

## Unit Project-Japan

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Subject: Social Studies / Language Arts

Grade Level: Grades 3(advanced students) through 6 grade.

Time Allocated for Unit Study: Approximately 6-8 weeks

**Purpose:** By teaching this unit, my students will learn some things about Japan. They will undoubtedly notice the differences between their own culture and Japan's, but more importantly, children will recognize the similarities between the two cultures. Misconceptions will be corrected and new views will take hold bridging not just two cultures, but two peoples....

**Rational:** Books are empowering. By reading the chosen books below, it is my hope that children will not only learn about another culture, but learn more about themselves. I believe as children read about the lives of people from Japan, they will make connections to their own lives. They will realize that people, regardless of where they live, are more alike than different.

By reading Sadako and The Thousand Paper Cranes, it is my hope that children will learn about the power of one person to create change.

### **Summary of Featured Book:**

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Crane's by Eleanor Coerr is a touching true story of a young Japanese girl's struggle with radiation poisoning ten years after the bombing of the city Hiroshima. She was two years old when she was exposed to the A-bomb in 1945 and was a healthy girl until she suddenly developed leukemia at the age of 12. She believed that if she folded 1,000 origami paper cranes, her wish to recover would come true. In the hospital, growing weaker every day, she managed to fold 644 cranes. She died on October 25, 1955. Sadako's classmates were shocked by her death. As a way to honor Sadako's memory, they decided to raise funds to build a monument to her to express their wish for peace. On May 5, 1958 a statue of Sadako was erected in Hiroshima Peace Park with the words, "This is our cry. This is our prayer. Peace in the world." Each year thousands of school children around the world fold paper cranes to be placed at the base of the monument on Peace Day.

### **Summary of books to read aloud to students:**

The Big Wave by Pearl S. Buck is a fictional story of two young boys in a small village in Japan, and their struggles with life and death because of a tsunami, or “big wave” that destroys the village.

A Child in Prison Camp by Takashima is the story of one family of Japanese origin living in Canada, and their three year relocation to the interior of the country. It is told from a child’s point of view.

White Serpent Castle by Lensey Namioka is the story of two samurais, their lifestyles, code of honor, and traditions.

**Materials:**

Multiple copies of Sadako and the Thousand Paper Crane’s

Single copy of: The Big Wave, A Child in Prison Camp, and White Serpent Castle

Basket of theme based books for independent reading (see Associated Book list).

Composition notebook for Literature Response Log (one per student)

Origami paper or assorted paper cut into 10 x 10 squares

Clay and other art supplies

Map of Japan

**Core Activity:**

**Literature Discussion Circles**

Students will be put into small groups to read and discuss Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes. Children will keep individual journal response logs to record their thoughts and feelings about the assigned reading. As children read, they will write down their reactions to what they’re reading. Responses will vary depending on the reader’s level of involvement and reaction to the reading.

Responses may include:

- \*questions they might have about their reading (I wonder why...)
- \*reactions or feelings to the characters’ actions or thoughts (when this happened, I felt angry, sad, upset, relieved, because...)
- \*poems expressing the overall theme of the chapter (haiku, diamante’, acrostic, free verse...)
- \*symbolic illustrations of the central idea or theme
- \*written connections from the text to self experiences
- \*written connections from the text to other books
- \*written connections from the text to the world (newspaper articles, TV shows, experiences of other people, etc.).
- \* diary entries written from the main character’s perspective

After children read their assigned chapters and write their reactions to their reading, they will meet the next day in their small

groups to share and discuss their journal responses. The climate of a discussion group is very informal; children sitting around discussing a good book.

Evaluation: After each group discussion a rubric is used to evaluate a student's level of participation and degree of preparation. Individuals receive a score of 0 to 3 (with 3 being the highest) based on his/her amount of participation in group discussions and a score of 0 to 3 based on how prepared he/she was (quality of responses) for group discussions. Scores are assigned by peers, teacher, and self. Verbal tips (Constructive feedback) for improvement will be given by group members to an individual who has been given a low score.

