIVITIES

As a class, discuss the folktales, legends, ghost tales, and myths that have been studied. Decide which piece of literature could be transformed into a play. Beginning with a write to, show students how to select appropriate text to create dialogue. Use the writing process, along with a shared reading of the story, to create a play from the story line. If possible, incorporate a song or two into the final production.

In the play, the students can act out elements of Japanese culture such as bowing and gift giving. Wear kimonos or robes as costumes. Present the play to other classes or at an evening performance for parents.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Audiotape

*Favorite Songs of Japanese Children* by Hanako Fukuda

ASSESSMENT

Have the students do a self-evaluation of their performance. The questions the students should consider in their self-evaluation should include the following: Did we include Japanese customs and behaviors? Did we follow the story line accurately? Could the speaking parts be heard? Did we sing loudly enough?

## Unit Assessment

### How will students demonstrate proficiency?

#### PERFORMANCE TASK

Review the types of literary genres studied including the essential elements for each one. Choose the genre that you enjoyed the most and create your own original piece of literature based on the essential elements of that genre.

Plan the story and use the Writing Process to write a rough draft. Proofread your writing for mistakes in grammar and mechanics. Ask for an evaluation by your classmates. Submit the rough draft before final publication. The writing should include Japanese customs and behaviors reflected in the setting, plot, characters, and message, lesson, or explanation. Illustrations also should reflect knowledge of Japanese style and colors. Publishing and presentation can be done in a variety of ways:

- In regular storybook form with Japanese style illustrations.
- In accordion book form with Japanese style illustrations.
- In regular published form with Japanese style illustrations.
- In storyteller style with *kamishibai* with Japanese-style illustrations.
- In a puppet show using Japanese costumes and scenery.

## Rubric for Unit Assessment

### GENRE OF WRITING

- 4..... Writing precisely follows the structure of a Japanese folktale, ghost tale, legend, or myth.
- 3..... Writing includes some essential elements of the chosen genre and seems Japanese.
- 2..... Writing has an ambiguous style and cannot be identified as Japanese.
- 1..... Writing lacks the characteristics of any genre.

### SETTING

- 4..... The setting is well-developed and clearly contains the geography of Japan.
- 3..... The setting is underdeveloped, but includes some details of the geography of Japan.
- 2..... The setting is undeveloped with little detail that indicates the geography of Japan.
- 1..... There is no setting.

### CHARACTERS

- 4..... Writing contains appropriate Japanese characters who are developed and pertinent to the plot.
- 3..... Writing contains underdeveloped characters who may or may not be Japanese.
- 2..... Writing contains undeveloped or unnecessary characters who do not reflect Japanese customs or behaviors.
- 1..... Writing contains unnecessary and one-dimensional characters who do not seem to be Japanese.

### PLOT

- 4..... Writing contains a plot that carries the message, lesson, or explanation, and the plot can be identified as Japanese.
- 3..... The writing contains a plot that carries a message, but the plot is not clearly Japanese.
- 2..... The writing has a plot, but it not related to a Japanese message.
- 1..... The writing lacks a plot.

### MESSAGE, LESSON, OR EXPLANATION

- 4..... The message, lesson, or explanation is clear and easy to identify as Japanese.
- 3..... The message, lesson, or explanation is implied, but is not clearly Japanese.
- 2..... The message, lesson, or explanation is vague and is not Japanese.
- 1..... There is no message, lesson, or explanation.

### ILLUSTRATIONS

- 4..... Illustrations are neatly done in Japanese style and colors.
- 3..... Illustrations are neatly done, but not always in Japanese style or colors.
- 2..... Illustrations are not carefully done and lack Japanese style and color.
- 1..... Illustrations are missing.

### GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

- 4..... There are very few errors in writing.
- 3..... There are several errors in writing.
- 2..... There are errors in writing that affect the story line.
- 1..... The errors in writing inhibit the reader from understanding the story line.

## Bibliography

### **Curriculum Materials**

Bernson, Mary and Linda Wojtan, eds. *Teaching about Japan: Lessons and Resources*. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 1996.

This book contains lessons and a resource list for teaching about Japan.

Kako, Satoshi. *The Goblin, the Water Imp and the Thunder God*.

This set of kamishibai (storytelling) cards will delight children with a tale involving three of the traditional Japanese folktale characters including the kappa or water imp.

Parisi, Lynn, Jacquelyn Johnson and Patricia Weiss. *Japan in the Classroom: Elementary and Secondary Activities*. Boulder, CO: Social Science Consortium, 1993.

This guide contains 26 activities on a variety of topics, including poetry and proverbs, with ideas for role-plays, literature, and games to use to teach about Japan.

### **Video**

*Kwaidan*. Directed by Masaki Kobayashi, Janus Films, 1964.

This video is an excellent representation of the ghost tale genre complete with shakuhachi (flute) and koto (lute) music. Warning: Preview the *Hoi-Ichi* portion first. The ending can be frightening.

### **Audiotapes**

Fukuda, Hanako. *Favorite Songs of Japanese Children*. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1965.

Martin, Rafe. *Ghostly Tales of Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Yellow Moon Press, 1989.

