

JAPAN

Lessons for Mission Minded Kids

Lesson 4

A Modern Celebration



Japan

Lesson 4: A Modern Celebration

Goals for Lesson 4:

- Students will learn about several Japanese celebrations and compare them to our own American traditional celebrations.
- Children will experience a sampling of Japanese food, art and tradition, thereby enhancing their understanding of the Japanese way of life.
- Children will compare the relational, interactive nature of the Living God to the impersonal, distant nature of religious ritual.

Verse for Japan:

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.”
Acts 17:24-25 (NIV)

Before Class:

- Read through lesson and decide what you will use according to your age group and time allotted.
- Prepare the pictures of the girls on the lesson cover and the carp kites as slides to show on a screen, or print them and back them with cardstock for stability.
- Using green construction paper or cardstock, make three blank cards of a size to cover the word “the” on your large verse poster. Prepare sticky tack, but do not put the green cards on the poster until during the lesson time.
- Make one copy of each of the Carp figures for each boy in your class (a back and a front). Collect markers, glitter glue, crepe paper, tissue paper, scissors, hole punches, tape and yarn to complete the Carp Kites.
- Copy the Kokeshi Paper Doll onto white cardstock, making one for each of your girls. Gather markers, scissors and tape to complete the Paper Dolls.
- Make copies of the recipe page for your students to take home to try making the Japanese treats. Prepare Kan Ten, Green Tea and/or Sticky Rice as a cultural snack for your students. Purchase small gummy fish to use in the game and as part of their snack. Locate one pair of chopsticks for each of your students. Chinese or Japanese Restaurants will often donate these for children’s cultural experiences.

Lesson Plan:

- Open your time together with a welcome, announcements and a brief prayer. (5 min.)
- Show your students the verse poster with the blue cards still covering the “ands”. Ask them if they remember what word is under the blue cards. Read through the verse together out loud, using “and” for every blue space. Place the three green cards over the three “the” words. Make a silly rule like for every blue card, you will all clap instead of saying “and”, and for every green card, you will all make a humming noise instead of saying “the”. Repeat with a different rule if desired. (5-10 min.)
- Read or tell the story part of the lesson, showing the pictures as directed and discussing as necessary. (15-20 min.)
- Separate your girls and boys onto two different tables, or two ends of the same table. Remind your students that on “Kodomo No Hi”, or “Boys Day”, the Japanese boys make kites out of paper carp and display them to fly in the wind outside their homes. On “Hina Matsuri” or “Girls Day”, the girls decorate and display dolls for their friends to see. Give a copy of the Kokeshi Paper Doll to your girls and a back and a front Carp copy to each of your boys. Everyone will begin by decorating their papers and then cutting out their figures. Girls will follow the directions on the paper doll sheet to join the two back pieces to make a rounded doll figure. Boys will staple or glue the sides of their fish together, leaving the top and bottom open. Add crepe paper streamers to the bottom of the fish. Loosely wad a half-piece of tissue paper and place inside to gently puff the sides. Punch four holes in the top and attach one piece of yarn to each hole. Tie the four strings together into a knot to make a handle. The kite can be attached to a stick outside to catch the breeze, or hung from the ceiling or bulletin board to display inside. (20-25 min.)
- Play the **“Racing Chopsticks”** game and finish with a Japanese snack of gummy fish (representing the real fish that is so common in the Japanese diet), sticky rice, kan ten, and green tea. (15-20 min.)

Lesson 4 Story: A Modern Celebration

People from every country around the world have special holidays and celebrations when they take time off from school and work to enjoy family and friends and remember certain traditions from the past. What are some of the holidays that you look forward to each year?

