

## MATERIALS

- large sheet of color diffusing paper
- metallic paper in different colors
- construction paper (pre-cut 3"x8")
- hole punch
- scissors
- markers
- masking tape
- glue sticks
- watercolors
- paint brushes
- access to water & water cups
- cotton string
- wooden dowels (1/4"x18")
- stapler & staples (optional)

## RESOURCES

Smithsonian - National Museum of Asian Art  
<https://asia.si.edu/?paged=6&s=carp>

Japan Society - Koinobori  
<http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/resources/koinobori>

## VOCABULARY (Definitions on page 3)

- **Carp**
- **Fukinagashi**
- **Kodomo-no-hi**
- **Koinobori**
- **Samurai**
- **Symbolism**
- **Symmetry**
- **Three-dimensional**
- **Two-dimensional**
- **Windsock**

## NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

- **Creating:** Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.
- **Presenting:** Interpreting and sharing artistic work.
- **Responding:** Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.
- **Connecting:** Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.



Suido Bridge and Surugadai, from the series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797-1858.  
Japan, Asia.

# Koinobori: Japanese Carp Windsocks or Kites

## INTRODUCTION

Children's Day is a national holiday in Japan, which always falls on May 5th. Families fly giant carp windsocks, called *koinobori*, on flagpoles next to their homes from April to early May. Parents hope their children will be as spirited and determined as the strong carp that can swim upstream and even through powerful waterfalls.

## OBJECTIVES

- To learn about Japanese art and culture and how flying a carp windsock is a celebration of childhood in Japan (historical and cultural understanding).
- To use your own design elements to create a carp windsock (perceiving, analyzing and responding).
- To create a carp windsock in the Japanese style using three-dimensional paper techniques (creating and performing).

## MOTIVATION

- Begin the lesson with a discussion of the celebration of *Kodomo-no-hi* Children's Day in Japan. Show the students examples of traditional Japanese windsocks, *Koinobori*, and have a discussion about their use by asking: What is a windsock? Who uses a windsock and why? What word would you use to describe what you see? What shape or symbol is represented in these windsocks? What do these windsocks symbolize in Japanese culture? Are there other cultures who celebrate Children's day?
- Demonstrate how to make the components of the windsock, but encourage students to invent new ways to create their own fish form and suggest that they try to repeat lines, shapes and symmetry within the form.

## PROCEDURE

1. Have the students fold their color diffusing paper in half lengthwise and then draw a fish shape from end to end using the example of a carp. Make sure the fish is drawn so that the bottom or belly of the fish is the folded edge of the paper. Also it is important to keep the mouth of the fish wide, at least 3" wide and 2" long. Walk around the room to give individual help and talk about color, design elements, balance and symmetry.
- 
2. Students can cut out the fish shape. Make sure they keep the paper folded.
  3. Choose 2 pieces of pre-cut construction paper (3"x8") and fold each piece in half lengthwise.
  4. Students can open the folded fish shape. Place each of the 2 folded construction paper strips onto the mouth of the fish; try to center the fish into each strip and tape (staple) both sides. These strips will form a collar which is used to connect the two sides and create a circular mouth.
- 
5. Now it is time to decorate the fish. Use the watercolors, markers and metallic paper. Students should practice creating pattern and texture. They can paint scales or do other designs as they wish. The eye of the fish is an important element. Use colored foils to simulate the shiny scales. Make sure students glue on the paper when it is dry.
  6. Once the fish is decorated, connect the two paper strips with tape or staples. Make sure to create a nice round mouth on your fish. Now use the glue stick or stapler to glue together the open side of the fish. (The side with the fin)
  7. Punch a hole at each side of the mouth and attach either end of an 8" string to each hole. Tie a 12" string to the smaller string loop. Tie the other end of this string to a wooden dowel (1/4"x18").

## EVALUATION

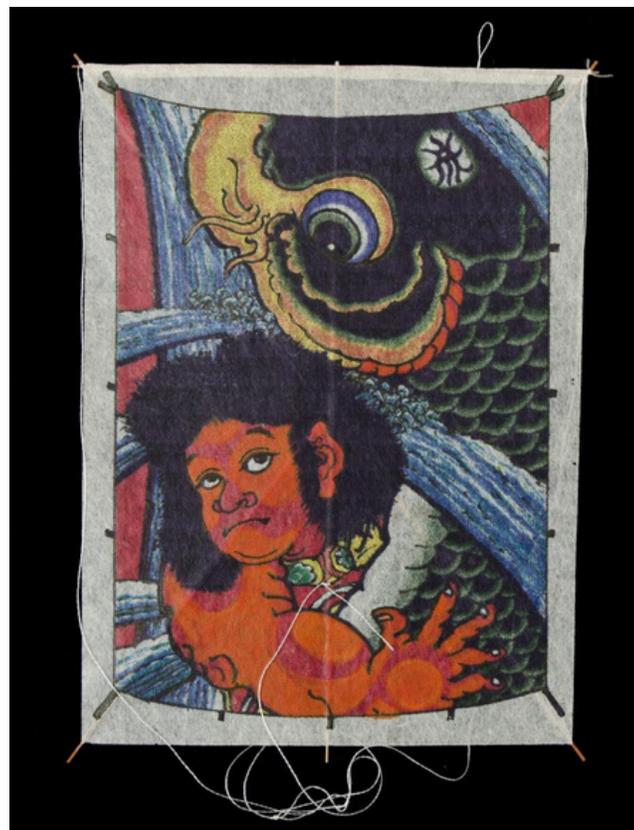
- Plan to have at least 10 minutes at the end of the class for students to share their fish kites. Students can parade around the room or playground with their koinobori.
- Have each student verbalize what is special or unique about other students' windsocks and their own.

