

Children's Day in Japan

(Story words: ancient)

In social studies, Zeke's class was doing a unit on holidays celebrated in other countries. Zeke's group was focusing on Children's Day in Japan which is celebrated on May 5.

Children's Day began as an ancient holiday called Boys' Day. It was associated with the planting season for rice, a very important crop, and the holiday was part of Golden Week. In the old days, there was a separate holiday to celebrate girls.

Families would display windsocks for fathers and sons in the family. The windsocks were brightly decorated carp. Carp are determined swimmers who swim upstream. In a myth, a carp swam up to Dragon's Gate and was reincarnated as a dragon. Thus, the carp represents the hope for children having perseverance and success.

In 1948, the government of Japan reintroduced the holiday and named it Children's Day, a day to respect children's personalities and celebrate their happiness. They decided that it was unifying to celebrate all children and family members on the same day. Since then, people display windsocks for each member of the family, including mothers and daughters.

Children's Day is a fun chance for children to shine as stars in the family. Music, theater, or dance recitals may be planned for children to perform in. Also, there may be Olympic-style games for children to compete in. People eat festive treats, such as sticky rice buns filled with red bean jam.

Before studying Children's Day, Zeke had thought it was just a day when children got gifts or candy. It was fun to learn that there is a lot more to it than that.