People from Japan call their festivals, “Matsuri”. Most of these matsuri are Shinto festivals from ancient times that honor and celebrate nature and the past. The first matsuri of the year is the most important. For the first three days of the year, everything closes down and families come together to celebrate “O Sho Gatsu”, or New Year. All food for the three days is cooked beforehand, and houses are decorated with bamboo, to symbolize strength, pine, to symbolize longevity, and plum branches to symbolize beauty. . During three days, Japanese people spend time with family and friends. Most of the Japanese go to Shinto shrine to wish good health of family and good business. On the first day, everyone usually stays home. On the second day, extended families get together to celebrate. On the third day, friends are invited to share traditional games and foods. At the beginning of every year, the Japanese people stop to rest and reflect on the importance of the future, remember the past with ancient traditions, and celebrate the present with family and friends.

At the beginning of March is the “Hina Matsuri”, or Doll Festival. This celebration is often called Girl’s Day. They share pretty pink, green or white diamond shaped rice cakes, and admire the special displays of dolls that the girls and their mothers have put up in their homes. Many families have special Hina Sama dolls that have been passed from mother to daughter for many generations, and they take great care to display them prominently for this festival.

Two months later, at the beginning of May, the Japanese celebrate “Kodomo No Hi”, or Children’s Day. Samurai armor displays and martial arts demonstrations are common on this day, so it is often called Boy’s Day. According to tradition, boys should grow tall, straight, and sternly beautiful like the Japanese Iris plant. Koi fish, or carp, symbolize the beauty and strength of children flying in the stream of life. Carp kites are often displayed outside of homes, flying in the breeze, **(show picture of carp kites)** one big black one for the father, one middle-sized pink one for the mother, and one small blue one for each child in the family.

The Festival of Tanabata is celebrated in early July, the 7th day of the 7th month. This matsuri is based on an ancient folktale about the “Emperor of Heaven”. The story is told that the Emperor of Heaven had a beautiful daughter whose job it was to weave the fabric of the stars. He also had a cowherd whose job it was to guard the heavenly cows. The princess star and the cowherd star fell in love and married. Soon the princess was leaving holes in the fabric of the stars and the cowherd allowed the heavenly cows to wander away. The Emperor of Heaven was mad at them and banished them to the opposite sides of the universe. Now they can cross the Milky Way galaxy only once every year. You can see the two stars meeting in the sky in early July every year.

The Japanese children make a parade on this day. They decorate bamboo branches with star and heart and circle shapes. They write wishes on the little shapes and dress up in their traditional Japanese clothing and then walk through the streets waving their decorated branches.

In November each year, every child who has turned 7, 5 or 3 that year gets to dress up in a fancy kimono for girls (**show girls in kimonos from front of lesson**), or a hakama for boys. To celebrate the “Shichi Go San” matsuri, their parents take them to visit the Shinto shrine to attract the nature god that lives there and to receive a packet of treats.

The many Shinto festivals are meant to teach children about their ancient culture and remind them of the old stories and traditions of the past. The parents want to pass their traditions on to their children so that the Japanese culture remains the same. The children hear the make-believe story about the “Emperor of Heaven”, but they have no way of knowing that God sent His real Son to die to make a way for them to go to the real Heaven. They don’t know that they can talk to Him and have a friend who will never leave them. They don’t know that God watches over them every day, not just when they turn 3 or 5 or 7.

Let’s pray for the children of Japan. They need to hear the story of Jesus and know that He loves them and wants them to follow His ways. Celebrating festivals and holidays can be fun when you get a day off of school, or when you get special treats. Honoring our parents and remembering our cultural heritage is also a good thing. But these things cannot bring us peace in our hearts, nor can they give us an eternity in Heaven with the God who loves us and made us. These are the things that truly matter.



Racing Chopsticks

Before Class: Locate one pair of chopsticks for each of your students. Chinese or Japanese Restaurants will often donate these for children's cultural experiences. Purchase enough small gummy fish so that each of your students can have 4 fish, plus some extras. Empty the fish into two bowls.

