

Cultural Symbols of China and Japan

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum Focus: Asia

Lesson Duration: One to two class periods

Student Objectives

- Create a list of symbols that represent our cultural values.
- Research and develop a list of Chinese and Japanese cultural symbols.
- Create a time line showing the evolution of cultural symbols in China and Japan.
- Report findings to the class.

Materials

- Video on *unitedstreaming: Destiny Determined: Power and Ritual in Asia*
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

1. Behind the Great Wall
2. Secrets of the Samurai

- Paper and pencils
- Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by introducing the idea that every culture has symbols that represent that society's values. Ask the class to identify symbols that represent our cultural values in this society. Record students' responses. Some examples of symbols might include the following:
 - United States flag (symbol of unity)
 - Statue of Liberty (symbol of freedom)
 - White House (symbol of leadership)
 - Capitol building (symbol of democracy)
 - Supreme Court (symbol of justice)
 - Arlington National Cemetery (symbol of heroism)

2. Show students video segments 1 and 3, Behind the Great Wall and Secrets of the Samurai. Discuss the cultural symbols introduced in these segments, including the Great Wall of China, samurai rituals, and Himeji Castle.
3. Have students choose a partner. Give each team the option to research cultural symbols in China or Japan. Ask each team to develop a cultural time line. The Chinese time line will cover from 221 B.C. to the 17th century, and the Japanese time line from the 12th to the 17th centuries. (These suggested time frames may be modified.) For each period on the time line, students should identify at least one representative cultural symbol.
4. Allow time during class for teams to complete their research. Suggest that students explore the following Web sites for additional information:

China

- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/imperial.html#first>
- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/ancient2.html>
- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/imperial3.html#yuan>
- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/modern.html>
- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/modern2.html>
- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/modern3.html>
- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/republican.html>
- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/republican2.html>
- <http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/republican3.html>
- <http://www.asterius.com/china/china2.html#Qin>
- <http://www.asterius.com/china/china3.html>
- <http://www.asterius.com/china/china4.html>

Japan

- <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2133.html>
 - <http://www.wsu.edu:8000/~dee/TOKJAPAN/WARRING.HTM>
 - <http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/japan/i.html>
 - <http://www2.kanawa.com/japan/history.html#kamakura>
 - <http://www.belmont.edu/philosophy/courses/Japanhist.html>
 - <http://www.askasia.org/image/maps/timejape.htm>
 - <http://www.himeji-castle.gr.jp/index/English/>
5. Ask teams to present their findings. Record them for discussion.
 6. Conclude the lesson by asking the class to compare these examples of Chinese and Japanese cultural symbols. What does each set of symbols reveal about the culture.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students researched the topic carefully and thoroughly; developed a thoughtful and comprehensive time line; participated actively in class discussions.
- **2 points:** Students researched the topic; developed a competent time line; participated somewhat in class discussions.
- **1 point:** Students did not complete their research; developed a time line with gaps and/or inaccuracies; did not participate in class discussions.

Vocabulary

Great Wall of China

Definition: A fortress built around the country that extends 6,400 kilometers from the Bo Gulf of the Yellow River to north-central China; the Great Wall was built by Emperor Shi Huangdi of the Qin Dynasty in the year 200 B.C.

Context: Because the world was so unsettled during the Qin Dynasty, the emperors built the Great Wall as a way to keep out invaders.

Himeji Castle

Definition: A large, indestructible Japanese fortress that originally was built in 1333; it was transformed into a three-story castle in 1581 and expanded into a five-story structure in 1601.

Context: The Himeji Castle is so well built that it has never been damaged, even during World War II.

Qin dynasty

Definition: Period in Chinese history between 221 and 206 B.C. when a strong central government was established in China

Context: Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty, set up a strong central government and standardized the country's weights and measures, currency, and writing system.

samurai

Definition: Members of the warrior class in Japan; they influenced Japanese culture from the 11th through the mid-19th centuries.

Context: The samurai introduced a unique system of values and conduct that prized personal honor and obedience as well as loyalty to their lords.

Silk Road

Definition: The network of primary trade routes linking China and Europe that was used from 100 B.C. to the 1500s

Context: Although its name came from the major silk trade carried out along this network, the Silk Road brought many other items to China, including new ideas.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – Human Systems: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
 - People, Places, and Environments
 - Power, Authority, and Governance
 - Production, Distribution, and Consumption
 - Global Connections
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [Discoveryschool.com](http://www.discoveryschool.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

