

An EAA Interview with the 2022 Franklin R. Buchanan Prizewinners: Anne Prescott, Yurika Kurakata, and John Frank for *Walking the Tōkaidō*: *A Multi-Disciplinary Experience in History and Culture*



This is our twenty-sixth consecutive interview with the winners of the Franklin R. Buchanan Prize, awarded annually to recognize an outstanding pedagogical, instructional, or curriculum publication on Asia designed for K–12 and college undergraduate instructors and students. This year’s winners are Anne Prescott, Yurika Kurakata, John Frank, and Arlene Kowal for *Walking the Tōkaidō: A Multi-Disciplinary Experience in History and Culture* (<https://tinyurl.com/y3cc5nr3>).

Walking the Tōkaidō: A Multi-Disciplinary Experience in History and Culture is an innovative virtual curriculum project which allows educators and students to explore Japanese history and culture as they journey along the Tōkaidō from Edo to Kyoto. As participants reach selected milestones, they receive an email with information and links to resources on a given topic (see the syllabus or the seventeen milestone emails). As outlined on the syllabus, the basic course of study includes ten required and seven optional stations, and each station includes a list of readings, videos and webinars on the topic of that station, as well as suggested educator and student discussion prompts. Each milestone can be used as a stand-alone unit of study if desired. *Walking the Tōkaidō* can be used for educator professional development (appropriate for K–16) or for classroom instruction (most appropriate for high school).



ANNE PRESCOTT is the Director of the Five College Center for East Asian Studies in Northampton, Massachusetts, and a National Director for the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia. Her recent NCTA work includes study tours and programming on peace studies centering on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She is the Editor of *East Asia in the World: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2015), which won the Buchanan Prize in 2016. Trained as an Ethnomusicologist specializing in traditional Japanese music, she spent eight years studying koto in Japan.



JOHN FRANK is a retired high school history teacher from Greenwood, Indiana. For the past thirty years, he has contributed to educator’s professional development programs about East Asia. These programs include study tours, workshops, curriculum development, and seminars. His affiliations have included the State of Indiana Learning and Teaching about Japan Program, the East Asian Studies Department of Indiana University, and The Five College Center for East Asian Studies. Mr. Frank is a recipient of the 2011 United States–Japan Foundation’s Elgin Heinz Award.



YURIKA KURAKATA was the Assistant Director and the Director of the East Asia Resource Center at the University of Washington, one of seven national coordinating sites for the National Consortium for Teaching About Asia (NCTA). Prior to that, she was the Associate Director of the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture at Columbia University. Currently based in Seattle, after four years living and studying in Singapore, she continues writing and working on curriculum on East Asia.



ARLENE KOWAL John, Yurika, and Anne would like to acknowledge the fourth member of the *Walking the Tōkaidō* team, Arlene, who passed away on February 14, 2022. Arlene was a valued FCCEAS NCTA consultant for twenty years, and she was particularly passionate about geography education. In the process of developing the curriculum, Arlene made sure we recognized the opportunities that the physical and cultural geography offered for teaching and learning. Arlene’s voice may be absent from this interview, but her spirit is embedded throughout the curriculum.

Lucien Ellington: *Congratulations to all of you for the stellar work on this impressive curriculum. Who originally came up with the idea for Walking the Tōkaidō? Why was this famous Tokugawa-era highway chosen as the focal point for the curriculum? How and why did each co-author become involved in the project?*

Anne Prescott: This project was born during the pandemic. John told me that he was going to do a virtual Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage, and anxious to get out of the house, I decided to join him. After a few weeks he suggested that this might be a great teaching tool. Since the Tōkaidō is an established road, and Google Street View, which is critical to our program, is available for the entire route, it was at the top of the list.

John Frank: Initially, I proposed to Anne that participants be offered the choice of a long, medium, and short length walk. I proposed a Japan route, the Tōkaidō (319 miles), as the long walk option. I also suggested the medium length offering be a walk along a section of the Great Wall of China (100 miles). The proposed short length walk might be a hike from the center of the city of Seoul to the Korean DMZ (35 miles). Anne pointed out to me that Google Street View is not available for China and that offering walks of different lengths and locals might be something for future consideration.

