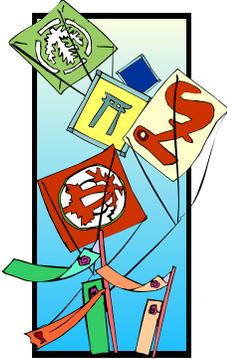


Dear Teachers,



The East Asian Studies Center is always thinking about effective ways of teaching Japanese culture to our students. We believe that realia – artifacts that can be touched, held up and looked at, played with, etc. – are one of the best ways “into” a culture. A few years back we brainstormed what kinds of Japanese things American kids would enjoy and benefit from. With this list in hand, we sent EASC staff on a shopping trip. The result is this teaching box: *Japan Box: Traditional Japanese Toys*. Everything in the box was purchased in Japan and reveals something about Japanese culture. We hope that students can see, feel and encounter Japanese culture through the materials in the box. We also hope that the box will be creatively used in various subject areas and for different purposes.

We did not create specific lesson plans based on the materials in the Japan Box. We believe that you know how to best use and apply these materials in your classroom. However, we included some suggestions for class activities and questions to ask students. We are in the process of making other “theme” boxes, so we would appreciate your comments and feedback. We also would like to hear how you used the materials in the box in your lesson/classroom and how the lesson went. Please make sure to fill out the evaluation form and include it when you return the box. (If you have lesson plans or activities based on the materials in the box that you are willing to share with other teachers, please submit them when you return the box.)

We hope you and your students enjoy *Japan Box: Traditional Japanese Toys*!

The staff of the East Asian Studies Center

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1021 East Third Street  
Bloomington, IN 47405

For specific questions regarding the Japan Box, contact EASC at [easc@indiana.edu](mailto:easc@indiana.edu) or at 1-800-441-3272.

日本

# Traditional Japanese Toys

Nintendo, Game Boy, Dreamcast and Play Station.....did you know that they are all from Japan? As young American children and teenagers like to play with these video games, Japanese students today also enjoy playing with the modern high-tech toys and games. But how did Japanese children play before these video games were available? What kind of toys did they play with? Are those toys different from American toys, similar, the same? In this box, we hope that students can answer these questions by studying the items in the box. Students will encounter the old days of Japan as they discover traditional Japanese toys. Some of the toys are still played with by Japanese children but many of them are now considered folk art. We hope that you and your students will enjoy learning, seeing, feeling and making their own Japanese traditional toys!

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5. Resources
6. Appendix
7. Evaluation sheet: Traditional Japanese Toys



# 1. Toy checklist

Please check the materials in the box when it arrives and before you return the box to the Center.

Item Number	Name of the Toy	Before Shipping (EASC)	After Receiving (School)	Before Shipping (School)	After Receiving (EASC)
1	Bi-dama (marble)				
2	Daruma Otoshi				
3	Hakata Doll				
4	Ito-denwa (paper cup-telephone)				
5	Kaeru (frog toy)				
6	Karuta (card game)				
7	Kazaguruma (pinwheel)				
8	Kendama (cup and ball)				
9	Kero Kero castanet (frog castanet)				
10	Kitsutsuki whistle (bird whistle)				
11	Kokeshi Doll				
12	Koma (top with string)				
13	Menko (face card challenge x 5)				
14	Origami book: <i>Let's Enjoy Origami</i>				
15	Otedama (beanbag)				
16	Paper balloon (small, large)				
17	Pon Pon maru (tin ship)				
18	Take-tonbo (bamboo dragonfly x 3)				
19	<i>Japan at Glance</i> (Book)				

## **2. Preparation**

1. Research or have students research American folk toys before introducing Japanese toys.

### Suggested books and websites about American folk art:

Nelson, Jon. R. Jr. *American Folk Toys: 31 Easy-To-Build Toys for Kids of All Ages*. Taunton Press, 1998.

Folk, Ken. *Folk Toys: Patterns & Projects for the Scroll Saw*. Stackpole Books, 1998.