### **Relax -n-Listen**

Every day after lunch and recess I like to read to my class for around 20 minutes. This is a great way to model good reading and to "anchor" us all together by giving us a common book to experience and enjoy. During my Japan unit study, I will read aloud excerpts from, A Child in Prison Camp by Takashima and White Serpent Castle by Lensey Namioka. While reading, I will model the cognitive strategies (inferring, connecting, questioning, summarizing, visualizing, and predicting) and occasionally encourage children to demonstrate their knowledge of the cognitive strategies by calling on them to share a connection, ask a question, describe a visual scene, or make a inference or prediction.

### **Correlating Student Activities: to be assigned before, during, and after the course of unit.**

Create a bulletin board using a map of Japan. Use colored push pins to highlight key places discussed during reading. Add children's artwork or writings to the bulletin board.

Reserve a space for a "Question Board" in your classroom. Using easel paper and markers, have children post any questions they have about Japan on the board. Throughout the unit study, as children read and find the answers to the posted questions, they write their names next to the question thus signaling the teacher to allow time for that student to share the answer with the class.

Many Japanese poems are about objects in nature. Have children write haiku's about things from nature.

Have children research one aspect of Japanese culture and write a short paper about it. Present findings to the class.

Ask children to write a friendly letter to Sadako asking her questions about life in Japan and living with Leukemia. Tell her about yourself.

Have children write a journal entry from one of the character's point of view (Sadako, Sadako's mom, dad, siblings, her best friend, her grandmother...etc.)

Have children design and build a Peace Monument (either 3-Dimensional or on poster paper). Write a brief description explaining the symbolism of their statue.

Have children write peace messages or speeches about peace and perform them in class or for other classes.

Involve the whole school in folding paper cranes. String them into garland and send to:

\*Peace Park in Hiroshima, Japan in honor of Peace Day

mail to: Office of the Mayor,  
City of Hiroshima, 3-34 Kokutaiji-Machi, 1 Chome Naka-ku,  
Hiroshima 730 Japan

\*the President of the United States (along with a Peace Message)

\*a sick person recovering from an illness

Here are some other ways to share the story of Sadako and your garland of paper cranes:

1. Invite the local newspaper to come and photograph all the people who participated in the folding of the cranes. Have them interview or publish a story about why you folded the cranes and the message they symbolize.
2. Hang them in a school library, and ask the librarian to display books related to Sadako, Japan, WW2, leukemia, peace, and origami,
3. Bring your string of cranes to a nursing home to decorate the dining area. Have children retell Sadako's story to the residents.

Have children write a persuasive letter to the mayor of your city asking him/her to declare a special day as Peace Day.

Have children choose another book to read with Japanese American theme. As they finish, have them do an oral presentation explaining how the story seemed different or similar from the other books read during course of unit.

Write a story that emphasizes “the power of one person to create change”.

Create Peace Banners.

Write a paragraph(s) stating whether you agree or disagree with the statement, “ One person has the power to create change”. Use ample reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Write and perform a play about peace.

Have students work in groups to generate responses to the question, “How is folding a paper crane like making peace?”

Some possible responses could be:

*Some of the steps to folding a crane are awkward and at first it may seem impossible. . . just like trying to change someone’s perspective about another culture may be awkward or downright impossible at first,...but ....*

Just as there is more than one way to achieve peace, there is more than one way to fold a paper crane, but all ways require patience and collaboration...

In folding of the crane, you must use your hands which to me means, actions speak louder than words. To achieve peace one must act. . .

*When folding, one must think of symmetry which makes me think of equal or equality. .all people should be treated equally. . . .*

Write invitations to parents, principal, school board members, and community leaders inviting them to a Peace Day celebration. Have each student bring in a food representing his/her culture. \* This

would be a great opportunity to have children read their stories and poetry, share their artwork, or perform their play.

