



***Same Animals, Same Stories?
How Animals Are Labeled in Different Countries, Cultures, and Communities***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Literacy, Social Studies, and Science, Grade 1-3rd

Keywords: Culture, Compare, Contrast, Difference, History

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: In this unit, students in 1st grade will identify diverse nations and compare two or more cultures, within those nations, by examining how animals are labeled and identified in different countries, cultures and communities. The students will explore the similarities and differences that exist between the real versions of the animal characters and the setting of picture books that they will read in class. A fox story that is set in Japan and a story focusing on eagle in Native American society will be used. The students will discover the common and different factors understanding each culture is special and unique. The lesson serves as both an assessment of the students' comprehension skills and their competency with respect to group work skills.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 26 students in Literacy and Social Studies, 1st grade.

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Introduction

Rationale

Picture books helped and motivated me learn and understand English when I started to study it as a student in Japan. The picture books are not only easy to read and understand, but they are also useful to learn new vocabulary and phrases. Moreover, the picture books sometimes teach cultural differences and community systems in diverse societies. I have been really enjoying reading picture books while learning and understanding the background in the books since then.

Many picture books have animal characters in it. Each animal has specific character and they have their own roles in the stories. Wolf usually plays the bad guy and koala bear plays the cute and kind one in books and these images for these animals are common among many people. I have been teaching as a Japanese Immersion 1st Grade teacher for 12 years and I never considered why people already have the stereotype images for these animals till I started to teach at the Language Immersion School.

In my class, many picture books and folktales are used in Japanese Language Art class. The students like to listen to the Japanese picture books and folk tales. They increase Japanese vocabulary, phrase identification, and reading comprehension skills. They also drive a feeling of want to know and learn Japanese and Japan naturally through “story time” and “read aloud time.” Moreover, the students easily compare diverse cultures and lifestyles and they accept the differences spontaneously. This is very important lessons for the students.

In the Japanese picture books many animals, particularly foxes and raccoons, are adopted as main characters. These animals are very familiar among children even though most have not seen these animals in their real lives before; nevertheless, pictures and illustrations of these two creatures abound. In the stories, the foxes and raccoons often trick people or other animals into doing something or take the form of another object in an effort to deceive other characters. The foxes and raccoons can transform into people or something by putting a leaf on the heads. When the picture of the foxes and raccoons putting a leaf on their heads in the picture books, people can understand what would happen next easily; which is the foxes and raccoons take the form of people or something.

Japanese children are able to accept this genre of story without questioning the premise of the narrative because people in Japan traditionally recognize foxes and raccoons as tricksters. However, at the beginning, my students were bit confused as they were not familiar with the concept. I also wondered why the fox and raccoon were used as main characters in picture books in Japan.

I thought that it was very interesting to search and understand the relationships between animals, countries, communities. I also felt that it would be a good lesson for my students to know the relationships as well because we humans, have been living with animals together for a long time, even though understanding the concept itself was very hard for my students yet. I really hope that something through this unit lesson would hit the students’ interests and lead to a broad view of nature and social interaction beyond the boundaries of language, culture and community in their future.

School/Student Demographic:

My school, E.E. Waddell Language Academy, is a K-8 county-wide magnet school in the South Learning Community. E.E. Waddell Language Academy is a language immersion school. We offer five languages: Japanese, French, German, Chinese and Spanish.

Our school has 1375 students with 929 at the elementary level and 446 in middle school. The ethnic make-up of Waddell closely mirrors the ethnic make-up of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Ethnic make-up of Waddell Language Academy students by percentage: 43% Caucasian, 22% African American, 22% Hispanic, 6% Asian, less than 1% each American Indian and Pacific Islander, and 6% Multiracial.

The number and percentage of LEP students is as follows: 78 5.7% Over 50% of the LEP students speak Spanish at home and are immersed in another world language (in addition to English) for instruction.

Our school is very data driven. Even though our school is unique with respect to teaching in the target language, we provide the same curriculum and assessments as other Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools do. We conduct formative and summative assessments in the target language and English accordingly.

The majority of our school staff is bilingual and 30% of the teachers and teacher assistants do not have US citizenship. Our school was a North Carolina Honor School of excellence for several years. It was awarded the National 2012 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) Melba D. Woodruff Prize for exemplary Foreign Language Program. This prize recognizes schools that align their curricula with the World Readiness Standards for Language Learning and integrate languages with content areas. In 2016, E.E. Waddell was also recognized as a magnet school of distinction.