The Beeline: American Folk Toys, Games, Crafts & Music  
<http://bton.com/store/aftgcm/index.html>

Museum of Craft & Folk Art (San Francisco)  
<http://www.mocfa.org>

Museum of American Folk Art (New York City)  
<http://www.folkartmuseum.org>

2. Have students interview their grandparents or their neighbors about what they used to play with (games or toys) when they were children (Appendix A). Students may also...
  - Write a short essay about the interview process and results.
  - Bring the toy(s) that their interviewee used to play with and make a short presentation about the toy. (This will help children physically compare and contrast the similarities and differences of traditional Japanese and American toys).
  - Draw pictures of toys the interviewee used to play with (Appendix B).
3. Have students describe or show their own favorite toys.

### **3. Description of Toys**

Many of the toys in the box are still played with by Japanese children, but many of them have become folk art. Some of the toys are not necessarily Japanese traditional toys, such as *pon pon maru* (tin ship) and *ito-denwa* (literally “thread-phone” in Japanese). However, we included those in the box because they are considered traditional “Japanese” toys because of the materials they are made of, etc. We did not provide descriptions for all of the toys; instead we’ve focused on those toys with particularly interesting features or histories.

An asterisk (\*) indicates that descriptions are from *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo: Japan, 1993.

#### **Daruma otoshi**

Please see entry for *Daruma otoshi* in *Japan at a Glance*, p.151.

#### **Hakata Doll**

This doll is the city of Hakata’s best-known traditional craft. Hakata City is in Fukuoka Prefecture, which is on the island of Kyūshū (southern part of Japan). For more information on the Hakata Doll, please see “Information on Hakata Doll” in the resource section.

#### **Karuta-playing cards\***

(*Karuta*: from the Portuguese *carta*, “card”).

Rectangular cards inscribed with numbers, pictures, or writing, used in playing Western and Japanese card games. Card playing was introduced to Japan in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and eventually gambling became so rampant that ordinances were issued by the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1867) banning card games and other forms of gambling. The earliest Western-style card game, *tensho karuta* (named after the Tensho Era, 1573-92) and *unsung karuta* (from the Portuguese *un* “one” and *summo* “highest”), were both associated with gambling. Today *karuta* usually refers to *hanafuda* (“flower cards”), *uta karuta* (“poem cards”), and *iroha karuta* (“ABC cards”), favorite games at New Year’s festivities. Western-style playing cards are now called *torampu* (from the English word “trump”).



*Uta karuta* developed in the early Edo period (1600-1868) out of traditional Japanese games that involved matching halves of decorated clamshells (*kai-awase*). In *uta karuta*, two sets of 100 cards are used. On each card of the first set is the entire text of

a poem. On each card of the second set are the last two lines of the same poems in the first set. One person, chosen as reader, picks a card from the first set and reads the first three lines of the poem on that card. Players try to remember the last two lines of the poem and pick out the matching card from the second set, which is spread out before them. Poems are usually from the *Hyakunin issshu* anthology (*Single Poems by 100 Poets*, circa 1235). Also see *Japan at Glance*, p. 23.

### **Kendama**

Please see entry for *Kendama* in *Japan at a Glance*, p.150.

### **Kero Kero castanet, Kitsutsuki whistle**

These are examples of how bamboo is used to make toys in Japan. These kinds of toys are often sold as a folk art or souvenirs. Even a whistle becomes folk art and a souvenir when it is made of bamboo. (Ask your students why they think bamboo seems to evoke images of a rustic and exotic Japan.)



### **Kokeshi\***

Wooden doll with a round head attached to a cylindrical body with no limbs. *Kokeshi* are thought to have originated in the Edo period (1600-1868) as a folk toy made by woodworkers of the Tohoku district (Northeastern Japan). Many *kokeshi* are painted with floral designs on the body and girl's face. They are classified into 10 types according to manufacturing techniques, shape, decoration, etc. There were once as many as 60 different local names for the doll. Since World War II, *kokeshi* have become popular among collectors.

