

National Symbols of Japan: **The National Flag and Anthem**

Purpose:

Increase knowledge of Japanese traditions and compare to American traditions.

Target Grade Levels: K-3

Essential Questions:

- *What does the flag design represent?
- *When is the flag displayed?
- *What are the words to the national anthem, Kimigayo ?
- *When do Japanese sing Kimigayo?

Rationale:

Students will become aware of Japanese traditions and compare them to their own traditions. Being aware of the traditions of other cultures establishes positive perspectives that will enable students to see how many similarities there are among people of all nations rather than how many differences.

Teacher notes:

The national flag of Japan is called hinomaru. It is a solid red circle on a white field. The ratio of length to width is 2 to 3. The circle in the center has a diameter which is three-fifths the width of the flag. The circle represents the sun. Japan is known as the Land of the Rising Sun. The hinomaru is displayed during ceremonies on national holidays, during other public observances and special occasions, and in ceremonies to welcome guests from other countries. People often display the hinomaru by their homes on national holidays.

Kimigayo, the national anthem is usually sung twice because it is quite short. It is sung on days the flag is displayed, at non-official events such as sports events, sumo tournaments and before award ceremonies. Kimigayo is not sung in all schools daily as some see it as a reminder of prewar militaristic state. Kimigayo is pronounced: kee-mee-guy-oh. Hinomaru is pronounced: he-no-mah-roo.

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Materials:

1. Picture of Japanese flag
(can be obtained at: <http://flagspot.net/flags/jp.html>)
2. Lyrics of Kimigayo (Handout A)
3. Recording of Kimigayo
(can be obtained at: <http://www.japanorama.com/kimigayo.html>)
4. Chart Paper
5. Rubric (Handout B)

Activities: Day One

1. Introduce the lesson by asking the students to identify national symbols in the United States. Then ask them, "Do you think other countries, such as Japan, also have national symbols?"
2. Teacher presents: Teacher will show picture of Japanese flag and explain symbolism, and times when it is displayed.
3. Teacher will help students trace circle on red paper and apply to white paper.
4. Teacher will help students hang flags in the classroom.
5. Teacher will play recording of Kimigayo for class.
6. Teacher will teach lyrics of Kimigayo (Handout A) to the class and explain when this song is sung (Teacher Background A & B).
7. Students will sing Kimigayo with recording.

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Activities: Day Two

1. Teacher presents: Teacher will review symbolism and times when Japanese flag is displayed (Teacher Background A & B).
2. Teacher will lead discussion to compare symbolism of American flag and when it is displayed.
3. Teacher and class will make a paper chart to compare American and Japanese flags and customs.
4. Teacher will lead class in singing Kimigayo with recording and review when it is sung in Japan.
5. Teacher will lead class in singing American national anthem.
6. Teacher will lead discussion of when the American national anthem is sung.
7. Teacher and class will make paper chart to compare American and Japanese national anthems and when each is sung.

Assessment:

While this lesson may be assessed in various ways (including group collaboration, individual product, and teacher observation), a rubric is provided as one form of assessment (Handout B).

Grade Adaptation:

Suggestions for other grade levels: Higher grade levels could make a Japanese flag from fabric. Higher grade levels could work in pairs or teams to make comparison charts on the flag and the anthem and present their charts to the class or interpret the words of the anthem. Higher grade levels could compose original music and lyrics for a school song.

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Relationship to State Social Studies Standards:

Kindergarten, People in Societies, Grade-level Indicator 2

I identify different cultures through the study of holidays, customs, and traditions utilizing language, stories, folktales, music, and the arts.

Grade 1, People in Societies, Grade-level Indicator 2

I identify cultural practices of a culture on each continent through the study of the folktales, music, and art created by people living in that culture.

Grade 2, People in Societies, Grade-level Indicator 2

Describe ways in which language, folktales, music, and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence the behavior of people living in a particular culture.

This lesson was developed by Nancy NgDung, teacher, St. Mary Elementary School, Columbus, Ohio. It is a revision of the original lesson developed by Julia Morris, teacher, Westerville City Schools.

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Handout A

The National Anthem of Japan :
KIMIGAYO

Kimigayowa, Chiyoni ya, Chiyo ni
Sazare-ishino, Iwaotonarite
Kokeno musumade.