List of Associated Books  
to be used during  
Unit Study on Japan

ABC's of Origami, The  
Atami Dragon, The  
Best Bad Thing, The  
Bicycle Man, The  
Big Wave, The  
Boy of the Three Year Nap, The  
Cat Who Went to Heaven, The

Claude Sarasas  
David Klass  
Yoshiko Uchida  
Allen Say  
Pearl S. Buck  
Dianne Snyder  
Elizabeth  
Coatsworth

Cheerful Heart, The  
Child in Prison Camp, A  
Commodore Perry in the Land  
of the Shogun  
Count Your Way Through Japan  
Cricket Songs  
Crow Boy  
Disastrous Floods  
and Tidal Waves  
Easy Origami  
Nakano  
Eternal Spring of Mr. Ito, The  
Festivals Around the World  
Forever Christmas Tree, The  
Fumio and the Dolphins  
Girl from the Snow Country  
Haiku Vision  
How My Parents Learned to Eat  
Illustrated Story of World War II  
Japan  
Japan- The Land and Its People  
Japan in Pictures  
Publishing  
Japanese Fairy Tale, A  
  
Japanese Food and Drink  
Jar of Dreams, The  
Lands and Peoples, Volume 2  
Ming Lo Moves the Mountain  
Miss Happiness and Miss Flower  
More Cricket Songs  
My Own Rhythm, an Approach  
to Haiku

Elizabeth Gray  
Takashima

Rhoda Blumberg  
Jim Haskins  
Harry Behn  
Taro Yashima

Melvin Berger  
Dokuohtel

Shela Garrigue  
Phillip Steele  
Yoshiko Uchida  
Chiyoko Nakatani  
Masako Hidaka  
Ann Atwood  
Ina R. Friedman  
Reader's Digest  
Forrest R. Pitts  
Sophy Hoare  
Sterling

Jane Horl Ike and  
Baruch Zimmer  
Lesley Downer  
Yoshiko Uchido  
Grolier, Inc.  
Arnold Lobel  
Rumer Golden  
Harry Behn  
  
Ann Atwood

New Japan, The	Edward F. Dolan
Origami for Fun	Toshie
Takahama	
Painter and the Wild Swans, The	Claude Clement
Pair of Red Clogs, A	Masako Matsuno
Paper Crane, The	Molly Bang
Passport to Japan	Richard Tames
Prancing Pony, The	DeForest,
Charlotte	
Return to Hiroshima	Betty Jean Lifton
Sadako and the Thousand	
Paper Cranes	Eleanor Coerr
Samurai of Golden Hill	Yoshiko
Uchida	
Seashore Story	Taro Yashima
See No Evil	Emmet Davis
Sign of the Chrysanthemum, The	Katherine
	Paterson
Sumi and the Goat and the	
Tokyo Express	Yoshiko Uchida
Sumi's Prize	Yoshiko Uchida
Sumi's Special Happening	Yoshiko Uchida
Thrupp-o-moto	James Clavell
Umbrella	Tara Yashima
Village Tree, The	Tara Yashima
War Between the Classes, The	Gloria Miklowitz
Warrior and the Wise Man, The	David Wisniewski
Welcome to Japan	Margaret Friskey
White Serpent Castle	Lensey Namioka
World at War- Hiroshima	R. Conrad Stein
You and Me Heritage Tree, The	Phyllis Fiarotta
Youngest One	Taro Yashima



## Additional Resources/ Handouts

\***Courtesy of [www.EnchantedLearning.Com](http://www.EnchantedLearning.Com)**

download a book about Japan: Each page gives specific information and has questions for students to answer.

### Overview of Japan Booklet:

Page 1: Cover of Booklet: Gives picture overview of what is inside book.

Page 2 Japan Introduction: Shows a World Map with facts about Japan listed.

Page 3 Map of Japan: Shows map of Japan. Gives brief information concerning the four largest islands of Japan.

Page 4 Japan Flag: Shows flag of Japan. Explains symbolism and gives history of flag.

Page 5 Japan Language: Gives brief explanation of the Japanese language and shows the Japanese word for English words or phrases.

Page 6 Japan Origami: Gives definition of origami and illustrates the steps for creating an origami whale.

Page 7 Japan Haiku: Gives examples and format for creating a haiku.

Page 8 Japan Mt. Fuji: Has a picture to color of Mt. Fuji and gives facts pertaining to how it was created.