### **Koma (tops)\***

For centuries the top has been a popular toy in Japan. Japanese tops, like their counterparts in other cultures, may be made of wood, bamboo, seashell, or metal, and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They are spun either by hand or with a string. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century tops were introduced to Japan from China via *koma*, one of the Japanese names for the Korean kingdom of Koguryo (hence the term *koma*). Originally tops were used for entertainment at court functions or as a means of diversion by the nobility. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, the top had become a form of amusement for the common people and later developed as a children's toy. The shape of the Japanese top depends on the material used and where it is made. Many have holes cut or bored in them to produce a humming sound when spun. Also see *Japan at a Glance*, p. 23.

### **Menko\***

This is a children's game originating in the Kamakura period (1185-1333). The game pieces, or *menko*, are made of circular or square pieces of clay, board, lead, or more recently paper. To play, one player's *menko* is placed on the ground: the opponent then attempts to flip it over by throwing his or her own *menko* at the first player's piece. During the Edo period (1600-1868) the pieces were decorated with pictures of Sumo wrestling champions. Today they are often painted with pictures of children's favorite cartoon or comic characters.



### **Origami**

*Origami* is a traditional Japanese pastime where a single square sheet of paper is folded in different ways to create shapes like cute animals and beautiful plants. Since it only takes a sheet of paper, the hobby can easily be done anywhere; many people in Japan enjoy it at home and at school. The best-known *origami* shape, which many children learn from their parents or grandparents, is the crane. Other shapes include flowers, butterflies, crabs, and even difficult creations like Christmas trees. *Origami* is especially popular among girls.

The practice of *origami* began in the early 700s when paper was first introduced to Japan. At first paper was folded to make decorations for use in religious ceremonies at shrines, but gradually people came to use it in their regular lives as well. During the Heian period (794-1185), it was popular to fold valuable paper and use it to beautifully wrap letters and presents. Later, *origami* continued to be used in traditional ceremonies, but the women of the imperial court began to fold dolls and other shapes for their own amusement.

In the Edo period (1603-1868) people thought up different kinds of *origami* involving cutting and layering the paper, and the activity grew popular among the common people. Later, in the Meiji era (1868-1912), *origami* came to be taught at elementary schools. Students continue to study *origami* at school to this day; it is used to teach concepts in geometry, such as the relationship between a plane and a solid shape. *Origami* is rapidly becoming more popular in countries throughout the world. Two associations of *origami* lovers include Origami USA and the British Origami Society. Text from: Kids Web Japan: <http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/index.html>.

### **Otedama –beanbag\***

Japanese beanbags are made of colorful scraps of cloth and usually are filled with red *azuki* beans or rice. They are round and small enough to fit into the palm of a child's hand; some have bells attached. The beanbag game, traditionally played by girls, uses a set of five, seven, or nine beanbags. The complexity of the game ranges from simply juggling to



performing various maneuvers with one or more of the other bags while one bag is in midair. An ancient game originally played with pebbles, it assumed its present form around the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Paper balloon**

We are not sure about the origin and the history of the paper balloon (we will continue researching this!) However, Japanese people are very familiar with paper balloons. Almost all Japanese people have played with the paper balloon at least once in their life. Paper balloons are often sold at *dagashiya* (candy stores) or toy stores. They are also sold at souvenir stores at famous sightseeing spots.

### **Take-tonbo (bamboo dragonfly)\***

This is a children's toy made of bamboo which has been carved into a propeller with a shaft attached at the center. It is set in motion by rubbing the shaft between the palms of the hands and then releasing it upward in the air to fly. Because of their simple design, *take-tonbo* are often made in primary school arts and crafts classes.

Some say the toy was invented by *Hiraga Gennai* (1728-80). Today *take-tonbo* are often made of plastic. (*Take-tonbo* is another example of a toy made of bamboo. However, unlike *Kero-Kero* castanet or *Kitsutsuki* whistle, *take-tonbo* is one of the most well-known and frequently-used Japanese traditional toys.)