### **Books**

Atwood, Ann. *My Own Rhythm*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1973.

This book contains stunning nature scenes to inspire haiku.

Behn, Harry. *Cricket Songs*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1964.

This book contains authentic pictures done by Japanese artists to illustrate its beautiful haiku.

Harrison, Annette. *Easy to Tell Stories for Young Children*. Jonesborough: National Storytelling Press, 1992.

This book gives students ideas on how to be a more effective storyteller.

Haviland, Virginia. *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Japan*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1967.

This book includes many of the popular stories of Japan.

Kalman, Bobbie. *Japan the Land*. New York: Crabtree, 1989.

This is a good geographic overview of Japan with lots of pictures

Martin, Rafe. *Mysterious Tales of Japan*. New York: Putnam, 1996.

This beautiful book represents the ghost tale genre and includes very eerie pictures.

San Souci, Robert. *The Samurai's Daughter*. New York: Dial, 1992.

This book tells about the medieval period of Japan and the bravery of a samurai's daughter. It also touches on the pearl diving women of Japan.

Spagnoli, Cathy. *Oni Wa Soto*. Bothell, WA: The Wright Group, 1995.

This book is told in storyteller style and is about one of the most popular monsters in Japanese folklore.

Spivak, Dawnine. *Grass Sandals*. New York: Atheneum, 1997.

This is an excellent book that chronicles the journey of Basho (a great haiku poet) on his trip through Japan.

Trompert, Ann. *Bamboo Hats and a Rice Cake*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1993.

This book is helpful for teaching about Japanese New Year, one of Japan's greatest holidays.

Uchida, Yoshiko. *The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folktales*. Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Co., 1986.

This book is a collection of stories retold by one of Japan's great storytellers.

### **Teacher Background Reading**

Henderson, Harold. *An Introduction to Haiku*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958.

This book includes a teacher-friendly explanation of the history of haiku and instruction on its subtleties.

Higginson, William. *The Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Share and Teach Haiku*. New York: Kodansha America, 1985.

This book is a great resource on how to teach haiku.

Piggott, Juliet. *Japanese Mythology*. London: Hamlyn Publishing, 1969.

This book is a comprehensive description of the mythology of Japan.

### **Internet Sites**

Children's Haiku Garden

<http://www.tecnet.or.jp/~haiku/>

This site offers haiku poems written by children. There is an e-mail address where students can send their own haiku to be included on the site.

Absolutely Whootie: Stories to Grow By

<http://www.storiestogrowby.com>

This site contains international folktales and an excellent list of theme of values for analysis of folktales.

Aaron's Storybook

<http://www.aaronshp.com/stories>

This site offers a discussion of the differences between folktales and legends. It includes "The Boy Who Drew Cats" and an excellent version of "Ho-Ichi the Earless" which Shepherd calls "The Man Who Sang to Ghosts." Shepherd also offers an historical perspective to the tale of the Heike clan.

Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/folk.html>

This is a great site! There are several traditional folktales, complete with animated illustrations and musical accompaniment.

**Ask Asia: Asia Society**

[http://www.askasia.org/for\\_educators/fe\\_frame.htm](http://www.askasia.org/for_educators/fe_frame.htm)

This site contains lesson plans for teaching about Japan including information about Japanese mythology.

**Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network**

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/japan/i.html>

This site contains information on the history of Japan and is good resource for making a time line.

**Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network**

[http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/language\\_lab1-1.html](http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/language_lab1-1.html)

This site contains common phrases in Japanese for students to incorporate in conversation, creating plays, retelling folklore or writing their own legends.

**Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network**

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/games/puzzle/puzzle.html>

This site contains a puzzle of Japan in the form of a timed game. It also offers a good map of Japan showing all the regions and labeling cities, etc.

**Kids Web Japan: Japan Information Network**

<http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/calendar/calendar.html>

This site contains references to all the holidays in Japan by month. It is helpful for writing a more authentic legend because it tells the ways to celebrate holidays in Japan especially, New Year's which is featured in several folktales.

## About the Author

Sandy Stokely has been a student of cultures for many years. She graduated from Beaver College in Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a minor in Spanish, and received her master's degree in reading from the University of Pennsylvania. She has studied in Mexico and Spain during the summer.

Sandy has been teaching for 24 years and has worked with students from ECE to eighth grade. She is currently a fourth grade bilingual teacher at Ellis Elementary School in the Denver Public Schools. Sandy is very involved in educational reform and is the standards advisor for her building. She has developed standards-based units and assessment for the Colorado Department of Education, and was a member of the committee that revised the Denver Public Schools elementary science curriculum. She is a past member of the steering committee for the Colorado Geographic Alliance and has presented workshops in science and geography around the country.

Sandy has been a Master Teacher for KRMA Channel Six for five years and was Public Broadcasting Teacher of the Year in 1999. She also received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching. She has received a fellowship from the Colorado Alliance for Science and several grants from the Public Education Coalition. Sandy has written curriculum for the "Colorado Kids" page of the *Denver Post* and has presented for the *Rocky Mountain News*. In addition, Sandy contributes her talents as a facilitator for Project Wild and Project WET.

Sandy recently traveled to Japan on a Fulbright Memorial Fund Scholarship.