

# Study Guide - Fushu Daiko: *Spirit Drummers*

## Introduction

This Curriculum Guide is meant as a teacher's companion to Fushu Daiko's stage show, *Spirit Drummers*.

Here, you will find information and activities to enrich your students' experience of the *Spirit Drummers* performance.

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## Study Guide - Fushu Daiko: *Spirit Drummers*

### What is Taiko

Taiko is the Japanese word for drum. Literally, "fat drum". Today, the word is also used to describe the *folk art* of Japanese drumming that developed out of the traditions of everyday life, and only recently has become an ensemble (or group) art form played for entertainment purposes.

Mainly used in customs of rural life, each community developed its own rhythms and styles that had meaning to those people in that particular place. The percussive language is spoken. It was taught orally and has never developed a standardized written notation.



*Fushu Daiko performing at Morikami Museum & Gardens, Delray Beach, FL*

## Ancient Taiko History

Historically, the many styles of Japanese taiko were mostly played by a solo drummer for a specific purpose other than entertainment. Although some of the taiko (drums) and rhythms were used in traditional Japanese theater such as Noh and Kabuki, they were part of a supporting soundtrack, not as the main attraction. The same is true in Japanese court music, as well.



The rumbling power of the taiko has been associated with the gods, and has been used by the religions of Japan as the main instruments in shrines and temples to symbolize the voice of god.

(Left: Kyoto Japan:  
Kasuga Grand Shrine)

Taiko were used in battle to intimidate and scare the enemy, and because the taiko could be heard across battlefields, the sound was also used to signal troops. *(Right)*



It is also said that a village's boundaries were based on how far one could hear the village taiko rhythm being played. It was beneficial to build the largest taiko possible, in order to produce a sound that could be heard as far away as possible. If you couldn't hear the village taiko, you were no longer within the boundaries of the village!

Taiko were used in fields to scare away birds and drive away insects, to call the people of a village together, and to signal other important activities.



Village festivals, or *Matsuri* (Ma-tsoo-ree), were celebrated with the sound of drumming. These religious and mainly agricultural festivals developed a rich body of traditional taiko rhythms which are now a source of inspiration to modern players.



*(left) Recent picture of Kokura Gion festival - Japan. One of the oldest running festivals in Japan.*

**The ancient folklore of Japan is filled with references to the taiko and its importance in the Japanese culture.**

## **Modern Taiko History**

### **... in Japan**

Taiko as it is performed today, as an ensemble, was born in Japan in 1951. Daihachi Oguchi (*right*) created the kumi-daiko (many drums) style. Oguchi was a jazz drummer, who was given an old notation of taiko music that no one could figure out how to play.

Deciding to perform the old music for the Osuwa shrine, Oguchi came up with a translation and “jazzed it up” as he arranged it. Coming from a jazz background, he wondered why taiko were never played together, and broke with tradition by assembling a taiko drum ensemble.



***Go deeper:***

After World War II, Japan was undergoing rapid cultural changes. Traditional ways of life with the traditional arts were disappearing quickly. Some people realized that they should preserve the traditional arts before they were gone altogether.

An effort was made to gather information about traditional rhythms and styles of taiko drumming along with the festivals and rituals that accompanied them.

Oguchi and later taiko groups were interested in the traditional art of taiko drumming, but also were interested in making it relevant to modern Japanese people in this changing, modern Japanese culture. This is how the ensemble taiko art form came to be.

**... in America**

In 1968 Seiichi Tanaka, brought the exciting kumi-daiko style to the United States. Japanese Americans gravitated to taiko as a way to reconnect with their Japanese heritage.

Tanaka formed the first North American taiko group and inspired many, if not most, of the taiko groups throughout America and Canada, including **Fushu Daiko** in South Florida.

*Below: Grandmaster Tanaka (center left) playing with Fushu Daiko.*



People from all backgrounds enjoy the experience of playing taiko and appreciate the Japanese traditions of the art form. Taiko, both in Japan and in North America, is a modern, evolving, creative art. Taiko players learn traditional rhythms and rituals - celebrating taiko's traditional roots, and also enjoy creating new, innovative taiko music based on the traditional instruments and rhythms.

