CLOCKSHOP’S 4TH ANNUAL
Community & Unity People’s Kite Festival

Kite Activity & Resource Guide
for K–6 Teachers
INTRODUCTION

Kites traverse boundaries. They can soar over national borders and are important symbols of cultural heritage. The theme of this year’s Community and Unity People’s Kite Festival, hosted by Clockshop, is celebrating multicultural kite traditions. We hope that this resource guide can enrich the work you’re already doing in your classroom to inspire curiosity about a wide range of academic subjects and a deep sense of care for the wide world we belong to.

Kites have much to teach us, whether we approach them through the lens of history, science, literature, art, or mathematics — or all of the above. The study of kites invites opportunities for joyful, hands-on exploration; meaningful social-emotional learning; and the focused deepening of academic skills. This activity and resource guide is a collection of kite-related offerings for you to explore and adapt, in combination or individually, with your students in the run-up to Clockshop’s fourth annual Community and Unity People’s Kite Festival on May 11, 2024. We hope to see you there—happy flying!
ABOUT CLOCKSHOP

Clockshop works with artists to deepen the connection between communities and public land, in order to build a shared vision of a future based in belonging and care.

As a Los Angeles-based arts and culture nonprofit, Clockshop produces free public programming and commissions contemporary artist projects on public land to better connect Angelenos to the land we live on. We address the climate crisis as a cultural problem that requires equitable cultural solutions. Through long-term collaborations with artists, like-minded partners, and local stakeholders, Clockshop promotes ecological stewardship and climate resilience among the communities we serve.

Our projects center working-class communities of color in Los Angeles and aim to support the wellbeing and vitality of multiple communities. Whether Indigenous, African American, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or immigrants living in LA, we shape the city’s future together.

THE KITE FESTIVAL

Every Spring, Clockshop hosts the Community and Unity People’s Kite Festival. This all-ages, family-friendly cultural festival brings together diverse communities in Los Angeles through the art of kites and a day of joyful connection in this important public green space. Clockshop invites attendees to participate in free arts workshops, enjoy live music, and meet local community organizations to learn about their nearby efforts. The Kite Festival is designed as a celebration to honor the communities surrounding Los Angeles State Historic Park that fought for and steward this public parkland, recognizing their resilience, cultural histories, and aspirations.
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GETTING STARTED

The activities below can be adapted to engage and challenge almost any grade level, K-8, though some may be more appropriate for older students and some for younger grades. Use your discretion to pick and choose, and modify activities for your particular group of learners and the standards you are focusing on.

For any grade level, but especially for younger students, Catch the Wind by Gail Gibbons is an excellent entry point to kite exploration. It is a sweet, straightforward book, perfect for building context and vocabulary. Use this story to lay the groundwork for deeper and more varied kite-related learning to come!

SOCIAL STUDIES & GEOGRAPHY

RESEARCHING KITES AROUND THE WORLD

Kites have been flown in countries around the world for millennia, originating in China or Malaysia and eventually traveling along routes of trade, conquest, and migration around the globe. Kites have been used for hunting and fishing, religious purposes, warfare, scientific discovery, and of course, recreation. Different countries and cultures have developed kite traditions that are entirely their own.

Support students in choosing a location and researching the cultural role that kites play there. Students can work alone or in groups and report back in written form or visual presentation. Encourage students to learn how to say “kite” in the language of their chosen region!

The following places have particularly deep and enduring kite traditions that would be ripe for deep research:

- Bermuda
- China
- Japan
- Bali
- Korea
- Guatemala
- Afghanistan
- Polynesia
- Malaysia
- Guyana

BORDER STORIES

Read Between Us and Abuela: A Family Story from the Border by Mitali Perkins. In this story, kites take on deep emotional and political significance, as the young main characters use a kite to transport a gift to their grandmother on the far side of the US-Mexico border wall. This story can be a jumping off point for a number of discussions or projects, and the

A NOTE ON ACCESSING RESOURCES: Most of the children's books mentioned below are available as rentable PDFs for free with an account at the Internet Archive (archive.org) and/or as YouTube read-alouds. Otherwise, find them in your school or local public library. In the appendix, you will find links to all referenced materials.
author, Mitali Perkins, has put together this guide with resources for discussing many of the topics the story brings up.

You might use this book as an entry point into discussions about migration and borders in alignment with California Common Core history and social science standards. Students can learn or share stories of movement and migration, study the history of border walls and the historical mutability of national boundaries, and freedom-dream about a world without borders.