Go to [enchantedlearning.com](http://enchantedlearning.com) to download pages for Japan booklet or print out the following pages to make a Japan booklet for fluent readers. Next have the students cut out each page of the book. Staple the pages together at the top of the page, then read the book and answer the questions.

## Japan: Introduction



Intro

**Japan is a country off the coast of eastern Asia. It consists of a chain of mountainous islands in the North Pacific Ocean.**

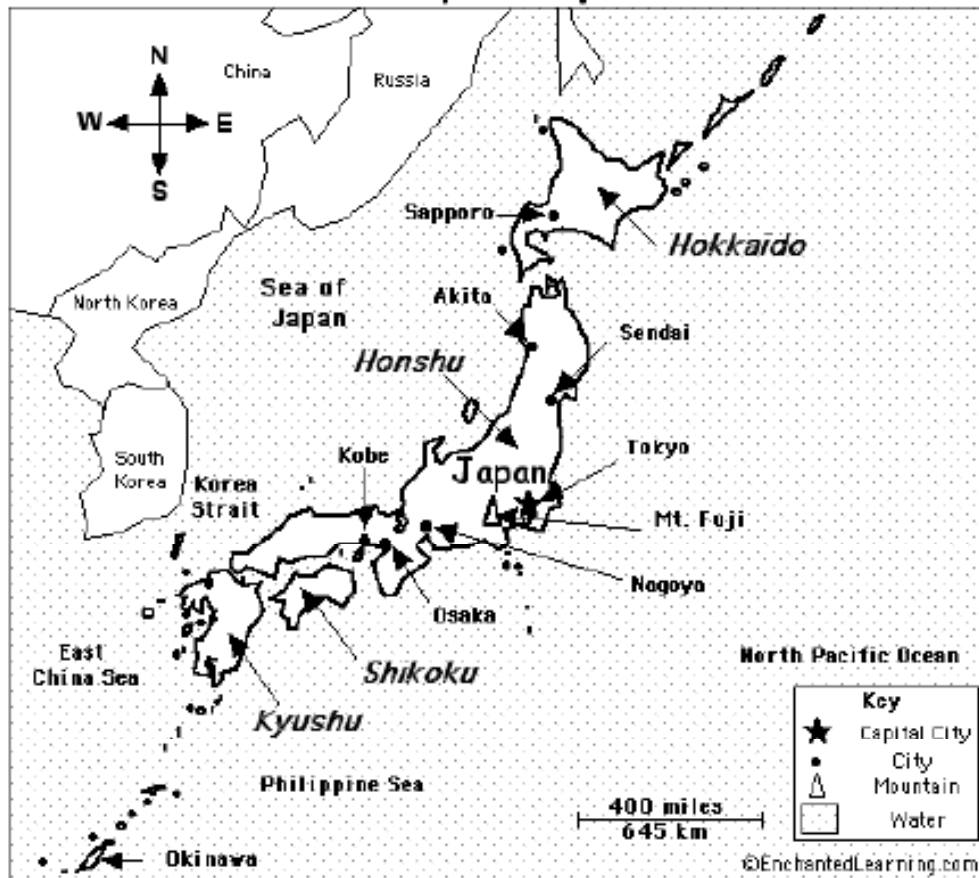
**Japan's area is 377,835 sq. km (slightly smaller than California). Japan has a population of about 127,214,500 (2003 estimate). The country is divided into 47 prefectures (governmental divisions). The main language of Japan is Japanese. The monetary unit of Japan is the yen.**

**Japan is a major industrial country with ancient traditions and a long history. People have lived in Japan since the Stone Age. The first unified state emerged about A.D. 400, when the Yamato clan took power.**

Japan is divided into how many prefectures? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the monetary unit of Japan? \_\_\_\_\_

## Japan: Map



Map

Japan consists of four large islands and over 3,000 smaller ones. The Sea of Japan separates Japan from mainland Asia. Japan's biggest island is Honshu. Tokyo, Japan's capital and largest city, is on Honshu.