**North American Taiko** combines traditional drums and rhythms of Japan with American musical styles such as jazz and rhythm and blues.



# Types of Taiko

**O-daiko**



**O Daiko** (oh dye-koh)  
Literally: big, fat, drum. In general, the term is used for any drum larger than 33 inches in diameter.

Odaiko also specifically refers to the largest drum in a musical ensemble.

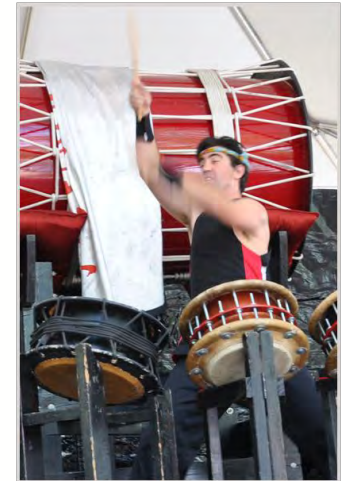
**Miya-daiko**



**Miya-daiko** (Mee-yah dye-koh)  
Shrine or temple drum. Barrel-shaped appearance with a fixed drumhead nailed to the body at each end.

Most common drum style used in Kumi-daiko (taiko played in a group or ensemble).

**Shime-daiko**



**Shime-daiko** (shee-may dye-koh)  
General term for a rope-tensioned drum.

Also specifically refers to small rope tuned drums (now often tensioned with bolts, as above) that are usually heavy, have thick skin, and are used to provide high pitched, fast paced rhythms.

**Cannon**



**Tetsu-zutsu** (teh-tsoo zoo-tsoo), **Cannon** - Three different diameters of metal pipe welded together to make a bell-like instrument. It is played with bachi or slim metal rods and is used to keep time and signal rhythm changes.

**Uchiwa-daiko**



**Uchiwa-daiko** (oo-chee-wah dye-koh) Fan drum.

This drum is made of a skin stretched over a metal frame, which is fixed to a handle. Most often it is held in the players hand when played.

**Bachi**



**Bachi** (bah-chee),  
General term for drum sticks. There are a huge variety of bachi in many size, shapes and materials.

**Kiai** (kee-eye), is a loud shout that taiko drummers use to gather energy and add to the music. In this way we support and encourage the other players while we are drumming.

## About Fushu Daiko



**Fushu Daiko** is made up of many nationalities and backgrounds, yet we have been drawn together by the taiko. Through its sound Fushu Daiko wishes to create a sense of connection in the hearts of those who hear the taiko's beat.

Fushu Daiko is a taiko ensemble that has been playing taiko in South Florida since 1990.

The training began with its founders, Yoshiko & Charles Cane, a Japanese woman and an American man. Then, with generous help from other great and generous Taiko sensei, including Grandmaster Tanaka and Ishikura Sensei of Maturiza (seen daily at Disney's Epcot), Fushu Daiko has become powerful and spirited performers in the art of Japanese Taiko Drumming.

Our focus is on building a sense of togetherness and community with our performances. We want to educate our community about the art of taiko drumming and related Japanese culture.



# Folk Tales & Legends

## What is a Folk Legend?

A very old story (or set of stories) handed down through word of mouth, from generation to generation, that people tell about a famous event or person. These stories have a specific time and place where they happened, and are often believed to be true, but cannot be proven.

## What is a Folk Tale?

Similar to a legend, a Folk Tale is an old story handed down from one generation to another, by word of mouth, but does not claim to be a true story.

# Background for the story of Spirit Drummers

As we said, the ancient folklore of Japan is filled with references to the taiko and its importance in the Japanese culture. One of those is the **legend of the Gojinjo drummers of Nafune in 1576**. This legendary conflict happened near the end of the 'Warring States Period' in Japan.

**This is the inspiration for Fushu Daiko's *Spirit Drummers* show.**

There are 3 important ideas to understand about the culture in which the people of Nafune were living in 1576:

### 1) Place: Noto Hanto

Noto Hanto is a peninsula, just like Florida is a peninsula. The land sticks out into the sea and has water on three sides.