This book also offers space to reflect on important relationships with relatives. Students can reflect on loved ones who might live far away and draw pictures for them, like the one that Juan makes in the book for his abuela.

**MATH**

**EXTRA! EXTRA! BUILD A NEWSPAPER KITE**

Older elementary students can work together to build functional kites out of newspaper, string, and tape, following the instructions in this New York Times tutorial. This project requires careful measuring and will deepen students' understanding of geometry and its relevance to daily life.

**KITE GEOMETRY**

Kites are wonderful objects of study for a geometry unit. Students can study traditional kites and kite shapes, measure a kite's perimeter in inches and centimeters, and discuss angles (acute vs. obtuse vs. right), symmetry, and the shapes (triangles, diamonds) that are hidden within.
SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

HOW DOES WIND WORK?

Begin with a discussion about wind. An inspiring prompt to start this conversation is A.A. Milne's charming poem “Wind on the Hill.” Some questions you might ask, depending on students’ age and background knowledge, are:

What is wind?
How do you know when it’s windy?
Where do you think wind comes from?
Why is it windy on some days, and not on others? How many words for wind can we think of?
(e.g. breeze, gust, gale, zephyr, draft)

Next, read the book Feel the Wind by Arthur Dorros and/or watch this video about the science of wind. Using the step-by-step instructions in the book, or these, make a weathervane out of simple materials to measure wind direction.

KITE PHYSICS

Study how a kite works by using any of these resources to support your instruction. Then students can build simple “bumblebee” kites (doable for students as young as first grade or kindergarten with teacher support) by following these instructions. (It can be fun to reserve some time to decorate the sheet of paper first). Spend 10 to 20 minutes flying bumblebee kites outside, then challenge students to explain what they observed, using the following vocabulary: lift, drag, thrust, and angle of attack.

ELECTRIC INVENTIONS

Before reading How Ben Franklin Stole the Lightning by Rosalyn Schanzer, ask students to consider: What is one surprising way you could use a kite to solve a problem? Students can write about and illustrate their idea, then share in partners or with the full group. After this exercise, read the book aloud to discover Benjamin Franklin's ingenious idea to use a kite to study the way electricity works. Fourth grade NGSS standard 4-PS3 encourages a deeper study of electricity. Fourth grade teachers may use this story as a jumping off point for a larger unit on energy and electricity.
I’M A KITE!—WRITING PERSONA POEMS

If students haven’t yet had the chance to fly a kite themselves, begin by sharing some videos of kites flying. Afterwards, invite students to discuss what they noticed. Explain that students will be writing a “persona poem” — a poem written from the perspective of someone (or something) besides themselves. Read and discuss the poem “Paper Dreams” by Bobbi Katz, focusing on the poem’s content and perspective, as well as its form (line breaks, word choice). Then, invite students to quietly meditate on what it might be like to be a kite — waiting to fly or flying, or getting lost or tangled. What would they, as a kite, see, smell, feel, think? After this meditation, students can write their own poems from the perspective of a kite. Bind them together to make a class book!

KEEPING STORIES ALIVE

In the story The Best Winds, written by Laura E. Williams and illustrated by Eujin Kim Neilan, Jinho learns the importance of listening deeply to elders’ advice and stories (in this case, a story about kites!). Ask students to interview a family member (ideally two generations removed, but a parent or other caregiver is great, too) about a story from their youth, listening closely. In class or for homework, students will write the story and create a corresponding drawing, retelling and illustrating it so that its wisdom can continue on across time.

SYMBOLS OF SELF

Artist Grace Lin wrote a beautiful, brief book called Kite Flying. In the author’s note at the close of the book, Lin writes, “each shape symboliz[es] traits that the person flying the kite wished to possess. The dragon kite, for example, symbolizes wealth, wisdom, and power.” Discuss the meaning of the word “symbolic,” and then invite students to design a kite inspired by an animal that is symbolic of traits that they hope to embody.

CLOSE LOOKING

Discussing art serves numerous purposes in the classroom: helping students who are learning English to develop their syntax and vocabulary, deepening critical thinking skills, and opening up discussions about history, culture, and social relationships. Open-ended conversations centered around the iterative questions, “What is going on in this picture?” “What do you see that makes you say that?” and “What more can we find?” are deeply motivating and enriching for students at all levels of academic achievement (see Visual Thinking Strategies for more guidance on how to facilitate these discussions). Select one or more of the images below and facilitate a discussion based on their noticings, wonderings, and ideas inspired by what they see.
Francisco Goya

La Cometa
(1777)

Katsushika Hokusai

A Sketch of the Mitsui shop in Suruga street in Edo
(1850)

Justus de Gelder

Boys Flying Kites
(17th century)
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

COPING STRATEGIES - BIG TOOLS FOR BIG FEELINGS

Read the story *Kite Day, A Bear and Mole Story* by Will Hillenbrand. Ask students: Have you ever worked very hard on something and had it go wrong? How did you feel? What did you do? What could you do next time?

