

Ceremonies - Kanji, Kanji

Summary

Students will learn and experience some of the Japanese writing system in comparison to writing in English.

Materials

Paintbrushes
ink
paper

Background for Teachers

In an effort to help students appreciate cultures other than their own, this exercise will inform them of the writing system of Japan, how it developed, how it works, and some experiences with simple characters.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will gain a greater appreciation for their own writing system while learning about writing in different languages, in particular, Japanese.

Instructional Procedures

There is always a curiosity about writing systems other than ours, and this would be a great opportunity to see how another writing system developed the way it has. With prior practice, a teacher can introduce students to the Japanese written language and have students learn and practice a few simple characters (see [fact sheet](#) for information).

If possible, have someone who is familiar with Japanese writing come in to show how to write kanji and lead students in practice with writing. Explain to students why they write from right to left and from top to bottom in vertical lines.

Because Japanese/Chinese characters are a pictographic language, showing students how the characters evolved. The books by Vaccari or Rowley (see bibliography) show how the Chinese/Japanese characters developed from actual physical situations. Kanji doesn't seem so difficult when you can show how the characters were developed from actual situations. Some of the simple ones include the characters representing "person," "big," "tree," "woods," "forest," "river," "mountain," (see Website examples below).

Extensions

It might be interesting to show other writing systems that students in the class might be learning at home (e.g., Korean, Arabic, Cyrillic).

Bibliography

- <http://www.kanjisite.com/html/wak/wak4.html>
- http://www.omniglot.com/writing/japanese_kanji.htm
Kanji Kanji by The East Publications, Inc., 1972
Pictorial Chinese-Japanese Characters by Oreste Vaccari
Kanji Pict-o-Graphix by Michael Rowley

Authors