Yurika Kurakata: I appreciated the idea of walking virtually (but also being able to walk physically in our own time and spaces) that would count towards our “steps” on the Tōkaidō. By taking a closer look at the Tōkaidō, we realized that there were so many possible topics that could be explored, and not only the historical and the societal.

Lucien: *Please describe the structure of this digital curriculum. Is there a reason certain topics are chosen for certain milestone locations along the Tōkaidō Road?*

Anne: The basic premise is that participants walk and upload their distances each day on the My Virtual Mission platform. They can then click on their location (or any other location) on the route, which John painstakingly laid out to follow the original Tōkaidō Road as closely as possible. From there Google Street View takes over, and they can explore the route and the neighborhood. Sometimes you can even enter shops, temples, subway stops or other buildings. When participants reach our pre-selected milestones, they receive an e-mail with information on that location, links to additional resources, and suggestions for further exploration. The curriculum includes suggested discussion prompts for each location.

John: One pragmatic reason the Tōkaidō was selected as the route for the curriculum unit was, in addition to the existing Google Street View imagery that Anne previously mentioned, the 319 mile length of the Tōkaidō. If a participant were actually walking an hour a day near their own home, it would take about three months to virtually walk the Tōkaidō. Three months was an optimal length to offer this seminar for our teacher participants.

During the summer of 2000, as the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the shutdown of our schools and kept us homebound, I felt a curriculum unit that “transported us” to a distant location would appeal to our globally minded teacher participants. Also, as pandemic related isolation could foster a more sedentary lifestyle, I thought it physically and mentally healthy to daily, virtually, walk in East Asia.

Anne: We brainstormed a list of about forty possible topics, then narrowed those down to topics that would work well in the classroom, topics that had a natural fit to the existing stations on the Tōkaidō, and topics that had complementary resources. We wanted to make it fit a ten-week seminar format, but we couldn’t get it down to seventeen milestones. So we settled on ten required milestones and seven optional ones covering topics as diverse as the environment, sports, haiku, convenience stores, tea, woodblock prints, and more.

Yurika: We also looked to see what kind of remnants of the Tōkaidō remain today; whether they were old signage on an inn or the marking of a historical site. Google Maps allowed us to check these details. Teachers also “wandered” into factories or a public bath near the center of town, allowing for more questions on life in Japan; what has changed and what has stayed the same.

Lucien: *Your intent as I understand it is that the curriculum is primarily intended for high school teachers and students, but that it also is applicable for broader K–16 audiences. If possible, please provide a few examples of ways that teachers, students, and Asian Studies educators who are responsible for programs like NCTA have thus far used the curriculum?*

Nihonbashi (mile 0)



Kanagawa (mile 18.6)



Hakone (mile 63.8)



Okitsu (mile 103.7)



Anne: One teacher used the curriculum for his World History classes, and I'm anxiously awaiting more information from him on how that went. More often, however, teachers are using individual units or material from units. One teacher from Texas, near the border with Mexico, latched on to the milestone on convenience stores, and planned to ask her students to compare convenience stores in three cultures—Japan, the US, and Mexico. Just recently a teacher told me that she's excited to collaborate with the PE teacher on a joint fitness and learning project.

Yurika: Yokkaichi station allowed us to discuss the environmental disaster there and what Japan is doing about waste and recycling today. There were teachers who were ready to use these examples to help students understand concepts about Japanese society and how it translates to its environmental practices, and whether that practice could work in this country or elsewhere.

Another station focused on the image of the "Great Wave". We all searched and found several dozen different depictions of this image from all around the world. One Language Arts teacher said she will use the images as a writing prompt for her students.

Nihonbashi (mile 0)



Lucien: *In my exploration of the curriculum, I spent time exploring and enjoying "Milestone 5 Hakone: Shintō"; "Milestone 6 Okitsu: The Who, Why, and How of the Tōkaidō Road," and "Milestone 8 Kanaya: Tea Production and Culture." The following questions are about these three milestones.*

Although I was aware of the Meiji government's transformation of elements of Shintō into a "national" religion, the "When Shintō Became a 'Religion'" video from milestone 5 (from Andrew Henry's "Religion For Breakfast" YouTube Channel) provides an excellent specific description of how government officials did this. The video also does a good job of highlighting subsequent controversies and ambiguities about Shintō that include rich content for viewers that encompass other periods of Japanese history concluding with recent events. I would be interested in the reaction of other educators or your reactions to this particular component of the milestone.