There are 22 to 26 students in my class of first grade Japanese immersion. The population of my class is composed of approximately 40% White, 40% African American, 12% Hispanic, and 8% Asian. In my class, 8% of the students are receiving ESL services twice a week. The students range in age from five to seven. My students receive daily instruction in math, social studies, and science all in Japanese except for 45 minutes in an English literacy class and 40 minutes of "special instruction" (e.g., music, art, P.E. and media). Generally during the English literacy time, I collaborate with a literacy instructor together in my classroom to provide 45 minutes of English instruction to my students. The rest of time they learn the subject matter in the target language, Japanese.

The students start to learn the subject areas in the target language from Kindergarten. There are one Japanese Immersion class per each grade. Of the students in my class 90-95 % had little to no exposure to Japanese before they entered our school. Only 5-10% of the students have Japanese parents or a Japanese father or mother, or possibly grandparent. Yet my 1st grade students already have some knowledge of the basic academic direction phrases, survival words at school, animal names, colors and shapes' words, etc., as they have studied Japanese since Kindergarten.

Unit

This unit will be taught in collaboration with the Social Studies, Japanese Literacy, and Science. It also will invite students to make connection between pre-knowledge and new world. Lesson: 40-45 minutes one lesson. Two weeks long. This unit will be used after students have completed the lessons of the class of animals, so students has already had pre-knowledge about the characteristics of animals in six groups.

Goals

Students will explore to different cultures, understand the similarities and differences between them, and show appreciation for each culture.

Students will be a global person through the touch of different cultures.

Students will learn how animals have adapted to their environment to meet their basic needs.

Background

For this unit, two animals, the fox and the eagle have been selected to compare the cultural differences. Fox is a very popular animal in Japan and often used as a main character in the Japanese folk tales. In the folk tales, the fox takes the shape of human and other small animals. The eagle is very powerful icon in America Native Indian myths and there are many stories related to it. Comparing and contrasting the two animals, the students will learn the differences and similarities in structure of animals and recognize cultural differences of how to symbolize these animals in the human community.

The Fox is a member of the dog family. Wolves and coyotes are in the same family as fox. The dog family is very adaptable to live in many areas. There are twelve species that belong to “true foxes” group of genus *Vulpes*. The red fox is the most common and large species. Foxes can be seen on every continent except Antarctica.

The fox has long fur, pointed ear, upturned snout, and long bushy tail. The fox’s bushy tail helps it keep balance and helps it keep warm in cold weather. The tail is also used as a communication tool with other foxes.

The red fox, a widespread species, is generally about 36-42 inches long and weighs about 10-15 pounds. The life span of fox is averagely about two to five years. The red foxes live in many diverse habitats, which are forests, grasslands, mountains, and deserts. They also can live in human environments such as farms, suburban areas, and even urban areas.

The red fox eats many different types of foods. The species is omnivorous and will eat fruits, berries, grass, birds and small mammals. They eat even insects like grasshoppers, crickets and beetles. Basically, the red fox is nocturnal even though they sometimes walk around in the daytime. The red foxes have ears that are capable of hearing low-frequency sounds. They can hear the sounds of that small animals are digging underground, which allows them to locate their

prey and dig in the ground or snow to get their food. When the red foxes dig underground, they use their surprisingly powerful paws. They can move rocks to get the food using their paws.

People tend to make images of animals based on impressions drawn from first appearances. They think that a baby is cute and people who are big and strong are necessarily dependable. People then impose these perceptions back on the animal. For example, the children's bodies are small and their heads are relatively big. Their eyes tend to be round and tend to dominate their faces compared to adults. Therefore, if people see the animals that have the same body shapes as the children, people feel the creatures are cute regardless of the animals' real habits and characters; familiar examples include the panda bear, koala, and rabbit. (Takaki, 2018:42-48)

In Japan, every person knows the story that a fox can take the shape of a human and other small animals. It is very common and people accept this phenomenon naturally in Japan. It is considered that the Japanese people from long ago believed in the spirit of anything; spirit of a mountain, spirit of a sea, and even spirit of a house. Some animals were treated as messengers of God and the fox was the one that was believed to be a messenger of the Gods. (Nakamura, 2008:9-13)

