



# Carp/Koi Fish Kites- Japan's Children's Day

こどもの日

**Grade Level:** PreK- 8

**Art Content Standard:** Recognize and describe visual art forms and artworks from various times and places.  
Identify and describe the different purposes people for creating works of art.  
Demonstrate knowledge of visual art materials, tools, techniques, and processes by using them expressively and skillfully.  
Apply basic reasoning skills to understand why works of art are made and valued.  
Use the visual arts as a means to understand concepts and topics studied outside the arts.

**Vocabulary/ Concepts:** Carp- A freshwater fish (*Cyprinus carpio*) of Europe and Asia that is frequently bred in ponds and lakes.  
Kite- A light structure or framework that is covered with cloth, plastic, or paper, and is designed to be flown in the air/wind at the end of a long string.  
Kodomo no hi (co dome oh- no- HEE)- Japanese Children's Day; May 5 holiday that once only celebrated young boys but now honors all children.  
Koi- Bright-colored carp of Japan and Eastern Asia.  
Koinobori- Japanese word for Carp kites; traditionally flown in Japan to celebrate Children's Day; made by drawing carp patterns on paper, cloth, or other non-woven fabric and then allowed to flutter in the wind; also known as satuski-nobori.

Windssock- A tapered, open-ended sleeve that shows the direction of the wind blowing through it.

**Background/ Key Ideas:** The carp is a symbol of strength and courage in Japan. Each year on the fifth day of the fifth month (May 5<sup>th</sup>), carp kites are flown outside homes to represent each child on Japan's Children's Day (formerly known as Boy's Day). Students will learn about Japanese carp, explore the traditions of Japan's Children's Day (Kodomo no hi), and make their own carp kites.

**Materials:** (1) one sheet 11 x 17 colored construction paper (or paper bag)  
per student  
Scissors  
Crayons  
(1) one pencil per student  
Hole punches  
Templates (for students to trace)  
(1) one ¼ " diameter wooden dowel per student or 1 unsharpened pencil  
Stapler and staples ( to be used by teacher only)  
Crepe paper for tails  
Kite string or twine  
Tape  
OPTIONAL: Cellophane for tails, colored tissue paper for scales, eyes, etc.

**Procedure:** STUDENTS:



1. Using a pencil, **trace template** of fish onto large sheet of paper (approx. 11" x 17").
2. Carefully **cut** along traced outline, cutting out the entire vase-shape and discard scrap paper.
3. **Fold** shape in half lengthwise.
4. Open shape up again and begin by **drawing two (2) large circles** for eyes at the top of the vase shape.
5. Draw a **horizontal line** from one edge to the other, directly below the two (2) eye shapes.



6. Draw **scales** on the fish below the horizontal line by making 'U' shapes. Stagger them or draw them scattered around the fish body. Use lots of color so that your fish stands out! (Markers, oil pastels, crayons, tempera or acrylic paint).

7. When finished coloring, **refold** fish shape and take to teacher for assistance.

**Procedure:** STUDENT OR TEACHER: (depending on age of students):

1. Using the **hole punch**, punch a hole on the folded fish shape below the eyes and close to the fish mouth so that 2 holes are made, one on each side of the folded fish.

2. While fish shape is folded in half, **roll the shape** so the paper curls slightly. This will allow the fish body to expand after stapling the ends together. Unroll and unfold, shaping fish gently.



3. **Refold fish while keeping its rounded shape.** Place a **staple** connecting the two bottom curves of the fish. (see diagram).

