

Japan: Seasonal Series

May Children's Day

The Japan Society with Katy Simpson (2019)

Learning Objectives:

- To produce creative work, to explore ideas about health and Japanese Children's Day.
- To improve physical coordination as a warm-up for art and craft activities.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students improve motor skills by practising calligraphy movements with the kanji for 'Power'.
- Students create a traditional craft (koinobori) to enhance their art and language learning skills.

Curriculum Links:

- National Curriculum Guidelines for Art and Design: Key stages 1 and 2.
- National Curriculum Guidelines Physical Education: Key stage 1 and 2.
- National Curriculum Guidelines Languages: Key stage 2

Keywords:

Kodomo no hi	Children's Day	Kabuto	Samurai Helmet
Koinobori	Koi carp flag	Chikara tsuyoi	Powerful
Chikara	Strength	Kashiwamochi	Children's Day Rice Cakes.

Resources:

- Video: [Children's Day in Japan](#)
- Presentation: Children's Day

Additional Resources:

- Trays filled with sand, craft paper, pens/colour pencils.
- Koi Carp (Koinobori) Template
- Video: [Origami Kabuto Samurai Helmet](#)
- Worksheet: Origami Instructions - Kabuto Samurai Helmet
- Kamishibai story: [Swim, Swim, Koinobori](#)

Japan Society Loan Resources (Activity Chest):

- Koinobori Flags
- Origami paper

Task 1: What is Children's Day?

- Watch the video clip on Children's Day (Kodomo no Hi) or show the presentation (slides 1 - 4).
- Highlight that it was once called the Boys' Festival but was changed about 70 years ago to 'Children's Day' to celebrate all children. Emphasise that traditions can change over time; you might want to point out that in the past, people hung koinobori outside their homes to

represent the father (top flag) mother (middle flag) and son (bottom flag) in the family, but today there are many different ways to think about what family means – simply put, koinobori represent a wish for someone special to you to become strong, healthy and happy.

Estimated Time: 5-10 minutes

Task 2: Kanji Power

- Show the symbol 力 on the whiteboard (or slide 5 on the PowerPoint).
- Explain that in Japanese this symbol means 'strength' or 'power'
- Explain that the koi (carp) is a special type of fish in Japan which is seen to be very lucky. Remind students the origin of the Koinobori: a koi fish swam upstream and was very strong so transformed into a dragon. The fish is described as 'chikara tsuyoi' which means 'powerful.'
- Tell students they are going to 'power up' their bodies to practise drawing this symbol with their hands. By looking at the kanji on PowerPoint (slide 5) ask students to trace the character either in the air; or they can even trace the kanji in trays filled with sand.

Estimated Time: 5-10 minutes

Task 3: Making Koi-nobori

- Create a classroom decoration typical of what can be seen in Japan at this time. You may want to use the 'koinobori' templates and ask pupils to colour in and make a 'koinobori' flag to represent somebody they think is special to them.
- If you can source one, find long sticks, or pipe cleaners for the koinobori to be displayed on. Alternatively, create a vertical strip of card on the wall or board where the koinobori can be stuck.

Estimated Time: 20-30 minutes

Extension Activities

- Read the kamishibai story, [Swim, Swim, Koinobori](#) to the students. The story follows a young boy and koinobori flag who meet by chance one Children's Day. They learn that families come in all shapes and sizes and that traditions can change.
- It is traditional for children to wear paper hats in the style of Samurai as a symbol of power on Children's Day. Students can make these or a mini version (see video [Origami Kabuto Samurai Helmet](#) and/or instruction worksheet).