## **4. Activities**

### ***A. Compare and Contrast Activity***

Part 1: Using Appendix C-1 or C-2, have students compare and contrast the similarities/differences between the Japanese traditional toys and American toys. Ask students questions like those provided below during the activity.

- What are the characteristics of Japanese traditional toys?
- What are the similarities/differences between the toys/games they play with and traditional Japanese toys?
- Are any of the toys/games the same?

Part 2: Have students draw a picture of their favorite traditional Japanese toy. (Appendix D or F)

If students have already drawn a picture of the toy that their interviewee used to play with, drawing a picture of a Japanese traditional toy will be another way to compare and contrast American and Japanese traditional toys.

## 4. Activities, cont.

### B. Let's make Menko!

#### Materials needed

Colored Cardboard (or the sides of empty cereal or shoe boxes that have been covered with white paper)

Scissors

Crayons/markers

Cup (to trace a circle)

Glue

White paper (if you don't have plain cardboard)

Stickers (optional)

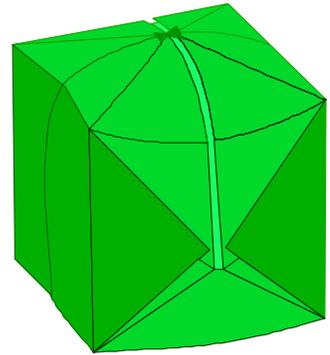
#### Directions

1. Trace a circle on the cardboard using the cup. Cut out your *menko*.
2. Decorate the *menko*: draw pictures/or put stickers on.
3. Play with *menko* with your friends. (see the description of the *menko* game in the description of toys )

#### 4. Activities, cont.

##### C. Making a paper balloon using Origami!

Please see the following pages for directions for making a paper balloon (samples of the difficult steps are also included). We suggest trying easy *origami* first, such as a dog, cat or *samurai* helmets. Please see *Japan at a Glance* (154,155) for directions. For additional ideas, also see *Let's Enjoy Origami*, included in this box.



#### **4. Activities, cont.**

### **Let's Play with *B-dama* Marbles!**

#### **Game 1: Near Line (3 or more people)**

1. Draw a start and goal line.
2. Each player will have one marble.
3. Decide who will roll first, and take turns rolling the marble.
4. Try to roll the marble as close as possible to the goal line. (It is O.K. if your marble hits someone else's marble)
5. The person whose marble lands closest to the goal line is the winner. The winner then places her/his thumb on her own marble and traces a circle with the little finger. The winner takes all of the marbles that lie within the circle.

#### **Game 2: Marble Drop (2 or more people)**

1. Draw a square (15-20 inches) on the ground.
2. Each player selects an *oyadama*, the marble he will use to drop into the square throughout the game. Players always keep their *oyadama* after their turns.
3. Each player puts three marbles anywhere in the square.
4. The first player drops his *oyadama* into the square from hip height without stepping on or inside the lines of the square.
5. If the first player's *oyadama* knocks other players' marbles out of the square, the player can keep these marbles. The first player can go again if his *oyadama* stayed in the square. However, if his *oyadama* (a) didn't knock any marbles out of the square, or (b) landed outside the square, it's the next player's turn.
6. The player with the most marbles when the square becomes empty wins.

