



# The Booklist Project



Focus: Culture-Specific Booklist

Japanese

Developed by: Xiaofang Lou

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Japanese Culture Specific Booklist

Xiaofang lou

TESL 507

## **Japanese Culture Specific Booklist**

1. Back in the time when I was in China, there were 2 Japanese boys in my class learning English with me. Back then, I was rushing to push them into accepting Chinese culture as soon as possible, and overlooked the power that they could probably get from their own culture. So, learning how to avoid this from happening again as well as the culture bond that has been cultivated during my learning of Japanese, has become my motivation for making this booklist. I feel I am not just making this booklist for my perspective students, but for me as well.
  - ❖ <http://www.japan-101.com/> This is the website that introduces precisely about different aspects of Japanese culture, including food, festivals, travelling, history and the most popular Japanese entertainment culture- Anime.
  - ❖ <http://www.ceas.ku.edu/outreach/documents/children-lit-review-japan.pdf> I strongly recommend this website to the teachers who have ESL students from Japan or are interested in teaching English through books on Japanese culture. The American Japan Society collected a large number of children's books on Japan, and labeled them with different grades based on the reading levels. So, the teachers, from Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade could pick up whatever books they find interesting for their children to read from different grade categories.
  - ❖ <http://www.mamalisa.com/?p=528&t=ec&c=85> This is a bilingual Japanese song website. It lists 37 songs in both English and Japanese languages. The best part about these songs is there is at least one Japanese cultural phenomenon soaked into each song. So, if your Japanese ELLs are born in Japanese and spend part of their childhood in their native country, they will be very excited to practice these songs. Meanwhile, both the melody and videos are also attached to each song already.
  - ❖ <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Smith-Bilingual.html> This is an article called *Teaching Japanese-English Bilingual Children to Read English at Home*, written by Craig Smith, that I found very interesting to read. By reading this article, you will get a taste of how Japanese parents regard and support their children's English language education, what kind of bilingual environments are created in Japanese families as well as what approaches we could use to teach Japanese ELLs' English reading. A specific case is also included in this article.
2. The following booklist is created for the students from 2nd- 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Read-alouds could be applied to most of the books. Also, asking students to read independently with teacher's instruction or under the support of their parents is also recommended to some of the books in this list.

Iijima, Geneva C. (2002). *The way we do it in Japan*. Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.

[ISBN: 978-0-8075-7822-3]

Reading level: Grade 3-4

Proficiency level: High expanding/Bridging

Interest Level: Ages 5-8

Summary: Gregory and his family are moving to Japan for his dad's job. After the long flight, they arrive at their new apartment. Gregory is surprised to find lots of things that are different with the way they do in America, like everyone is driving on the left side, taking off their shoes and wearing slippers when they enter their homes, as well as sitting or kneeling while eating or visiting. Gregory is wondering why, and his father tells him: "That's the way we do it in Japan." Gregory goes to school and gets to explore more differences. With his serious efforts to fit into the new environment, he finally earns respect and understanding from other students.

Book available in: Paperback

Story found:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=MDHuf7Zs5mEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+way+we+do+it+in+Japan&hl=en&ei=KdCHTvC2KYzG0AGptpEE&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=MDHuf7Zs5mEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+way+we+do+it+in+Japan&hl=en&ei=KdCHTvC2KYzG0AGptpEE&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Kimmel, Eric A. (2003). *There samurai cats*. New York, NY: Holiday House.

[ISBN: 978-0-8234-1877-0]

Reading level: Grade 3

Proficiency level: High expanding/Bridging

Interest Level: Age 5-8

Summary: After a rat took over his castle, a canine lord goes to a shrine to find help from samurai cats. The first one arrives, draws his sword, charges the rat -- and is soundly defeated. The next samurai cat arrives in full armor -- but is also defeated. Then an old, toothless, ragged-tailed cat limps to the castle, doing nothing but lying down, eating and resting, finally takes the rat down without using force. His words explain how he could win in this silent battle: "Draw strength from stillness. Learn to act without acting."