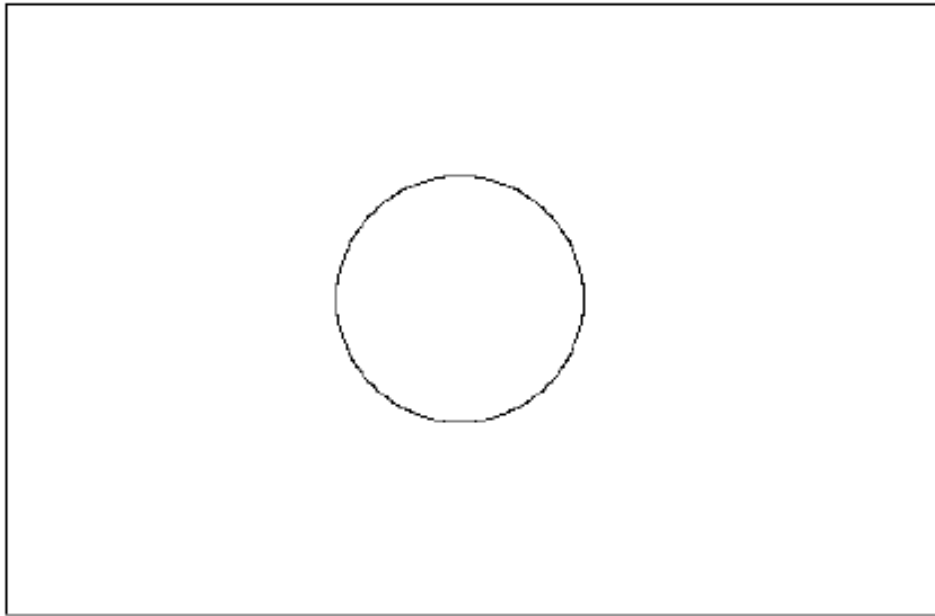
What is the capital of Japan? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the name of the biggest island of Japan? \_\_\_\_\_

What body of water separates Japan from mainland Asia? \_\_\_\_\_

## Japan: Flag

White background with a  
red circle  
↓



Flag

The Japanese flag is a white banner whose center contains a red circle; this circle represents the sun. The Japanese flag is called Hinomaru, which means "Circle of the sun." In English it is sometimes called the "Rising sun."

This flag has been used for over a thousand years, and no one knows who designed it or when. It was officially adopted as the flag of Imperial Japan on January 27, 1870.

What does the red circle in Japan's flag represent?

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When was Japan's flag officially adopted?

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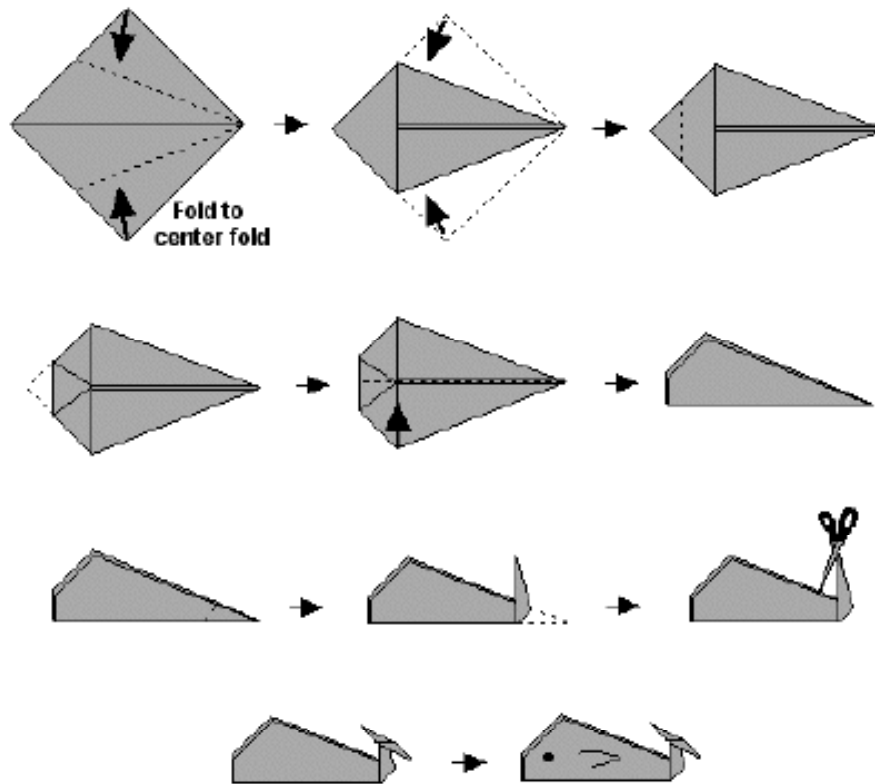
## Japan: Origami