Japanese people started to think that the fox was a messenger of the Gods because of the fox's habits, which typically live in mountains, which is also associated with the God of mountains. The fox came down from a mountain to a village in fall and it ate mice that were consuming the important grain for villagers. On the other hand, it was considered that the God of mountains came down to a village in spring and he became a God of paddy fields. In fall, he came back to the mountain. Therefore, people started to worship the fox as a messenger of God and an incarnation of God. Since then, the fox was enshrined as a spiritual animal of Japanese farming faith. (Tobe, 2013:19)

The eagle is a large and powerful bird of prey with a heavy beak and big-footed bird. It belongs to the family Accipitridae. Most of the 60 species of eagle are from Eurasia and Africa. Eagles and vultures share similarities in physical build and flight characteristics, but the differences between them are that an eagle has a fully feathered covered head and strong feet with curved talons.

The bald eagle typically weighs 6-14 pounds while the golden eagle can be slightly heavier at 6-15 pounds. The wingspan of both eagles is about 6-7.5 feet. Their lifespan is about 20 years. The bald eagles can fly up to 10,000 feet at speeds as fast as 30-35 mph.

The tail of an eagle is very important. It helps the eagle glide in flight and brake down toward land in order to attack its prey. Bald eagles have 7,000 feathers and their feathers are very light, yet they are very strong and flexible. They protect the bird from the cold and the heat of the sun. Moreover, the feathers are waterproof, and they enable eagles to live in very cold places. Eagles do not migrate to search for warmer areas, but they do travel considerable distances to look for available foods.

Eagles are diurnal predators and they usually move around during the daytime. They have great eyesight to identify and isolate their prey. The size of the eagles' eyes are almost same as the size of human eyes, however, eagles can not only see much farther than humans, their eyesight is four to eight times stronger than human vision.

Bald Eagles range from Alaska and Canada to northern Mexico. Most of the bald eagles lives in the northwest because they like salmon and fish for their food. The bald eagle was particularly revered by those tribes of the Pacific Northwest who also fished for salmon.

In various cultures, from long ago birds and many other winged creatures have been considered of spiritual messengers from the Gods. Especially eagles are placed in a high position among the world of birds because they fly higher than any other bird. Eagles have been recognized as a symbol of strength and power. They represent spiritual power, victory, authority, courage, and strength.

In Native American culture, the eagle is a very meaningful animal from one tribe to another. A long eagle feather is believed to convey great power and the tail feathers are used in the ceremonies and legends of Native American society. The eagle was a symbol of respect and honor. Moreover, the eagle was considered that it had great medicinal powers. It was said that if a seeker saw an eagle or dreamed of an eagle during a vision quest, he increased in special medicines or spirit power.

Instructional Implementation

Objectives

- Students will be able to understand the characteristics of animals
- Students will be able to compare and contrast between the Japanese and American cultures.
- Students will be able to work in groups to create a picture book that illustrates the animal image in different communities.

Lessons

Lesson 1

Students will review the characteristics of animals and be able to classify them.

1. Review the class of animals in the whole class using the animal book that the students made in previous science lessons.
2. Make a chart and review each characteristic in each class.
3. Make six groups and one animal class (mammal, bird, fish, amphibian, reptile, insect) is assigned to each group
4. Everyone must choose his or her favorite animals from the animal class and make an animal mask that he or she picked.

Lesson 2

Students will discuss whether the animal's basic characteristics would change in different countries just as languages and cultures do.

1. Each group will give a presentation to the whole class. In the presentation the students will identify the animal they have chosen and give their characteristics; having fur, feather, living on the land or air, etc.
2. After all presentations are finished, I will ask a question: "If your animal were to be described in Japan in in another country, do you think the animals' basic characteristics would change?"
3. Why? Why not?
4. The students with the animal masks will also dance in the identity of the animal that they selected and celebrate the animal world.

Lesson 3

Students will compare two animals and clarify the differences and similarities between two animals. Students will brainstorm adjectival words appropriate to the creature and express two animals using those adjectives.

1. Introduce Fox and Eagle to the class.
2. Compare the two animals and find the similarities and differences. (Make a chart: number of legs, living places, how they give a birth, eyesight, noses/smelling, teeth/eating habits, etc.)
3. Show the real size models of fox and eagle using paper. Brainstorm adjectives to describe animals in entire class first.
4. Make six groups and discuss what image the students have about fox and eagle. Have them write down five adjective words about each animal on the sticky notes. Have them post the sticky notes on the pre-models of fox and eagle.
5. Each group tells why they chose the adjectives they did to describe the animal.
6. Have them think why people have preconceived images about animals and whether each country and community has the same image or not.

