

LESSON NOTES

Japanese Children's Songs #6

Koinobori

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KANJI

1. 屋根より高い こいのぼり
2. 大きいまごいは お父さん
3. 小さいひごいは 子供たち
4. おもしろそうに 泳いでる

KANA

1. やねよりたかい こいのぼり
2. おおきいまごいは おとうさん
3. ちいさいひごいは こどもたち
4. おもしろそうに およいでる

ROMANIZATION

1. Yane yori takai koinobori
2. Ōkii magoi wa o-tō-san
3. Chiisai higo wa kodomo-tachi
4. Omoshirosō ni oyoide ru

ENGLISH

CONT'D OVER

1. Hoisted high above the roof tops are the carp-streamers.
2. The big, black carp up there - that one is the father.
3. See the smaller red carp there? They are his children.
4. See all of them swimming in the sky, so merrily.

VOCABULARY

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
屋根	やね	yane	roof
真鯉	まごい	magoi	black carp
泳ぐ	およぐ	oyogu	to swim
お父さん	おとうさん	o-tō-san	father
子供達	こどもたち	kodomotachi	children

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>弘之は三歳のとき屋根から落ちた。 <i>Hiroyuki wa 3-sai no toki yane kara ochita.</i></p> <p>Hiroyuki fell off the roof when he was three years old.</p>	<p>昨日、川で大きな真鯉を釣りました。 <i>Kinō, kawa de ōki na magoi o tsurimashita.</i></p> <p>I caught a big black carp in the river yesterday.</p>
<p>イルカが群れで泳いでいます。 <i>Iruka ga mure de oyoide imasu.</i></p> <p>The dolphins are swimming in schools.</p>	<p>お父さんはお元気ですか。 <i>O-tō-san wa o-genki desu ka.</i></p> <p>How's your father?</p>
<p>子供達は裏庭で遊んでいます。 <i>Kodomotachi wa uraniwa de asonde imasu.</i></p> <p>The children are playing in the back garden.</p>	

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Japanese Children's Song *Koinobori*.

The theme of this song is *koinobori*, which are carp streamers put out for decoration on the fifth day of May (Children's Day) every year. These days, the fifth of May is known as Children's Day, but originally it was a day where people celebrated the growth of their sons and prayed for their success in life. These *koinobori* are long streamers in the shape of a carp. In the Edo Period, people decorated their yards with these *koinobori*, with the wish that their sons would advance in the world with the grace of a carp. In China, there is a legend that says that although many kinds of fish tried to make their way up a waterfall, only the carp managed to do it. According to the legend, these carp turned into a dragon, which is why carp have come to symbolize success in life.

In the Edo Era, only *koinobori* of "black carp" known as *magoi* were flown, but starting with the Meiji Era, "red carp" known as *higo* were also put out for decoration. In the Showa Era, blue and green *koinobori* have also started to be flown alongside the others.

This song was chosen as one of the One Hundred Songs of Japan in 2007. The One Hundred Songs of Japan is comprised of nursery songs and folk songs that were chosen as songs that the Japanese want to pass on for many generations.

屋根より高い こいのぼり

The literal translation of this line is "the carp streamers that are higher than the rooftops." *Yane* (屋根) means "roof." *Yori* is a particle we use to compare two different objects. We usually use it in the sentence structure *A wa B yori X*, which means "A is X-er than B." In this case, it's comparing the height of the *yane* ("roof") and the *koinobori* ("carp streamers"), and we can rephrase it as *koinobori wa yane yori takai* (こいのぼりは屋根より高い), which means "the carp streamers are higher than the rooftops." But, in this case, the phrase *yane yori takai* is modifying *koinobori* and it means "the carp streamers that are higher than the rooftops."

大きいまごいは お父さん

This is the basic sentence structure *A wa B desu*. But, in this case, we omit *desu*. So this line means "The big, black carp is the father." *Magoi* is "a black carp," and among the carp streamers, the black one is the biggest and it flies above the others.

小さいひごいは 子供たち

This is the same sentence structure as *大きいまごいはお父さん* and it means "the small

red carps are his children." *Higo* means "a red carp."

おもしろそうに 泳いでる

This literally means "they are swimming and look happy." *Sō ni* is an adverbial form of *sōda*, which is an auxiliary adjective that expresses a guess that the speaker makes about something. It is usually based on what the speaker sees, feels, or hears. So, in this case, the songwriter saw the carp streamers flapping in the wind and felt that they looked like they were swimming and having fun.

When *sōda* comes after an *i* adjective, we omit the final *-i*. So, *omoshiroi* drops the final *-i* and then is followed by *-sō*. All together, you have *omoshirosō da*. Its adverbial form would be *omoshirosō ni*.