After reading the story, work together to discuss coping strategies (tools or tactics that can help us regulate our big feelings), brainstorming them on the board (e.g., taking deep breaths, reading a book, drawing a picture, moving your body, etc.). Send students off with a notecard and colored pencils to illustrate one coping strategy that works well for them. Glue these to a large anchor chart and post it somewhere prominent in the classroom to serve as a visual resource for students to use when they’re feeling overwhelmed or frustrated.

PROBLEM SOLVING - STICKY SITUATIONS

Oliver Jeffers’ delightful, hilarious book *Stuck* catalogs one child’s wild and unusual attempts to solve a not-so-unusual problem: his kite is stuck in a tree. Read this story aloud and discuss Floyd’s problem solving attempt and other potential solutions he could have tried. Then, invite students to discuss or write about a time when they solved a tricky problem and the steps they took that led to success.

TEAMWORK - MAKING THE DREAM WORK

Read *The Kite Festival* by Leyla Torres, and discuss what teamwork looks like for the Flóres family as they work together to build an unlikely kite. After the discussion, break students into groups of four or five and challenge them to accomplish a feat of teamwork themselves: the no-hands cup-stacking challenge.

Feel free to adjust the number of cups, the number of team members, and the desired final result to adjust the difficulty level according to your group’s skills and needs. (This activity is recommended for students in grades 3 and up; for younger grades, another collaborative activity may be more appropriate). After the activity comes to a close, discuss:

- What was your plan to solve this problem?
- Why was teamwork so important for this activity?
- Did you or a teammate feel frustrated during the activity? What did you do about it?
- What did you do to support your team?
- What did another team member do that helped the group?
- How can you use what you learned during this challenge in other situations in the future?
APPENDIX

Here is a list of all of the children’s books mentioned in the prompts above:

- Catch the Wind by Gail Gibbons
- Between Us and Abuela: A Family Story from the Border by Mitali Perkins
- Feel the Wind by Arthur Dorros
- How Ben Franklin Stole the Lightning by Rosalyn Schanzer
- The Best Winds by Laura E. Williams
- Kite Flying by Grace Lin
- Kite Day, A Bear and Mole Story by Will Hillenbrand
- Stuck by Oliver Jeffers
- The Kite Festival by Leyla Torres

And here are some additional kite-related resources:

- Bridge Kite Shop sells wonderful, high-quality kites and kite kits that are great to assemble and decorate in a classroom setting
- Kitesintheclassroom.com is packed with helpful resources on kite-making, kite safety, and other kite-related topics
- Whole Child Homeschool put together a comprehensive kite unit with engaging activities for students from preschool through high school
- The American Kitefliers Association put together this comprehensive guide to teaching about kites
- Drachenkite.com is a comprehensive archive of all things kite, complete with news stories, images, videos, kite-making instructions, and numerous lesson plans

Links referred to throughout the activity book:

1. About—Clockshop: https://clockshop.org/about/
2. Clockshop’s Community & Unity People’s Kite Festival: https://clockshop.org/project/clockshops-kite-festival/
3. Catch The Wind: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-UZHNa0J88
4. Between Us and Abuela: A Family Story from the Border: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeULnqJ8zaM
8. Feel the Wind: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBbg3ZAWXM
10. Weathervane Instructions: https://www.amnh.org/explore/earth/make-your-own-weather-station/make-a-wind-vane
11. How a Kite Works: https://airandspace.si.edu/stories/editorial/how-kites-fly
13. How Ben Franklin Stole the Lightning: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WudCkHmwe2s
15. The Best Winds: https://archive.org/details/bestwinds00will
16. Kite Flying: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ae9R9QH2IKc
17. Visual Thinking Strategies: https://vtshome.org/research/
18. Kite Day, A Bear and Mole Story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JY8LV6KJ5Q
20. The Kite Festival: https://archive.org/details/kitefestival0000torr
22. Kites in the Classroom—Resources: https://www.kitesintheclassroom.com/resources/