



Created, Directed, and Choreographed by

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An interactive show for children 2 – 5 years old

Study Guide created and produced by Arts on the Horizon

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## Pre-show Activities for the Classroom

### *First Things First: Get to Know the Show*

#### **Blossom's Rainbow Show Description:**

A painter's brush sets a young cherry blossom's world into motion. Infused with whimsical dance, vibrant colors, and dynamic live music, join Blossom on her journey from the red mountains down to the indigo city in this new piece that celebrates Japanese culture

#### **Characters:**

*Blossom* – one actor plays Blossom, a cherry blossom that blooms in the morning and spends the day exploring Japan. She starts in the mountains and travels down to the sea, meeting new friends on the way.

*Mountain, Crane, Father, River, Friend* – the second actor plays many different roles in the play. He acts as the red mountain, plays with Blossom as the yellow crane, has a picnic with Blossom in the green village, carries Blossom as the blue river with the orange koi fish, and explores the indigo city as her friend.

#### **Discussion: Let's Talk about Japan!**

*(Cognitive Development & Comprehension, Language Control & Speech, Auditory Learning, Oral Language)*

This is a story about a cherry blossom's life cycle that explores Japan's natural environment. Throughout the show, your students will learn about Japanese culture and traditions through this journey. Prepare for the show by leading an open conversation with your classroom

- Use a map, globe, or smart board to show the students where Japan is in comparison to the United States of America and even more specifically to Virginia or the Washington D.C. metro area.
  - Where in the world in Japan?
  - How could we travel to Japan?
- What is culture? Explain that culture is the language, songs, traditions, ideas and art of a specific group of people.
  - Ask students to describe their own culture. What do they eat? What games do they play? What do they wear to school? What songs do they sing as a family?
- What are traditions? Explain that traditions are celebrations handed down from parents to children.
  - Why are traditions important?
  - Does your family celebrate any traditions? What about your preschool or neighborhood?

### Hands-on Activity: Color Exploration

*(Fine/Gross Motor Development, Sensory/Tactile Exploration)*

Colors are all around us! How many colors are there in the rainbow? (Seven colors: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet.) How many shades of those colors can you find? Create a beautiful and vibrant rainbow collage as a class to review knowledge of colors, practice sorting and matching, and work collaboratively as a team.

- Pre-draw a giant rainbow on a poster board or butcher paper. Paint or color in each band with the respective color.
- Collect colored objects from around the classroom: buttons, jewels, construction paper scraps, feathers, wood blocks, etc.
- Allow students to sort objects by color. Ask them to sort colors in sets of 5-10. Have them touch and count each object and say the correct number (one-to-one correspondence)

#### **Math Connection**

Have students help collect the different colored items from around the classroom. Students can sort the items into additional categories according to a particular attribute like size, texture, function, etc.

### Science Connection: Spring Blossoms and the Seasons

*(Cognitive Development & Comprehension, Language, Vocabulary, and Science)*

Show a series of photos from each of the four seasons to your students. Ask them what they observe. What do you notice about the winter picture versus the summer picture? How do they feel when they look at certain photos? What happens in each season (i.e. leaves fall in the fall, we go to camp or the beach in the summer, etc.)?

*Guided Learning Questions:*

- What season do flowers bloom?
  - Cherry Blossoms and other flowers appear in the springtime. Discuss what needs to change from winter to make this happen. (Possible answers: the snow needs to melt, the sun needs to come out, rain or people need to water the seeds, etc.)
- How do you feel when you see flowers suddenly open up in spring?
- What colors do you notice in spring that you haven't seen all winter?



### **Dive Deeper with Onomatopoeias**

*(Sense Memory, Writing Skills, Comprehension, Creative Expression, Tactile Learning)*

After completing the science connection discussion, ask children ages 5 and up to take a moment to reflect how they felt. Then draw a picture, sketch, doodle, or even write a few words in their journals or notebooks. Encourage the use of explosive language (e.g. bam, bang, boing, pop, poof, snap, whoosh, etc). This secondary activity will help children to process and remember their experience.

### **Music Connection: Taiko**

Blossom's Rainbow uses visual arts, dance, and music to tell a story. The music is made from special Japanese drums. Taiko music uses drums and other percussion to explore sound, rhythm, and call-and-response.

