

Motoko's Japanese Culture Workshops

Dear Teachers,

Please choose one of the following options for your class and let me know ahead of time by emailing me at motoko@folktales.net.

Each workshop starts with a brief discussion on geography, climate, and housing in Japan, then moves on to the specific cultural topic, related folktales and art. The art activity may have to be completed after my visit. I request 45-60 minutes for each session.

1. Children's Day (Grades K-4)

Japan celebrates Children's Day on May 5 with flying carp streamers. This session includes:

Story: The Origin of Carp Kites, or *Momotaro*, the Peach Boy

Song: *Koinobori*, the Carp Streamers

Art: Small carp streamers, and/or newspaper *samurai* helmets

Recommended Book: *A Carp for Kimiko* (Virginia Kroll, Charlesbridge, 1993)

2. The Doll Festival/Girls' Day (Grades 1-4)

Girls are particularly celebrated on March 3 with a display of beautiful dolls. **Story:** The Princess Who Loved Bugs, a 12th century feminist tale

Song: *Haru ga kita*, Spring Has Come

Art: *Origami* paper dolls

Recommended Book: *The Girl Who Loved Caterpillars* (Jean Merrill, Putnam, 1997)

3. Sumo Wrestling (Grades K-4)

Sumo is a traditional sport that emphasizes respect and self-control. The session includes:

Story: *Sumo Mice & Power Rice*, or Three Strong Women

Art: Paper *Sumo* game

Recommended Book: *Three Strong Women*, a Tall Tale from Japan (Claus Stamm, Trumpet Club 1995)

4. Oni Monster in Japanese Folklore (Grades K-4)

The *oni*, a scary ogre, is a familiar figure in Japanese folklore. Every February children perform a ritual of throwing beans to expel the *oni*!

Story: The Funny Little Woman

Art: Paper *Oni* mask

Recommended Books: *The Funny Little Woman* (Arlene Mosel, Puffin 1993); *Ten Oni Drummers* (Matthew Gollub, Lee & Low 2000)

5. Japanese New Year (Grades K-3)

New Year's Day is the most important holiday in Japan, celebrated with special food, clothing, and customs.

Story: The Tale of the Twelve Animals

Song: *Oshogatsu*, the New Year Song

Art: Lucky Smile Game (Japanese version of "Pin the Tail on the Donkey.")

Recommended Book: *Why Rat Comes First* (Clara Yen, Children's Book Press 1991)

6. Japanese Writing System (Grades 2-5)

In order to write, children in Japan learn two sets of phonetic alphabets (*hiragana* and *katakana*) as well as thousands of Chinese characters. I will teach students to sing Japanese "ABC" Song, demonstrate writing, and make everyone a nametag in Japanese. Discussion also includes school life in Japan.

Recommended Book: *The Way We Do It in Japan* (Geneva Iijima, Whitman & Co. 2002)

7. Origami Storigami (Grades 1-5)--New!

Origami, the ancient Japanese art of paper-folding teaches children to focus, develop their dexterity, and increase their understanding of geometry. This workshop includes traditional and contemporary stories related to *origami*, and age-appropriate hands-on activities.

Recommended Books: *Easy Origami* (John Montroll, Dover 1992); *The Paper Crane* (Molly Bang, Mulberry 1985); *The Origami Master* (Nathaniel Lachenmeyer, Whitman & Co. 2008); *Butterflies for Kiri* (Cathryn Falwell, Lee & Low 2008)

8. Calligraphy Lesson (Grades 2-5)—New!

Japanese people consider good penmanship a sign of fine character. Ink and brush calligraphy is taught in elementary and middle schools as a part of their language arts curricula. In this workshop students experience ink brush writing as a form of meditation; to practice being quiet, relaxed, and focused.

Recommended Book: *Mieko and the Fifth Treasure* (Eleanor Coerr, Puffin 2003)

Please email me with any questions. Thanks!

Motoko

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