## 5. Resources

### General information on Japanese culture

- East Asian Studies Center      <http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/>
- Ginkoya      <http://www.ginkoya.com/pages/frontpage.html>
- Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo: Japan, 1993.
- Japan Atlas      <http://web-japan.org/atlas/index.html>
- Japan at a Glance: Updated*. Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo: Japan, 2001.
- Japan.co.jp      <http://www.japan.co.jp>
- The Japan Forum      <http://www.tjf.or.jp/eng/indexe/indexe.htm>
- Japan Guide      <http://www.japan-guide.com>
- Kids Web Japan      <http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/index.html>
- News on Japan      <http://www.newsonjapan.com/>
- Japan Information Network      <http://jin.icic.or.jp/>

### General information on Japanese traditional toys

- Kids Web Japan  
<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/fukuwarai/fukuwarai04.html>
- Japan Atlas: Traditional Crafts  
[http://web-japan.org/atlas/crafts/craft\\_fr.html](http://web-japan.org/atlas/crafts/craft_fr.html)
- Japanese Toys: A Guide to Traditional and Modern Japanese Toys  
<http://web.mit.edu/21f.066/www/theisen/toys/traditional.html>
- Traditional Toys of Japan  
[http://japanese.about.com/od/toysofjapan/Traditional\\_Toys\\_of\\_Japan.htm](http://japanese.about.com/od/toysofjapan/Traditional_Toys_of_Japan.htm)

Information on specific toys/activities

Kokeshi

Japan Atlas: Traditional Crafts (2. Naruko Kokeshi)  
[http://web-japan.org/atlas/crafts/craft\\_fr.html](http://web-japan.org/atlas/crafts/craft_fr.html)

Koma

Japanese Toys  
<http://www.fsinet.or.jp/~eohashi/e/edo-e.htm>

Origami

British Origami Society  
<http://www.britishorigami.org.uk>

Nippon Origami Association  
[http://www.origami-noa.com/index\\_e.htm](http://www.origami-noa.com/index_e.htm)

Origami U.S.A.  
<http://www.origami-usa.org>

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes  
<http://www.sadako.org/>

Hakata doll:

Japan Atlas: Traditional Crafts (Hakata doll)  
<http://web-japan.org/atlas/crafts/cra24.html>

## Interview sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

I interviewed \_\_\_\_\_.

S/he is \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

S/he is from \_\_\_\_\_(country)\_\_\_\_\_ (city).

What did he/she play with when he/she was a child?

How did they play with this toy? (rules of the game, or how to play with that toy)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The toy he/she used play with looked like this: (Draw a picture of the toy)



Name of Toy \_\_\_\_\_

# Traditional Japanese Toys/Games and American Toys: Similarities and Differences

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Brainstorm and write what you have learned about traditional Japanese toys/games in the circle on the left. Then contrast those with American toys in the circle on the right. Write characteristics that they have in common in the center circle.