Origami is an ancient Japanese art of paper folding. An origami design usually starts with a square piece of paper; a series of simple folds transforms the paper into a beautiful paper sculpture.

One of the most well-known origami projects is the crane. Japanese legend states that a person who makes 1,000 origami cranes will have their heart's desire come true.

The following is an origami whale:



Origami

## Japan: Haiku

Haiku is a type of Japanese poetry. Haiku are short poems that have a total of 17 syllables and usually have three lines; the first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third line has five syllables.

The first two lines describe the subject; the third line conveys the heart of the matter.

Haiku usually describes nature and a fleeting moment in time; it often contains a reference to a season of the year. Haiku was developed in Japan over 400 years ago. It was popularized by the poet Matsuo Basho in the 1600s.

Haiku, a poem,  
Five, seven, five syllables.  
Life frozen in words.

Write your own Haiku below:

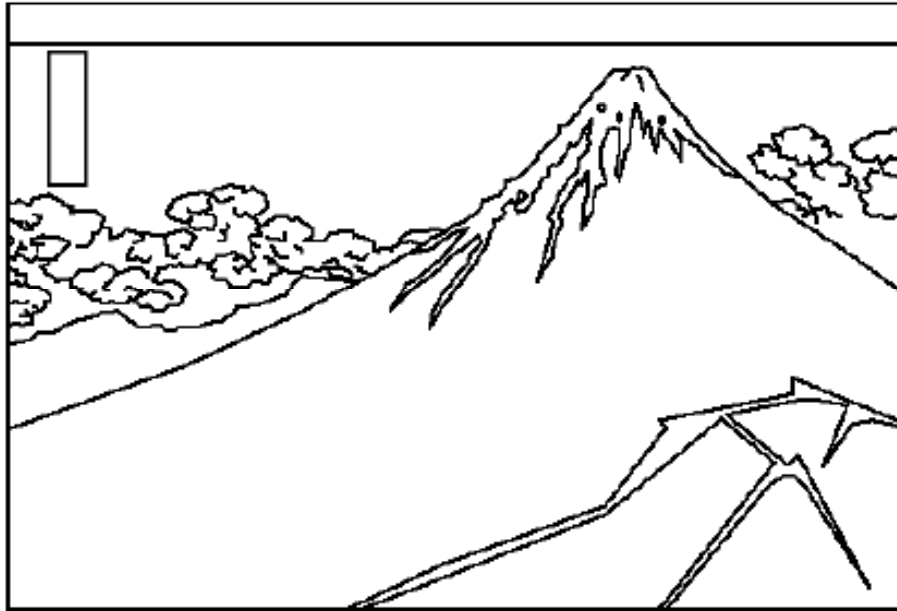
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Haiku

## Japan: Mt. Fuji



"Thunderstorm at the foot of a mountain," from "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji" by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)

The tallest peak in Japan is *Mt. Fuji*; it is 3,776 meters (12,390 feet) tall. *Mt. Fuji* is a snow-capped, cone-shaped volcano that is located in central Honshu, Japan's main island. The circular crater at the top is about 500 m across. Although it looks like a single cone, *Mt. Fuji* is actually a group of superimposed cones formed by many volcanic eruptions. *Mt. Fuji*'s most recent eruption occurred in 1707-1708.

*Mt. Fuji* is sacred in the Shinto religion. This mountain is climbed by thousands of people each year. This mountain has been the subject of artists for hundreds of years.

Mt. Fuji