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Lesson Plan: Japanese Kites
Spring 2008

Grade Level: 6-8

I will be using the following lesson plan to teach about Japanese kites in my 6th grade Social Studies and Math classes. I will have approximately 100 students for about six total hours.

Time: 2-3 days

Purpose:

Sixth through eighth grade students study civilizations and geography of different countries. Students will learn about an ancient art that started in China, was shared with Japan, and has evolved into a modern era hobby. If time permits, students will construct a Japanese style kite. In my math classes, we study the applicability of almost everything we learn. I can easily incorporate math into the measurement on the maps. Constructing the kites themselves is a wonderful math lesson, with the measurement of all the materials. We can even bring in wind speed, and length of the flying string!

Standards:

History

- A. Interpret relationships between events shown on multiple-tier time lines.
- B. Describe the political and social characteristics of early civilizations and their enduring impact on later civilizations.

People in Societies

- A. Compare cultural practices, products and perspectives of past civilizations in order to understand commonality and diversity of cultures.
- B. Analyze examples of interactions between cultural groups and explain the factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict.
- C. Explain how contact between different cultures impacts the diffusion of belief systems, art, science, technology, language and forms of government.

Geography

- A. Identify on a map the location of major physical and human features of each continent.
- D. Explain reasons that people, products and ideas move from place to place and the effects of that movement on geographic patterns.

Social Studies Skills and Methods

- A. Analyze different perspectives on a topic obtained from a variety of sources.
- D. Work effectively in a group.

Procedure/Activities:

Students will locate and label the countries of China and Japan on a world map. Using a timeline, students will mark 500 B.C., approximately the time of the first kite used in China. The use and legends of kites from this time will be shared through books and lecture.

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On the timeline, students will locate A. D. 700, the time kites were brought to Japan by Buddhist missionaries. They will measure the distance between the two countries using the legend and a ruler. The Japanese adapted the Chinese kite designs and made them practical, as well as decorative and entertaining, and most interesting of all, made some for fighting!

During the Edo period, (1603-1867) the Japanese created their special style and decoration, indigenous to each region. Kite pictures and slides will show the basic construction of the bamboo frame and skin made of washi paper, handmade paper, and painted with sumi, black ink, all from Japan. Students will also see the symbol for “kite crazy” “Tako-Kichi” and learn about festivals, and other traditions utilizing kites in Japan.

Students will learn about Tiezo Hashimoto, the last professional kite maker in Tokyo. He was a living National Treasure for his work with painting Edo, (the old name for Tokyo) kites. He died in 1991.

Assessment:

Students will locate and label the countries of China and Japan on an outline map. Through short answer responses they will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between travel between China and Japan, and the exchange of ideas and items. Students will also demonstrate knowledge of the different ways the Japanese modified the kite for themselves.

Extension:

Students can construct their own kites, following one of the common forms of historical kites still used in Japan, or one of the more recent modified kites designed by recent generations of kite builders.

Materials/Resources:

Webpages:

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/china/china-outline-map.html>

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/japan/japan-outline-map.html>

<http://www.kiteman.co.uk/JAPANESE%20HISTORY4.html>

<http://www.kiteman.co.uk/JAPANESE520HISTORY2.html>

<http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~ET3M-TKKW/history2.html>

Kite Materials:

The Drachen Foundation has paper and bamboo pieces, as well as books and posters of kites for teachers, as well as classes in creating your own Japanese-style kite.

<http://drachenstore.easystorecreator.net/items/pulications/educators-special-p035-detail.htm>

Books:

The Art of the Japanese Kite by Tal Streeter, Weatherhill, New York 1989

Kites by Wayne Hosking, Friedman/Fairfax Publishers, New York, 1994