

A Day in the Life of a Japanese Child: School Programs on Japan Japanese House Exhibit

Description of Program:

The *Kyo no Machiya* is a real townhouse from Kyoto, Japan, which was given to the city of Boston in 1979 by our sister city, Kyoto, in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the relationship. The House is approximately 100 years old and was formerly the shop and residence of a silk-merchant family. Though not many houses like this remain in Japan today, and the *Kyo no Machiya* represents the architecture of a time past, we utilize this authentic, immersive space to guide Museum visitors in coming to an understanding of Japanese culture, customs, and lifestyles that still exist today.

A group visit to the *Kyo no Machiya* will allow your students to explore everyday life in present-day Japan. Guided by a Japanese Museum Educator, your class will experience what a typical day is like for Japanese child of about the same age. Through cultural immersion and hands-on activities in the Japanese House, your students will discover what customs, objects, and aspects of home and school life in Japan are similar to and different from their own.

Goals of the Program:

All people have the same basic needs—food, shelter, clothing, etc. The way people fulfill these needs reveals a great deal about their environment, but also distinguishes one culture from another. We hope to develop an awareness and understanding of Japanese culture by helping visitors to better understand how customs and values make sense within the context of Japanese daily life and tradition. Through this process, visitors can begin to acquire skills to recognize and appreciate similarities and differences in other cultures. The goals of the School Programs on Japan include the following:

- To give the students an opportunity to experience a real Japanese house, and through this, to discover aspects of the culture and Japanese peoples' values.
- To provide an arena for the students to think about the “how”s and “why”s of Japanese culture, and through this process, arrive at a better understanding of their own.
- To give the students a real context in which to discover the similarities and differences between their own daily lives and those of children their age in Japan.

Meeting the Learning Standards:

The content within the School Programs on Japan addresses the major Themes outlined in the Massachusetts State frameworks for History and Social Science. The following Themes are particularly applicable:

- The evolution of the concepts of personal freedom, individual responsibility, and respect for human dignity.
- The influence of economic, political, religious, and cultural ideas as human societies move beyond regional, national, or geographic boundaries.
- The effects of geography on the history of civilizations and nations.
- The growth and spread of free markets and industrial economies.
- The development of scientific reasoning, technology, and formal education over time and their effects on people’s health, standards of living, economic growth, government, religious beliefs, communal life, and the environment.

The Program also support Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks:

History and Social Science

Grade 1 – 1.1

Grade 2 – 2.1, 2.3, 2.6, 2.7,2.8

English Language Arts

Grades PreK-4 – Discussion 1.1

Grades 3-4 – Discussion 1.2

Grades PreK-2 – Questioning, Listening, and Contributing 2.1

Grades 3-4 –Questioning, Listening, and Contributing 2.2

Grades 5-6 - Questioning, Listening, and Contributing 2.3

Grades PreK-2 – Oral Presentation 3.1, 3.2

Grades 3-4 - Oral Presentation 3.4, 3.5

Grades 1-2 – Vocabulary and Concept Development 4.3

Vocabulary related to the *Kyo no Machiya (Japanese House) exhibit:*

The following are some of the Japanese words that the Museum Educator will teach the students during the visit:

- ***Ohayo gozaimasu*** [oh-hi-yo go-zye-mahs]: Means “good morning.”
- ***Konnichi-wa*** [cone-knee-chee wah]: Means “hello” or “good afternoon.”
- ***Konban-wa*** [cone-bahn wah]: Means “good evening.”
- ***Maneki neko*** [mah-neh-kee neh-koh]: Literally, “beckoning cat,” a figure often found in shops to welcome customers in.
- ***Tatami*** [tah-tah-mee]: Traditional Japanese floor mats made of firmly packed rice straw and covered with tightly woven rush.
- ***Shoji*** [shoh-jee]: Sliding panels of a light, wooden, rectangular-grid frame covered with translucent paper on one side. Thin *shoji* paper allows light to filter through.
- ***Fusuma*** [foo-soo-mah]: Paper-covered sliding wooden panels that serve as doors and walls to separate rooms.
- ***Futon*** [foo-ton]: Bedding consisting of a cotton-filled mattress and comforter-type cover that is folded up and stored in the closet when not in use.
- ***Tokonoma*** [toe-koh-no-mah]: Alcove located in the most formal room of the house, for the specific purpose of displaying beautiful (usually seasonal) objects or works of art, such as calligraphy scrolls and flower arrangements.
- ***Ofuro*** [oh-foo-roh]: Deep bathtub filled with hot water and used only for soaking. Before getting into the tub, one washes with soap and rinses off while sitting on a stool. Because each person enters the *ofuro* clean, the whole family can use the same tub of water.

