

Motoko

Teacher Preparation Material

(413)253-1664
www.folktales.net



(Please read this to students.)

Konnichiwa! (This means "Hello") My name is Motoko (pronounced "MO-toe-ko"), and I am a storyteller. I will be visiting your school soon to tell you some folktales from Asia.

I was born and raised in Japan. I grew up in a big, crowded city named Osaka. My parents, my brother and two sisters all live there. I lived in Osaka until I was 18. Then I went to Tokyo, the capital, to go to college.

I came to the United States when I was 20. I was an exchange student to University of Massachusetts. I came to America because I wanted to get good education. I liked Massachusetts a lot and decided to stay and raise a family. Now I have a son in college. His name is Charlie.

I became a storyteller when my son was in kindergarten. I love storytelling because it is the best way to combine two things I love the most: reading and acting. I read lots of books, and act out the stories on stage. I also like singing. I will probably ask you to sing with me when I tell stories. You will also see me make gestures to create images for the stories. That is called mime. It is a lot of fun.

Now I visit schools and libraries all over the United States and tell stories. Several years ago, I got to be on "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood." Working with Mr. Rogers was very exciting.

When I come to your school, you can ask questions about me and my stories. You can also ask questions about Japan. I look forward to meeting you all.

Requests for Teachers

1. Please help students identify Japan on a world map. They should also be able to name several other countries in East Asia, such as China, North and South Korea, and Vietnam.
2. Have students read as many folktales as possible, especially Asian stories. Please see the next page for suggested bibliography.
3. Please participate fully in both the assembly and the workshop.

Some Basic Facts about Japan

1. Geography and Population

Japan is off the east coast of Asia. It consists of four major islands (*Hokkaido*, *Honshu*, *Shikoku*, and *Kyushu*) as well as thousands of small ones. Japan is roughly the size of California, but it has 125 million people, half the population of the U.S. Three-quarters of the land is mountains covered with forests. Most people live in cities, which are very crowded. The climates vary from the north to the south. The northern islands have dry summer and snowy winter. In the southern regions, summer is hot and humid, and it rarely snows in winter. There are considerable rainfalls, and frequent typhoons and earthquakes.

2. Food

Rice is the staple of the Japanese diet. They also eat seafood, beef, pork, chicken, dairy, vegetables and fruits. They have Japanese-style noodles, as well as spaghetti and bread. Soy sauce and soybean paste are the primary flavorings in traditional Japanese cooking. In cities, there are restaurants from different countries, including American fast-food chains.

3. Clothing

Most people ordinarily wear western-style clothes. Some schools have uniforms. The traditional clothing, called *kimono* ('kee-mo-no') is worn only on special occasions, such as New Year's Day, graduations, and tea ceremonies.

4. Housing

Traditional Japanese homes are wooden buildings with tiled roofs. However, most of the contemporary houses and apartments are western style and made of concrete. Inside they have both western-style rooms with tables and chairs, and Japanese-style ones with straw mats and low tables. Traditional bedding is called *futon* ('foo-ton') quilts.

5. Language

In Japanese, vowels are pronounced similar to ones in Spanish. Some greeting words are:

Good morning	“ <i>Ohayo</i> ” (oh-ha-YO)
Good afternoon	“ <i>Konnichiwa</i> ” (KON-nee-chee-wah)
Good bye	“ <i>Sayonara</i> ” (sa-YO-na-ra)
Thank you	“ <i>Arigato</i> ” (ah-REE-gah-toe)

In order to write, Japanese children learn two sets of phonetic alphabets (50 letters each,) as well as thousands of Chinese characters. *Hiragana*, the basic alphabet, allows them to write simple sentences. *Katakana*, the other alphabet, is to write words of foreign origin. (English words, for example, such as “sak-kah”= “soccer”.) Most of the other words are written in *Kanji*, Chinese characters. The finished writing is a mixture of all three kinds of letters. Despite this complicated system, the literacy rate in Japan is quite high. Students spend a major part of their school life learning how to read and write.

6. Schools

The kindergarten includes preschool, and is not a part of the elementary school. The compulsory education includes the elementary school (grades 1-6) and the junior high (grades 7-9). The senior high (grades 10-12) is not mandatory, although the enrollment rate is nearly 100%. A class usually consists of 35-40 students. The curriculums are in general more uniform and rigid. The school is open roughly 220 days a year. The school year begins in April and ends in March, with the month of August as the summer vacation.