4. Cut a small piece of cellophane (about 9" x 12") and fold into an **accordion fan**.

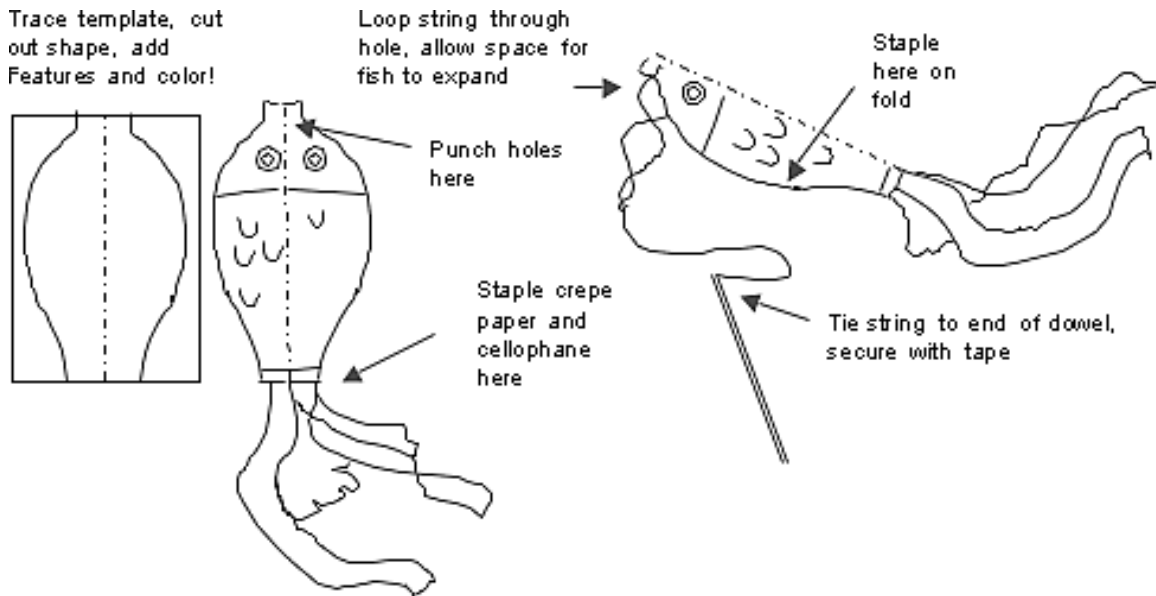
5. **Cut string** (about one or two yards if you have long dowel rods, much shorter for pencils) and loop through the two punched holes near the carp mouth.

6. **Tie** the string – forming a V-shape below the carp mouth. Allow ample room for the fish to expand.

7. Finish by tying the loose end of **string to dowel** end and securing with tape.

**Template:**

Teacher should make templates prior to the activity. Label them "TEMPLATE" in nice large letters. Ideally, you should draw your design on posterboard, laminate, then cut out.



**Assessment:**

- Completion of kite: Did the student follow directions? How much assistance was needed?
- Understanding of Japanese Children's Day, carp symbolism, and purpose of carp kite.
- Neatness of project: Did students trace template accurately? Did students cut along traced lines? Did student draw and color carp details with care?
- Use of materials and workspace: Did student use materials, such as scissors and crayons, properly? Did student discard paper scraps? Did student put away all art materials when project was completed?

**Enrichment Activities:**

*Math:* Have students draw a 1" circle using a compass. Cut out multiple circles from tissue paper and glue them onto the kite's surface to create scales. Estimate the number of scales that will be needed and compare to actual total. Try different size circles-- estimating beforehand. Then compare the number of scales needed depending on sizes.

*Social Studies:* Have students research other holidays that Japan celebrates. Compare and contrast with some U.S. Holidays. Have students make a map of

Japan and label its landmarks and/or prefectures. Discuss how the holiday has “evolved” into Children's Day (from Boy's Day)

*Language Arts:* Have students write a journal entry about making their first carp kite (describe steps, how they selected colors to use, hard parts of construction and so on). Create a class book on multicultural holidays. Journal writing. Venn – Compare life in Japan with the U.S. Create an ABC Book related to Japan. Creative writing book using chopsticks as binding.

*Science:* Identify and discuss the many distinct environments that support different kinds of organisms. Investigate the different structures of plants and animals that help them live in different environments (for example –gills!).

**Resources (Books, websites, etc):**

Iijima, Geneva Cobb. *The Way We Do It in Japan*. (Daily living, customs.)

Kroll, Virginia & Roundtree, Katherine. *A Carp for Kimiko*.

Littlefield, Holly. *Colors of Japan*. (Uses colors to describe parts of Japanese culture, carp kite illustration.)

MacMillan, Dianne M. *Japanese Children's Day and the Obon Festival*.

Reynolds, Betty. *Japanese Celebrations: Cherry Blossoms, Lanterns, and Stars!*

Streissguth, Thomas. *A Ticket to Japan*.

Takabayashi, Mari. *I live in Tokyo*. (Daily living, holidays, customs, carp kite illustration)

Japanese Children's Day

[http://www.essortment.com/all/kodomonohijap\\_rnsd.htm](http://www.essortment.com/all/kodomonohijap_rnsd.htm)

Boy's Day May 5 th- TANGU NO SEKKU

<http://www.ginkoya.com/pages/childrensday.html>

Children's Day, A Japanese Holiday: A Multicultural Unit

<http://www.intranet.csupomona.edu/~tassi/children.htm>

Great photos of carp/koi kites being flown

<http://www.ginkoya.com/pages/koinobori.html>

**Lesson adapted from:** <http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/asia/carpkites/Default.html>

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