

PERSIMMONS: SEASONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITY

DESCRIPTION

Students will learn about Japanese traditions associated with persimmons in the fall and winter and create a haiku.

MATERIALS PROVIDED	MATERIALS NEEDED
Images related to Shogatsu.	Paper for students to compose haiku.

PREPARATION

Have paper ready for students to compose their haiku individually, or a large surface to create a haiku as a group.

BACKGROUND FOR LEADER

The persimmon is an important part of the lives of the Japanese people. Fresh persimmons are a symbol of autumn, and dried persimmons (called hoshigaki) are a symbol of early winter. Both forms of persimmons appear in Japanese haiku. Dried persimmons are also an important part of the Japanese New Year, called Shogatsu.

ACTION

A. Explain the following information about persimmons and Japanese traditions:

1. The persimmon is an important part of the lives of the Japanese people. Persimmons are a symbol of the fall season in Japan, when the bright orange fruits hang in the bare branches of the persimmon trees. **Share the map of Japan (Image 1). Share the image of persimmons tree in the fall (Image 2).**
2. Fall is also the time to prepare hoshigaki (dried persimmons) in Japan.
 - Unripe, astringent persimmons are peeled and hung up somewhere warm and dry.
 - The persimmons are gently massaged by hand about every other day. This helps break down the tannins and remove the astringency.
 - Sugars in the fruit also start to come to the surface, leaving a powdery coating on the skin. It takes about a month to finish drying the persimmons, leaving them darker in color, soft, chewy, and very sweet! **Share images of the process of making hoshigaki (Images 3-5).**

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3. The finished hoshigaki are a symbol of early winter and an important part of the Japanese New Year, called Shogatsu or Oshogatsu. Shogatsu is celebrated from January 1 to January 3 and is Japan's most important and festive annual holiday. Hoshigaki are part of many Shogatsu traditions!
- Hoshigaki are eaten to symbolize having a prosperous harvest and a wish for family success in the coming year.
 - Hoshigaki are strung together to make lucky ornaments. People hang them on walls to symbolize a long life because the wrinkled, dried fruits resemble the face of an elderly person.
 - Millions of people visit Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines during the first three days of the year to pray for health and good luck. Alters in the temples will contain stacked, round rice cakes topped with the skewers of hoshigaki.

Share images of Shogatsu (Images 6-7).

4. Persimmons are captured in Japanese art. **Share images of persimmons in Japanese artwork (Images 8-10).**
5. Persimmons are also written about in poetry such as in haiku. Haiku is a type of Japanese poetry that often connects to nature and the seasons. Persimmons are used as symbols: fresh persimmons for fall, and dried persimmons (hoshigaki) for early winter. Here are some examples, translated from Japanese:

Fresh persimmons/fall haiku:

This old village –
not a single house
without persimmon trees

Preparation of fresh persimmons to make hoshigaki/fall haiku:

Hanging persimmons –
casting their straight shadows
upon the shoji screen.

Hoshigaki/early winter haiku:

Dried persimmons –
thoroughly, utterly,
winter deepens.

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B. Tell students that they will make their own haiku. It can be about persimmons or some other symbol of fall (you can lead this as a group activity or have students work individually).

1. Describe some features of a haiku.

- It has three short lines.
- English haiku follow a pattern where the first and third lines have five syllables, and the second line has seven syllables.
- The words do not rhyme.
- It describes a moment in the present.
- There are no rules about punctuation and capitalization.

2. Have students make a list of words they might use to describe fall. Use all the senses!

3. Use words from the list to write a haiku.

- Show the following visuals to help students if needed. Have them clap out the syllables of their poems to make sure they are following the pattern.

Line 1: 5 syllables	1 2 3 4 5
Line 2: 7 syllables	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Line 3: 5 syllables	1 2 3 4 5



Image 1.
Map of Japan.



Image 2.
Persimmon tree in the fall.



Images 3-5.
Making hoshigaki.



Images 6-7.
Shogatsu traditions.



Images 8-10.
Persimmons in Japanese artwork.