

Japanese calligraphy

Teacher Material

Subjects: Art or Physical Education lessons

Age group: early primary school children (age 6-8)

Duration: 3 didactic hours

Author: Christina Karasava, primary school teacher, xrista_kara@hotmail.com

Step 1: Discovering Japanese calligraphy

Resources: Internet access

Focus on content: Discovering another writing system

Focus on language(S): Pronouncing sounds from other languages

Timing: 45' minutes

Notes for the teacher:

The teacher should create a context to help the young students to understand katakana characters. He/She may e.g. shortly introduce Japan, the Japanese language and calligraphy to the students.

1. The teacher talks and shows some pictures on the internet about Japan, Japanese language and calligraphy. Then he/she shows the short video “How to read and write Katakana Alphabet” shown on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf-n_ql2occ (the explanations are in English). The video shows you how to write and pronounce Japanese characters.
2. The teacher shows the short film again and now asks the students to practise reading/pronouncing some katakana characters while listening to the short film on YouTube.
3. The teacher initiates a discussion with the students about the katakana characters. They share in the classroom whether any of these sounds remind them of something and what they think about these characters: Are there any similarities with sounds in their home language(s) or any other language they know? The teacher may provide more examples through internet based on the childrens’ references or in order to include other languages of the world.



STEP 2: Let's study Japanese

Material required: The Katakana table. Short history of this syllabic alphabet.

Resources: Document 1, Katakana table

Grouping:  An owl icon representing a group or pair.

Timing: 45' minutes

Notes for the teacher:

1. The teacher explains in a very simple way what is demonstrated in the list in Document 1. He/she provides the students with some information about the table. For example, he/she explains that the table is read from right to left and from top to bottom. He/she brings examples from other languages, such as Arabic, that are constructed likewise. (10')
2. After the brief introduction the teacher asks the students to choose one character and try to draw it by themselves. Then the student can try to pronounce it and present it to his/her classmates. The teacher might assist the students when they need some help. (35')



Document 1

Japanese "Katakana" Character List

ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ								
a	i	u	e	o								
カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ	ガ	ギ	グ	ゲ	ゴ	ギヤ	ギユ	ギョ
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko	ga	gi	gu	ge	go	gya	gyu	gyo
サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ	ザ	ジ	ズ	ゼ	ゾ	ジャ	ジュ	ジョ
sa	shi	su	se	so	za	ji	zu	ze	zo	ja	ju	jo
タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト	ダ	ヂ	ヅ	デ	ド	チャ	チュ	チョ
ta	chi	tsu	te	to	da	ji	zu	ze	zo	ja	ju	jo
ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ						ニヤ	ニユ	ニョ
na	ni	nu	ne	no						nya	nyu	nyo
ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ	バ	ビ	ブ	ベ	ボ	ビヤ	ビユ	ビョ
ha	hi	fu	he	ho	ba	bi	bu	be	bo	bya	byu	byo
マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ						ミヤ	ミュ	ミョ
ma	mi	mu	me	mo						mya	myu	myo
ヤ		ユ		ヨ								
ya		yu		yo								
ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ						リヤ	リュ	リョ
ra	ri	ru	re	ro						rya	ryu	ryo
ワ				ヲ								
wa				wo								
ン					パ	ピ	プ	ペ	ポ	ピヤ	ピユ	ピョ
n					pa	pi	pu	pe	po	pya	pyu	pyo

Step 3. PLAY WITH KATAKANA

Grouping: 

Material required: The Katakana table, Document 1.

Timing: 45' minutes

Notes for the teacher:

1. The teacher helps the students to form small groups (4-5 students) and asks them to choose one character from the katakana table and to find a way to form the chosen katakana character with their bodies.
2. The students have some time to work within their group in order to find a way to form the chosen katakana character.
3. The teacher calls two groups into the middle of the classroom. The students in the first group demonstrate the katakana character with their bodies and the other group needs to find the character, show it in the table and if possible, try to pronounce it. Then the same is repeated by the other group.
4. Finally, the students reflect on what they have learnt and share their reflections in the group.

ENJOY!