



Implementation Plan: Kathleen Comer

Reading the Landscapes of East Asia Implementation Plan March 2010

Kathleen Comer Leicester Middle School

My thanks are extended to the Five College Center for East Asian Studies and the Teachers Center for Global Studies. I am a sixth grade world geography and language arts teacher and appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the geography and literature of East Asia. The lectures, materials, and lesson ideas are very useful.

Korea in the World: A Geographic Focus

The first presenter, Ms. Wang, provided information that I used in my teaching such as:

- The explanation of the symbols on the South Korean flag
- The twenty-seven bridges that connect the northern and southern part of Seoul
- The expression “Miracle of the Han River” to refer to successful economic development
- The han-gul alphabet
- Korean foods such as gimchi and Ddok – the students were interested to hear that rice cake soup is traditionally made on New Years Day
- Ondol Korean heating system- this led to a discussion about how my students’ homes were heated, and they were to find out if they didn’t know
- Korea being referred to as “the shrimp between to whales”-Students were given this metaphor, looked up the sizes of these animals, and figure out which countries were the shrimp and whales, why this metaphor was used, and what did it mean

The next two presenters, Mr. Barner and Mr. Vacca, provided several very good lesson ideas such as:

- The parallel peninsula activity which superimposed Korea on a map of Florida – my lesson compared latitudes, climates, and vegetation
- The postcard activity – using classroom resource books and the internet, students selected one physical or human feature in an East Asian country, drew and colored the feature, then wrote their descriptive notes on the back. The five step process was used, focusing revising proofing, and using descriptive language

Understanding Korea in the 21st Century

The presenter, Young Un, provided us with a very useful packet, including a lesson using the tale, “the Rabbit’s Judgment”. I will use a similar format with my language arts classes. They will read the tale and eventually come up with a list of basic values in the story. Before generating the list, they will complete a series of events chain and retell the story in a comic strip. The students will also be asked to compare the rabbit in this tale with the one in the African American folk tale, “He Lion, Bruh Bear and Bruh Rabbit.”

The poem, “The Song of Flying Dragons,” describes qualities Korean want in their leaders. First my students will independently read the poem and underline unfamiliar words. Then they will



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work with partners to come up with definitions for these words. Class as a whole will decide upon the best meanings for the words. Students will be asked to identify the qualities of a good leader and name some, such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.

Young Un's provided a good list of sources, some of which I used for my own background as well as in class.

Teaching Korean Sijo

This workshop introduced me to Korean sijo and I received a book, The Bamboo Grove, which was an introduction to this poetry, with a forward written by the presenter of this workshop, David R. McCann. He selected a few poems from the book, read/sung them aloud in Korean, then spoke about each. I have selected several sijo from the book to use the following ways with my classes:

- #8 can be read literally as a concern about the effects of a snowy, windy night in late winter on pine trees. The poet thinks ahead about how flowers might not blossom on time. Discussion about the harsh winter in the Mid Atlantic states will be followed by finding the week the cheery blossoms bloomed in DC this year. (I will give the historical background of the poem)
- #35 is about not judging what is black or white. This poem is good to read during Black History Month because the last two lines of the poem seem to be about letting go of prejudice, not stereotyping people
- #'s 107 and 108 are about the effects of spring, the former spoke of the sadness of the quick passage of time, the latter the colors of spring, sharply contrasting humans who live only once. These poems are very similar to one I already do, "Change" by Charlotte Zolotow., about the cycles of the four seasons in contrast to people who change/age.
- #110 has the same basic meaning of the previous poems, except that it's the wind that is contrasted with humans. These poems will be used when we read the book, Tuck Everlasting, which deals with immortality and mortality.

Bringing Japan into the Reading and Literature Classrooms: Practical Strategies for Middle and High School Teachers

Kathleen Babini's bibliography, internet sources, and lesson plans/activities are impressive. I am going to use her story reflections activity with the Japanese folk tale, "The Wise Old Woman," set in the western hills of Japan. It expresses the value of older people in their society. One interesting thing about this tale is deciding on who is the main character. Some students may choose the elderly woman, condemned to be banished from the village when she turns seventy-one years old. But other students could make a strong argument that it is her son, the young farmer who refused to accept this decree and hid her away in a secret room in their house. I'll make a large chart with the two names at the top. Students will write their reasons below the names, followed by a discussion. Students will also find the average age and life expectancies for modern Japan.



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Ms. Babini's prediction activity will also be used with this story. I like this activity because students have to predict what won't as well as will happen and why. As my language arts classes are reading this story I'll stop first at the point in the story where the young farmer decided that he couldn't leave his mother to die in the mountains and brought her back home with him. Students will then make their predictions. The second place I'll stop is at the point where the young farmer told the arrogant lord that he had illegally hidden his mother for two years. Students will again make predictions.

The Geography of Japan

During this session we were given time to explore the Deai kit, did some activities and were given a copy of Lesson 9: My Home: Okinawa Japan. This chapter focused on the life of one student, Tamaki Shun'ichi. Handout 9-1 begins with a very good description of his personality traits in the first two paragraphs under the section heading, "Me in a Nutshell." I'll use this with my language arts students as a good example of a clear, seemingly honest description of oneself. After reading this in class, there will be a discussion. Questions will include: Would Shun'ichi make a good friend? Why or why not? Do you have any traits in common with him?

Possible activities would include: students writing descriptions of themselves to share with classmates and students could pretend to be one of the characters from a story that they read this year and write a character description in the first person.

I was given the book, Shizuko's Daughter by Kyoko Mori. Chapter Three is about the reactions of the 12 yr. old main character, Yuki, whose father is remarrying thirteen months after the death of Yuki's mother. This could lead to a discussion of my students dealing with stepparents. Students could compare/ contrast weddings in Japan with those in the United States. Students will be asked to explain why Yuki broke the sake bowl and make predictions about how Yuki will get along with her stepmother.