

## Making a Karuta Game

### Purpose:

This lesson will enable students to appreciate the culture of Japan expressed in the playing of a traditional Japanese game.

### Target Grade Level: 6-8

### Essential Questions:

1. What is a *Karuta* game?
2. How can I make a *Karuta* game similar to the Japanese version?

### Rationale:

Tolerance and understanding occur in the appreciation of another's culture.

### Materials:

Game instructions provided in Teacher Instructions or use of internet access or reference books in order to discover additional Japanese or American proverbs.

### Activities:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking the students "What can we learn about a culture from the games they play?" Have them discuss games played in the United States and what that tells them about American culture.
2. Introduce the students to the rules of the *Karuta* games.
3. In groups of two, students will make individual *Karuta* games using the *kotowaza* (Japanese proverbs and sayings) from the previous two worksheets or in researching to find additional *kotowaza*. Students may use traditional Japanese *kotowaza* or traditional American proverbs in order to create the game.
4. Have the students discuss what they learned about Japanese culture based on playing the *Karuta* games.

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### Assessment:

Teacher observation of students playing the game and the ideas expressed during the discussion. A followup writing exercise could also be used.

### Grade Adaptation:

Target grade for this lesson is 6-7<sup>th</sup> grades. In order to modify for higher grades, address the following questions:

1. Are there similar games to the Karuta game which you can find in other cultures?
2. What are the one hundred poems penned by Japanese poets during the seventh and eighth centuries from which the *Hyakunin-ishu* version of the *Karuta* game is devised?

### Relationship to Social Studies Standards:

Grades 6-8, People in Societies, Benchmark A

Compare cultural practices, products and perspectives of past civilizations in order to understand commonality and diversity of cultures.

*This lesson was developed by Marlene Henry, teacher, Northwood Elementary Schools, Northmont City Schools, Ohio.*

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## Teacher Instructions

### KARUTA

Karuta is a game traditionally played by the Japanese during the New Year holidays. There are two variations of the game, Irohagaruta and Hyakunin-ishu. Both of these are played with two decks of cards. One of the decks has pictures on it; the other has sayings and phrases or poems.

Irohagaruta, Japanese alphabet cards, number ninety-two. Irohagaruta is most frequently played by children while Hyakunin-ishu is an adult version of Karuta. Hyakunin means "one hundred people" and ishu means "one poem". These words refer to the one hundred poems penned by Japanese poets during the seventh and eighth centuries. Each year master Hyakunin-ishu players gather to test their memory skills in a national competition held on New Year's Day. This event has helped make Hyakunin-ishu a type of national game among the Japanese.

The directions that follow are for making and playing an American adaptation of Irohagaruta, the children's version of Karuta.

#### Game Rules:

1. A minimum of three people is necessary to play the game.
2. Players must remain quiet throughout the game so that everyone can hear the reader.
3. Players must keep their hands folded in their laps unless they are touching or reaching for a picture.
4. If a player touches the wrong picture card after the reader has read the card, then that player automatically loses any further chances for that round.

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### Playing the Game

1. Select the reader for the game.
2. The reader spreads out the picture cards face up.
3. The reader mixes the word cards and then reads one card.
4. The player who first finds and touches the corresponding picture card gets to keep both cards.
5. The game continues until all the picture cards have been retrieved.
6. The player with the most cards at the end of the game is the winner.

### Making a Karuta Game:

Using Japanese and/or American proverbs, make two decks of cards with 15 cards in each deck. There will be 15 pictures to illustrate the 15 proverbs (kotowaza). Cards can be the size of regular American cards or bigger. On one set of cards copy the proverbs. This will be the deck the reader uses. The picture cards will have to be drawn to illustrate each of the proverbs (kotowaza). Refer to pages 217-221 of this book for examples of proverbs or research additional kotowaza. Enjoy!