

Japanese Culture for 3rd Graders

Essential Question: How is Japanese culture both different and the same as the culture we have in the United States?

Lesson Rational: This lesson is intended to cover Ohio's 3rd grade social studies standard, "Communities may include diverse cultural groups." In Greenville, Ohio we have families from Japan who make our community home for several years due to the fact that we have a company (GTI) in our town which is Japanese owned. Since "making comparisons with communities in other places" is a major theme in the 3rd grade, and since our students often encounter classmates who are from Japan, this lesson fits right in to Ohio's standards.

Lesson Timeline: This lesson is crafted to last approximately one week, but can easily be expanded to go for two weeks.

Activities:

Day 1: Holidays

Materials: A Carp for Kimiko by Virginia Kroll

Japanese Cooking for Kids by Kimberly Ono

My Japan by Etsuko Watanabe

Various artifacts (if you have them)

1. Read aloud to the students a book or various passages that have to do with Japanese Holidays. As you read, display a large Venn Diagram (labeled AMERICAN HOLIDAYS and JAPANESE HOLIDAYS) on chart paper. Ask students to raise their hands and offer things to put on the Venn Diagram. Help students notice similarities and differences.

2. Display and talk about artifacts if you have them (I have several carp kites and some Girl's Day artifacts that are meant to be decorations.)

3. If time, make an easy recipe (or make something at home and just give to the kids) that goes with one of the holidays and let the students sample.

4. At the end...hand out the worksheet (attached) on which the students will compare and contrast and have them fill out the appropriate part for the day. This will be done daily and can be part of their assessment of the unit.

Day 2: Food

Materials: Various Japanese foods for sampling. You can have as many or as few as you want, but I always try to include Japanese Ramen noodles (which can be bought cheaply at local stores and microwaved quickly.) Chopsticks for each child (I often ask a local Chinese restaurant to donate cheap ones, or you can buy them.

1. Hand out a chart for the students to record facts and opinions for each food as they eat (I have included a sample on this lesson plan. You can customize as needed.) Make sure to talk about how the foods are similar and different from foods that we eat in the United States!

2. At the end, have the students fill out the appropriate parts of their compare and contrast paper.

Day 3: Tea

Materials: White paper cups, colorful permanent markers, some sort of tea (I have used iced tea in pitchers, but I have also done hot tea using a teapot that I heat on a hotplate), some sort of “sweet” (I usually use some sort of American cookie, which isn’t authentic, but gives them the idea!), the book Tea Ceremony by Shozo Sato (this book is for your reference and is interesting to read before hand), and the book Japan by Debbi Michiko Florence.

1. Explain the ceremony to the kids. Read page 20 (bowing) and 46 (tea ceremony) in Japan. Tell them how the REAL ceremony is long and very elaborate. We are going to do a more simple version, trying to maintain the mood...no giggles, hardly any talking. We will take our shoes off and we will do some bowing! I will serve a sweet (which is tradition) and some tea. You do not have to eat or drink either if you don’t like them.

2. Arrange in a circle. Show the traditional way to sit. Give students a few minutes to make a pretty design on their cups. Explain how the Japanese would have fancy teacups for the ceremony and everyone would admire them!

3. Have the kids get up and file out in order so when they come back in they will sit down next to their cup. Have the other teacher walk them down the steps and back around. They will take their shoes off in the hall. Each will bow to me as they enter the room in silence and file around to their spot, by their cup, kneeling!

4. Serve each a cookie. Have them stand and bow. When everyone is served, have them say “itadakimas” before eating. Explain to them that it means “I receive this food” and it is kind of like a thank you.

5. Serve the tea in the same way!

6. When all are done, have the students say “gochisosama deshita” (a polite way to say thank you for the meal) and have each file out individually. Show them how first! When they get to the doorway, they turn and face the room and bow and step out of the room backwards! Talk about how it is more polite to show your face as you leave and not your behind! They should then go get their shoes and we will all come back in the room. Discuss the experience. Brainstorm with them: what are some traditions we do in the United States that this reminds you of?

