

Kodomo no hi (こどもの日) [5th May] and Aboriginal Children's Days [4th August]

This Senseis' Voices article is brought to you by Japanese teacher Natalie Cornish of Tasmania.

Natalie sensei incorporated Aboriginal Children's Day and Japan's kodomi no hi in order to both celebrate and enhance her students understanding of diversity combining ideas from The Japan Foundation, Sydney and the Japanese Teachers of Australia Facebook page.

In this article she kindly shares how she did it.



Lesson 1: Exploring *kodomo no hi*

Lesson 1 explored how こどもの日 is a day to wish for the health and happiness of children. We learnt that koi, a strong and determined fish which swims up stream, and also *kabuto*, *samurai* helmets which represent strength, symbolise this wish. We discovered what special food is eaten on this day and saw a video with the *koi-nobori* decorating homes, streets and public places. After this, we made *origami koi* and *kabuto*, along with some fun *matigai sagashi*, spot the difference and *meiro*, maze game for fast finishers.

Matigai sagashi: <https://happyililac.net/matigaisagasi-haru-2.html#down2>

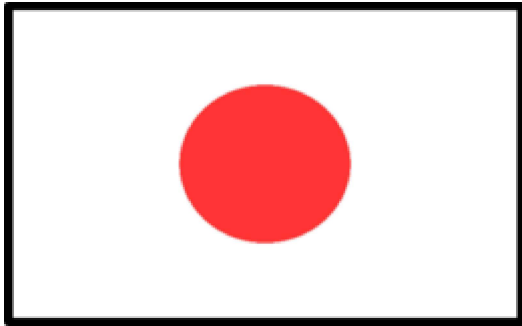
Origami koi-nobori and kabuto: <https://www.japansociety.org.uk/resource?resource=10>

Lesson 2: Aboriginal Children's Day and the importance of understanding other cultures.

The 4th August is Indigenous Australian Children's Day and the website link below offers many resources for activities.

<https://www.aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/activities/>

As こどもの日 is in May, the same month as Reconciliation week for Indigenous Australians, we used the following lesson to learn about Children's Day for Aboriginal children in Australia and look for similarities between the two children's days.



I started the lesson by showing the Japanese flag and asking what the red circle represented. Many students could not guess. I then showed the Aboriginal flag and asked what each colour represented. Most students know that the red is for the colour of the earth, the black for the colour of the skin of the people and the yellow for the sun.

Going back to the Japanese flag I asked again what the red represented, and students were able to guess that it was the sun. I then asked them if one flag has a yellow sun and the other a red sun, who is right and who is wrong? Most students answered that nobody was right or wrong. Some commented that nobody can be sure that we all see the same colours when we look at things anyway. We concluded that people can see things differently, both in colours and culturally, and it doesn't mean that somebody is right or wrong, just that they have a different view.

We then went on to discuss the British colonisation of Australia and how they arrived here finding a culture very different from their own. We talked about how different views led to a period when Aboriginal children were taken away from their families, causing great suffering to the children and families who were separated. This in turn led to a discussion on the importance of learning about other cultures so that we don't make the mistake of thinking that something different is wrong, but how we can enjoy these things and enrichen our lives.

We learnt that Aboriginal Children's Day is on the 4th August and is a time when communities get together to teach their children about their heritage, often using stories

based on animals to explain creation or ethics. It is a day to remember the children of the Stolen Generation and to celebrate Indigenous children with the hope that they will grow up strong, healthy and connected to their community.

When I asked the class about similarities between the two days, they were able to share that both days were celebrated with the wish for children to grow up healthy and strong, that the flags were similar and that both cultures used animals to share stories. They all agreed that even if learning a language is not their favourite thing, that it is important to learn about other cultures so that we can be open minded and not judge others as wrong which can cause suffering and lead to disasters like wars.

It was a valuable way to learn about Japanese culture, to acknowledge the history of the Stolen Generation in Australia and to highlight the importance of learning about other cultures.



On the Japan Foundation, Sydney website there are templates for the head of *Koi* in different colours and pictures showing how *origami kabuto* can be used to make the scales. Adapting this idea to incorporate both Children's Days, we traced our hands and drew a red circle in the middle of one hand to represent the Japanese flag and a yellow circle in the middle of the other, colouring the top half black and the bottom half red to represent the Aboriginal flag. We then cut these out to become the scales of the *koi-nobori*. I used the black, red and yellow *koi* head templates found on the JPF Sydney website and we put them altogether to represent the colours of the Aboriginal Flag. These stayed up all month to celebrate NAIDOC week at the end of the term.



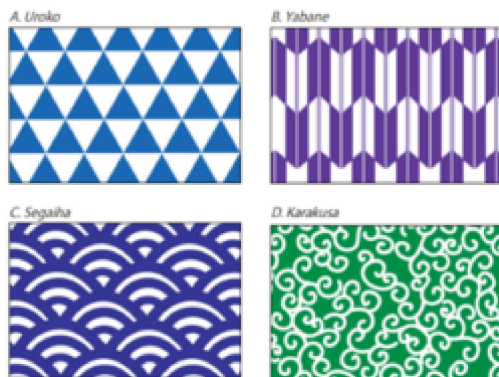
The templates for of *Koi*: <https://sydney.jpf.go.jp/events/let-the-carps-grow-origami-koinobori/>

Possible extension work: Indigenous Australian and Japanese patterns

On the website for Aboriginal Children's Day, there are activities including how to make animal tracking patterns. Time permitting, it would be interesting to compare patterns used in Japan and then to create an Australian *yukata* using Aboriginal animal track prints.

Animal Tracking: CDAActivitySheet-animal-tracking-1.pdf (aboriginalchildrensday.com.au)

Japanese Traditional Patterns: <https://sydney.jpf.go.jp/classroom-resources/resources/japanese-traditional-patterns/>



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Links:

SNAICC Children's Day: <https://www.snaicc.org.au/news-and-events/childrens-day/>

Banners and Tokyo Tower: <https://en.photo-ac.com/photo/4826476/carp-streamer-children-s-day-tokyo-tower>