Lesson 4

Students will comprehend two stories and compare the similarities between two stories.

1. Introduce the target words of two books; *Kitsune no Yomeiri* by Miyoko Matsutani and *Tebukuro wo Kaini* by Nankichi Niimi. in Japanese.
2. Put the target words with pictures on the wall and make words wall.
3. Then make a "picture dictionary."
4. First, do "picture walk." Show only pictures without reading. After the picture walk, ask students what they think is a story to get pre-knowledge.
5. Read two books about the fox; *Kitsune no Yomeiri* by Miyoko Matsutani and *Tebukurowo Kaini* by Nankichi Niimi.
6. While a teacher reads the books, have students raise their hands when they hear the target words to emphasize the target words, so it will help the students understand the stories in

Japanese.

7. After reading two books. Contrast the two books and find the similarities between two books.
8. Have the students think why Fox takes the form of the shape of human in these two books.

Lesson 5

Students will be introduced a role of eagles in the Native American communities and understand the importance of eagle roles in the communities.

1. Introduce the target words of the first of two books; *Adopted by the Eagles* by Paul Goble.
2. Put the target words with pictures on the wall and make words wall.
3. First, do “picture walk”. Show only pictures without reading.
4. After the picture walk, ask students what they think is a story to get pre-knowledge.
5. Read *Adopted by the Eagles* by Paul Goble and find out how eagle is described in the Native American communities.
6. Have the students think why the eagle has an important role in the Native American communities.

Lesson 6

Students will re-think of the image of two animals, fox and eagle and will discuss if the image for them would be changed.

1. In the same group as before, once again have the students think and discuss about the adjectives to describe two animals.
2. Have the students write down five adjective words about the fox and the eagle on the sticky notes (use different colored sticky notes).
3. Have them post the sticky notes on the pre-models of fox and eagle, again.
4. Compare the adjectives that students selected in Lesson 3 and the adjectives that students chose after reading the three stories.
5. Discuss with the whole class if there are any different adjectives selected before and after reading books or not. If yes, why? If no, why?
6. Have the students explore their thoughts about the results.

Lesson 7

Students will make a four-frame picture book using animal characters.

1. Make 6 groups (one group – 4 or 5 students).
2. Give a same story line to every group, so every group uses the same story line to make picture books.
3. Each group choose animal characters to fit the story line. So, each group has the same story, yet different animal characters are in their picture books.
4. A big easel and pad-sized paper will be provided to each group.

Lesson 8

Students will understand that people have preconceived images of animals.

Each group will give a presentation about their picture books. The students read the story in the class and explain why they selected the animals as the characters in the story. After all presentations are done, we will put the all works on the wall and discuss what animals are chosen for the story.

Assessment

Throughout this unit, informal assessment will take place and the picture books, presentation and participation to the groups will be assessed. The self-assessment for the group work will be conducted.

Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

Literacy

RL.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL.1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

RL.1.3 Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

RL.1.5 Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information.

RL.1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

RI.1.8 With guidance and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support ideas in a text.

SL.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

- a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions.
- b. Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.
- c. Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.