Thousands of years of happy reign be thine;

Rule on, my lord, till what are pebbles now
By age united to mighty rocks shall grow
Whose venerable sides the moss doth live.

<http://jin.jcic.or.jp/access/flag>

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Handout B (pg. 1)

Rubric Scale:

3 points : child makes no errors
2 points : child makes 1-3 errors
1 point : child makes 4 - 5 errors
0 points : child makes 6 or more errors

Rubric – K - Grade 3

This assessment is based on teacher observation and individual oral assessment.

Cuts and assembles flag of Japan.

Tells what the red circle represents.

Tells two occasions when the flag is displayed.

Given two recordings the child can identify which is Kimigayo .

Tells two occasions when Kimigayo is sung.

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Handout B (pg. 2)

Rubric – Grades 4 - 8

Cuts, and assembles flag of Japan.

Identifies significance of red circle on flag.

Tells word for Japanese flag—"hinomaru".

Tells two occasions when the flag is displayed.

Can read and sing words with recording of Kimigayo.

Tells two occasions when Kimigayo is sung.

Tells why Kimigayo is not sung in all schools.

(Optional) Creates chart to compare Japanese and American flag and anthem characteristics .

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Teacher Information A

The Hinomaru and "Kimigayo" in Contemporary Japan

Today the Hinomaru and "Kimigayo" are displayed and performed during ceremonies on national holidays, during other public observances on auspicious occasions, and in ceremonies to welcome state guests from abroad.

In addition, many Japanese citizens display the Hinomaru outside their front doors on national holidays. The music of "Kimigayo" is performed also at non-official events, such as international sports events where Japanese teams are represented. At tournaments of sumo, which is considered by many to be Japan's national sport, the national anthem is commonly performed prior to the award ceremony.

Acknowledging that the wide usage of the Hinomaru and "Kimigayo" has taken hold as customary law, the government, on the eve of the 21st century, deemed it appropriate to give them a clear basis in written law. A bill to codify the Hinomaru and "Kimigayo" as the national flag and anthem was submitted to the Diet in June 1999. The Law Concerning the National Flag and National Anthem was enacted by the Diet on August 9, 1999.

<http://jin.jcic.or.jp/access/flag>

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Teacher Information B (pg. 1)

Japanese National Holidays

(this is not a list of ALL Japanese holidays, but rather those in which the national flag and anthem are traditionally displayed/sung)

New Year's Day (*Ganjitsu*) January 1

Celebrates the beginning of the new year.

Coming-of-Age Day (*Seijin no Hi*) 2nd Monday in January

This holiday honors young people who have reached the age of 20.

National Foundation Day (*Kenkoku Kinen no Hi*) February 11

This holiday commemorates the start of the reign of Japan's legendary first emperor, Jinmu.

Vernal Equinox Day (*Shunbun no Hi*) around March 21

This is a day for family reunions and visits to family graves.

Greenery Day (*Midori no Hi*) April 29

This is the late Emperor Showa's birthday. After his death, it was designated as a day for preserving Japan's greenery.

Constitution Day (*Kenpo Kinenbi*) May 3

This holiday commemorates the entering into effect of the Constitution of Japan in 1947.

Children's Day (*Kodomo no Hi*) May 5

This is a day to wish for the health and happiness of children.

Marine Day (*Umi no Hi*) July 20

This is a day to thank the sea for its blessings.

Respect-for-the-Aged Day (*Keiro no Hi*) September 15

This is a day to show respect to the elderly.

Autumnal Equinox Day (*Shubun no Hi*) around September 23

This is a day for family reunions and visits to family graves.

Sports Day (*Taiiku no Hi*) 2nd Monday in October

Established in 1966 in commemoration of the opening of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, this is a day to promote health and physical fitness.

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Teacher Information B (pg. 2)

Culture Day (*Bunka no Hi*) November 3

This is a day on which the ideals of peace and freedom expressed in Japan's Constitution (promulgated on November 3, 1946) are fostered through cultural activities.

Labor Thanksgiving Day (*Kinro Kansha no Hi*) November 23

This is a day to show appreciation for labor and to celebrate a good harvest.

Emperor's Birthday (*Tenno Tanjōbi*) December 23

On this day, in 1933, Emperor Akihito was born.

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