Unlike Florida, it is mountainous. The weather there is pretty harsh. It is cool in summer and cold in the other seasons.

It is extremely windy and is surrounded by large, rough and jagged rocks, making it a harsh place to live and a difficult place to get to.



## 2) Time period: Sengoku "Warring States" Period c.1465 - approx 1600.

This was a time of civil war in Japan. There was an **Emperor**, but his position at this time was mostly ceremonial (like the Queen of England), with real power in the hands of the Shogun. The **Shogun** was appointed by the Emperor as the chief military ruler of the country. The Shogun appointed military governors, called Daimyo, to control the different areas of Japan.

The **Daimyo** were samurai warriors. They gained a lot of political and military power in the areas they governed, so it became difficult for the Shogun to control them. They waged constant warfare against each other to defend or enlarge their areas of control. This went on for over a hundred years, until one Daimyo gained enough power to become the next Shogun and establish a central government again.

**Emperor** (Monarch)

- **Shogun** (hereditary military dictator)

- **Daimyo** (Samurai warlords, military governors, appointed by Shogun)

Our story occurs near the end of this hundred years of civil war. One of the most successful samurai warlords, **Kenshin Uesugi**, was trying to conquer the village of Nafune, in his quest to be the next Shogun.

Major Sengoku Daimyo (ca. 1572)



Sengoku daimyō 1572 (Source: Harvard FAS); <http://www.jref.com/articles/sengoku-period.232/>

## 3) Beliefs (Gods, Spirits, Demons, and Ghosts)

In medieval Japan, people saw the world differently than modern Japanese or Americans do. They were very religious and thought about life in religious terms. Their religion included both Buddhist and native Japanese gods. People felt that there was a strong presence of the gods, who would communicate with

humans in different ways. They also strongly believed in spirits, ghosts and demons in most aspects of life. Even objects - like the taiko - were thought to have their own natural spirit in them.

Japanese people were always looking for ways to prevent the gods from being angry with them, or for avoiding the attention of unhappy spirits or violent demons. There are many, many stories involving these kinds of things in Japanese folklore. There are also many traditional customs that are still done today, in order to clear bad spirits out of one's home, or keep the spirits of ancestors happy and content. Today, these customs may be done more as 'good luck', or as a way to keep tradition alive, instead of actually trying to drive away the evil spirits.



## GOJINJO TAIKO: Inspiration for Spirit Drummers

### The Legend:

There were 3 powerful samurai Daimyo fighting for power at the end of the Sengoku (Warring States) Period in 1576. In Nafune, a small village on Noto Hanto, it was learned that the well-known, powerful samurai warlord Kenshin Uesugi was coming to conquer the village.

The villagers were farmers and fishermen. They were very frightened and knew that that they couldn't possibly defend themselves against a samurai army. They came up with a plan to make the soldiers believe that the village was inhabited by spirits and demons.

Before Kenshin Uesugi invaded, the villagers infiltrated the samurai camp at night, dressed as demons. They wore masks made of bark and they wore seaweed on their heads to look like ghostly tangled hair. Of course, they used the thundering sound of the village taiko to play battle drums in a demon-like way to terrify the invading soldiers.

The legend says that the samurai camp was taken by surprise and thrown into confusion at the sound of this demon-like battle drumming and the ghostly appearance of the drummers. Kenshin Uesugi's troops fled the area in fear and the village was saved!

Ever since that time, until today, there is a festival every summer called the Nefune Taisai where the people of the area celebrate the victory of their ancestors over the samurai.



**TODAY**, there is a taiko group that performs this famous style of taiko drumming called **Gojinjo Taiko**. Only people who have grown up in the little village of Nefune and who are committed to staying there, are allowed to belong to the Gojinjo Daiko of ART group and perform the official Gojinjo Taiko. If you visit Japan, you can go watch a performance by Gojinjo Taiko!

### How does this story inspire us?

This story is not only a very famous Japanese legend, it is also a very good example of putting one's full spirit and effort into an activity in order to succeed. This is a core concept in the playing of taiko drums today. The taiko drummers in an ensemble try to put their whole spirit into playing the taiko. In this way, we can pass our energy to the other members of our ensemble and to the audience who is sharing the experience with us. This also helps us persevere when we are tired!