Pre-Visit activity suggestions:

- 1) Have your students brainstorm about what they already know about Japan. Then have them list the kinds of things they want to learn more about. Use the K-W-L (What I Know/What I Want to Know/What I Learned) chart or other similar format. After your Museum Visit, the students can fill in the “What I Learned” column on the chart, as a review.
- 2) Try to identify stereotypes and misconceptions about Japanese people, and if necessary, lead a discussion about the dangers of lumping “all Japanese people” into one broad category. Don’t forget—Japanese society is diverse and varied!

Post-Visit activity suggestions:

We suggest giving the students time to think about what they learned at the Museum as soon as possible after their visit.

- 1) Go back to the K-W-L chart that the class started before visiting the Museum. Have the students fill in the “L” column with different things they learned about Japan during their visit.
- 2) Ask the students what were some of the most interesting aspects of Japan that they learned about on their Museum visit. If possible, pursue learning even more about these topics, using some of the resources suggested below.

Suggested Resources:

For Teachers:

- Aihara, Chris. 1998. *Nikkei Donburi: A Japanese-American Cultural Survival Guide*. *Education About Asia*. (Quarterly journal for teachers.) Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies.
- Gordon, Andrew,. 2003. *A Modern History of Japan; From Tokugawa Times to the Present*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press
- Moore, Willamarie. 2002. Using Museums to Teach about Japan. In *Japan Digest*, National Clearinghouse for United States-Japan Studies. October 2002.
- Reischauer, Edwin O. and M.B. Jansen. 1995. *The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- White, Merry Isaacs. 2002. *Perfectly Japanese: Making Family in an Era of Upheaval*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- White, Merry I. and S. Barnet. 1995. *Comparing Cultures: Readings on Contemporary Japan for American Writers*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press.

For Children:

- Arden Films. 2001. *Families of Japan*. [Video] Cincinnati, OH: Master Communications, Inc.
- Iijima, Geneva Cobb. 2002. *The Way We Do It In Japan*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whiteman & Company
- Iwamura, Kazuo & Eric Carle. 2001. *Where Are You Going? To See My Friend!*. New York, NY: Orchard Books
- Kuklin, Susan. 1995. *Kodomo: Children of Japan*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons.
- Nomura, Takaaki. 1991. *Grandpa’s Town*. Brooklyn: Kane/Miller Book Publishers.
- Takabayashi, Mari. 2001. *I Live In Tokyo*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company
- Sakade, Florence, ed. 1990. *Japanese Children’s Favorite Stories*. Rutland, Vt: Charles E. Tuttle Company.

Say, Allen. 1993. *Grandfather's Journey*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

Kits and Curriculum:

Boston Children's Museum. 2003. *Japanese Families* Teaching Kit.

Boston Children's Museum. 2004. *Japan: Getting Acquainted* Teaching Kit.

Moore, Willamarie and Shigeru Miyagawa. 2000. *StarFestival: Exploring Cultural Heritage*.

StarFestival, Inc.: Cambridge, MA. 2000.

Web Sites:

Asia for Educators: <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>

Kids Web Japan: <http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/index.html>

Web Japan: <http://web-japan.org/>

Lives of Japanese Elementary School Students: http://www.tjf.or.jp/shogakusei/index_e.htm

Asia For Kids (Resource for Language & Culture): www.asiaforkids.com