



## Japan: O-Bon Festival

### Post-visit Activity: Quick Write

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose one of the two topics to complete a Quick Write about the O-bon Festival. Use the words found in the word bank.

1. Describe O-Bon from an invited ancestor's point of view.
2. Summarize what you learned about the Japanese celebration of O-Bon.

festival

ancestor

reunion

relative

yagura (stage)

circle

taiko drums

Buddhist

yukata (kimono)

fruits

vegetables

rice

Bon-Odori (dance)

altar

river

lantern

mukae-bi (welcoming fire)

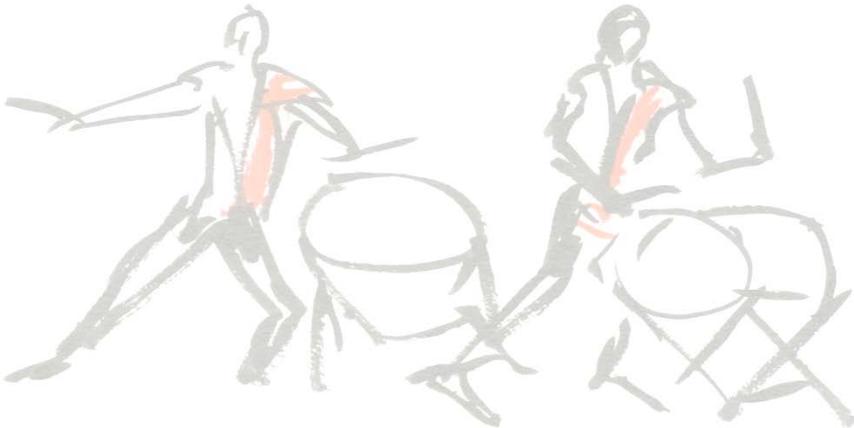
spirits

gravesite

okuri-bi (sending-off fire)

flowers

O-Bon





## Japan: O-Bon Festival

### Post-visit Activity: Quick Write **KEY**

Information included in the student Quick Write should include some of the following:

**O-Bon**, a centuries-old **Buddhist** memorial **festival**, is a time to pay respects to one's **ancestors**. The most important family gathering, O-Bon is celebrated during the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar which coincides with August.

O-Bon is both serious and festive. Families travel back to their hometowns for a 3-day **reunion** with their living **relatives** as well as the **spirits** of the deceased. To start the celebration a **mukae-bi** (welcoming fire) is lit at the entrance to the home. It is meant to light the way for the ancestors' spirits to return to the world of the living. People also visit and clean their ancestors' **gravesites** to welcome the spirits back. They offer **fruits, vegetables, rice, and flowers** at a family **altar**. Sometimes the local Buddhist priest visits. Then three days later, an **okuri-bi** (sending-off fire) is lit to guide the ancestors back to the world of the spirits. In some regions of Japan people send off their ancestor's spirits using a **lantern** which is floated down a **river** to the ocean.

The more festive side of things occurs during the evening. Families go to the village center or local Buddhist temple, where something like a big carnival takes place. There is music and dancing. Vendors sell food, toys, and souvenirs. Family members usually wear a **yukata**, which is a lightweight cotton kimono. During these O-Bon evenings a special community dance, called **Bon-Odori**, is performed at the festival. Everyone participates – from grandparents to little kids. They all form a **circle** around a raised **yagura** stage decorated with lanterns. It is set up for musicians who play Japanese **taiko drums**, gongs, and flutes. Everyone sings and claps their hands to the steps of the dance as they go round and round the yagura.