### **Craft Connection #1: Create your own Japanese drum!**

*(Fine/Gross Motor Development, Creative Expression, Tactile Learning, Patterns and Relationships)*

Some younger children may need assistance. Have classroom aids help prepare the craft activity and assist when necessary.

#### *Materials:*

- Small tin containers or oatmeal containers – make sure there are no sharp edges!
- Balloons
- Chopsticks
- Construction paper
- Crayons or markers
- Tape or glue

#### *Instructions:*

- Cut the balloon at the tail and stretch it over the top of the can. Secure with a rubber band.
- Cut paper to wrap around the tins or containers.
- Secure the paper with tape or glue
- Let children decorate their own drums with markers or crayons



### **Movement: Imaginative Journey Part I**

*(Listening, Perceiving, Performing, Responding, Kinesthetic and Auditory Learning, Big Muscle Development, Earth Patterns, Cycles, and Change)*

Try a guided learning experience with your classroom that combines imagination, movement, music, and listening.

Plant a Cherry Blossom tree – Describe the lifecycle of a tree starting from seed. Ask students to imitate the movements as you enact the life of a tree:

- *Curl up in a tight ball* – you're a seed
- *Uncurl and kneel* – you've sprouted
- *Stick up one arm (fist clenched)* – you've grown a branch
- *Stick up the other arm* – you've grown another branch
- *Wiggle your fingers*—you grow lots of leaves.
- *Stand up tall (feet together)* – you grow tall
- *Spread feet apart* – you spread a lot of roots
- *Wiggle your toes* – you grow lots of little roots
- *Start scratching all over* – ants are walking all over your trunk
- *Smile and sigh* – you become a home for a bird
- *Stick out one hand and shake it* – seeds are released
- *Can your class come up with a few more movements as a group?*

***Take it Further:***

Germinate seeds in damp paper towels. Have children examine the seedlings and identify their structures, e.g., roots, stems, and leaves.

## Post-Show Activities for the Classroom

### Discussion: Reviewing the Show

*(Comprehension, Appropriate Response, Cognitive Development, Speech Skills, Listening Skills)*

Start with an open-ended conversation about *Blossom's Rainbow* to practice memory, reflection, and articulation. Let the students direct the discussion and go deeper into moments toward which they gravitate.

- Tell me about the show.
- What happened in the show?
- Who were the characters in the show? (Goal: Identify Blossom and the characters she met including Mountain, Crane, Father, River, Friend)
- What colors did you see in the show?



### **Dive Deeper with Imaginative Brainstorming**

*(Problem Solving, Social-Emotional Development, Comprehension)*

After the discussion, ask children ages 5 and up to take a moment to reflect back on Blossom's journey. How does it feel to travel to new places? What is it like to meet new people? Who helps Blossom on her journey? Where would you like to travel? Then, have them draw a picture, sketch, doodle, or even write a few words in their journals or notebooks. This secondary activity will help children to process and remember their experience.

### **Music & Movement: Imaginative Journey Part II**

*(Listening, Perceiving, Performing, Responding, Kinesthetic and Auditory Learning, Large Muscle Development, Scientific Investigation, Reasoning, and Logic)*

Now that your class has seen *Blossom's Rainbow*, have them recall the physical movement they explored in their first imaginative journey and think about how they saw the characters move during the show.

Move like Blossom – This time, imagine that you are experiencing your own journey as a cherry blossom. How do you feel? What do you hear? What do you see? How does the wind affect your movement? How do you feel when the sun shines?

*Next Step: Add instrumentation*

Use sound effects and music to influence the movement. Using a drum, or other instruments in the classroom, tell students that each instrument will signal them to do a specific action as part of the journey. Begin by giving verbal directions in addition to using the instruments. After the students have completed the journey once, try again with just instruments to guide their actions.

*For Example:*

- Maraca: falling from the tree
- Drum: traveling through a thunderstorm
- Triangle: Floating in a gentle breeze
- What else can your class come up with?



#### ***Take it Further***

Now that you've seen the show, can your class make music just the like the taiko drummer? Try tapping out simple rhythms by clapping or patting your knees.

## Discussion: Celebrating Japanese Culture

*(Listening, Speech Skills, Comprehension, Cognitive Development, History/Similarities and Differences)*

Read the book, **I Live in Tokyo**, or another Japanese folktale or story from the list of recommended reading at the end of the guide. The *Koi fish* is a symbol of strength and courage in Japan. Each year on the fifth day of the fifth month, koi kites are flown outside homes to represent each child on Japan's Children's Day.

