



## Tanabata Matsuri Tassel

**Grade Level:** Art 5-7, Social Studies 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Objective:** Students will create a Japanese inspired *Tanabata Matsuri* tassel using the principles of symmetry, shape, and form so that they will understand how to make a 2 dimensional material into a 3 dimensional object using origami techniques.

**I Can Statements:** I can: (1) fold origami paper symmetrically and precisely to create a bell form (2) complete the Tanabata Matsuri tassel project to expected standards; (3) use accurate vocabulary; (4) use tools safely and appropriately

### GA Standards of Excellence:

#### Art:

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: VA2.CR.4.a.c, VA2.CR.5, VA.RE.1.C, VA2.CN.1.a-c, VA2.CN.2, VA2.CN.3

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: VA3.CR.1.A, VA3.CR.3.c, VA3.CR.4.a.c, VA3.RE.1.a, VA3.CN.1.a-b, VA3.CN.2.a, VA3.CN.3

4<sup>th</sup> Grade: VA4.CR.1.a, VA4.CR.2.b, VA4.CR.3.c, VA4.CR.4.b, VA4.CR.5, VA4.RE.1a-b, VA4.CN.1.a-c, VA.CN.2.b, VA.CN.3

5<sup>th</sup> Grade: VA5.CR.1.a, VA5.CR.2.b.d, VA5.CR.4.b.c, VA5.CR.5, VA5.RE.1.a, VA5.CN.1.a-d, VA5.CN.2, VA5.CN.3

6<sup>th</sup> Grade: VA6.CR.1.c, VA6.CR.2.b, VA6.CR.3.a-c, VA6.CR.4.b, VA6.CR.5.b, VA6.RE.1a-c, VA6.RE.2.b, VA6.CN.1a-c, VA6.CN.3.c

7<sup>th</sup> Grade: VA7.CR.1.c, VA7.CR.2.b, VA7.CR.3.a-c, VA7.CR.4.b, VA7.CR.5.b, VA7.RE.1a-c, VA7.RE.2.b, VA7.CN.1a-c, VA7.CN.3.c

8<sup>th</sup> Grade: VA8.CR.1.c, VA8.CR.2.b, VA8.CR.3.a-c, VA8.CR.4.b, VA8.CR.5.b, VA8.RE.1a-c, VA8.RE.2.b, VA8.CN.1a-c, VA8.CN.3.c

#### Social Studies:

Map and Globe Skills 10

7<sup>th</sup> Grade: SS7G9, SS7G12, SS7E5.a, SS7E8.a

**Background:** *Tanabata*, also known as the Star Festival, translates to “evening on the seventh” and it is one of Japan’s five traditional seasonal festivals, or *gosekku*. The festival takes place on the seventh day of the seventh month of the year. In some areas of Japan, it is celebrated on July 7<sup>th</sup> based on the Gregorian calendar. However in Sendai, home to the largest Tanabata Festival, it is celebrated on August 7<sup>th</sup>, based on the older lunar calendar.

The festival originated from the Chinese Qixi festival, which is based on the legend of Kikkoden, a story about the love between a weaver princess and cow herder, who meet once a year. The tale arrived in Japan during either the Nara period (710-784 CE) or the Feudal period (1185-1868 CE) in the form of a weaving festival for young women looking to improve their weaving skills on the loom. The story merged with the Japanese legend of *tanabata-tsume*, the tale of a celestial maiden who weaves

clothes for the gods as well as other Japanese cultural elements to form a Chinese-infused Japanese tradition.

The stars Vega and Altair are at the center of the legend. Vega is known as Orihime, the weaver star and patron of silk and farming, and Altair is called Hikiboshi, the cowherd star and agricultural messenger. Orihime was the daughter of the king of the skies or heaven and a beautiful weaver princess who lived on the eastern side of the heavenly river (the Milky Way). Daily, she diligently wove cloth for her father. As she fell in love with Hikiboshi, she began neglecting her weaving. Her father, angered by her actions, forbade the lovers from meeting each other ever again, and separated them on opposite sides of the heavenly river. Orihime was heartbroken by this and cried all the time. Moved by her tears and unable to bear her sadness, her father allows her to meet Hikiboshi once a year on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, so long as they both fulfill their celestial obligations the rest of the year. At this point, storytellers may change the end of the story. If it rained on the day of their meeting, the heavenly river would flood, and they would not be able to see each other. Another telling says magpies would form a bridge for the lovers to cross the river, but if it rained the bridge would not be formed. Orihime and Hikiboshi always prayed for good weather, and if they met successfully, then everyone who makes a wish on that day has their wishes come true. Thus the Tanabata holiday marks the day that Orihime and Hikiboshi met.