Activity: Give each student a pair of chopsticks and a paper plate. The chopsticks often come in paper pockets, with the two sticks joined together. Have the students write their name on the paper plate and on the paper chopstick pocket. Then have them remove the chopsticks from the pocket and separate them. Instruct them as follows for the proper way to use the sticks.

- Use the hand you normally write with.
- Slot the thick end of one chopstick in the hollow between your thumb and first finger. Rest the middle of the chopstick firmly on your third finger. This is the base chopstick and does not move.
- Hold the second chopstick between your thumb and first and second fingers, similar to the way you hold a pencil, making sure the ends are even.
- Move your first finger and thumb to wiggle the top chopstick up and down like a snapping crocodile.

Once each student has an understanding of how to use their chopsticks, divide the class into two teams. Line the two teams up about 10 feet from the table if possible. Gather each team's plates into a loose group on their end of the table, and place one bowl of gummy fish in front of each team. The first student in each team will use their chopsticks to pick up one fish and carefully walk it across the room to deliver it to the plate with their own name on it. That student will then go to the end of the line and the next student will take one fish to their plate. If a fish drops on the floor, that student picks up the fish with their other hand, throws it in the trash can, and goes to the back of the line. When a student has successfully delivered four fish to his own plate, he may sit down at the table to watch the rest of the game. When a whole team is seated around the table, they have won and the game is over. Tell the others to sit and finish delivering fish to any plates that don't have four. As students are seated around the table, show them the KanTen and/or sticky rice. Serve small amounts onto each plate beside the fish and serve the plates to the students for their Japanese snack. They should eat their snack with their chopsticks, as much as possible.

Kan Ten (finger jello)

The children of Japan love this refreshing treat.

- One small package of any flavor of Jello
- One cup of hot water

Pour the Jello into the hot water and stir until completely dissolved. Pour into a small square or rectangular pan or dish. Place in refrigerator overnight or until firmly set. Cut into small bite-sized cubes. Make several flavors for a variety of bite-sized tastes. Have your students eat them with their chopsticks.