## CONNECTIONS & EXTENSIONS

- Have students research different aspects of Japanese culture and report on how it is different and similar from their own. Have them find out what other cultures celebrate children's day and how, and make a presentation to the class. (Social Studies)
- Students can research windsocks, and their use in other cultures and activities. (Visual Arts and Social Studies)

## VOCABULARY

1. **Carp** - a large freshwater food fish.
2. **Fukinagashi** - a streamer kite to fly with koinobori.
3. **Kodomo-no-hi** - Children's Day
4. **Koinobori** - fish kite
5. **Samurai** - ancient Japanese warrior
6. **Symbolism** - is using a form or shape to represent a concept or feeling.
7. **Symmetry** - is having two halves that are mirror images of each other.
8. **Three-dimensional** - is having depth, lifelike or realistic.
9. **Two-dimensional** - is having only two dimensions, especially length and width.
10. **Windsock** - a cloth cone mounted on a mast, used esp. at airports to indicate the direction of the wind.



Miniature Dako (kite) depicting Kintaro and a Carp, by Nobuhiko Yoshizumi. 1990-2013. Gift of Mrs. Michiko Yoshizumi and the Yoshizumi family in honor of the artist's devotion to the art of the kite, Museum of International Folk Art.

# Koinobori: Japanese Fish Kites

Children's Day is a national holiday in Japan, which always falls on May 5th. The holiday apparently comes from an ancient Chinese story about carp, which swam up a waterfall and turned into dragons. The carp, or *koi* in Japanese, became symbols of perseverance. The Japanese version tells of the *koi* swimming up the waterfall, but does not mention the dragons.

Families fly giant carp windsocks from flagpoles next to the house for about 1 month before the holiday and about 2 weeks to a month after. These windsocks are called *koinobori*, carp flags. Originally flags with symbols of strength, such as carp, and the family crest were flown.

On the same flagpole a streamer called a *fukinagashi* was flown. This symbolized the whip, the *busho*, samurai warrior leaders carried into battle. The *busho* was a symbol of the samurai's authority.



Flying Koinobori over the roof tops in Japan, 2006.



*One Hundred Aspects of the Moon: Faith in the Third-Day Moon*, by Taiso Yoshitoshi. Japan, Asia. 1886. Gift from the collection of Else and Joseph Chapman, Museum of International Folk Art.

Later the other symbols were dropped and only carp and sometimes the *fukinagashi* were used. Families generally stop flying the *koinobori* when their children are 10 or 11, about the time they enter junior high school. Boy's Day became an official holiday in the Edo Period 1603 - 1867 and was set on May 5th. At the same time Girl's Day was set on March 3rd. The holiday was established to help create a national identity and stress military training for boys. After World War II the name of the holiday was changed to Children's Day to remove the stress on military training. Now, many families fly a *koinobori* for each member of the family, from the father down to the youngest son, but not for the daughters. When a baby boy was born, the child's maternal grandmother would give the *koinobori* to the parents as a present for the new baby. Originally, the grandmother might make the flag.

Families fly the *koinobori* and *fukinagashi* in hopes that their children will be strong and healthy and to inspire the children to persevere. Some children thank their mothers for everything they do for them on this day.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sakurai Tokutarō. *Japanese Festivals: Annual Rites and Observances*. International Society for Educational Information Press, 1970.

Vilhar, Gorazd, and Charlotte Anderson. *Matsuri: World of Japanese Festivals*. Shufunotomo, 1997.

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Cobb, Geneva. *The Way We Do It In Japan*, Morton Grove, Illinois, Albert Whitman & Company, 2002.

Kroll, Virginia L. *A Carp for Kimiko*. Watertown, MA Charlesbridge Publishing, 1996.

Tahabayashi, Mari. *I Live in Tokyo Boston*, Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

## WEBSITES

Smithsonian - National Museum of Asian Art  
<https://asia.si.edu/?paged=6&s=carp>

Japan Society - Koinobori  
<http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/resources/koinobori>

Wikipedia - free encyclopedia  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koinobori>

## VIDEOS

Gunma Koinobori Village Festival  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=123&v=3XehiPvckgM&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=123&v=3XehiPvckgM&feature=emb_logo)

BBC TWO-Children's Day Festival - Japan: Earth's Enchanted Islands  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEqsHt1lIZ0>