

# Little Oh Unit Study

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## BIBLE & CHARACTER

### Empathy

Empathy is understanding how someone feels or “putting yourself in their shoes.” The little doll had empathy in that she was able to understand how the crane felt (they both lost someone they loved). She decided to sing songs and tell stories to take the crane’s mind off her sorrow.

II. Cor.1:4 tells us that God comforts us in our difficulties so that we will be able to help comfort others when they go through troubles. Even though our trials may seem difficult at the time, God has a purpose in allowing them and walking through difficulties increases our empathy and compassion for others.

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

### Holidays: Children's Day

In Japan, Children’s Day holiday is celebrated on May 5<sup>th</sup> honoring boys and girls. Activities include games, crafts, special plays, the beating of drums, and flying fish streamers. Boy’s Day and Girls’ Day used to be celebrated separately but now the two holidays are combined.

Girl’s Day, also known as the Peach Blossom Festival, is a time when Japanese girls have a tea party shared with their special dolls--as many as 15 of them! Many of these dolls are passed down from their mothers. A week or two before the holiday they unpack and put the dolls on special shelves built like steps. Red cloth covers the steps and at the top is placed the Emperor and Empress doll along with lanterns. The other dolls are placed in the lower steps along with doll furniture. Peach blossoms on the steps represent beauty. The girls dress in kimonos and

enjoy tea and cake with friends and show off their dolls. The original purpose of this holiday was to clean away evil spirits through the ceremony.

A month prior to Boy's Day, fathers put up a bamboo pole in the family garden which has a pinwheel at the top. It contains a pulley to hoist up streamers--one for each boy in the family. Windsocks shaped like carp fish are flown atop. Carp are strong fish that swim upstream and represents the parent's hope that their boys will have the qualities of the carp: strength and courage. Just as the dolls for Girl's Day are passed from mother to daughter, these streamers are often handed down from father to son. Inside the house, boys decorate small toy men dressed as Japanese warriors (samurai). Tiny helmets swords and spears are placed to represent courage and strength. Boys visit the homes of their friends to see the display and eat sweets together.

### The Role of Tea in Japan

Green tea is enjoyed at all times of day in Japan by most everyone. Japanese green tea is served in cups without a handle and is never drunk with sugar or cream. The politest way of drinking green tea is to hold the cup with one hand and support it from below with the other hand.

The tea ceremony is a ritualistic way of preparing and drinking tea and is a hobby of sorts. Many Japanese take tea ceremony lessons with a teacher. Tea ceremonies are then held in community centers or private homes.

The ceremony itself consists of many rituals that have to be memorized. Almost every hand movement is prescribed. Basically, the tea is first prepared by the host, and then served to the guests. This custom has been strongly influenced by Zen Buddhism.

### Culture: Japanese Clothing-- Kimonos

The traditional dress of Japan is the kimono. Kimonos are usually made of silk and have large sleeves. Although silk is the traditional material for kimonos, they also come in cotton, wool, and linen. They are tied with a wide belt called an *obi*. Today, kimonos are usually worn only on special occasions, such as festivals, weddings, and graduation ceremonies.

Kimonos limit one's movement, and also take time to put on properly. A more easily worn, informal kimono is sometimes worn by children and young adults at festivals, fireworks displays, and other special occasions. In everyday life, though,

young people tend to prefer clothing that is easier to move around in, such as T-shirts or polo shirts and jeans.

### Culture: Japanese Clothing-- Geta

Japanese shoes or clogs are called geta because of the "clack" sound they make when walking. "Geta" sandals are carved out of wood and raised so that if you walk through mud or wet streets, your feet and kimono wouldn't get wet. You may want to read *A Pair of Red Clogs* by Masako Matsuno. In the book the shoes seem to be "talking" to the little girl with the noise they make.

### Japanese Culture: Homes and Furniture

Can your child spot any chairs in the illustrations inside the homes? Traditional Japanese homes have mats called tatami on the floors. These mats are made from woven grass. Japanese generally don't use chairs on top of tatami, so people either sit directly on the tatami or on flat cushions. This explains the custom of taking off shoes when entering a Japanese house.

People tend to put on slippers for indoor use as soon as they have taken off their shoes. Tatami is cool in the summer and warm in the winter, and remains fresher than carpet during Japan's humid months.

Today Western-style rooms with chairs and beds are common but even so most houses have at least one room in the traditional style.

Room dividers are common and they consist of translucent washi paper over a wooden frame. Washi is tougher than ordinary paper so it works well for this type of use. See the science lesson for more information on washi paper.

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## LANGUAGE ARTS

### Story Within a Story

Ask your child whether he/she recognizes the story within the story. The story within the story (the story the mother is telling her boy) is distinguished from the main story by the regular font. The main story is in italics. The bulk of this book is actually the story within the story.