Social Studies

1.C.1 Understand the diversity of people in the local community

1.C.1.1 Compare the languages, traditions, and holidays of various cultures

1.C.1.2 Use literature to help people understand diverse cultures

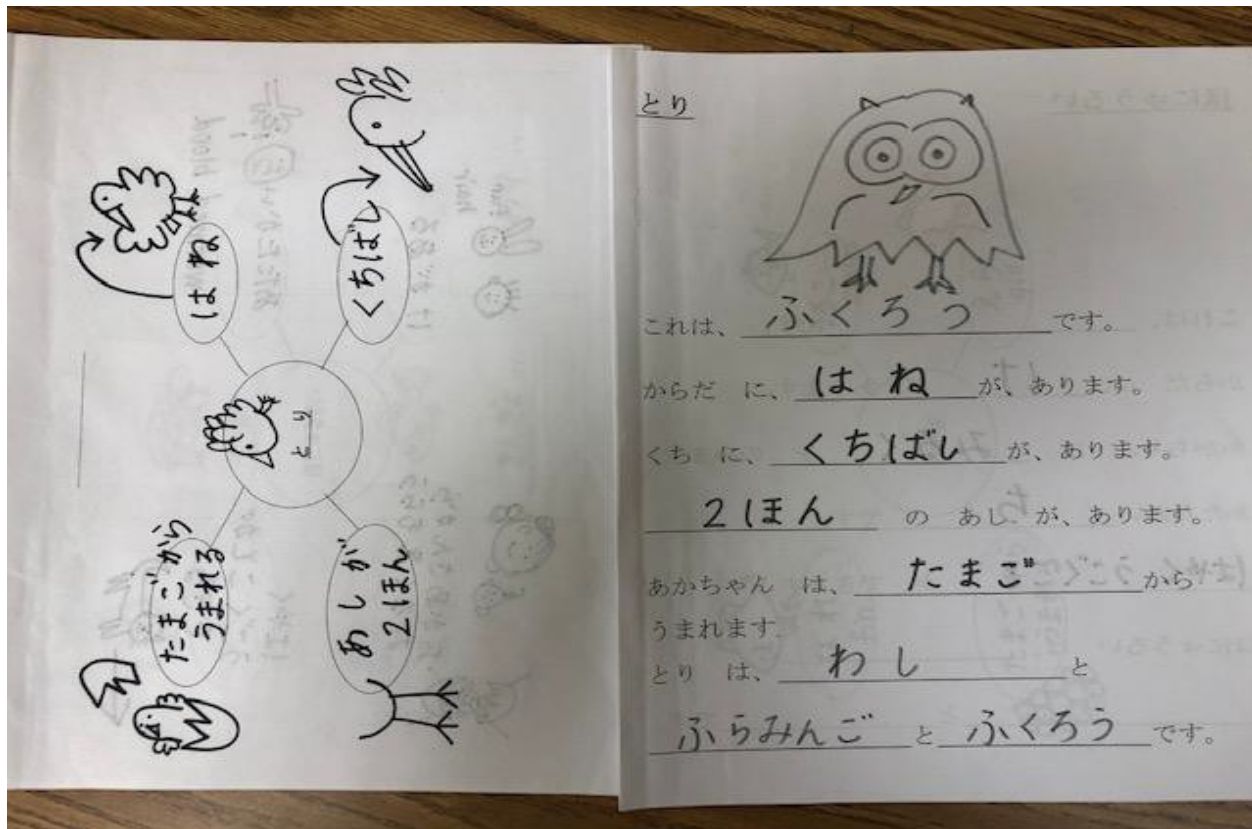
Science

1.L.1 Understand characteristics of various environments and behaviors of humans that enable plants and animals to survive.

1.L.2 Summarize the needs of living organisms for energy and growth



Appendix 2: My Animal Book

Example



Appendix 3: Picture Dictionary

Example

②	
いみ(meaning)	ひんし(parts of speech)
とり ① たまご	
たまご	
たまご ② を わります。	
ぶん を つくる(sentences)	え を かく(pictures)
いみ(meaning)	ひんし(parts of speech)
ほっとけーき ① を つくる もと	
ざいりょう	
ざいりょう ② を まぜます。	
ぶん を つくる(sentences)	え を かく(pictures)

Appendix 4: Self-Assessment

なまえ： _____ 月 日

おともだちと なかよく わーく が でき た			
おともだちの はなしをち ゃんときけた			
ぐるーぷわー くにさんか した			
ぐるーぷわーく は たのしか った			

☆ できたー！ → ☆ おっけー → ☆ できなかった → ×

Name : _____ / _____ / _____

I could work well with my friends			
I could listen to my friends.			
I participated to the group work.			
I thought that the group work was fun!			

☆ I did ! → ☆ So So → ☆ I could not → ×

Appendix 5: Resources for Teachers

Clutton-Brock, Juliet. *Smithsonian Handbooks:Mammals*. New York: DK Publishing Inc, 2002. Print.

This book gave me basic knowledge about mammals. It was an usable guide with the colorful illustrations and detailed information. Students also can use this book to have some knowledge about mammals.

Conway, D.J. *Animal Magick*. St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1995. Print

This book talks about animals as familiars and humans. I got some ideas of how to see messages and guidance from magickal companion.

Firedancer, Sherry/ Horn Man, Gray Buffalo. *Animal Energies:Interpreting the Messages and Warnings of Animals*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2009. Print.

This book shows habits and habitats of animals, along with colorful photographs. It also includes original stories told in Native American style. It is easy to read.