Book available in: Paperback

Kroll, Virginia. (1993). *A carp for Kimiko*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

[ISBN: 978-0-88106-411-7]

Reading level: Grade 2-3

Proficiency level: High expanding

Interest Level: Age 5-8

**Summary:** A kite in the shape of a carp is flown for each boy in Japan on Children's Day. Kimiko is a little girl who desperately wants an orange, black, and white carp kite of her own to fly on this holiday. Even though Kimiko's mother told her she has her own holiday-Doll's Festival Day, it does not reduce Kimiko's desire for a carp kite at all. Finally, on the next day after Children's Day, Kimiko's dream comes true, she gets what she longs for without breaking tradition. She gets a beautiful live carp with the exact colors that she wants.

Book available in: Paperback

Story found:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=HYTts4yKGMsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=A+carp+for+Kimiko&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=F8qHTtasIqrX0QHvhtQI&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=HYTts4yKGMsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=A+carp+for+Kimiko&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=F8qHTtasIqrX0QHvhtQI&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Littlefield, Holly. (1997). *Colors of Japan*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books.

[ISBN: 978-1-5750-5215-1]

Reading level: Grade 5-6

Proficiency level: High bridging/Reaching

Interest Level: 6 and up

**Summary:** Different colors could represent different things. This book introduces some aspects of Japanese culture that are demonstrated by colors. For example, a red circle in the center of the Japanese flag symbolizes the sun, thus, Japan is called the land of the rising sun. Meanwhile, this book accommodates a lot of normal life scenes that seems very interesting from a non-Japanese perspective. For instance, the workers at subway usually wear white gloves when they are on shift.

Book available in: Paperback

Story found:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=XXj0g-B\\_luUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Colors+of+Japan&hl=en&ei=1NaHTralGqju0gGO\\_tDwDw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CEAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=XXj0g-B_luUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Colors+of+Japan&hl=en&ei=1NaHTralGqju0gGO_tDwDw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CEAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Mannis, Celeste D. (2002). *One leaf rides the wind*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.

[ISBN: 978-0-14-240195-8]

Reading level: Grade 2

Proficiency level: Developing

Interest Level: Age 5-8

**Summary:** This is a counting book, demonstrating 10 items that a Japanese girl in kimono explored in a temple. These 10 items are well organized in the form of the Japanese poem-Haku. They are one leaf, two carved dogs flanking the entrance to a temple, three pots of bonsai trees, four startled birds, five tiers on the roof on a pagoda, six sandals outside the teahouse, seven sweet cakes, eight lotus blossoms, nine koi fish, and ten stone lanterns. Pull up the images that are offered by this book, and you will also get a little taste of Japanese Buddhism.

Book available in: Paperback

Reynolds, Betty. (2006). *Japanese Celebrations –Cherry Blossoms, Lanterns and stars!* North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing.

[ISBN: 978-0-8048-3658-6]

Reading level : Grade 6

Proficiency level: Reaching

Interest level: Grade 1-3

**Summary:** With beautiful illustrations, this book introduces major celebrations that happen throughout a year in Japan, including New Year Celebration, Doll Festival, Cherry Blossoms, Buddha's Baptism Celebration, etc. Detailed descriptions are thoughtfully given on what activities Japanese usually hold, based on traditions for each celebration. For instance, kids gather and play Karuma (Traditional card games) on New Year's Day. Meanwhile, vivid and cartoon like pictures that feature the Japanese traditions and religion are well arranged among the texts, like plenty of animal pictures are inserted to help to interpret the zodiac calendar.

Book available in: Hardcover

Say, Allen. (2010). *The boy in the garden*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

[ISBN: 978-0-547-21410-8]

Reading level: Grade 2-3

Proficiency level: High developing / Expanding

Interest Level: Ages 4-8

Summary: Jiro's mother told him a story called *The Grateful Crane*, in which a crane turned into a beautiful woman and married a woodcutter in order to return his kindness of setting her free. One day, Jiro travels to visit Mr. Ozu with his father. In Mr. Ozu's garden, Jiro gets fascinated by a statue of a crane. He then falls asleep in the teahouse and dreams about the Crane Woman from the story he was told. He does not realize it was not real until his father and Mr. Ozu wake him up. The best thing about this book is that it dances on the edge of reality and dream, which will get the children very engaged.

