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TEACHING TUESDAY

CHILDREN'S DAY

APRIL 25, 2017

Children's Day (kodomo no hi, 子供の日) is one of the four major holidays that form Golden Week. Every year on May 5th families gather together and celebrate the health and lives of their children. In addition, children express thanks and pay respect to their parents, relatives, and even teachers who have cared for them.

Although Children's Day did not become a national holiday until 1948, the Japanese people have celebrated the lives of their children since historic times. Boys' Day (tango no sekku, 端午の節句) was an older tradition aimed for boys that eventually transformed into Children's Day, which celebrates the livelihood of both genders. Families enjoy displaying figurines and helmets of famous samurai warriors to inspire their children to be strong and brave. Families bathe in hot water containing iris leaves to ward off evil and eat kashiwamochi (柏餅), a rice cake filled with sweet bean paste and wrapped around with oak leaves.

The most iconic symbol of Children's Day is the carp fish. The carp symbolizes courage and strength due to the fish's ability to swim up a waterfall. All-over Japan homes and schools display carp-shaped streamers known as koinobori (鯉のぼり), arranged by size and color with each streamer representing a different member of a family. The first streamer is the largest and most colorful one and symbolizes the whole family. The second streamer is black in color and represents the father while the red one stands for the mother. The smallest koinobori, usually green or blue in color, are on the bottom of a pole and are representations of the children.