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Reading the Landscapes of East Asia: An Exploration of the Geography of Japan and Korea as Viewed Through Literature

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The Seminar, Reading the Landscapes of East Asia: An Exploration of the Geography of Japan and Korea as Viewed through Literature, sponsored by the Five College Center for East Asian Studies and the Teachers Center for Global Studies and funded by the Massachusetts Geographic Alliance and the United States Japan Foundation has given me quite a few useful things that I might employ in the teaching of Japan and Korea in United States History I, United States History II, Sociology, and High School Geography.

KOREA:

The information on Korea was provided from the Workshop on Korea on Tuesday, December 1st, 2009.

For the Korean War part of United States History II, I would use excerpts from **Still Life with Rice** by Helie Lee to show what life was like living in Korea during this time. Our students get such a superficial view of this war and never from the perspective of one who lived through it. Also, “**Cranes**” and “**Clowns**,” both short stories by Sun-Won Hwang, could be used for the same effect. These would be found in **Shadows of a Sound**, edited by J. Martin Holman. These were included in the handout: **Select Annotated Bibliography on Twentieth-Century Korean and Korean-American**



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Literature. Finally, Simon Winchester's writing on the DMZ will be used.

JAPAN:

The rest of the Workshops (five in number) centered on Japan, mainly. On January 14th, 2010, at the University of Massachusetts, Karla Drake presented Haiku, Tanka, and Renga as part of: Selected Literature of East Asia. We practiced the Haiku and Tanka, so we would be able to teach it to our students. I would use this in a couple of places. First, I would use it as part of my Sociology course in general, and Japan in particular. I do what I call a culture project, where each student chooses a culture to explore (most choose their own) and they research it, bring things in that have to do with it, show slides, film, etc. Some even do ethnic dance. They have the whole period if they need it. One of the features has to be a food that has significance to that culture, enough for a taste for each student in class. I would have Japan as a class effort, with each student having as an assignment, **Shizuko's Daughter** by Kyoko Mori, as required reading. Topics to be discussed after reading will be: saving face, respect for elders, women's roles, work ethic of males, and schooling. Part of the work on Japan would be the teaching of Haiku. After they learn how to write Haiku, each student would have to produce one of his/her own. The other place Haiku would fit is when I do the chapter in United States History I that includes Transcendentalism. I use to have each student compose or find a "nature poem" and deliver it in front of the class. Instead, I would teach Haiku and have each student write a Haiku poem that represents the Transcendentalist Movement and read it in front of their classmates. To accomplish the teaching of Haiku in each instance, I would use selected excerpts from **The Essential**



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Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson, & Issa, edited by Robert Hass.

On January 21st, 2010 at The Five College Center for East Asian Studies in Amherst we were introduced to the Kamishibai Play and received a set of Kamishibai Play cards entitled **The Story of Tanabata**. This would be used as part of the culture project on Japan in Sociology. Also, before this was done **Kamishibai Man** by Allen Say would be read to the class. It would be projected on the wall so the beautiful pictures that accompany it may be seen by all.

On January 28th, 2010, again at The Five College Center for East Asian Studies in Amherst, Marilyn Day and Carolyn Cicciu presented us with a plethora of material, easily adapted to the classroom experience. **Contraband in School** would be good to use for the Sociology Culture Project on Japan along with a lesson I did for the Peabody Essex Museum a few years ago on comparing and contrasting Japan and the United States on a number of topics, one being education, for the opening of an exhibit they did on Japan.

Hachiko Waits by Leslea Newman would be used in the Sociology Project. The class would be divided into five groups, with each group responsible for reading two chapters. The handout received in this workshop will be utilized. This was from the **Teachers Guide from Henry Holt Books for Young Readers**. “Curriculum Connections” would be the part applicable here. Students would brainstorm a list of Japanese customs. After, they each would be given one of these customs to research and report back to the class their findings.

Marilyn and Carolyn also presented us with many ideas to use in United States History II and the teaching of World War II in Japan. To introduce the topic, I would show the film



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Tora, Tora, Tora and use a couple of the discussion questions provided to us by Marilyn and Carolyn . These would be: a. After the viewing go over observations the students made and collate a list. b. Discuss how and why the attack on Pearl Harbor could have been prevented, using specific examples from the film to substantiate your opinion. I would have previously divided the class into five groups and each group would have a different book to read applicable to the War. Those books would be **Black Rain** by Masuji Ibuse, **Hiroshima** by John Hersey, **The Girl with the White Flag** by Tomiko Higa, **Farewell to Manzanar** by Jeanne and James Houston, and **I am an American: A True Story of Japanese Internment** by Jerry Stanley. Each student would be tested on their book and afterwards would get together in their group to prepare a presentation to be delivered to the class as a whole. As an added feature, students at some of the Lynn schools are predominately immigrants or sons and daughters of immigrants. Their stories would make for an interesting sidelight, if they were inclined to share them. On occasion, we have heard about life in refugee camps and even life in flight by some of them. Students usually look at World War II from the American point of view. It will be a different approach to put themselves in the shoes of the Japanese or Japanese-American civilian to see what their experiences were like. Also, I will use examples of poetry written by Sadako Kurihara in a collection called **Black Eggs** from a handout provided by Marilyn and Carolyn. The topic of these is basically the dropping of the bomb. Also, **A Bomb that I Experienced** by Keijiro Matsushima details the tragedy at Hiroshima for the people who lived through it. Again, this, coupled with a poem by her entitled “Young Lives,” will give the students the perspective of what it was like for the people to experience this. To finish off this discussion, the History Channel film, **Enola Gay**,



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which I always present to my class, will be shown and the students will list pros and cons on the dropping of the bomb. Afterwards they will debate the issue, using the format drawn from the handout presented to us in this Workshop.

