

Make a 7-5-3 Day Candy Bag

七五三

KYO NO MACHIYA ACTIVITIES



Learn about the *Shichi-Go-San* (7-5-3) festival in Japan and create a *Chitose-ame* (Thousand-year) candy bag.

1. Learn about *Shichi-Go-San*

Shichi-Go-San is a special day to celebrate three-year-old boys and girls, five-year-old boys, and seven-year-old girls. *Shichi* means seven, *go* means five, and *san* means three, so *Shichi-Go-San* literally means 7-5-3. On November 15th, or the closest weekend, children dress up in traditional or other fancy clothing and visit neighborhood shrines with their parents to give thanks for their health and happiness and to pray for continued health and happiness in the future. Parents also buy *chitose-ame* for their children when they visit the shrine. *Chitose-ame* are very long pink-and-white candy sticks, and when parents buy them for their children, they wish for their lives to be long and sweet, like the candy. The candy bags are often decorated with cranes and turtles, which are symbols of good luck, happiness and longevity.

The *Shichi-Go-San* tradition evolved from three ancient rites of passage. At the age of three, boys and girls stopped getting their heads shaved and began to grow their hair long; at the age of five boys were allowed to wear *hakama* (traditional male *kimono* pants); and at the age of seven, girls started to tie their *kimono* with *obi* instead of string. Nowadays, Japanese children no longer participate in these types of formal ceremonies, but the holiday remains.

TIME:

20 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Candy bag activity sheet
- Markers, crayons or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Scotch tape or glue

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Shichi-Go-San:

She-chee-go-sa-n

Chitose-ame:

Chee-toe-say-ah-may

Hakama: *Ha-kah-mah*

Kimono: *Key-moe-no*

Obi: *Oh-bee*

2. Make Your Own *Chitose-ame* Bag

1. Color the bag.
2. Color the handle red—red is a lucky color in Japan, and these handles are always red.
3. Cut out the bag and handle.
4. Fold the bag along the dotted lines.
5. Tape the back and the bottom of the bag.
6. Tape the handle to the top of the bag.



3. Things to Talk about

- Cranes and turtles are the symbol of a happy, long life in Japan; what animals represent long life in your culture? What other characteristics do animals represent?
- When you turn a certain age can you do something new? Are there special ages in your culture? Is there an age when you get to wear something special?
- Are there any special days on which you and your family celebrate your growth and happiness? For example, birthday and graduation days.





On *Shichi-Go-San*, parents would buy *chitose-ame* (1000-year candy)—long pink-and-white candy sticks for their children. They wish for their children's lives to be long and sweet, like the candy. The candy bags are often decorated with cranes and turtles, which are symbols of good luck, happiness and longevity.

