

# My Daruma Doll

(Art Lesson Recreated by Ashley A. Jones)



*Art project inspired by a Japanese symbol of perseverance & good luck*

*Middle School & High School (art + social studies)*

## **Objective:**

In this lesson, students will delve into Japanese culture, specifically exploring the cultural importance of Daruma dolls. Subsequently, they will engage in a hands-on activity, crafting their personalized Daruma doll using a plastic egg as the base and covering it with instant paper mache. This creative endeavor aims to seamlessly integrate elements of personal goal-setting and cultural understanding into the artistic process, fostering a deeper connection to both the craft and the broader cultural context.

## **Background:**

The captivating tale behind the Daruma doll, a Japanese toy inspired by the legendary Bodhidharma, who founded Zen Buddhism in the 5th and 6th centuries CE. Bodhidharma's life is cloaked in mystery and legend, adding an extra layer of intrigue to his story.

As he journeyed, Bodhidharma visited a Shaolin monastery in China, founded a renowned martial art, and later settled in a cave for deep meditation, setting the stage for the Daruma's origins.

Known as a "wall-gazer," Bodhidharma meditated for an astounding nine years, eyes fixed on a wall, demonstrating exceptional discipline. Legend has it that, upset with himself, he even sliced off his own eyelids to stay awake, and where they fell, green tea plants supposedly sprouted, explaining the monks' preference for green tea.

In addition to these challenges, Bodhidharma lost his arms and legs due to his prolonged immobility, shaping the iconic features of the Daruma doll.

Now, fast forward to today, and the Daruma has evolved into a symbolic Japanese toy, crafted to resemble Bodhidharma. It lacks limbs, wears a traditional red and gold monk's robe, and its scowling expression signifies Bodhidharma's enlightenment. Made from paper maché with a weighted base, Daruma toys always return to an upright position, symbolizing resilience and overcoming adversity.

Beyond mere play, the Daruma embodies profound symbolism. Its blank eyes represent a journey—owners fill in one eye when setting a goal and the other upon its achievement. In contemporary times, Daruma dolls come in various forms and colors.

Here is a list of different Daruma colors and their most common meanings:

- Red: Best of luck and good fortune.
- White: Purity and balance.
- Golden: Money and glory.
- Black: Protection against evil spirits.
- Green: Health and physical condition.

- Orange : Academic success or prosperity.
- Blue : Career success.
- Purple : Personal development or health.
- Pink : Love & Romance.

**Here's an exciting opportunity for you as teachers:**

Encourage your students to create personalized Daruma dolls, reflecting either themselves or a significant animal. This lesson is designed to inspire them, with the completed Daruma serving as a tangible reminder of perseverance, resilience, and the pursuit of goals. It goes beyond being a simple craft; it becomes a powerful symbol of personal courage and a constant encouragement for students never to give up on their aspirations.

**Materials:**

- Plastic eggs (any size)
- Low Temp Glue Guns
- Large Hex Nut or any item that can weigh the egg down
- Masking Tape (3/4" x 60 yards)
- Instant Papier Mâché mix (options: use store-bought Papier Mâché, or make paste with flour & water or Wheat Paste, and paper)
- Sandpaper (medium grit)
- Acrylic paint
- Aleene's Gloss Finish Spray Acrylic Sealer (for added shine)
- Paint Brushes

**Procedure:**

**Introduction to Japanese Culture**

- Begin by introducing students to Japanese culture.
- Show a visual example of a Daruma doll, emphasizing its cultural significance.

 [What is a Daruma doll?](#)

### The Making of a Traditional Daruma Doll

- Read or show students stories about the Buddhist Monk, Bodhidharma, on whom the Daruma doll is based. To enhance their understanding, consider using the YouTube video, ["Daruma, The Amulet Of Purposes In Japan | Draw My Life."](#)

### **Connecting Daruma Dolls to the film Spirited Away's Connection:**

#### Spirited Away - Official Trailer

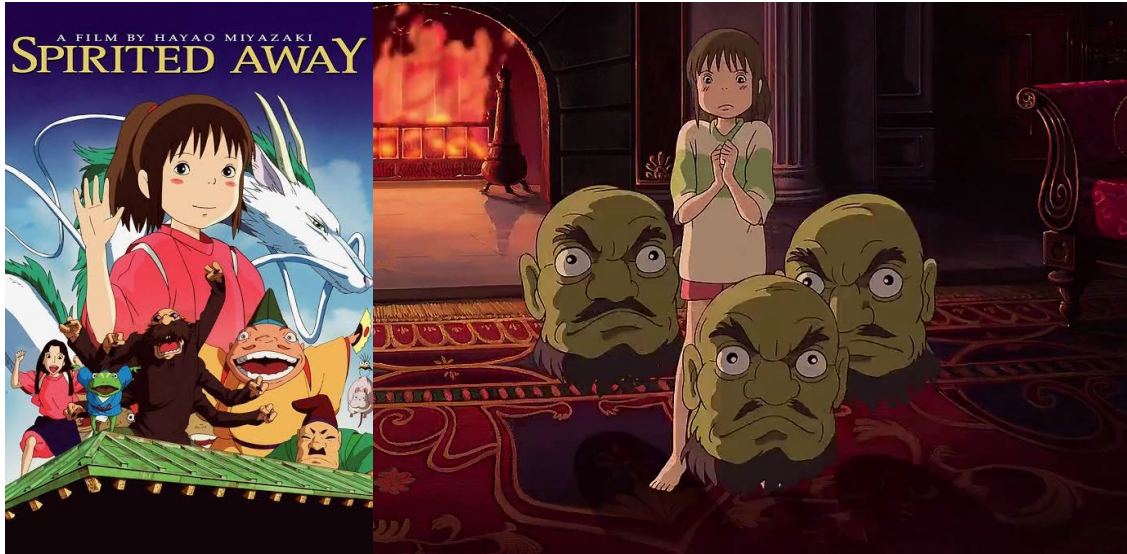
#### Spirited Away

- Illustrate the connection between the concept of Daruma dolls and the Kashira (three heads) in Spirited Away, emphasizing the resemblance of these bouncing heads to Daruma dolls. Engage in a discussion about the purpose and significance of Daruma dolls, particularly their role in goal-setting. Encourage students to consider the possibility that the Kashira in Spirited Away might symbolize specific goals achieved by the character Yu-Baba in the film. This exploration offers a unique perspective on traditional Japanese symbolism and its reinterpretation in popular culture.