Paper cranes, using Origami, will be made by the students, as they learn about the “Paper Crane Project” and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. As they peruse this topic, they will employ the “Voices of the Survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki Website (<http://geocities.jp/s20hibaku/voshn/index.html>) and Tour of the Peace Park Website (<http://www.hiroshima-spirit.jp/en/park/index.html>).

On February 11th, 2010, at Clark University, Kathy Babini presented several ways to use literature in the teaching of Japan. However, most of the ideas were for the Elementary grades. Even so, I can adapt one of the strategies given to us in any of my classes. She suggests that students choose a scene from the book (**Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story** by Ken Mochizuki) and have them illustrate pictures to tell the story they wish to convey. She also suggested a photo box. I have had students pretend they are making a film. I give them an empty 35mm film container and tell them to illustrate the story (or even the first 5 frames of the story). They will do this on plain white paper cut to the size that will fit in the container and can be any length to be rolled up. This would work best with the five stories the students would read with World War II on Japan. Instead of a test, this strategy could be used.

The final Workshop came on March 13th, 2010, with The Geography of Japan presented by Timothy George at Clark University. The things learned here could be used in Sociology, United States History II, and Geography. First of all Geography will be discussed. He spoke about the following topics: population, land area, land use,



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agriculture, diet, poverty index, ethnicity, climate, style of housing and why, birth rate divorce rate, urbanization, GDP, purchasing power parity, and tourism. Each would be included in a lesson on Japan.

The students would be given a blank Map of Japan and be asked to fill in the major features: names of islands, water bodies that surround it, major cities, major waterways, and neighboring countries.

I would check out Deblij and Miller, “Ten Major Geographic Qualities of Japan,” *Geography* (7th ed.), p.229 and Grant, Patrick, “Geography’s Importance to Japan’s History,” *Education about Asia*, (Spring 1998), pp. 44-47. Part E of Timothy George’s handout included some very thought provoking questions that could be used with the students at the conclusion of their Geography of Japan study. Some of the students may need some History background depending upon when they would be taking Geography. At Classical High in Lynn, they take it as an Elective in their Senior Year, so should have had this background already.

Sociology had a lot of application here. Timothy George mentioned the Japanese tea ritual, religion, housing and why houses are built the way they are and sparsely furnished, eating of meals and sitting at the table with the heater (called yagura-gotatsu) and tatami mat, futons, education, culture borrowing in the fact that the Bonsai tree is from China originally, and the word “etiquette” being of Japanese origin. He also recommended several texts and websites. I would look into **Japanese Culture**, by Paul Varley and **Top Ten Things to Know about Japan in the Early Twenty-first Century**, by Carol Gluck, which was given us as a handout. Of course the cultural universal, baseball, will be discussed as well.



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United States History II can draw on his discussion of World War II, or as they say” Asia-Pacific War” or “War with the United States.” He stated that it could be called the “Sino-Japanese War” with a 14 year duration. This lends itself to what is studied on this topic. However, we don’t stress it this way as the “War to Liberate Asia from Imperialism,” but this is a different approach that would be beneficial. This would be supplemented by a study I did and use to determine if the United States (Franklin D. Roosevelt in particular) maneuvered Japan into this war. When the students finish looking at the pros and cons of the subject, they write an essay about their conclusions, citing reasons for believing as they do.

When the chapter on the Post-War is undertaken, Japan’s Article 9 will be discussed, as well as some of the problems facing Japan today from the global perspective.

The final part of this Workshop was presented by Mimi Stephens, using the **Deai Text Booklet**. This would give numerous examples of what it is to be a Japanese student, today. It would be an excellent companion piece for the Culture Project on Japan in Sociology.

Finally, another source that is invaluable is *Nipponia: Discovering Japan*. This is a magazine that comes out quarterly. I won four of them during one of the sessions and can see numerous uses for them in Sociology. There is a food page in each issue, which tells you how to make a certain Japanese dish. Fashion, traditions, jobs, housing, and even Karaoke is discussed. There are beautiful colored pictures to show scenes from the countryside for use in Geography. The fishing industry is discussed in one issue and would be invaluable for the study of Geography. Finally, for United State History I they did an article on “Signs of the Times,” whereby they showed how in the 1600’s Japanese



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merchants advertised their wares by placing signs showing what they sold in front of their stores. They have two pages of such signs. I do a piece on this very thing during colonial times. Examples I use are things like barber poles, that symbolize the fact that the barber was also the doctor (or blood-letter). This is a good comparison to see that we were not unique on this.

To end, I want to say that when I discuss Japan in Sociology that I will wear my kimono that I won during the Workshop with Marilyn Day and Carolyn Cicciu.