Have you heard of this festival? Which country do you think it is from?

Kodomo no hi, or Children's Day, is celebrated in Japan every year on the fifth day of May. The festival is held to wish for, and celebrate, the happiness of children. In the past this festival was only for boys but now it is a national holiday for the whole family.

On Kodomo no hi day young boys and their families fly colourful carp kites and streamers in their gardens and on their balconies. Carp are a type of fish. They are very strong and robust. They can swim upstream against the current and jump out of the water. They show a good example of determination and success. Japanese boys tie these kites to tall poles and let them fly with colourful streamers called fuki-nagashi. The streamers represent freedom and the carp kites represent the family members.

The carp kites come in different sizes and prices. The largest kite symbolizes the father and it flies at the top of the pole. It can be as long as 6 metres (20ft)! The second kite represents the mother and the kites below this represent each of the children. When the wind catches the kites it makes them fill up and move as if they are swimming in the air.

Sometimes boys receive a new carp kite as a present when they are born. In other families, the kites are passed down from generation to generation. Boys fly the kites until they are about 15 years old. Carp are called Koi in Japanese. Koinobori is the name given to the streamers and kites. In the past the streamers were made of silk but nowadays they are made of nylon.

Another important tradition during this festival is to bathe boys in iris leaves. This is because there is a Japanese belief that iris leaves can ward off evil and offer protection from illness. After bathing in the iris leaves the boys put on a kimono. They don’t wear kimonos every day but on this special day it is traditional.

On Kodomo no hi the boys also display warrior dolls in their homes. When Japanese boys are born they are given a set of Samurai dolls. They display these dolls with their armour and weapons and they remind people of the courage and fearlessness of these ancient warriors.

Food and drink are also important during Kodomo no hi. They eat rice cakes called chimaki which are wrapped in bamboo leaf and another type of rice cake called Kashiwa mocha which are wrapped in oak leaves. They offer these treats to the warrior dolls before eating them.
Kodomo no hi festival comprehension

Name: ..........................................................  Date: ..........................................................

Comprehension questions

1. Who celebrates Kodomo no hi?

2. What do Japanese families fly in the garden?

3. What do the fish represent?

4. What were the streamers made of in the past?

5. Why do Japanese boys have a bath in iris leaves?

6. When do Japanese boys get a set of Samurai dolls?

7. What is eaten during this time?

True/False questions

1. Carp are cute little frogs.

2. The kites need to be tied to short, thick poles.

3. When the wind blows, the fish appear to be swimming in the air.

4. Kodomo no hi takes place on 5th May every year.

5. The kites are colourful.


7. The rice cakes are wrapped in bamboo or oak leaves.

8. The first kite represents the father.


10. Samurai warrior dolls are also tied to the poles to fly in the wind.
Kodomo no hi festival comprehension

Name: ............................................. Date: ..............................................................

Japanese words definition match.

Write the correct matching definitions in the table below

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chimaki</td>
<td>a. Children’s day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fuki-nagashi</td>
<td>b. Strong warriors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kashiwa mocha</td>
<td>c. Traditional clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kimono</td>
<td>d. Carp fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Kodomo no hi</td>
<td>e. A rice cake wrapped in oak leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Koi</td>
<td>f. The colourful streamers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Koinobori</td>
<td>g. The streamers and kites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Samurai</td>
<td>h. A rice cake wrapped in bamboo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kodomo no hi festival comprehension

Name: .......................................................... Date: ..........................................................

Picture description activity

Talk to a partner about what is happening in each picture then write a description under each picture.

© Petrusbarbygere, 2005, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Two_carp_in_a_cascade.jpg
© Vitor, 2016, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Two_samurai_dolls_(28146117425).jpg
What does it mean? Understanding meaning and paraphrasing preparation activity

Match the word in bold with a word on the left. Complete the table below to match the correct meaning to the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The streamers represent freedom and the carp kites <strong>represent</strong> the family members.</th>
<th>inherited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It makes them <strong>fill up</strong> and move <strong>as if</strong> they are swimming in the air.</td>
<td>like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The kites are <strong>passed down</strong> from generation to generation.</td>
<td>symbolize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The streamers were made of silk but <strong>nowadays</strong> they are made of nylon.</td>
<td>bloat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Japanese belief that iris leaves can <strong>ward off</strong> evil and offer protection from illness</td>
<td>these days send away</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you add some more synonyms and definitions?
My Kodomo no hi: creative writing

Imagine you are a Japanese boy on the day of Kodomo no hi. Write a two page, first person account of the day. Remember to describe what you see, hear, eat, do. Use lots of adjectives to make your account interesting and remember to describe how you feel during the activities of the day. Make a plan before you start using the following questions:

Before you start, consider:
- How old are you?
- Who is in your family?
- Where did you get your carp kite from?
- What colour is it?
- Where will you display the Samurai dolls?
- What's your favourite part of the day?
- Is there anything you dislike about the day?

Compare the Kodomo no hi festival to a festival in your country. Complete the table below to help you plan your comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive aspects of each festival</td>
<td>Negative aspects of each festival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You could start your writing with the following:

My name is........... . Today is the fifth day of May. I am happy because it is Kodomo no hi.
Creative work

Research carp kites and design your own. Here is one idea.

- Trace template and cut out, then add features and colour
- Punch holes for string
- Staple tissue paper streamers here
- Staple together here on fold
- Tie string to rod
Discussion

Read ‘A Carp for Kimiko’ by Katherine Roundtree.
After the story, ask children to think about these questions on their own and then discuss with the class.

What about girls? What do they do on Komodo-hi day? How do you think they feel on a day dedicated to boys? Have you ever been excluded from an activity because of your gender? For some other reason?

Follow up lessons or homework ideas

- Research Hina Matsuri – the Japanese festival of dolls (and see resource 17738)
- Research origami carp models, choose a favourite and ask children to make the carp origami. Display the results in the classroom and vote for the best! If you haven't got origami paper, you can cut a 15 x 15 cm square of normal copy paper, newspaper or a magazine. For more authenticity you could provide traditional Japanese paper for the origami.
- Ask children to summarise the comprehension text and write their opinion of this festival.

Answers

Comprehension
1. Japanese families and in particular boys.
2. Streamers and carp kites on long poles.
3. The family members. The biggest kite is the dad, the second biggest is the mother and the lower kites are the children.
4. Silk.
5. To get rid of evil and to protect them from sickness.
6. When they are born.
7. Rice cakes.

True/False
1. F, F, T, T, T, T, F, F

Japanese words definition match.
1 – h, 2 - f, 3 - e, 4 - c, 5 - a, 6 - d, 7 - g, 8 - b

What does it mean?
Represent – symbolize, fill up – bloat, as if – like, passed down – inherited, nowadays – these days, ward off - send away.
Other suggestions – as though, handed down, today, presently, get rid of, eliminate, prevent.