Sticky Rice

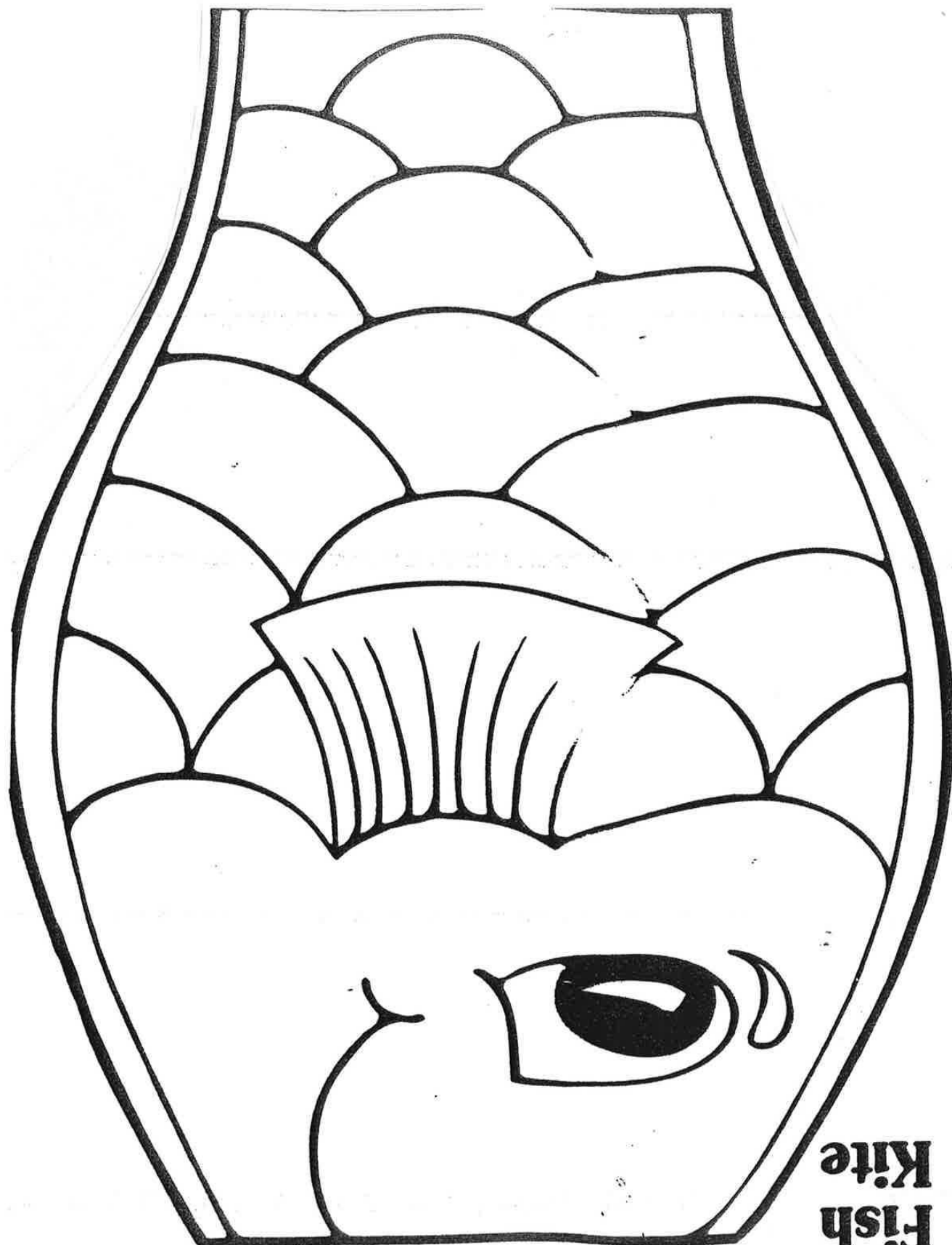
Use Calrose, "Sweet", or "Glutinous" Rice. The regular "American" or "Mexican" rice have individual grains that do not stick together. Asian sticky rice should have grains that stick together with a little pressure, and can be eaten with chopsticks.

- 1) Measure 2 cups of rice and put it in a pot with a heavy bottom and a tight-fitting lid.
- 2) Cover with water, stir well, and drain water. Repeat 5 times to thoroughly wash the starch out.
- 3) Pour 2 ¼ cups of clean water over the rice. Let the rice sit in the water, covered, for 20-30 minutes.
- 4) Bring the water to a low boil and reduce the heat to low. Let it cook 12-15 minutes.
- 5) Turn off the heat and let it sit for 10 minutes.
- 6) Fold carefully with rice paddle or large spatula. Serve warm or room temperature.