## Activity: Cultural Values and Communication

### Spirit: Giving your all

In Japan, a very common phrase is '**Ganbatte**' (gahn-baht-tay). This is the command form of the verb 'Ganbaru' - to stubbornly persevere or try hard. To be more polite, you would add Kudasai (koo-duh-sigh), meaning 'please'. 'Ganbatte kudasai' means please do your best. It provides encouragement for the person to try hard and to not give up.

Let's look at what Americans often say to each other when faced with a difficult challenge. In English, we often say 'Good Luck!' This saying doesn't really encourage the person to try hard, but offers hope that things will go well for the person, regardless of their effort.

We mean well when we say it, but the meaning is quite different, isn't it?

**Activity:** (These can be done as a class or independently)

#### Perseverance!

- What is your definition of success?
- Tell about a time when you were faced with a challenge and you kept going even though there were obstacles or disappointments.
  - Why did you keep going?
  - Did anyone encourage you?
  - What kind of feelings did you have?

#### Option: Interactive Group Activity:

- Teach the whole class two rhythms -Best if the rhythm is a short rhythm, repeated twice and stop:
  - one for optimism and perseverance (clapping rhythm), and
  - one for obstacles or pessimism (stomping rhythm).
- teach the class to start together on cue
- During the exercises, display a cue sheet for what the rhythms mean.
- Practice by telling a story to the class about challenge and perseverance.
- Ask students to play whichever of the rhythms is appropriate (at their discretion) during the storyteller's cues.
- Stop at strategic points in the story to cue students to play a rhythm that seems right to them.
- If there is disagreement, discuss!

- How about a time when you tried as hard as you could but you didn't accomplish exactly what you tried to accomplish?
  - How did you feel?
  - Did you learn anything from that?
  - Even though you didn't accomplish the goal, what did you do that made you proud of yourself?
  - Will you try again?
  - What do you think would happen if you kept at it?

Adapted from: [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/columnists/davies/davies006.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/columnists/davies/davies006.shtml)  
<https://www.learningtogive.org/units/character-education-perseverance-grade-7/my-personal-best>

## **Activity: Folk Tales & Legends: Every Culture has them!**

### **Create a Class Book of Folk Heroes**

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/american-tall-tales-extension-activities>

**Suggested Grouping:** Cooperative groups and individuals

**Step 1:** Encourage students to think of heroes from different cultures, countries, or periods in time and recall folk tales they have read or heard about.

**Step 2:** Have students research and write about one of these folk heroes. Students may want to include illustrations to go with their writing.

- Use the attached worksheet (2 pages) for this part, if you like.

**Step 3:** Allow time for students to share with the class the information they were able to learn about these folk heroes.

**Step 4:** Combine all research and illustrations to create a class book of folk heroes and display it in the classroom library.



# Folk Heroes & Legends

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Hero or Legend:

\_\_\_\_\_

Country or Culture: \_\_\_\_\_



This picture shows: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Hero or Legend:**

---

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Characters</b><br><hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |  |
|--|--|

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Problem the characters face:</b><br><hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | <b>How they solve the problem:</b><br><hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
|--|---|

## Activity: Origami



**You can make a scene similar to this, depicting the samurai and the villagers.**

1) Samurai:

- a) Use instructions for "Samurai Hat"
- b) Use instructions for "Japanese Man"

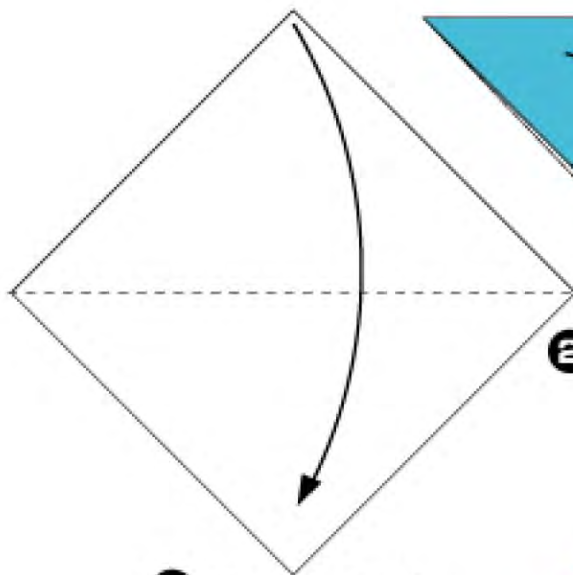
2) Villager(s):

