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TEACHING TUESDAY

HINA NAGASHI

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Every year on March 3rd, Japan celebrates Hina-Matsuri, also known as Girl's Day or Momo no Sekku (Peach Festival). A special day for girls and families with female children, the festival is marked by an ancient custom known as Hina Nagashi.

The tradition of Hina Nagashi, or Doll Floating, dates back to the 8th century. It was once believed that dolls had the ability to contain bad spirits. To ensure the health and success of girls, straw or paper hina dolls are set afloat on small boats, supposedly taking troubles and bad spirits with them.

Awashima Shrine in Wakayama holds the largest Hina Nagashi ceremony in the country, although rural areas like Tottori continue the tradition as well. To prevent littering in the ocean, the boats are retrieved and dolls burned after the ceremony.