

Japanese Kokeshi Dolls



A lesson for students ages 6-10, grades 3-4
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I. Theme/Subject:

Kokeshi Dolls

Kokeshi dolls are made of wood and have no arms or legs. There are many different styles, but all are simple in their design with a head and a body - a sphere and a cylinder or another sphere. They are usually very small, just a few inches tall, but may be larger. The original dolls were always female. (Modern kokeshi dolls can be male) In the Tokugawa era kokeshi dolls were used as souvenirs given to the tourists of hot spring resorts in the Tohoku region.

II. Objectives/Concepts:

- Students will become familiar with the Japanese holiday Hina Matsuri and its traditions and celebration.
- Students will learn about the cultural significance of Kokeshi dolls.
- Students will learn about the history of Kokeshi.
- Students will study the map of Japan and learn about its prefectures.

III. Standards:

A. National Standards

1. Visual Arts
 - NA-VA.K-4.1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
 - NA-VA.K-4.3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
 - NA-VA.K-4.4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
2. Social Studies
 - NSS-USH.K-4.4: Understand selected attributes of societies in Asia

B. Ohio State Standards

1. Visual Arts
 - Benchmark 1A: Connect various art forms and artistic styles to their cultural traditions.
 - Benchmark 1B: Compare and contrast art forms from different cultures

and their own cultures.

- Benchmark 1C: Identify artworks from their communities or regions and communicate how they reflect social influences and cultural traditions.
 - Benchmark 2A: Demonstrate skill and expression in the use of art techniques and processes.
 - Benchmark 3A: Identify and describe the visual features and characteristics in works of art.
 - Benchmark 4A: Apply basic reasoning skills to understand why works of art are made and valued.
2. Social Studies
- Economics: Explain why entrepreneurship, capital goods, technology, specialization, and division of labor are important in the production of goods and services.

IV. Vocabulary:

- *Hina Matsuri*: Japan's Doll Festival; on this holiday, families with young daughters set up a display of dolls inside the house, prepare rice paddies and other food, and pray for the healthy growth and happiness of the girls.
- *Kokeshi*: Traditional Japanese dolls originally from northern Japan
- *Lathe*: A machine tool used in woodworking which spins a block of wood so that when abrasive or cutting tools are applied to the block it can be shaped to produce an object with rotational symmetry.
- *Prefecture*: an administrative district, similar to a county in western society; Japan is divided into 47 prefectures.

V. Materials:

Per student:

- (1) 2" Wooden dowel end cap
- (1) 1.5" Wooden dowel end cap
- Elmer's white glue
- Pencil
- (1) Paintbrush
- (1) Water dish
- (1) Paint Mixing Tray (may be shared between multiple students)
- Acrylic Craft Paint:
 - White (for base coat)
 - Black (for hair and details)
 - Various flesh tones (for face)
 - Assorted primary and secondary colors (for bodies)
 - Gloss or Matte finish (Modge Podge works well)
- Paper Towels

VI. Strategies and Procedures:**A. Engage (motivation):**

Motivate students with background information about *kokeshi* dolls. In Japan, *kokeshi* are made of wood in simple cylindrical shapes. They are turned on a lathe and then painted by hand. Many people collect *kokeshi* and there is even a museum entirely devoted to *kokeshi* (called Nihon Kokeshi-kan or Japan Kokeshi Center Museum). Each design made by a different artist is uniquely distinctive; different regions are known for characteristic designs.

B. Explore:

Students will explore the variety of *kokeshi* dolls as they do Internet searches and visit the library. Note differences in size and shape, such as the body of the doll which can be either cylindrical or spherical. Students should also notice the different styles and patterns painted on the dolls' bodies.

Have students look at a world map and find Japan. Have students discuss different types of land divisions found in the U.S., such as states, counties, cities, and compare them to the divisions found in Japan. Ask students the following questions:

- How does a prefecture compare to a state?
- How many prefectures can you find in Japan?
- How many states are there in the U.S.?
- Many prefectures in Japan are specifically known for their type of *kokeshi* doll. Can you think of a city or state in the United States that is known for manufacturing a specific item? (i.e.: Pittsburg-steel; Detroit- cars, etc.)

C. Create:

Students will create their own *Kokeshi* dolls.

1. Paint both the 2" and 1.5" dowel ends with a base coat using white acrylic paint.
2. Let base coat dry.
3. Paint 1.5" dowel end with flesh color of student's choice.
4. Paint 2" dowel end with solid color of student's choice.
5. Let dowel ends dry completely.
6. For girl *kokeshi*:
Using the tip of a Q-tip dipped into yellow acrylic paint, make several flower centers (one circle) over the painted 2" dowel end.
For boy *kokeshi*:

Paint a thick horizontal stripe around the center of the 2" dowel end to create an obi around the "waistline."

7. For girl kokeshi:

Using another Q-tip, dip the end into a mixture of the solid color used to paint the 2" dowel end plus white acrylic paint.

Apply end of Q-tip to create five circles around each yellow circle center, forming the petals of flowers.

For boy kokeshi:

Paint a thinner horizontal line around the entire 2" dowel end in the center of the obi using the same solid color as the rest of the body.

8. For both kokeshi dolls:

Using black acrylic paint, use the tip of the paintbrush to create a short hairline on the top of the 1.5" dowel end. (For boy kokeshi, start about 1/4 the way down from the top of the dowel, and paint up to the top; for girl kokeshi start 1/4 from top for bangs, 3/4 from top for the rest of the doll's hair)

9. Let black dry completely.

10. For girl kokeshi:

Using another Q-tip, recreate one or two of the flowers from the girl kokeshi doll's dress as hair accessories.

For boy kokeshi:

Using the same color of the doll's obi, paint a thin line around the doll's head just above the hairline to create the hachimaki.

11. Let both dowels dry completely.

12. Apply white glue or paste to the bottom flat edge of the 1.5" dowel end.

13. Press glued edge of 1.5" dowel end to top of the 2" dowel end.

14. Let glue dry completely.

15. Using a permanent fine point marker, draw details of the doll's face.

16. Apply a thin coat of Modge Podge gloss to entire surface of doll.

VII. Assessment:

Student projects should be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Following directions
- Neatness
- Creativity
- Completion of project

VIII. Closure:

Students will review material discussed in the beginning of the lesson, such as the traditions and history of Hina Matsuri and the origin of the kokeshi doll.

IX. Across the Curriculum:

- A. Technology:** Use the Internet to investigate the history and traditions surrounding *Hina Matsuri*. This is known as Girls' Day or Doll Festival and is celebrated every year on March 3. The roots of this festival extend back as far as 1,000 years; it has been an official national holiday since the eighteenth century. Girls arrange special displays of dolls representing members of the imperial court, plus other dolls they have collected.
- B. Geography:** Have students draw a map of Japan and label the 4 main islands and different prefectures. Students can highlight the specific prefecture(s) that make kokeshi dolls.
- C. Literature:** Read examples of Haiku by the poet Basho and have students create their own haiku about either the festival or their doll.

X. Resources:

A. Books:

1. Evans, Michael and Robert Wolf. *Kokeshi: Treasures of Japan, A Visual Exploration*. Vermillion Press: Carmel, California, 2005.

B. Websites:

1. www.japan-guide.com/e/e2281.html
2. www.ginkoya.com/pages/girlsday.html
3. www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/japan/kokeshi/
4. www.indiana.edu/~japan/LP/LS14.html
5. www.web-japan.org/atlas/crafts/cra02.html