- a) Use instructions for "Japanese Woman"
- b) Use instructions for "Japanese Man"

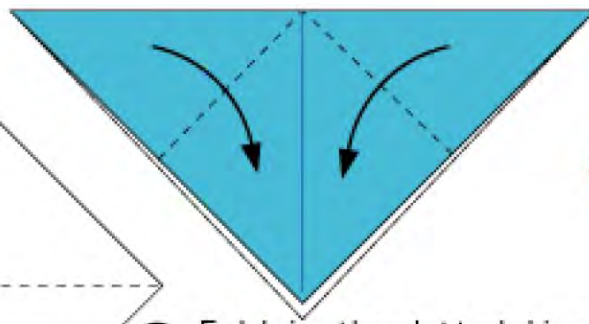
3) Make a background for your origami scene and glue the origami on to the background paper.

**Get creative!** Maybe you'd like to change the scene. By cutting out paper seaweed hair to add to the villager and by coloring on the villager's face to look like a bark mask, you can show the villagers scaring the Samurai. It's your scene... do it your way!

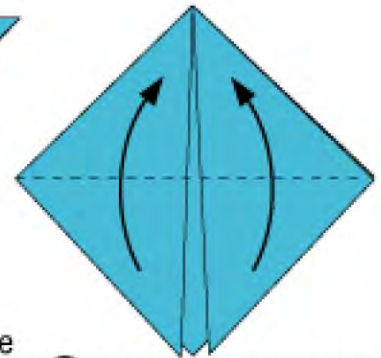




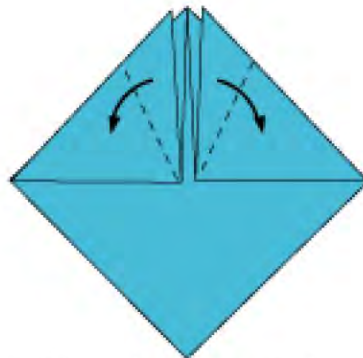
**1** Fold in half



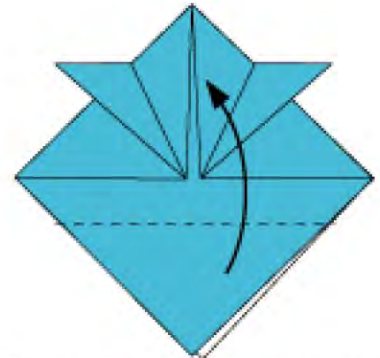
**2** Fold in the dotted line to meet the center line