Japanese Toys

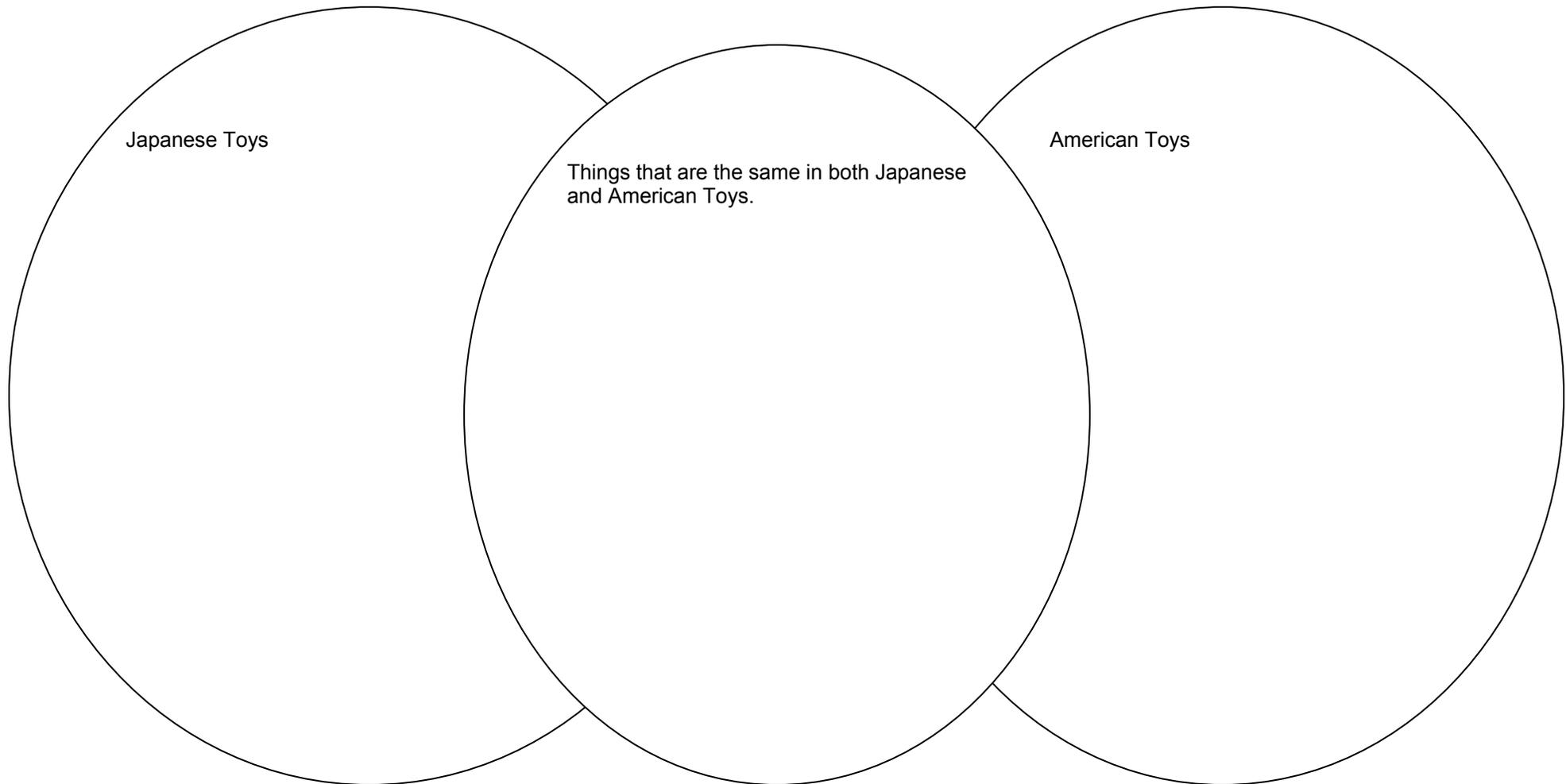
American Toys

Things that are the same in both Japanese and American toys

## Traditional Japanese Toys/Games and American Toys: Similarities and Differences

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

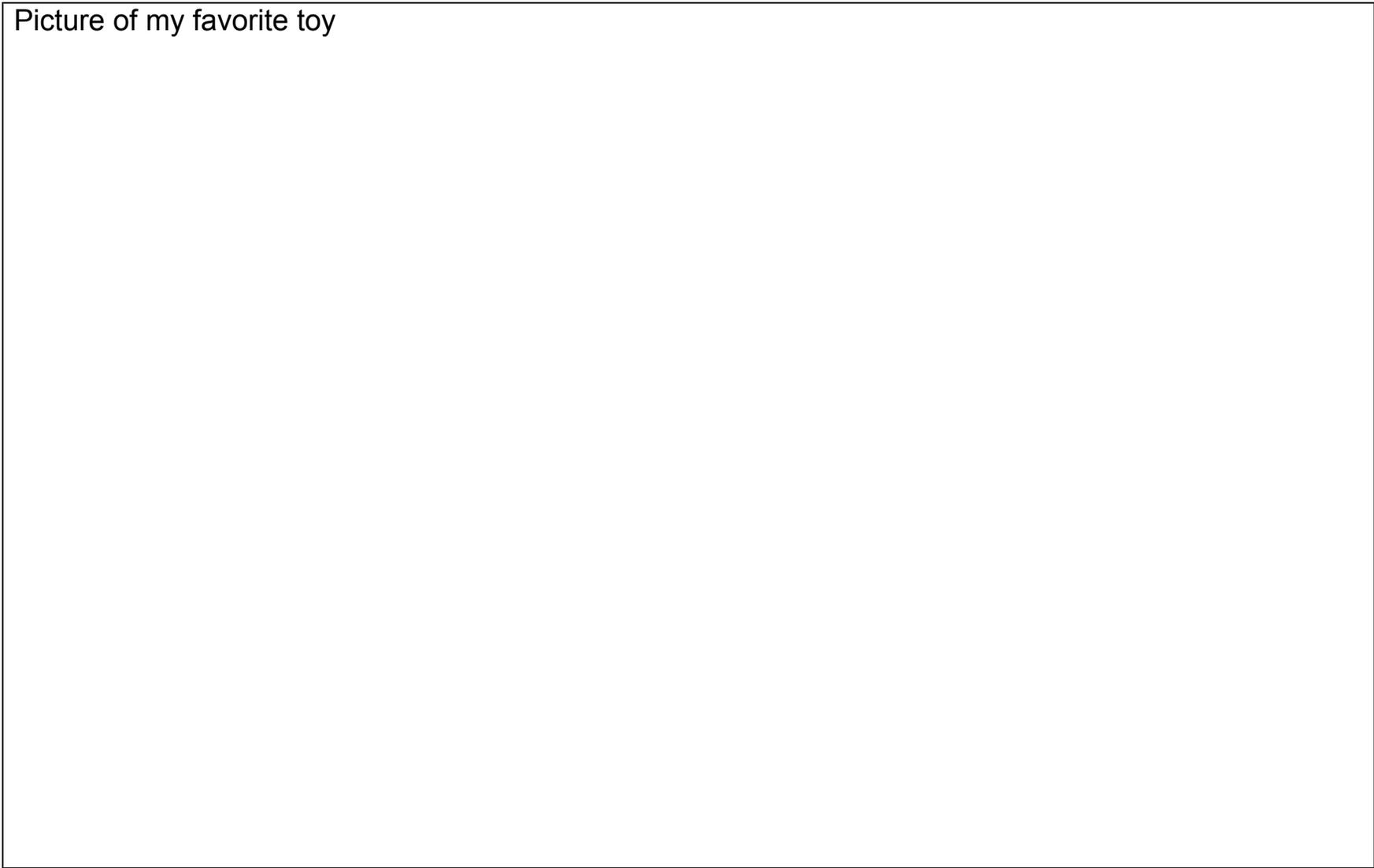
Brainstorm and write what you have learned about traditional Japanese toys/games in the circle on the left. Then contrast those with American toys in the circle on the right. Write characteristics that they have in common in the center circle.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

The Japanese toy I like the best is \_\_\_\_\_

Picture of my favorite toy



Name \_\_\_\_\_

A picture of my favorite toy

A picture of my favorite Japanese toy

# Evaluation Sheet: Traditional Japanese Toys

1. Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name of your school: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_
3. Grade level you teach: \_\_\_\_\_
4. How did you hear about the Japan Box? \_\_\_\_\_
5. For what subject did you use the Japan Box (Traditional Japanese Toys)?
6. Did you find the Japan Box helpful in meeting the objectives and goals of your lesson/class?  
Yes                      No

If you answer "No," please provide suggestions to make the Japan Box more helpful.

7. How would you evaluate the "Description of Toys" section in the Japan Box? (Please circle one)
  - a. It was helpful; there was enough information to teach my lesson.
  - b. Need more of a description on each toy.
  - c. It was not helpful at all and needs to be changed.

If you chose "C," how should the descriptions be changed?

8. Did you use any of the activities introduced in the box?                      Yes                      No

**If you answer "Yes" to the Question 8,** please answer following questions:  
Which activity did you try in your classroom?

How did the activity go? Was it helpful?

If you answered "No," please tell us how you used the toys.

Please write any comments and/or suggestions regarding the Japan Box: Traditional Japanese Toys on the reverse side. Thanks!