The festival became popular during the Edo period (1603-1868). In the city of Sendai, the festival was called Tanabata-san and Lord Date Masamune, the city's founder, wrote 8 poems related to Tanabata, giving an authentic glimpse to what the early Tanabata celebrations were like. It was during this time that the tradition of writing a wish on a small piece of colored paper or *tanzaku* and hanging it from bamboo branches began. The wish tradition has expanded to also include *fukinagashi* (colorful streamers): thread for those wanting to improve weaving skills, *amikazari* (paper cut in a way that stretches to look like a fishing net): wishes for fishermen for full nets, *kinchaku* (small drawstring bags): for prosperity and *orizuru* (folded paper cranes): for longevity. Items for celebration are created from paper and other light, colorful material. Historically, bamboo branches laden with tanabata were placed in rivers and carried away by the current to ensure the wishes were granted. Today shopping centers, train stations, other public places hang 3-5 meter long streamer tanabata tassels from long bamboo poles and then take them down after the festival and leave them on the floor for visitors to collect pieces as souvenirs of the festival.



Sources:

[https://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/tanabata\\_japans\\_star\\_festival#sthash.fR4c5SPV.dpbs](https://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/tanabata_japans_star_festival#sthash.fR4c5SPV.dpbs)

<https://www.nippon.com/en/features/jg00097/tanabata-star-festival.html>

<https://www.kyuhoshi.com/sendai-tanabata-matsuri/>

<https://www.sendaitanabata.com/english/pc/outline/history/>

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## **Vocabulary:**

*2-dimensional* — a flat surface that has length and width but not depth

*3-dimensional* — is observed in terms of its height, width and depth. A form with volume.

*form* — When a shape acquires depth and becomes three-dimensional, then it is referred to as a form. Cylinders, pyramids, and spheres are some of the more common forms, though they can also be amorphous

*origami* — the Japanese art of folding paper into decorative shapes and figures

*shape* — a 2-dimensional area that is flat and has height and width. Often determined by a defined or implied boundary due to line, value, color, or texture.

*symmetry* — the quality of being made up of exactly similar parts facing each other or around an axis. Often when two or more parts are identical after a flip, slide or turn.

*Tanabata Matsuri tassel* — decorative tassels hung during the Tanabata Matsuri, or Star festival, in Japan celebrating the 7<sup>th</sup> day in the 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month where stars, Vega the weaver and Altair the cowherder can meet.

**Materials:** Each student needs: at least 3 origami paper squares, 1 string at least 18", scissors, 3 or more beads, 1 glue stick, 1 bone folder (optional)

**Preparations:** If not using decorative origami paper, cut thin paper to 3" x 3", 4" x 4" or 5" x 5" squares. Construction paper and colored printer paper will work for this project. Pre-cut string lengths to 18" or longer depending on paper size. Check to make sure beads will thread on string.

**Essential Questions:** (1) Do other cultures have traditions are similar to the Tanabata Matsuri? Yes or no and why or why not? (2) How do different cultures celebrate success? (3) Why did the Japanese create a story about the stars? Do other cultures create stories about stars and constellations? (4) What stories does America have behind their holidays? What is the point of those stories? (5) How can something 2-dimensional become 3-Dimensional?

**Introduction:** Instructors will introduce background information about the Tanabata Matsuri tradition, legend behind the festival, and significance of tassels. Instructors will cover project vocabulary with students. Instructors will demonstrate how to symmetrically fold paper to create a bell, turning a 2D sheet of paper into a 3D form. Instructors will then show how to knot the end of the string, add a bead, string the paper bell, and glue the insides together.