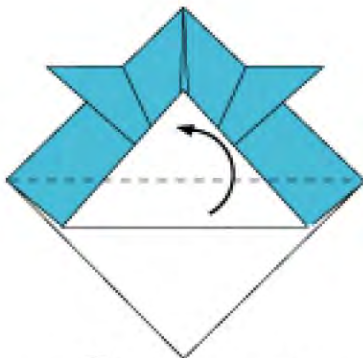
**3** Fold in the dotted line



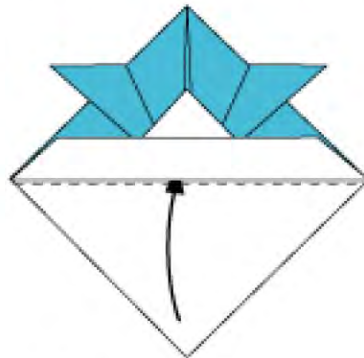
**4** Fold in the dotted line



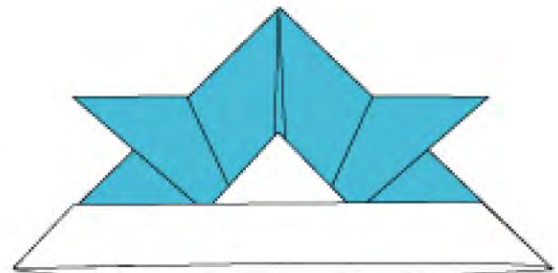
**5** Fold in the dotted line



**6** Fold in the dotted line



**7** Tuck the corner into the pocket

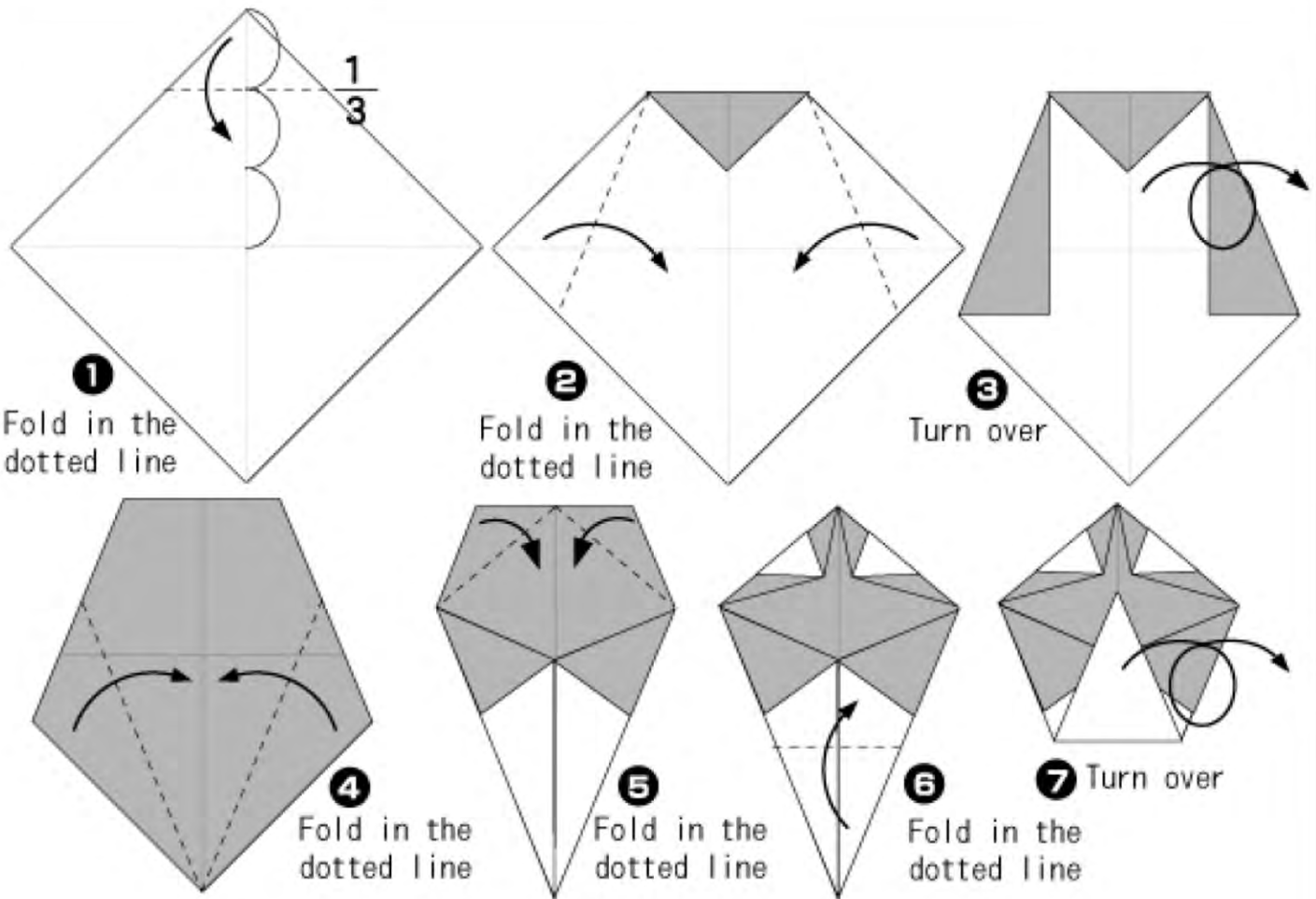


**8** Finished

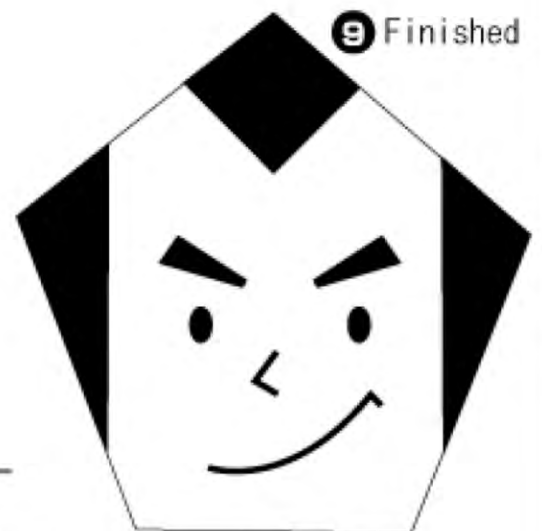
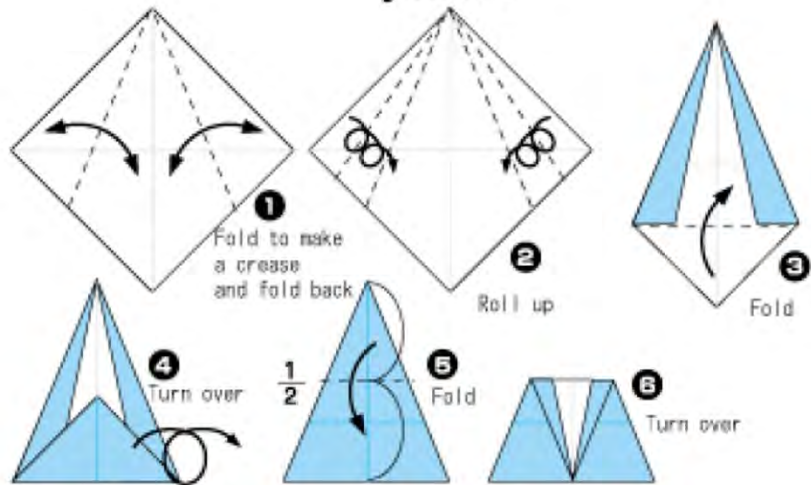
\*Traditional  
Diagram: Fumiaki Shingu

# A Samurai Hat

Video instructions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKthKH1E5I0>



**yukata**



★  
By changing the way  
the folding little  
Changing the face.

**A Man**  
(Japanese coiffure)

## Activity: SOUND: Experiment with PITCH! Continued...

Adapted from <http://www.education.com/science-fair/article/size-vibrating-surface-affect-pitch>

Divide the class into 3 sections:

Each section makes a different sized drum, using the same materials so that the main difference is the *diameter of the head* of the drum.

### Materials:

- 3 different sized containers (5-7 of each size) of the same rigid material (all plastic, or all metal, etc)
  - plastic buckets with fitted lids, or
  - clean, empty, metal cans with one end removed. (large coffee, small coffee, soup cans), or
  - stiff plastic food containers, or
  - bowls of any stiff material.
- large balloons or heavy fabric for drum heads
- packing tape to hold balloons or fabric on to the drum body
- wooden spoons, plastic spoons, or pencils for drumsticks.

### Process:

#### 1. Make drums:

##### A. Balloon drum heads:

1. Set clean containers with the open hole facing the ceiling (this will be the drum head).
2. Cut the end off of a large balloon with scissors (the end you would put your mouth on to blow it up)
3. Stretch the balloon over the top of the container.
4. Fasten the edges of the balloon to the side of the container by wrapping packing tape all around the diameter of the container, with the tape covering both the balloon edge and the container.

or

##### B. Packing tape drum heads:

1. Set clean containers with the open hole facing the ceiling (this will be the drum head).
2. Using packing tape, start on the edge of the container and stretch a piece of tape across the open hole and secure it on the opposite side.
3. Repeat by criss-crossing the tape pieces until the entire top is covered and you have a drum head.
4. Fasten the edges of the tape to the side of the container by wrapping packing tape all around the diameter of the container, with the tape covering both the tape edges and the container.

