Make a 7-5-3 Day Candy Bag 七五三

THE JAPANESE HOUSE ACTIVITIES



Learn about the Shichi-Go-San (7-5-3) festival in Japan and create a Chitose-ame (thousand-year) candy bag.

1. Learn about Shichi-Go-San

Shichi-Go-San is a special day to celebrate three-year-old boys and girls, five-year-old boys, and seven-year-old girls. Shichi means seven, go means five, and san means three, so Shichi-Go-San literally means 7-5-3. On November 15th, or the closest weekend, children dress up in traditional or other fancy clothing and visit neighborhood shrines with their parents to give thanks for their health and happiness and to pray for continued health and happiness in the future. Parents also buy chitose-ame for their children when they visit the shrine. Chitose-ame are very long pink-and-white candy sticks—when parents buy them for their children, they wish for their lives to be long and sweet, like the candy. The candy bags are often decorated with cranes and turtles, which are symbols of good luck, happiness, and longevity.

The *Shichi-Go-San* tradition evolved from three ancient rites of passage. At the age of three, boys and girls stopped getting their heads shaved and began to grow their hair long; at the age of five, boys were allowed to wear *hakama* (traditional male *kimono* pants); and at the age of seven, girls started to tie their *kimono* with *obi* instead of string. Today, Japanese children no longer participate in these types of formal ceremonies, but the holiday remains.

TIME:

20 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Candy bag activity sheet
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Scotch tape or glue

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Shichi-Go-San: *She-chee-go-san*

Chitose-ame:

Chee-toe-say-ah-may

Hakama: *Ha-kah-mah*

Kimono: *Key-moe-no*

Obi: Oh-bee



2. Make Your Own Chitose-ame Bag

- 1. Color the bag.
- 2. Color the handle red—red is a lucky color in Japan, so these handles are always red.
- 3. Cut out the bag and handle.
- 4. Fold the bag along the dotted lines.
- 5. Tape the back and the bottom of the bag.
- 6. Tape the handle to the top of the bag.





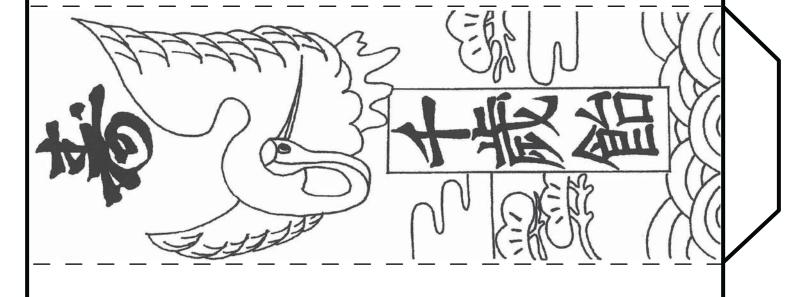
Things to Talk about

- Cranes and turtles are the symbol of a happy, long life in Japan; what animals represent long life in your culture? What other characteristics do animals represent?
- When you turn a certain age, can you do something new? Are there special
 ages in your culture? Is there an age when you get to wear something
 special?
- Are there any special days on which you and your family celebrate your growth and happiness? For example, birthday and graduation days.









On Shichi-Go-San, parents would buy chitoseame (thousand-year candy)—long pink-and-white candy sticks for their children. They wish for their children's lives to be long and sweet, like the candy. The candy bags are often decorated with cranes and turtles, which are symbols of good luck, happiness, and longevity.

