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Social Studies

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# East Meets West: Japan and America



by Patricia West

Genre	Comprehension Skills and Strategy	Text Features
Expository nonfiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compare and Contrast</li><li>• Generalize</li><li>• Predict</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Captions</li></ul>

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Azami and Taro were born in Japan. They now live in the United States. They enjoy their Japanese customs and the American customs they are learning. Their favorite American holidays are the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving. Here are some of their favorite Japanese traditions.

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Japanese New Year is from January 1 to January 3. It is Japan's biggest holiday. Families visit and exchange good wishes. Some people celebrate by wearing costumes and masks.



A Japanese family celebrates the beginning of a new year.



March 3 is *Hina Matsuri* (the Doll Festival, or Girls' Day). Girls display dolls that are dressed like royal people of long ago. Families wish for the health and happiness of daughters on *Hina Matsuri*.



Fifteen dolls are displayed on a stand covered with red cloth on Girls' Day.





In Japan people gather for the Flower Festival in April. Some families picnic under the pale pink blossoms of the cherry trees.

The Cherry Blossom Festival is celebrated each spring in Washington, D.C. The cherry trees there were given to the United States by Japan!



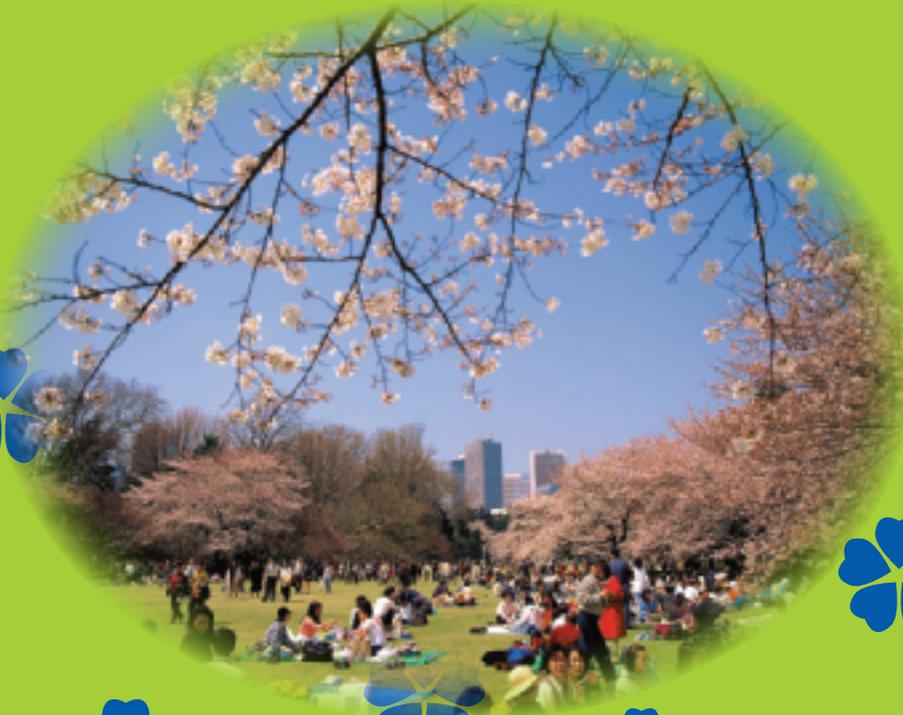
A large crowd celebrates the Flower Festival under the cherry trees in Japan.



May 5 is *Kodomo no Hi* (Children's Day, or Boys' Day). Families in Japan give thanks for the health and happiness of their children. Banners in the shapes of fish are flown. Parents wish for boys to grow strong.



It is Boys' Day. A banner shaped like a fish is flown for each boy in the family.





November 15 is 7-5-3 Day in Japan. Children who are seven, five, or three wear a kimono on that day. A kimono is a colorful robe of silk or cotton. Boys and girls tie the sash, or *obi*, for a snug fit. A handkerchief is tucked inside. Children walk in a graceful way when wearing a kimono!



A Japanese girl wears her bright red kimono.



Most children in Japan come running at a fast pace when they hear the beat of the *taiko*, or drum. *Taiko* come in many sizes. The exciting rhythm of the *taiko* gets children marching and dancing to its beat.



Japanese children play *taiko* on a stage during a festival.





In Japan, people read *manga*, which means “comics” or “cartoons.” One difference between Japanese *manga* and American comics is that *manga* are read from right to left!



The second Monday in October is Sports Day in Japan. A game called *Tamaire* is played with two teams. Each team tries to throw fifty balls into a basket on a pole. The team that gets the most balls inside the basket wins!



*Manga* were once more like American comics. Now they have their own style.



It is Sports Day in Japan. These boys are on the red team.



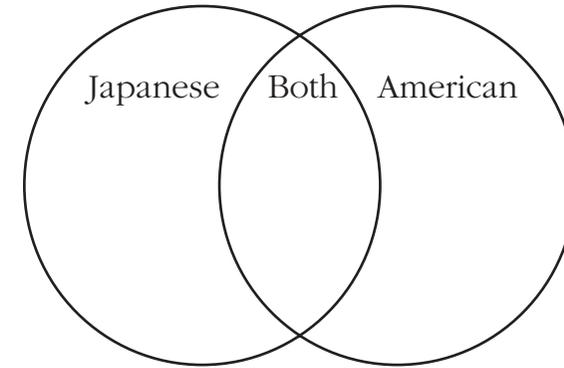


Azami and Taro have learned to play American games, such as basketball and dodgeball. They have also taught their classmates to play *Tamairé*. Playing new games and celebrating new holidays are fun ways to meet new friends!



## Reader Response

1. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast one Japanese custom or holiday described in the book and one American custom or holiday that you know about.



2. Azami and Taro teach their classmates a game from Japan. Predict what would happen if children from other cultures introduced new games at your school.
3. You can pound out a *rhythm* on a *taiko*. What does *rhythm* mean in this sentence?
4. Look at the picture of a kimono on page 8. How is this kimono different from what you wear to school?

