



Japan: O-Bon Festival

Pre-visit Activity: Background Reading

Japan is an island country on the continent of Asia. Japan has more than 3,000 islands stretching for 1,864 miles from north to south. Japan is about the size of the state of California. When you look on a map you will see that Japan is shaped like a seahorse.

Japan is located in the part of the world called the "Ring of Fire," where there are many hot springs, earthquakes, and volcanoes. This means most of the island is covered by mountains. Mt. Fuji is Japan's tallest mountain. The geography of a place affects the culture or the way of life of the people who live in that place. Celebrations are one part of culture.

O-bon is a very special celebration in Japan. Many people travel back to their hometowns for a 3-day family reunion. A '*welcoming fire*' is lit outside the doorway of the home. This fire is meant to light the way for the ancestors' spirits to return to the world of the living. Fruits, vegetables, rice and flowers are placed at a family altar. Three days later a '*sending-off*' fire is lit to guide the ancestors back to the world of the spirits.

People enjoy being with their families during O-bon. At night they go to the middle of town or to a Buddhist temple. Lanterns are hung on a stage where musicians play drums, gongs, and flutes. People gather to perform a traditional dance called Bon-Odori. Vendors sell food, toys, and souvenirs at the festival. It is great fun!

Source: <http://www.globalroadwarrior.com/#mode=country®ionId=75&uri=country-content&nid=20.38&key=facts-holidays>





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Pre-visit Activity: Background Reading Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Japan is a group of _____ shaped like a seahorse.
2. Japan is located in a part of the world called the _____ where there are many earthquakes and volcanoes.
3. Culture is the way of _____ for a group of people.
4. _____ is an important holiday in Japan because families get together to remember their _____.
5. A fire is lit outside the _____ of the home to welcome and guide their ancestors back home.

Draw a picture of what families do in town at night to celebrate O-Bon





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Pre-visit Activity: Background Reading **KEY**

1. Japan is a group of **islands** shaped like a seahorse.
2. Japan is located in a part of the world called the **Ring of Fire** where there are earthquakes and volcanoes.
3. Culture is the way of **life** for a group of people.
4. **O-Bon** is an important holiday in Japan because families get together to remember their **ancestors**.
5. A fire is lit outside the **doorway** of the home to welcome and guide their ancestors back home.

Draw a picture of what families do in town at night to celebrate O-Bon