The following can be used as an instructional guideline:

1. *Tanabata*, also known as the Star Festival, translates to "evening on the seventh" and takes place on the seventh day of the seventh month of the year in Japan. This festival first came from China and then mixed with Japanese traditions to create the current Tanabata celebration. The festival became popular during the Japanese Edo period (1603-1868 CE), around the same time

that the American colonies were being formed. During the festival, wishes are written on long, narrow strips of colored paper and are attached to a bamboo branch, or *tanzaku*. It is thought that everyone who makes a wish on that day, will have their wish come true. The legend that started the wish making comes from a love story between two stars Vega, Orihime the weaver star, and Altair, Hikiboshi the cowherd star. Read legend behind the festival to students (in background section).

2. Why do you think the Chinese/Japanese came up with a story about the stars? Why is the Tanabata Matsuri festival important to the people of Japan? Do other cultures have similar traditions?
3. Each student will need one sheet of paper for the activity. What are characteristics of something that is 2D, 3D? Write down your answers. Something that is 2 dimensional is flat and only has length and width. It is a shape. 3 dimensional objects have length, width, and height – which creates depth. 3 dimensional objects have form. What are some examples of shapes and forms, 2D/3D items around you? How can you take a piece of paper that is 2D and make it 3D? What are some different techniques? Today we will be taking a 2D piece of paper in a square shape and turning into a 3-dimensional bell form for our Tanabata Matsuri tassel

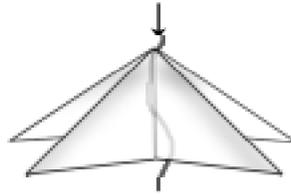
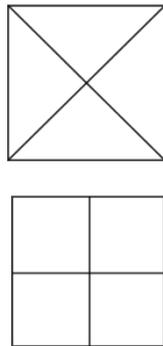
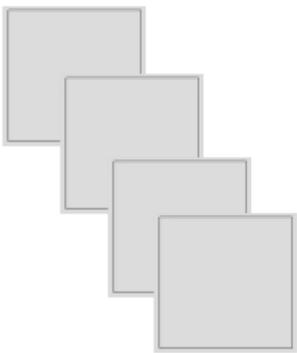
### **Procedures:**

1. Write a wish on each sheet of paper for the bells. If students are creating the Tanabata extension have them sketch design for Tanabata Matsuri Tassel (Sample 1 below)
2. Fold a square of paper in half from corner to corner, into a triangle.
3. Open paper and fold the paper along the opposite diagonal. The bone folder can be used to create sharper folds.
4. Turn the paper over and fold the paper in half from side to side, creating a rectangle. After unfolding, fold in half the opposite way.
5. Turn paper over again.
6. Push the sides toward the center to form a bell. (Two triangles)
7. Cut off the very tip of the bell or poke a small hole at top peak.
8. Tie a knot at the end of the string and add a bead that will sit on top of the knot. If bead is falling off add additional knots, enlarging the original knot.
9. Thread the paper bell onto the string so it will rest on the bead. Inside walls of bell will need to be glued together to keep the bell in place.
10. Keep tying knots, adding beads, stringing bells and gluing insides of bells together until tassel is complete.
11. Wrap up questions: why do you think the Japanese celebrate the Tanabata Matsuri? Why do they make tassels as part of the celebration? Cultures all over the world have special decorations for different celebrations. What are some special decorations for our holidays and celebrations? Do other cultures have traditions are similar to the Tanabata Matsuri tassel? How are they the same and how are they different? How would the tassel look if you added more

bells to the tassel or a different origami object? What do you consider to be a “good” Tanabata Matsuri tassel?

12. Students will reflect on work, and take time discuss essential questions. Students will articulate reasons why the Japanese culture celebrates Tanabata Matsuri and makes tassels for the event. Students will identify universal themes related to Tanabata Matsuri in works of art from diverse cultures, both past and present. Students will evaluate their own artwork through verbal discussion with other students discussing topics such as craftsmanship, symmetry, and cultural relevance

**Sample 1:**



**Extensions:** To increase level of difficulty project students can fold more difficult origami forms like the crane, balloon or many others to string on tassel. Students can also increase length of tassel and number of paper forms strung. Another option is to create several tassels that are then joined together at the top by a larger central form.

To add a writing extension teachers could have students write a poem based on one of their wishes or write a legend based off stars or a holiday of their choice.