How to Count in Japanese

1	一	ICHI(ee-chee)
2	二	NI (nee)
3	三	SAN
4	四	SHI (shee), or YON
5	五	GO
6	六	ROKU (ro-koo)
7	七	NANA, or SHICHI (shee-chee)
8	八	HACHI (ha-chee)
9	九	KYU ("Q"), or KU (koo)
10	十	JU (joo)

This is used in the story "Gombay the Goose Catcher."

Bibliography and Other Resources

Classroom-ready Anthologies of Japanese Folktales

(for Grades K-3)

Sakade, Florence, ed. *Japanese Children's Favorite Stories*. Tuttle, 1958.

_____. *Kintaro's Adventure and Other Japanese Children's Stories*. Tuttle.

_____. *The Little One-Inch & Other Japanese Children's Stories*. Tuttle.

_____. *Urashima Taro and Other Japanese Children's Stories*, Tuttle.

_____. *Peach Boy and Other Japanese Children's Stories*. Tuttle.

(for Grades 4-8)

Uchida, Yoshiko. *The Dancing Kettle*. Berkley, Creative Arts Book Co.

_____. *The Magic Listening Cap*. Berkley, Creative Arts Book Co., 1987.

_____. *The Sea of Gold*. Berkley, Creative Arts Books.

Helpful Organizations for Teaching about Japan

Five College Center for East Asian Studies, Smith College, 69 Paradise Rd, Northampton, MA 01063. (413)585-3751, www.smith.edu/fceas. (Call and they will send you a wonderful catalogue of resources. You can borrow everything for free!)

Sasuga Japanese Bookstore, 7 Upland Rd. Cambridge, MA 02140

(617)497-5460, www.sasugabooks.com. (They have a great catalogue, too.)

<http://jin.jcic.or.jp/kidsweb/index.html> (Great Japan website for kids!)

National Clearinghouse for U.S.-Japan Studies, Indiana Univ., 2805 E. Tenth St., Suite 120, Bloomington, IN 47401. (800)266-3815, <http://www.indiana.edu/~japan>

Important Authors for Children in Japanese/Japanese American Literature

Kuroyanagi, Tetsuko (*Totto-chan: The Little Girl at the Window*)

Mochizuki, Ken (*Baseball Saved Us, Heroes, The Passage to Freedom*)

Namioka, Lensey (*The Coming of the Bear, Island of Ogres*)

Patterson, Katherine (*Master Puppeteer, Of Nightingales that Weep, Sign of Chrysanthemum*)

Say, Allen (*Tree of Cranes, Grandfather's Journey, The Ink-keeper's Apprentice*)

Uchida, Yoshiko (*Journey to Topaz, Jar of Dreams, The Best Bad Thing, Journey Home*)

Watkins, Yoko Kawashima (*So Far from the Bamboo Grove, My Brother, My sister, and I*)

Wells, Ruth (*A to Zen, The Farmer and the Poor God*)

Yumoto, Kazumi (*The Friends*)

Books on Storytelling

Davis, Donald. 1993. *Telling Your Own Stories*. August House.

Gillard, Marni. 1996. *Storyteller, Story Teacher*. Stenhouse Publishers.

Lipman, Doug. 1995. *Storytelling Games*. Oryx Press.

Livo, Norma J., and S. A. Rietz. 1987. *Storytelling Activities*. Libraries Unlimited.

National Storytelling Association. 1994. *Tales as Tools*. National Storytelling Press.

Zipes, Jack. 1995. *Creative Storytelling: Building Community, Changing Lives*. Routledge.

Yellow Moon Press www.yellowmoon.com

Suggested Follow-up Activity: Sugoroku

Sugoroku ('soo-go-row-koo') is the traditional Japanese board game based on a story. It works particularly well with long, cumulative or sequential tales.

Materials:

- 3"x5" index cards
- Foam board or poster board, 22"x28"
- Stickers of different shapes
- Markers and crayons
- Game tokens
- Glue or tape
- Dice

Procedure

1. Choose a folktale, and tell it or read it to your students.
2. Rewrite the story in a simpler language, and divide the text into scenes as many as the number of students in your class. Each scene needs to be summed up in one or two short sentences. Assign each student a scene.
3. Each student copies the text and draws the scene on the blank side of an index card. The text and the picture must be on the same side. The finished cards must be numbered.
4. Attach the cards to the foam/poster board in order, and connect them with arrows. Put "START" and "FINISH" on the first and the last card, respectively.
5. Have the class collectively design the board. By using stickers, mark the places where special rules apply. For example:
 - Star-shaped stickers mean, "Proceed three."
 - Red dots mean "Lose one turn."
 - Heart-shaped stickers mean, "Go back to START," and so on.
6. To play: Four or five players can play at the same time. Roll the dice and proceed. The object of the game is to reach the FINISH box before other players.

