

Education Guide for “Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire”

www.pbs.org/empires/japan/

Lesson Plan #1: Class Structure Of Feudal Japan

LEVEL

Middle School

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to visually show, discuss and write about the class structure of feudal Japan.

STANDARDS

• [Time, Continuity, & Change](#)

• [Power, Authority, & Governance](#)

PROCEDURE

- Discuss “class” with students. Point out issues like educations, socio-economic situation and/or lifestyle.
- View *Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire*, Episode Two. Ask students to focus their attention on the issue of class in feudal Japan noting the structure and rigid nature of the system. (14:00-15:30 mins.)
- Define “class” as it applies to feudal Japan.
- Create a chart showing members of feudal Japan and their roles within society. Charts should include shoguns (leaders), samurai warriors, artisans, merchants and farmers. Access background on these characters can be found on the following PBS Web pages: [Travel Tokaido](#) and [Enter Edo](#).
- View *Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire*, Episode Two. (24-44 mins.) This section of the documentary discusses the various groups who make up Japanese society in the 1700s.
- Students should note each group’s role within the society, their ability to travel and possible punishments for not abiding by the law.
- Students will write a memoir from the perspective of a person living in Edo in the 1700s. Students can choose to be a farmer, samurai, artisan, Christian, laborer or a woman (using the film) or a bookseller, street vendor, guard, monk, woman or tea seller (using the [Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire Web site](#)). Within the memoir, students should convey what daily life was like for a member of this group, how easy or difficult their lives may have been, what freedoms they may have enjoyed.

ASSESSMENT

- Participation in class discussion
- Does each student share their ideas about class as it applies to society members’ lives and life in feudal Japan?

- Completion of chart feudal Japan showing samurai at the top followed by farmers, artisans, and lastly, merchants.
- Completion and accuracy of memoir. The following grading system can be used:
 - 5 points: States and explains society member's role in society
 - Explains daily routine with a minimum of three examples
 - Explains the challenges of their lives with a minimum of three (3) examples
 - Explains the advantages of their place in society with a minimum of three (3) examples
 - 4 points: States and explains their role in society
 - Explains daily routine with two to three (2-3) examples
 - Explains the challenges of their lives with two to three (2-3) examples
 - Explains the advantages of their place in society with two to three (2-3) examples
 - 3 points: States their role in society
 - Explains daily routine with examples
 - Explains the challenges of their lives with examples
 - Explains the advantages of their place in society with examples
 - 2 points: States their role in society
 - Explains daily routine with example(s)
 - Explains the challenges of their lives with example(s)
 - Explains the advantages of their place in society with example(s)
 - 1 point: States their role in society
 - Explains daily routine, the challenges of their lives and/or the advantages of their place in society with examples

Lesson Plan #2: What Is A Memoir?

LEVEL

Middle and high school

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to:

- Define the term "memoir."
- Identify the qualities that make a memoir.
- View and identify examples.
- Write a personal memoir.

STANDARDS

 Culture

 Time, Continuity, & Change

- Individuals, Groups, & Institutions
- Global Connections

PROCEDURE

Begin with a short discussion about memoirs. Focus Questions:

- What is a memoir? *Personal written record of one's life and times*
- Cite examples of memoirs with which you know or are familiar. Examples include those written by Anne Frank or Frederick Douglass.
- What is the value of a memoir to historians? *Memoirs give historians clues about activities and ideas of the average person during a particular time in history.*

Throughout "Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire," the term memoir is used to communicate the story of feudal Japan. Divide students into three groups: Each group will view one episode of *Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire*, looking for memoirs by the following historical figures:

- William Adams (Episode 2)
- Dr. Englebert Kaempfer (Episode 3)
- Katsu Kokichi (Episode 3)
- Commodore Matthew C. Perry (Episode 3)
- Missionaries (Episode 1)
- Joao Rodrigues (Episode 1)
- Hideyoshi (Episode 1)
- Tokugawa Ieyasu (Episode 1)

What have historians learned - especially Western historians - about feudal Japan based on these accounts? Have students use the [timeline](#) from the *Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire* Web site to examine the place in history to which each of these individuals belongs. Students should act as experts for the memoirs from their episode and exchange information with students from the other two groups, answering the following questions about each memoir:

1. Who was the author?
2. Who was the intended audience?
3. What was the author's position in society?
4. Summarize the ideas/information discussed in the parts of the memoirs presented.
5. What have you learned about Japan during this era as a result of the information in the memoir?
6. How would this information have been valuable to politicians at the time? How would it be valuable to historians today?

After students have all the information, have them complete the one of the following essay questions:

- What is the value of a memoir to historians? Cite examples of memoirs and the information they provide to historians about feudal Japan.
- Describe Japanese feudal society based on the memoirs presented. Compare the impressions and descriptions of a Westerner versus a Japanese citizen.

ASSESSMENT

Participation in class discussion and expert group activity

Completion of notes based on the episode viewed

Essay: The following grading system can be used.

- A: Addresses questions with clear and accurate information
Supports answer with nine (9) or more examples
No errors in grammar punctuation or spelling
- B: Addresses questions with clear and accurate information
Supports answer with six (6) to nine (9) examples
Few errors in grammar punctuation or spelling
- C: Addresses questions with accurate information
Supports answer with a minimum of six (6) examples
Errors in grammar punctuation or spelling
- D: Addresses questions with information
Supports answer with examples
Many errors in grammar punctuation or spelling

Lesson Plan #3: Art & Literature In Feudal Japan

LEVEL

High school

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to visually express cultural and historical information.

STANDARDS

-  [Culture](#)
-  [Time, Continuity, & Change](#)
-  [People, Places, & Environments](#)
-  [Individuals, Groups, & Institutions](#)

PROCEDURE

Eighty-five percent of males living in Edo in the 1700s were literate. Arts and literature were a means of entertainment as well as communication.

- Using the Web sites below, examine woodblock prints of the period. What can you learn about Japanese society based on the print?
 - [National Library of Australia](#)
 - [Prints Art Northwest](#)
 - [Ukiyoe-Gallery](#)
 - [How the Prints Are Made](#)
- Share with students how woodblock prints are made. At individual computers, have students test colors and design on [Create Your Own Woodblock Print](#).
- Create an illustration about Edo Japan. Using linoleum squares, carve and create a woodblock print based on woodblock colors, images and design seen during the class activity.

ASSESSMENT

- Participation in discussion

- Completion of student's own woodblock design showing examples of Japanese culture during the Edo period.
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EXTENTIONS

- Examine Japanese literature (modern or feudal) and Kabuki Theater. Have students discuss how specific pieces of literature and drama reflect the culture and society of Japan. Read *Tales of the Genji* by Lady Murasaki.
- Examine the life of a samurai warrior: View *Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire*, Episode Two ("The Way of the Samurai" and "He Cut His Belly"). Create a flyer or want ad to fill the job of a samurai warrior.