#### 2. Using your mallet or drum stick, bang each drum in turn.

*Which drum makes the highest pitch? Which one makes the lowest? If there is a difference, why? What happens when you bang softly or harder? If there is a difference, why?*

### Results

The larger the diameter of the drum, the lower the pitch of the drum.

Banging harder makes the amplitude higher.

## Activity: SOUND: Experiment with PITCH! Continued...

### Why?

Sound is friendly: it waves. When you hit a surface with a mallet, the surface **vibrates**, or moves back and forth. This pounding is called **percussion**. When the surface bounces, it moves the air around it, causing ripples of compressed and stretched air that travel outward from the struck surface toward your ears. That's all sound really is!

The sound waves enter through your outer ear to your middle ear, where they make your eardrum vibrate, moving the tiny bones in your ear. These bones are called **ossicles**. These vibrations visit your **inner ear**, a snail-shaped organ that sends a message to your brain, letting it know that you've heard a sound. This sounds like a complicated process, but what's even more amazing is that it all happens in a fraction of a second!

A sound wave moves through the air, but you can't see it. If you could, what you'd see would be areas where air particles are pushed together and spread apart. These areas are called areas of **compression** and **rarefaction**.

The waves move out from the object that's making the sound. In this case, it's your drum. Since they move in a direction that's parallel to the object, they're called **longitudinal waves**.

**Pitch** is a way of talking about how "high" or "low" a sound is. When you hit a big drum, it makes a lower pitch than a smaller drum might. Hitting a drum applies pressure to the drum. Drums with larger heads (drum surfaces) take longer to wobble back and forth, creating slower vibrations and a lower pitch. If you gave one of your drums a thicker surface or a looser surface, it would also take longer to bounce and would make a deeper sound.

Professional musicians use many different mallets or sticks and drums (and even different parts of the drum) to make different sounds. Try this experiment again, hitting different parts of each drum. *How does this change the sound? Why do you think it changes?* Try the same experiment with different sizes of cymbals or different sizes of pot lids that you hang from a string. *Does the same principle hold true when you try the experiment with different materials? How about using a different mallet? How does this change the sound you make?*



## More Connections:

- **Social Studies: 3rd grade curriculum:** Civics/Government. Identify levels of government (local, state, federal)
  - - compare the levels of government in the Sengoku period in Japan to our levels of government to understand the setting of the story.
  - - How is our government structure different than the ancient Japanese structure in the legend?
    - government chosen by the people (voting) vs. leaders whose position is gained by birth (like kings, queens, princesses...).
    - administrative /political governors vs. military governors
- **Social Studies: 4th grade curriculum:** Florida Studies (exploration/colonization)
  - In the 1500's, Japan had already been a structured political society for a long time, but had devolved (weakened and split) into civil war. In comparison, look at how Florida was not part of a centralized government at the time and was under attack (like Noto Hanto) by people who wanted to control or colonize it. So, at the time, both Florida and Japan were not part of a centralized government structure.
  - Native Florida people defended the land from Portugese (Native Florida people were Calusa, Tequesta, Seminole)
  - Compare, contrast - how did the environment contribute to the native people's ability to defend their land in both Noto Hanto and Florida? Peninsula, harsh conditions, etc.

## More Information

[www.fushudaiko.org](http://www.fushudaiko.org)

[The World Factbook: Japan](#)  
[Kids Web Japan](#)

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Anthology of Japanese Literature : Earliest Era to Mid-Nineteenth Century, Compiled and translated by Donald Keene.

Japanese Tales, Edited and translated by Royall Tyler.

[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main\\_pop/kpct/kp\\_tokugawa.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_tokugawa.htm) :

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<http://www.jref.com/articles/sengoku-period.232/> (map)

[http://www.gojinjodaiko.jp/en\\_top.html](http://www.gojinjodaiko.jp/en_top.html)

<http://taikoskin.blogspot.com> - bachi image