

Art & Design: The Tokyo Traveler's Bento Box

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will become "Food Architects" as they design and build a 3D model of a Japanese Bento Box. Inspired by a hypothetical trip to Tokyo for **Bekkiboo123**, students will learn about Japanese aesthetics, the "Rule of Five" in food presentation, and how to translate travel landmarks into edible art forms using mixed media.

Materials Needed

- A shallow box (a shoebox lid, a clean plastic food container, or a cardboard tray)
- Colorful construction paper or cardstock
- Tissue paper (various colors)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Scissors and non-toxic glue (or glue sticks)
- Found objects for texture (cotton balls, yarn, buttons, or clean recycled plastic)
- Optional: Aluminum foil or cupcake liners for dividers

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Explain the "Rule of Five" (Goshiki) used in Japanese food presentation.
- Translate 2D travel concepts (Tokyo landmarks) into 3D artistic shapes.
- Construct a balanced visual composition using color, texture, and form.

1. Introduction: The Hook & The "Rule of Five"

The Hook: Imagine you just hopped off the Shinkansen (bullet train) at Tokyo Station. You are hungry, so you head to a *Depachika*—a massive underground food hall. You see rows of "Bento Boxes" that look like tiny pieces of art! In Japan, people believe we "eat with our eyes" first. Today, you are designing a special Tokyo-themed Bento for Bekkiboo123's big trip!

The "Rule of Five" (Goshiki): To make a bento look delicious and healthy, Japanese artists try to include five colors:

1. **Red/Orange:** (Energy - like carrots or salmon)
2. **Yellow:** (Sunshine - like tamagoyaki omelet or corn)
3. **Green:** (Freshness - like broccoli or edamame)
4. **Black/Dark:** (Earthiness - like seaweed/nori or mushrooms)
5. **White:** (Cleanliness - like fluffy rice)

2. Body: The "I Do, We Do, You Do" Model

Step 1: Planning the Menu (I Do/We Do)

Watch as I think about Tokyo. If I visit **Tokyo Tower**, it is tall and red. How could I make that out of food? Maybe a red pepper slice or a strawberry! If I visit **Shibuya Crossing**, the black and white stripes look like nori (seaweed) on white rice.

Activity: Let's brainstorm together! Pick three things Bekkiboo123 might see in Tokyo. How can we turn them into "food"?

- *Example:* Mt. Fuji = A triangular rice ball (Onigiri) with a "snowy" salt cap.
- *Example:* Cherry Blossoms = Pink ginger or ham cut into flower shapes.

Step 2: Constructing the "Food" (You Do)

Now, it's time to build! Use your materials to create the components of your bento.

- **Rice:** Use crumpled white tissue paper or cotton balls to create "rice" textures.
- **Protein/Main:** Cut cardboard or cardstock into shapes for "sushi," "tofu," or "pork cutlets."
- **Vegetables:** Use green yarn for noodles or green paper for "grass dividers" (Baran).
- **The Detail:** Use markers to draw "Kawaii" (cute) faces on your food items—a Tokyo specialty!

Step 3: The Arrangement (You Do)

Place your items in your box. Remember: **A bento should be packed tight!** In Japan, a bento shouldn't have gaps so the food doesn't slide around while you're traveling on the train. Use cupcake liners or foil to create "compartments."

3. Conclusion: The Grand Reveal

Recap: Review the five colors. Ask: "Which color was the hardest to find? How does your bento represent a trip to Tokyo?"

Bento Presentation: Have the student present their box. They should explain:

1. Which Tokyo landmark inspired each "food" item.
2. How they used the "Rule of Five" to make it look appetizing.

Success Criteria

- The bento box contains at least 3 different "food" items inspired by Tokyo.
- All 5 colors of the "Rule of Five" are represented.
- The box is "packed tight" with no large empty spaces.
- The student can explain the connection between their art and Tokyo travel.

Adaptations & Extensions

- **For Younger/Struggling Learners:** Focus on just the 5 colors rather than specific Tokyo landmarks. Provide pre-cut circles and squares.
- **For Advanced Learners:** Research "Kyaryaben" (character bento) and attempt to create a 3D paper version of a specific character (like Pikachu or Hello Kitty) within the bento.
- **Digital Extension:** Use a tablet to take a "food blogger" style photo of the creation and write a caption for Bekkiboo123's imaginary travel blog.