

Japanese Kimono faces the Economy

NewsDepth, April 2, 2009

Classroom Activities

Lesson Plan

Additional Resources



Overview:

The tough economic times are affecting nearly every kind of business there is – even those that have stood the test of time. In Japan, kimonos are a very expensive and very traditional garment more often worn by women than men. As the Japanese continue to fight the recession, the tradition of making and wearing kimonos is struggling to survive. Today we will take a look at the history of the kimono, its place in the Japanese culture.

Grade Level: Grades 5-6

Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts, Visual Arts

Standards: National and State Standards are included at the Lesson Plan sites

Classroom Activities:

1. Activity #1 “Clothes and the Crunch” Discussion (30-40 minutes)
 - The tough economic times are affecting just about every kind of business right now. Can you name some of the businesses you have heard about or read about in the news that have been hardest hit by the economic crisis? **Answers will vary. The NewsDepth show mentioned the automobile industry. Banking, Major electronic stores like Circuit City, furniture, and many clothing chains have suffered.**
 - Why do you think so many clothing stores have been affected? Let’s look at your own clothes. What material is your shirt or blouse or sweater? Do you think the material is expensive to make? How do you think it is made? What makes some clothes more expensive to make? How do you think the label on clothing affects its price?
 - How have other cultures influenced the clothing of the United States through history?
 - In Japan, one of its cultural icons, the kimono, is being greatly affected by the economy. Based on what you saw in the NewsDepth show, why is the tradition of making and wearing kimonos struggling to survive? What is the price of some of the more expensive ones? What are they doing to help lower the costs and keep their businesses alive? They said that cheaper kimono can be purchased for \$1,000. For kind of an occasion would someone in our country spend that much money? If you were given \$1000 to buy one outfit, what would you buy?

- Originally, "kimono" was the Japanese word for clothing. But in more recent years, the word has been used to refer specifically to traditional Japanese clothing. Visit one of these sites to introduce your students to the tradition of the kimono and how culture has affected its style and transition.
 - <http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/kimono/kimono01.html> This is "Kids Web Japan". It presents the history of the kimono, its types and designs, the occasions for wearing it, and a virtual kimono dressing room.
 - <http://web.mit.edu/jpnet/kimono/index.html>
 - <http://www.japanesekimono.com/index.htm>

2. **Activity #2** Discovering the Role of the Kimono In Japanese Culture (30 minutes to multiple class periods)

- This interactive site allows students to click on a Japanese Culture map and learn tidbits about the Japanese Tea Ceremony, the New Year, the Haiku, the Kimono and Japanese Drama.
<http://www.imaginon.org/fun/cranes/japanmap.asp?themeid=7&activityid=36>
- At this site, entitled, "The Beauty of the Kimono," it is particularly interesting to read and observe how the material is presented by the three young Japanese students who were the producers.
<http://contest.thinkquest.jp/tqj2001/40514/english/index2.html> (It is sponsored by ThinkQuest.)
- There is a saying, "Clothes make the man." As an individual assignment, have students draw and design their own kimono. The design is to in some way reflect their own personality, their interests, favorite color, activities, etc. It also should be a reflection of something influential in our own culture.
 - Provide each student with paper, colored pencils, markers, wallpaper, fabric pieces and any other materials that can help them with their finished product. (They can take these home to finish them)
 - When finished, have the students explain what has gone into their designs.
 - As an alternative activity: Many of the designs in Japanese kimono tell a story. Ask students to design a kimono that tells a short story. It should have characters, setting and a plot. Have students share stories.

3. **Activity #3 Kimono Haiku**

- In Japanese culture, art and poetry often go hand in hand. Haiku poetry is a very short, centuries-old form of Japanese poetry. It is comprised of three lines of no more than seventeen syllables: typically a first line of five syllables, a second line of seven syllables, and third line of five syllables.
- Students will either draw and design their own kimono and write a haiku about it, or they will chose a kimono from the Encyclopedia of Kimono at this site:
<http://www.japaneselifestyle.com.au/fashion/kimono.html> (source for lesson pictures)

- Here are sample kimono haikus:
 - *Sleep little silkworm.
Create your shimmery threads.
Kimono cocoons?*
 - *Beautiful colors
Seasons changing, patterns show
Textures, mountains, glow*
 - *Carrying beauty
of nature and culture through
colors and stories*
 - *KIMONO wraps us
AS silken threads stitch through hearts
ART binds east to west*



- Additional Haiku resources:
 - <http://www.gigglepoetry.com/POETRYCLASS/HAIKU.HTML> How to write Haiku Poetry
 - <http://www.members.shaw.ca/kcic1/haiku.html> Composing a Haiku poem
 - <http://www.withwords.co.uk/what.html> Simple explanation of Haiku poetry

- 4. Activity #4** A trip to the Kimono exhibit at the Canton Museum of Art
 A suggested family activity: The Canton Museum of Art is presently displaying the **Kimono as Art: The Landscapes of Itchiku Kubota**. <http://www.cantonart.org/32>
 This stunning exhibition of forty over-sized landscape kimono is visiting the United States for only the second time, since its 1995 exhibition at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. It will be on display until April 26th. This is a must see rare exhibit and a treasure the entire family will enjoy!

Online Lesson Plans: Standards included in plans

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/06/g68/gakimono.html>

Objectives:

Students will: conduct Internet or library research to learn about the history and significance of kimonos in Japanese culture; identify key design elements that differentiate types of kimonos and define their symbolism; understand that different kimono are appropriate for specific genders, social statuses, and settings; compare Japanese kimono with formal attire from another culture; and apply traditional design principles to create a new kimono.

<http://www.clevelandart.org/educef/asianodyssey08/html/kimonosmi.html>
<http://www.clevelandart.org/educef/asianodyssey08/pdf/kimonosmi.pdf> Lesson plan from the Cleveland Museum of Art

Objectives:

Students will learn that the visual arts have a history and identifiable relationship to specific cultures, times, and places; and that time, place, culture, and art influence each other. Thus a traditional garment, the kimono, worn by Japanese men and women, has a relationship with Japan's history and culture.

<http://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org/absolutenm/articlefiles/366-Art%20&%20Social%20Studies%20-%20Robert%20Blum%20-%20the%20Silk%20Merchant.pdf> Lesson plan from the Cincinnati Museum of Art

Objectives:

Students will learn that Japan's history of trade or isolationism impacted the development of the kimono. Students will design a kimono and obi, based on Japanese themes or those of another culture, including their own.

<http://www.bates.edu/x175588.xml>

A thousand word project – Integrating art and literacy

Objectives:

Students will enhance their understanding of Japanese cultural history.

Students will use descriptive language to develop ideas through haiku poetry.

Students will expand their fluency with the use of punctuation within the haiku poetry format.