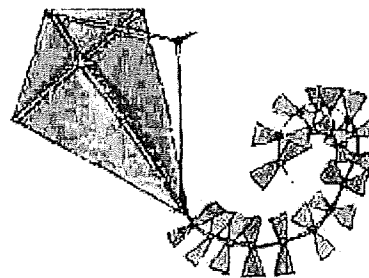


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Kites

WEBSTER DICTIONARY DEFINES KITES AS A LIGHT FRAME COVERED USUALLY WITH PAPER OR CLOTH, OFTEN PROVIDED WITH A BALANCING TAIL, AND DESIGNED TO BE FLOWN IN THE AIR AT THE END OF A LONG STRING.



Did you know--

Kites were flown in China more than two, maybe even three thousand years ago? All the right materials for building kites are found there: Bamboo for the frame and silk for the tail and bridles. Chinese folklore is filled with legends involving kites. Kites were even used by the military to surprise and frighten the enemy.

The earliest written account of kite flying was about 200 BC.



Kite flying spread from China through trade to other countries like Korea, Japan, and India. In fact, Buddhist monks brought kites to Japan in the 7th century. They were thought to avert evil spirits and insure rich harvests. The Japanese created ingenious ways of using the kite. One thief in Japan used a kite to try to steal a treasure, but he forgot how much the treasure weighed and got caught. Kites are part of Asian culture.

The people of Micronesia used leaf kites to carry bait out over the water to catch garfish.

Kite fighting is popular in the Far East. In fact, the Polynesians have myths about two brother gods introducing kites to man when they had a kite duel.

Marco Polo carried stories of kites to Europe around the end of the 13th century. First regarded as curiosities, kites had little impact on European culture. Leonardo da Vinci developed a method for crossing a river with the help of a kite. The same method was used in the 1850s to build a bridge across Niagara Falls. Experimenting with kites led da Vinci to study air currents. This led him to invent the parachute, draw diagrams for helicopters and design many "flying machines."

In the 18th and 19th centuries kites were used to make discoveries. Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Graham Bell, and the Wright Brothers experimented with kites. Kites were used to raise weather instruments, and someone even used a kite to pull a carriage 20 miles an hour.

Airplanes took the place of kites and now they are simply used for recreation. Kites led to modern hang gliders and parachutes.

Go Fly a Kite!

This kite, called a **Flexikite**, was shown in *Kites: The Gentle Art of Flying*, by Susan Tyrrell. You simply fold the paper according to the diagram, attach a bridle and a tail. You can make this kite out of almost any material. If your material is too light it helps to reinforce the folds with dowels or strips of tape.