Franklin, Adrian. *Animals and modern cultures a sociology of human-animalrelations in modernity*. London: Thousand Oaks. 1999.Print.

Relationships between social change and animals are the main focus in this book. The book provides a useful outline historically established and changing relationships between animals and humans. I got basic information how and why the relationships have changed.

Goble, Paul. *Adopted by the Eagles*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1994 Print.

This book is for read aloud for Lesson 5, focusing on how eagles are described in the Native America Community. This book shows friendship and betrayal. In text and illustrations, there are good representation of Native American culture.

Herzog, Hal. *SOME WE LOVE, SOME WE HATE, SOME WE EAT* New York: HarperCollins, 2010. Print

This book indicates a lot of views on animals by society and shows the viewpoints of how humans think about different animals. It provided me with some wonders about how much I care about animals.

Hogrogian, Nonny. *One Fine Day*. Macmillan Publishers, New York: 1971 Print.

This book gives a view of how a fox is described to compare both similarities and differences in different cultures.

Hollander, Cass. *Why Bear Has a Short Tail: A Traditional Tale*. New York: Scholastic Inc, 1994. Print

This book is a traditional tale that is about how the fox tricked the bear. This book gives a view of how the stories are both alike and different in different cultures. It is easy to read for students.

Hurn, Samantha. *Humans and Other Animals: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Human-Animal Interactions (Anthropology, Culture and Society)*. London: Plute press, 2012. Print

This book tells how humans and animals have interacted. It is also about friendships with animals and choices to eat, kill or idolize animals. It helped me to think the relationship between humans and animals.

Mason, Georgia, Rushen, Jeffrey. *Stereotypic Animal Behaviour: Fundamentals and Applications to Welfare*. Canada: 2006 Print.

This book gives information about environmentally induced animal stereotypes. It helped me to have some knowledge of how captive animals show abnormal behavior patterns and how the patterns are environmentally created.

Matsutani, Miyoko, *Kitsune no Yomeiri*, Tokyo: Hukuinkanshoten, 1967 Print.

This book is about a fox who has a wedding after sun shower. It shows a friendship between a grandfather and a fox and incorporate aspects of Japanese culture.

R. McNeill, Alexander. *Animals*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1990 Print.

This book is about animals' structure and physiology. It shows a taxonomic group of animals. It helped me to get basic knowledge about animals.

Nakamura, Teiri. *Doubutsutachi no Nihon-shi*. Tokyo: Kaimeisya, 2008 Print.

This book shows viewpoint of how Japanese people think about animals. It also talks about how Japanese people have built the relationship with animals and how they made animals sacred in the Japanese history.

Nakamura, Teiri. *Nihonjin no Doubutshkan*. Tokyo: Kaimeisya, 2006 Print.

This book tells how the Japanese has symbolized animals and how the symbolic animals were valued in Japanese culture. It helped me know the history of the relationship between the Japanese people and animals.

Niimi, Nankichi, *Tebukuro wo Kaini*, Tokyo :Kaiseisya, 1988 Print.

This Japanese folklore paints a friendship between human and fox. In Japan a fox is often depicted as a trickster who take on human form. This is a very friendly book to read.

Saunders, Nicholas J. *Animal Spirits*. London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 1995 Print.

This book shows a bestiary of both real and mythological creatures, searching the associations of each creature in different culture. It helped me to look at mythical and symbolic meanings.

Takatsuki, Seiki. *Ningen no Henken Doubutsu no Iibun Doubutsu no "Image" wo kagakusuru*. Tokyo: East Press, 2018.

This book pursues why humans started to have stereotypes for animals. Some stereotypes for animals are born with the impression from the animals' appearances and through animals' behavior and actions.

Tobe, Tamio. Kamisama ni natta Doubutsutachi. Tokyo: Taiwa Shobo, 2013 Print.

This book is about the sacred animals that are often the messengers of Shinto or Buddhist deities. This book discusses about when and why people started to consider specific animals as sacred animals.

Tylor, Harriet Peck. Brother Wolf: A Seneca Tale, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1996 Print.

This book is a retelling of Native American tales. Wolf is a everybody's friend and Raccoon is the one that likes to tease Wolf. In the story, the wolf is seen as wily and wise and he shows his gratitude to the birds that help the wolf. This book helped me to have information of how the Native American recognize wolf and they consider wolf represents power.