#### *Background Information in Spirited Away:*

- Yu-Baba's three pet heads, referred to as "Kashira," translate to "head" in Japanese. Drawing parallels, these bouncing heads share similarities with Yokai from Japanese folklore known as "Tsurube-otoshi," which are giant disembodied heads attacking humans by dropping from trees and consuming their prey. Notably, the smaller size of Kashira is thought to be influenced by Buddhist talismans called "Daruma dolls."

By connecting these elements, students gain insights into the interplay between traditional symbolism, cultural context, and its portrayal in popular media. The critical thinking about the creative reinterpretation of cultural symbols in films like Spirited Away.



The Kashira (頭, lit. "head") is a trio of beings that appeared in Spirited Away.

## My Daruma Doll Preparation & Process

### My Daruma - Lesson Plan

## Features of Daruma Dolls

### *Daruma Doll Eyes:*

one of the most noticeable features of the Daruma is its blank glance. These dolls do not have pupils but they present large white circles where the eyes would be. One of the theories behind this choice in the design is linked to the legend of Bodhidharma removing his own eyelids.



### *Facial hair:*

The beard and eyebrows painted on the doll are meant to reproduce Bodhidharma's facial features, but they do not serve a merely aesthetic purpose.

### *Writing:*

kanji meaning "luck", "fortune", "perseverance", or similar others are sometimes written on the Daruma's midsection, probably as a reflection of the reason for which the doll was acquired. Additionally, sometimes, people write their wish, or goal, on the doll itself, maybe to remind themselves, or to inform the god in a more "official" manner.

## Preparation:

### *Weight Attachment:*

- Use a low-temperature glue gun to securely affix a large hex nut or any other type of weight to the bottom of each egg. This ensures a balanced weight distribution, preventing the egg from tipping over. Allow the glue to cool.



*Step 1: Glue a hex nut in the bottom of a plastic egg, then stuff the egg tightly with scrap paper or tissue.*

## Process:

### *Filling and Securing:*

- Pack scrap paper or cloth firmly into the top of the egg and around the hex nut at the bottom. This step ensures that if the Daruma is accidentally dropped and the hex nut becomes dislodged, it won't move freely inside the egg. Seal the egg by taping it closed with masking tape.

### *Paper Mache Application:*

- Create a mixture of one part instant paper mache mix to one part water, achieving a solid, clay-like consistency. Hold the egg firmly in both hands and apply a thin, even layer of the mixture, covering the entire surface. Allow the Daruma to dry for at least two hours. Note: drying time can be expedited by placing it in a sunny location or in front of a fan.



**Step 2:** Cover the egg with Blick's Mix and allow it to dry for at least two hours.

- Note: If desired, once the paper mache is dry, use small pieces of sandpaper to smooth the surface. Pay special attention to the bottom of the egg, ensuring it is rounded through extra sanding if necessary.

*Painting:*

- The Daruma can be painted in various ways, such as a traditional representation of Bodhidharma, a self-portrait, or even as a favorite animal or character. While acrylic paint provides the most durable finish, tempera and watercolors can also be applied to the paper mache surface.



**Step 3:** Paint the Daruma with the likeness of a character or animal.

## **Options:**

### *Decorative Touches:*

- Enhance the Daruma's appearance by attaching feathers, ribbons, sequins, or other materials to its surface for a decorative effect.

### *Protective Finish:*

- For added durability, consider applying acrylic gloss varnish spray as a protective finish, ensuring the longevity of the Daruma's appearance.

## **Daruma Doll Reflection & Culture Questions:**

- Briefly explain what a Daruma Doll is?
- Who is the traditional Daruma Doll modeled after?
- What purpose does the Daruma Doll created for? Explain the process.
- What country does the Daruma Doll originate from?
- What is the traditional Daruma Doll made from?
- What colors and features are on the traditional Daruma Doll? What do those colors and features represent?
- Traditionally, what happens to the Daruma Doll after it has been used for its intended purpose?
- What traditions do we have in America that are similar to that of the Daruma Doll?
- What goal are you attaching to your Daruma doll? And why is this goal important to you?

## **Artistic Creation (Multiple Class Periods)**

- Allow 2 to 4 art class periods for students to complete their Daruma dolls.
- Provide guidance and support as needed during the creative process.



- Encourage students to express their personal goals through the design of their dolls.

**Assessment:**

- Assess students on their understanding of Daruma's cultural significance.
- Evaluate the creativity and effort put into the creation of their Daruma dolls.
- Review and assess the written reflections on color and design choices, as well as personal goals.

**Conclusion:**

This lesson provides students with hands-on experience in creating art while exploring cultural aspects of Japan. By connecting personal goal-setting to the creation of their Daruma dolls, students gain a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of these iconic figures.

**Resources:**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daruma>

<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2104.html>

[http://www.artelino.com/articles/japanese\\_mythology.asp](http://www.artelino.com/articles/japanese_mythology.asp)

<http://jref.com/culture/>