Book available in: Hardcover

Story found:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=E5F8uwJgtg4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+boy+in+the+garden&hl=zh-CN&ei=nqKHTumPD-Tx0gGppYGDCQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=E5F8uwJgtg4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+boy+in+the+garden&hl=zh-CN&ei=nqKHTumPD-Tx0gGppYGDCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Takabayashi, Mari. (2001). *I live in Tokyo*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company Boston.

[ISBN: 978-0-618-49484-2]

Reading level: Grade 2-3

Proficiency level: Developing

Interest Level: Age 4-8

Summary: In this book, Mimiko, a seven years old Japanese boy leads readers to explore various festivals that happen throughout a year in Japan. It begins with Oshogatus, a New Year celebration in January, followed by Setsubun, a festival in February that is celebrated to scare away ogres and welcome the happiness home. The festivals go on month by month, and you will surprisingly find that there is at least one celebration in each month in Japan.

Book available in: Paperback

Story found:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=EcVC3lfieCsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=I+live+in+Tokyo&hl=zh-CN&ei=2aWHToHpJanX0QGS6OzfDw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=EcVC3lfieCsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=I+live+in+Tokyo&hl=zh-CN&ei=2aWHToHpJanX0QGS6OzfDw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Turner, Pamela S. (2004). *Hachiko-The true story of a loyal dog*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

[ISBN: 978-0-618-14094-7]

Reading level: Grade 4-5

Proficiency level: High bridging/Reaching

Interest Level: Ages 4-8

Summary: This is a true story about a loyal dog-Hachiko, a story that is seen through the eyes of Kentaro, a young Japanese boy whose life is changed forever by his friendship with this very special dog. Kentaro moved to Tokyo with his family. They now live in a small house that is very close to Shibuya station. The first day he went to pick up his father from train station, he ran into Hachiko, a one year old dog that comes to wait for his owner-Dr. Ueno at Shibuya station every day. Very soon, Kentaro becomes friends with Hachiko. One day, Kentaro's father got off work and brought back very sad news: Dr. Ueno died that morning. No matter what people did to try to get Hachiko a new home, he still went to Shibuya station waiting every day until the day he died. Out of respect and admiration of Hachiko's loyalty, people built up a statue of Hachiko right in front of Shibuya station. This is a very touching tale that will capture the hearts of young dog lovers.

Book available in: Paperback, Hardcover

Story found:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=FxxEFdM-1UIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Hachiko-The+true+story+of+a+loyal+dog&hl=zh-CN&ei=TaKHTpChNera0QHz6-wJ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=FxxEFdM-1UIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Hachiko-The+true+story+of+a+loyal+dog&hl=zh-CN&ei=TaKHTpChNera0QHz6-wJ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Uegaki, Chieri. (2003). *Suki's kimono*. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press.

[ISBN: 978-1-55337-752-8]

Reading level: Grade 2-3

Proficiency level: High developing/Expanding

Interest Level: Ages 4-8

Summary: Suki loves kimonos and she decides to wear a kimono on her first day at school. Her two sisters were trying to convince her to not wear a kimono but something "cooler", but Suki was not persuaded. When Suki gets to school, nobody would like to play with her because of her different style. When Suki was asked what she did over the summer, she told everybody about her experience of going to a cultural festival with her

grandmother during the summer. She then begins to dance as if she was at the festival. She earned warm applause from all the students and teacher when she finished the story.

Book available in: Paperback, Bound

Story found:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=EorigOkjLdoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=suki's+kimono&hl=zh-CN&ei=H6KHTgmVHYjL0QHw5MTODw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=EorigOkjLdoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=suki's+kimono&hl=zh-CN&ei=H6KHTgmVHYjL0QHw5MTODw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

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Feinstein School of Education and Human Development  
Rhode Island College

For Further Information, Contact:

Nancy Cloud, Ed.D., Director

[ncloud@ric.edu](mailto:ncloud@ric.edu)

Rhode Island College

600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue

Providence, RI 02908