7. Students fill out their daily compare/contrast sheet.

Day 4: Kamishibai (and possibly Manga)

Materials: Kamishibai Man by Allen Say, Kamishibai cards if you have them, wood to use as clappers as well as some small candies (if you are planning to perform a Kamishibai yourself), YouTube videos of Kamishibai being performed (here is one: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_Ugic0n49M), age appropriate manga books (any...but a few appropriate ones could be: YO-KAI WATCH, Vol. 1 by Noriyuki Konishi, Yotsuba&!, Vol. 1 by Kiyohiko Azuma, Chi's Sweet Adventures, 1 (Chi's Sweet Home) by Kinoko Natsume)

1. Introduce the subject by reading and discussing Kamishibai Man by Allen Say to the students. Talk about it. Talk about what changed over time (also a 3rd grade standard) and then ask how story time has changed in the United States over time.

2. If you plan to perform a Kamishibai, then do that next. You can just hold up the cards if you do not have a frame or you can make a simple one out of foamboard. I tell my students ahead of time to bring a coin (but I don’t tell them why) and I let them buy a sweet (the coins collected will be saved and donated the next time we have a penny drive for a good cause!) Kids who buy sit in front (but I let all the kids have a piece, even if they forget!) Instead of performing, you could show a performance on YouTube instead (and still do the candy selling ahead of time!)

3. If you have plenty of time left, you can introduce manga as a modern storytelling method. Discuss the difference (reading right to left, etc.) Give them time to look at/read some and then discuss the style. What do we have that is similar (many will refer to the Wimpy Kid books that are very popular.)

4. Students fill out their daily compare/contrast charts.

Day 5: Anime

Materials: A DVD of a suitable anime cartoon. I like to use Ponyo or My Neighbor Totoro both by Hayao Miyazaki.

1. Show the video (this may take several class periods depending on your flexibility.)

2. Discuss the similarities and differences between cartoons they usually watch. I like to watch the whole video with them and help point things out as they watch. Third graders are very enthusiastic about the cartoons but don't always understand some of what is going on.

3. Fill out the compare/contrast paper.

Assessment: Depending on your timeframe, the compare/contrast paper they students worked on daily can be your main assessment of this unit. If you have more time, the students could complete a project at the end to show what they learned. They could choose between making a poster, doing a presentation on their ipads or chromebooks, or writing a letter to a "friend" explaining how Japanese culture is the same and different from their own.

Extensions: If you have time, there are many more things you could add. I often add a day of "art" in which we explore origami and/or Japanese scroll art. I will often add in some calligraphy by going to <https://japanesetranslator.co.uk/dictionaries/your-name-in-japanese/> and choosing "calligraphy" as the style. You can then print out the paper that can be handed out to the kids to show them how to write their name and how to pronounce it (or you can have them go to that site on their computers and explore it themselves.) Some names will not translate, so you have to get creative! I also often show the DVD: The Little Travelers Japan by the Little Travelers Productions (can be bought on Amazon) which shows two little girls from California living and playing in Japan for a few months.







Name _____

The Japanese Culture

Directions: As we go through our unit, fill out the chart to show how our culture is similar and different from the Japanese culture.



Japanese Culture Item/Activity	Tell how this item is different from what we have in the United States.	Tell what we have in the United States that is similar to this item or activity.
<p style="text-align: center;">Holidays</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Chopsticks</p> 		
<p style="text-align: center;">Sushi</p> 		

Tea Ceremony



Bowing



Kamishibai



Manga



Anime



Name _____

Japanese Food!!!!

As you taste each food below, sketch a picture of it, then describe it with fact words AND opinion words. If you choose not to taste, you can use words that describe its texture (what it feels like) or words that describe what it looks like!

Name of Food	Sketch of your food	Words to Describe-Facts	Words to Describe--Opinions
Miso Soup			
Rice Crackers			
Ramen Noodles			
Roasted Seaweed Snack			
Shrimp Crackers			
Sushi			

Mango Yogurt Drink			
Pocky			

Now, Write a sentence about your FAVORITE food and your LEAST FAVORITE food you tasted today. Make sure to begin with a capital letter and end with a period!!

Favorite _____

Least Favorite _____

How did you do with chopsticks? _____