## Craft Connection #2: Koi Fish Kite

*(Fine/Gross Motor Development, Creative Expression, Tactile Learning, Patterns and Relationships)*

Some younger children may need assistance. Have classroom aids help when necessary.

### Materials:

- Paper towel rolls cut in half
- Multi-colored tissue paper (pre-cut in semi-circles for the scales and in strips for the tail)
- Double-sided tape
- White construction paper (pre-cut into small circles for the eyes)
- Black markers
- Dowel rod or stick
- String, twine, or ribbon

### Instructions:

- Wrap tape all the way around the outside of your paper towel roll, starting at the bottom.
- Place the straight edge of each semi-circle along the tape, letting the rounded side hang off.
- Repeat this row all the way to the top until the roll is completely covered in the multi-colored tissue paper scales.
- Use black marker to color the iris of the white construction paper eye and attach with tape.
- Place a piece of double-sided tape on the bottom inside of the koi fish and attach the multi-colored tissue paper strips as tail streamers.
- Attach with string to the dowel rod.



## Get on your feet! Creative Movement for the Classroom

*(Kinesthetic, Big Muscle Development, Listening)*

In the show, the taiko drummer guided the story with rhythms made by his drums and sticks. Guided by the music, the characters took part in a traditional obon dance—a circular walking dance used in Japanese festivals.

*Start with normal walking to establish a neutral base movement to warm up before you get into the dance. Then try each of the moves in sequence.*

- Mountain – with a partner, stretch your arms in the air and join them in an arch
- Crane – spread your arms out to your side; swoop and soar around your partner
- Village – with your partner, join arms at the elbow to dance around each other in a circle
- River – break from your partner, and as a class, swim around the room using your arms to propel you through the imaginary water
- City – now that you are in the city, imagine that there are many people and flashing lights. Use your arms to stretch high and spread your fingers out like flashing lights.

### **Craft Connection #3: Cherry Blossom Tree Painting with UpCycled Stamp**

*(Creative Expression and Production, Tactile Learning, Patterns and Relationships)*

Make cherry blossom artwork with a recycled 2-liter soda bottle as a stamp!

*Materials:*

- 2-liter soda bottle
- Brown or black paint for the branches
- Pink paint for the cherry blossoms
- Poster board

*Instructions:*

- Use the brown or black paint to make the branches – Branches are easy to paint, and look better if not all lines are straight. Allow the paint to dry
- Pour some pink paint on a paper plate and dip the bottom of the plastic bottle.
- Press the plastic bottle on the poster board, and then lift up. Dip the bottle in more paint each time you repeat the stamp. Add as many blossoms as you want!



#### ***Local Connection:***

The cherry blossom is the national flower of Japan. In 1910 the Japanese sent 3,000 cherry trees to Washington, D.C. as a token of friendship. This lasting friendship and the bloom of the cherry blossoms is celebrated every spring with a parade, kite flying, taiko, and dance performances!



## Recommended Reading List

**Am I small? Watashi, chisai? (Bilingual Edition)** by Phillipp Winterberg, illustrated by

Nadia Wichmann

**Bon Odori Dancer** by Karen Kawaamoto McCoy and Carolina Yao

**The Boy of the Three-Year Nap** by Dianne Snyder, illustrated by Allen Say

**I Live in Tokyo** by Mari Takabayashi

**Grandfather's Journey** by Allen Say

**Konnichiwa! I am a Japanese-American Girl** by Tricia Brown with photographs by

Kazuyoshi Arai

**The Loyal Cat (a Japanese tale)** retold by Lensey Namioka, illustrated by Aki Sogabe

**The Magic Fan** by Keith Baker

**My First Book of Japanese Words: An ABC Rhyming Book** by Michelle Haney Brown,

illustrated by Ava Padron

**Sora and the Cloud** by Felicia Hoshino

**Suki's Kimono** by Chieri Uegaki, illustrated by Stepane Jorish

**Tsubu The Little Snail** by Carol Ann Williams, illustrated by Tatsuhiro Kiuchi

**Two Mrs. Gibbons** by Toyomi Igus

**Wabi Sabi** by Mark Reibstein, illustrated by Ed Young

**Where Are You Going? To See My Friend!** (English and Japanese Edition) by Kazuo

Iwamura, illustrated by Eric Carle