## Similes

There are many similes found in the text, comparing two things with the words "like" or "as." Take two index cards and write the words "like" on one and "as" on the other. As you read through the story, have your child listen for the words (when used in a simile) and raise the appropriate card when they hear the word read.

Examples:

"...like bony knees"

"like a toy village"

"the bird unfurled her wings like banners against the blue sky."

"May I skip over the stones like the little brook?"

"May I dance in the wind like the red maple trees?"

"as supple as a sapling"

## List-making

Notice on the page where the paper doll is just encountering the crane that she says to herself. "I may be a paper child but I sailed the raging river." Help your child make a list of his/her achievements. I may be insert number years old, but I insert achievement.

e.g.

I may be 5 years old, but I can tie my shoes.

I can put away my supper dishes.

I can dress myself.

I can hop on one foot.

Try to think of as many things as possible to compile a really big list--even though he's little he can do a lot of things!

## Genre: Fantasy

Literature is broken down into categories or genres with somewhat loose criteria.

Some genres your child may be familiar with are: autobiography, biography, non-fiction, comedy, historical fiction, poetry, mystery, fable or science fiction.

In the story the origami girl turning into a real girl thus it has some elements of a fantasy genre. In fantasy, an author is free to explore the “what ifs” of a storyline following his/her imagination.

Other fantasy stories your child may be familiar with are: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Hobbit*, *Lord of the Rings*, or *Harry Potter*.

### Writing

For your older student, choose one or more of the following writing assignments.

1) How would you describe Japan through the eyes of the crane?

Japan has "snow-peaked mountains, storms at sea, grassy plains and golden temples."

2) If you were to fly over your state, city or town like a bird, describe how that place might look.

3) Have them try their hand at writing fantasy. "And now my telling is over, though the story is far from done." Write a sequel to the story. Perhaps one of the origami animals in the story could come to life.

Possible story starter (based on the last illustration): "Little Oh and her brother ran across the bridge holding their origami cranes. A crane flew over them. Little Oh gave the crane a gentle toss, like one letting go of a paper airplane. It sailed a few feet and suddenly, it vanished. In its place was another live crane, flying through the air."

### Vocabulary

coaxing: to gain by gentle urging or flattery

nimble: agile; quick and light in motion

lacquer: a glossy clear coating

winsome: cheerful, pleasing

frolicked: to play about happily, romp

supple: limber, able to bend without breaking

helter-skelter: haphazardly, in disorder

lope: an easy, bounding manner of moving

careening: swaying from side to side

serenade: music sung or played as a compliment

unfurled: to unfold

terraced (fields): a leveled section of a hilly cultivated area, designed to slow or prevent the rapid run-off of irrigation water

### Lullabies

Every group of people in the world seems to have its own lullabies. In America probably the most famous lullaby goes like this:

"Rock a bye baby on the tree top,  
When the wind blows the cradle will rock,  
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,  
And down will come baby, cradle and all."  
-- Author Unknown

From Wikipedia:

A popular version of another well-known lullaby goes like this:

"Hush, little baby, don't say a word  
Mama's gonna buy you a mocking bird  
If that mocking bird don't sing  
Mama's gonna buy you a diamond ring  
If that diamond ring turns brass,  
Mama's gonna buy you a looking glass  
If that looking glass gets broke  
Mama's gonna buy you a billy goat

If that billy goat won't pull,  
Mama's gonna buy you a cart and bull  
If that cart and bull turn over,  
Mama's gonna buy you a dog named Rover  
If that dog named Rover won't bark,  
Mama's gonna buy you a horse and cart  
If that horse and cart fall down,  
You'll still be the sweetest little baby in town.”

Sing as many verses of this lullaby as you like. Alternatively, have your child sing to a doll. Can your child create a verse of their own to add?

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## ART

### Origami

Origami is a traditional Japanese pastime where a single square of paper is folded in different ways to create shapes such as animals or plants. Since it only takes a sheet of paper, the hobby can easily be enjoyed anywhere. Washi paper is often used.

The crane is the most famous origami figure. The Japanese view the crane as a symbol of long life and good fortune. Most Japanese people have made at least one in their life. According to Japanese belief, good health will result from folding a thousand origami cranes. If a person is very sick, his or her friends may decide to work together to fold a thousand cranes and string them on thread into long chains. They take them to the sick friend in hopes of easing the pain.

Find a book at the library that teaches the origami craft. (See the math lesson for creating a square from a rectangular piece of paper to get you started).

### Expressions

Look through the book at each of the illustrations of the mother and have your child describe which emotions shows on the woman's face, starting with the cover. LaMarche has painted some truly beautiful illustrations that are full of expression. Notice in the close-ups the reflection of light (white spots) in the eyes that make the illustrations come alive.