Anne: The "Religion for Breakfast" videos were scripted by doctoral student Kaitlyn Ugoretz, and after viewing them, we asked Kaitlyn to do two webinars for this project. Many (perhaps most) of our participants are unfamiliar with Shintō and they're still struggling with the very basics. In our curriculum we focus mainly on visual identification and cultural practices associated with Shintō. A handful of teachers have noted that the videos help them contextualize Yasukuni Shrine.



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Yurika: In some ways, Shintō doesn't fit neatly into some of the predominant Western frameworks of what a religion is, so it was important to be able to parse out the various aspects and practices which Kaitlyn's webinars were able to do.

Anne: A few teachers have used the Religion for Breakfast videos with their Japan clubs, and one teacher commissioned Kaitlyn to do a live presentation on Shintō in pop culture for the entire 7th grade class at her school.

Lucien: *I found Ethan Segal's webinar to be dynamic and content rich. In my opinion, the differentiation in the functions of roads in Ancient Japan and the Tokugawa era provided great basic insights into Japan's history, belief systems economy, and popular culture. How did teachers in your webinar, or who subsequently used the curriculum respond to Segal's presentation?*

Anne: Ethan demystifies the Tōkaidō and helps participants to understand the diversity of people who traveled on or worked along the Tōkaidō. He provides background so they understand the reasons those people are there, either as travelers or as service providers, and how those roles may have evolved. This gives teachers more confidence to present Tōkaidō material in the classroom.

In the seminar discussions we ask them to use what they learn from Ethan's webinar to analyze an Edo-era image portraying people on the Tōkaidō—tour groups, porters, touts, religious people—and talk about their clothing and baggage. They often extend their visual examinations to woodblock prints. My favorite responses are when they compare the Tōkaidō checkpoints to TSA, and Edo period clothing to what people wear today when they travel. Leggings, fanny packs, slip-on shoes, backpacks—they draw all sorts of very interesting and creative parallels.

Lucien: *As a daily Japanese green tea drinker (running recovery mixed with cranberry juice), I have great respect for Professor Landeck's long time interest in tea. "How Japanese Green Tea is Made" from The Noal Farm YouTube Channel was a wonderful visual and auditory experience in my opinion, and I think D-Matcha is a nifty example of young entrepreneurs enhancing interest in Japanese tea. How have other curriculum users responded to this milestone?*

Anne: I discovered that there are teachers who have never tasted any kind of tea, let alone green tea, and this milestone was an eye-opener to them. Teachers soon realize that they can use tea in a broad range of classes. History, geography (where is tea grown? Why there? Why not in the US?), literature (tea poetry), the environment (global warming, extreme weather), and more. Teachers from regions of the US where farming is central to the economy have done their own research on machinery, organic farming methods, and who manufactures tea-picking implements and how much they cost. Very few know that all tea—green, oolong and black—comes from the same plant, and that leads to inquiry into processing tea leaves. They're really taken by Mindy Landeck's experience in becoming a tea sommelier (expert), and not a small number have said they'd love to do something like that.

Yurika: Trying green tea at home was one way teachers could bring some of the curriculum to life. Teachers received tea bags and followed brewing directions provided by the tea company that kindly donated them. We hope it gave them a chance to taste real green tea without added flavors or juices!

Anne: We've added small-group virtual sencha tastings hosted by D-Matcha from Kyoto which have been hugely popular.

A number of teachers have indicated that they will add a "tea corner" in their classrooms and use it as an informal way to talk about some of the points mentioned above. In short, they've gone from Lipton tea bags or sweet tea to, wow, tea could fit into my curriculum in so many places.

Lucien: *Anne, John, and Yurika, thanks for the interview!* ♦

Mariko (mile 117.7)



Hamamatsu (mile 165.3)



Okazaki (mile 208.7)