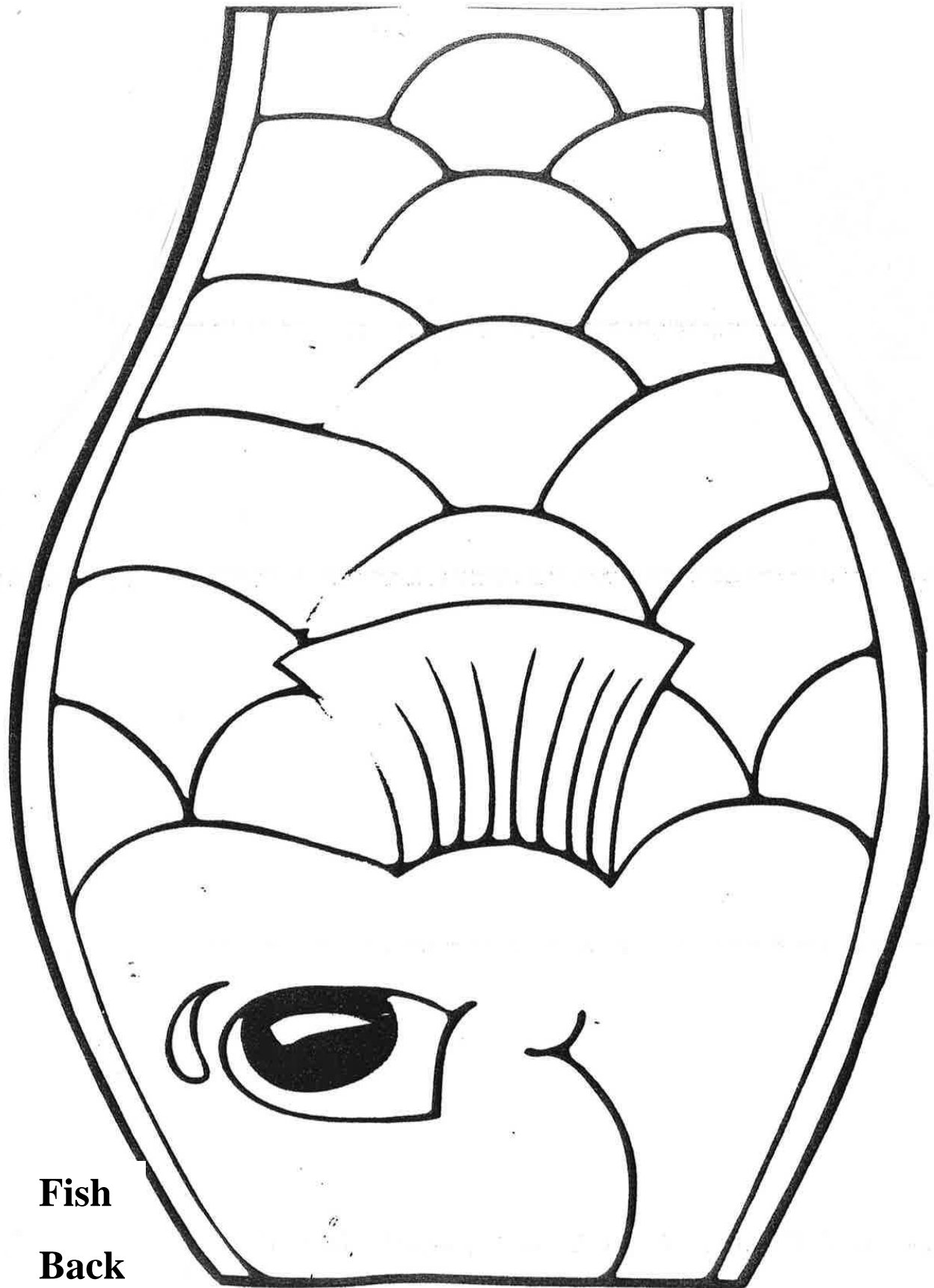
Green Tea

Green tea is a common and beloved drink in Japan. The Japanese love the taste so much that they even use dried green tea powder to flavor their favorite desserts, like "Green Tea Ice Cream" and "Green Tea Chocolate Cake".

Make about a quart of green tea by steeping two or three decaffeinated green tea bags in 3-4 cups of hot water for several minutes. Remove tea bags and stir in a little honey to make it mildly sweet. Serve the tea iced or slightly warm as a beverage for your cultural snack.



**Fish
Kite**



Fish
Back



Kokeshi Paper Doll

Activity village .co.uk
coloring page by Jacque Lynn Davis



Kokeshi Dolls are hand made wooden dolls made in Japan.
The artist that makes each doll, signs the bottom of the doll.
To make this kokeshi paper doll, print out this page. Color the doll,
be sure to sign your name on the back flap.
Cut out on the solid black lines and fold on the white dashed lines.
Glue Flap A to the opposite side, slightly curving the front.

Japanese symbol
for love.

愛

Kokeshi
Paper
Doll

Glue
flap A
to this
side,
slightly
bending
the front
into
a curve

Fold
Here

Fold
Here