## Fans

Decorative folding fans are popular in Japan and are said to have been invented in Japan in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Some people have used large leaves or large bird feathers as fans. Today we also have electric and battery operated fans. The flat surface of the fan moves the air particles making us feel cooler. Although we can't see air, it takes up space and thus can be moved. Air is made up of atoms of mostly nitrogen and oxygen; atoms are the basic building blocks of all matter.

Take some origami paper and fold it into a fan. You may want to trim it into an oval shape. Attach a large popsicle stick for your own fan.

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## **APPLIED MATH**

### Symmetry

Observe the origami in the illustrations as well as any other books with origami that you come across. Note that many of them are symmetrical. Being symmetrical along a symmetry line means that one half of the figure is the mirror image of the other half. Imagine that you folded the figure along the symmetry line--both sides would exactly meet.

Have your child draw two very different triangles on a piece of paper and then ask them to draw a mirror image to them. To see if it is a mirror image fold the paper between the two images most of the way while peeking to see if the lines and points match up. Fold a piece of paper in half and paint one side of the paper (preferably acrylic type paint or poster paint). While the paint is still wet fold the paper along the fold again to create a mirror image. Both sides of the paper are now symmetrical.

### Geometry

Origami always starts with a square sheet of paper. Give your child a rectangular-shaped piece of paper. Next, show them how to make a square piece of paper from a rectangular piece of paper by folding one corner to the opposite side to form a triangle (with the edges lining up). Trim off the excess rectangle and open up to find your square. You are now ready to create an origami figure. See the art lesson for some links or design your own.



Next have your child take a square piece of paper and see if your child can find the symmetry line. Fold along it and then cut along the symmetry line so that you have two triangles. Take one of the triangles, fold down the tip and get a trapezoid!

If your child enjoys these exercises your child may enjoy trying to fold and cut other shapes.

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## SCIENCE

### Wood and Paper

Bamboo has many uses. Note the bamboo in various illustrations of the book – paint brushes, flute, basket handle, fence, trellis, tea pot handle, flag pole, bamboo cages.

Washi paper is likely the material shown in the illustrations of the room dividers, sliding doors, umbrella, and origami paper.

According to Wikipedia “Washi is generally tougher than ordinary paper made from wood pulp, and is used in many traditional arts. Washi is commonly made using fibers from the bark of the gampi tree, the mitsumata shrub, or the paper mulberry but also can be made using bamboo, hemp, rice, and wheat.” Other uses include clothing, toys and objects used in rituals.

### How is traditional paper made?

Thousands of years ago, the Egyptians used papyrus plant to make a sort of paper. Later, The Chinese are said to be the first to make paper more like we know it today. Although we have more sophisticated equipment today, the method hasn't changed much.

First, the bark is removed from the logs. The logs are cut into small pieces. The chipped wood and some chemicals are then added to a big pressure cooker and cooked to a pulp (like a slurry). Bleach is used to clean the pulp. The water is drained from the paper, the paper is pressed flat and a coating is added to make it smooth and glossy. The paper is then cut into sheets.

### Paper Project:

Why not try out these steps yourself? Here is a way to recycle paper while reviewing the steps to paper-making:

#### ***What You'll Need:***

A variety of pieces of scrap paper

Bleach

Water

Blender

Two large buckets

A large strainer – (you can make this by covering a frame with nylon netting)

Newspapers to dry your paper on

#### Directions:

Tear the scrap paper into small pieces and place into your bucket.

Add enough warm water to cover the paper and a tablespoon of bleach. Let soak at least 30 minutes.

Next, place about one cup of soaked paper into the blender. Add two more cups of bleach water into the blender, too. Add more water and a splash of bleach if necessary. Blend this paper and water mixture on high until you have slurry. Pour the slurry into the second bucket and repeat this process until all of the paper has been blended.

Take your screen and scoop out some of the slurry onto it, straining out the water.

Lay in thick layers onto newspapers to dry. Let dry at least 4 days or until completely dry.

### Health: Antioxidants

Green tea has been found to contain antioxidants. An antioxidant is a substance that may protect cells from the damage caused by unstable molecules known as free radicals. Free radical damage may lead to cancer. Antioxidants interact with and stabilize free radicals and may prevent some of the damage free radicals otherwise might cause. Find some green tea bags and steep four them for a while in some water. Add enough water to make a half gallon and chill. If desired, you could add some honey

Antioxidants are found in a number of fruits and vegetables, as well as in other foods including nuts, grains and some meats, poultry and fish.

It is recommended that we get at least five servings a day of fruits and vegetables for optimum health. Take this opportunity to encourage healthy food habits in your child. Make a fruit and veggie checklist for your child to keep a record of the fruits and vegetables he eats each day for a week. Strive for five servings a day with as much variety as possible. Your older student should write in the name of the fruit/vegetable eaten; your younger child can apply a sticker for each one. Repeat this activity from time to time to remind them of the importance of nutrition for good health.

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