

Key Creations / Kaylie Kreatrix

KIMIKO - STUDY GUIDE



Created and Performed by Kaylie Kreatrix
Directed by Graham Cuthbertson

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Kimiko

This award-winning one-woman circus and story telling show explores the difficult history of Japanese-Canadians and the self discovery that comes with exploring one's heritage. A work of physical theatre that includes dance, puppetry, circus and more, Kimiko is a celebration of Japanese arts and culture. Not only will audience members learn about institutionalized racism, and how that trauma affects generations, they will have a new appreciation for Japanese arts, and they will experience some outstanding circus skills. Learning, laughing, and seeing something new are the three goals of this performance.

Kaylie Kreatrix / Key Creations

Key Creations is a company founded by Kaylie Kreatrix. Key Creations specializes in creating unique experiences of performing arts through the fusion of circus, storytelling, puppetry, dance, and other physical theatre. Key Creations has created and produced two theatre shows, 'Kimiko' and 'Kitsune' – both are performances that explore Japanese culture.



Artist Biography

Kaylie Kreatrix (Hatashita) was born and raised in Ottawa, and first started to learn circus arts at the age of 20. She travelled the world learning, teaching, and performing various circus skills. She eventually studied sword swallowing in Arizona and is now one of four professional sword swallowers in Canada. Kaylie has spent the last 4 years learning about her Japanese heritage, and creating performances that fuse her love for circus and her love for Japanese culture. Kaylie has

won multiple awards for her performances including 'Jury's Choice Award', 'Best of Fest', and 'Outstanding Production'. She has also been the recipient of multiple grants from the Canada Art Council and the City of Ottawa.

Program Context

Kimiko is an educational performance at its core, making sure to introduce new words and concepts without assuming the audience knows. During the performance we will touch on many different subjects that are linked to Japanese-Canadian history. Here is a list of subjects that will come up during Kimiko:

- The journey of self discoveries
- Japanese-Canadian internment during WWII
- Living as a bi-racial person
- Finding belonging in a culture
- Fan dancing
- Kimono dressing
- Folding origami cranes and Sadako Sasaki; the girl who popularized it
- The dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan
- Shintoism (Japan's original religion)
- Dragons and what they symbolize
- The art of balancing objects

Japanese words that will be introduced during Kimiko:

- Buugeng: Buu = Martial Arts / Geng = Illusion, S shaped objects that create an illusionary effect when manipulated with skill
- Shinto: the original native 'religion' of Japan
- Kami: sacred spirits and deities of Shinto beliefs
- Origami: the art of folding paper to create 3D shapes
- Kimono: traditional Japanese clothing, both formal and informal
- Obi: the long belts that tie kimono
- Edo Daikagura: an ancient art of balancing and juggling traditional household objects

Pre-Program Learning

[Many can also be done post-program]

1. Talk about what the students expect to see and do when they experience the program
2. Discussion questions that the teacher can prompt beforehand
3. Classroom activities that relate to the program
4. Some specific elements for students to watch/listen for during the performance
5. Examples of questions the students can ask the performer

1. Student Expectations:

- Who has watched a play before? What was it like? Do we think this will be similar?
- Who has seen the circus before? What was it like? Do we think this will be similar?
- What do we know about Japanese culture? Do you think that will be mentioned?

2. Potential discussion questions:

Japanese Culture:

- Has anyone visited Japan?
- Does anyone know any Japanese words? (sushi, kimono, origami...)
- Are there any aspects of Japanese culture anyone appreciates? (Anime, samurai, zen....)
- What is the Japanese flag? Do you know the history of the flag? Japan is referred to as the land of the rising sun. The flag represents the sun. Learn more about the Japanese flag [HERE](#).

Japanese Canadians:

- How many times can Japan fit into Ontario? (2.8 times)
Into Canada? (26 times)
- How many people of Japanese descent are currently in Canada? (roughly 130,000 or 0.36% of Canada's total population)
- Can we imagine moving across the world to a country you never visited? What would that be like?
- What are some reasons that people would want to move to Canada?
- Where can we experience Japanese culture here in Canada?
- What can we learn from other cultures?

- Are other cultures still relevant to us even if we aren't from there?

Japan during WWII:

- What role did Japan play in WWII? Whose side were they on?
- What do we know about the Japanese-Canadian internments? What are some other examples of unjust internments?
- What do you know about the atomic bomb? What was the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Japan? How many people died?

3. Potential classroom activities:

1. Learning to fold an origami paper crane is super relevant for this performance. It will be done onstage, and it's symbolism talked about.

Students can fold a paper crane using any square piece of paper.

It can be learned on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyC7pkT-dE0>

2. Trying to balance an object will give students a better understanding of the difficulty involved during the show. Any long object can be balanced, some accessible ones are: rulers, newspaper crumpled into long tube, a stick, a peacock feather. The longer the object the easier it is to balance.

Steps to try balancing:

- place object on your hand
- Keep staring at the top point of the object (this is crucial). Do not stare at your hand.
- When the object starts to fall, move your hand to catch it.
- If this is easy, try balancing the object on your chin or forehead.

This can also be learned on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_i_8rL-ak0

4. Some specific elements to listen for during the performance:

- The Japanese words previously mentioned.
- The name of the Japanese girl who folded 1,000 paper cranes (Sadako Sasaki)
- What did she wish for? (Peace on earth)
- What do dragons symbolize in Japanese culture? (Water)
- Can you listen for different Japanese instruments? Can you hear the Taiko drumming?

5. Examples of Questions the students can ask the performer:

- Have you ever been to Japan?
- What do you like about Japanese culture?
- What does your family think about the show?
- How did you learn to juggle, balance objects, and swallow a sword?
- Is the sword real?
- Where does sword swallowing originate from?
- How many people can swallow swords?
- How long did I practice these skills?
- What is the hardest part of the show?
- What is the most fun part of the show?



Post-Program Learning

1. Open-ended questions or prompts to get students to talk about their overall reaction to the performance, the elements of the art form, and connections to their own lives.
2. Activities and / or resources for continued learning

1. Open ended questions for further reflection:

- What did we learn about Japanese Culture?
- What did we learn about Canadian history?
- Did we see anything we had never seen before?
- Was there a part of the show that surprised us?
- What emotions did we experience during the show? Why?
- What other examples of racism can we see in our lives? In Canadian history? Globally?

If it is Asian Heritage Month:

- Why is it important to have dedicated time for Asian Heritage?
- What other Asian cultures have we studied?
- Was there anything in this performance that reminded us of a different Asian culture?

2. Activities for continued learning:

History: Create a family tree, where did your ancestors come from? Do we have photos of them?

Geography: What are some cultures and practices of students in the classroom? Where did they originate from?

Art: Design a pattern for a kimono, learn to fold a paper crane

Music: Learn about taiko drumming, and other unique Japanese instruments.

Gym: Learn to balance and object or to juggle.

Religion: Learn about Shintoism and its similarities to other native religions

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