

Considering the Web site as a whole, I have a few more miscellaneous changes to suggest. In the Elementary Level Resources section, I clicked on the link to a video demonstrating the use of chopsticks, but the video did not open properly in my browser, which is a common problem faced in using software across operating systems. Not being a technical guru myself, I cannot usefully suggest how one might avoid such glitches. In the section on Korea entitled “East Asia in Geographic Perspective,” some of the links to original sites are broken. This change in linked materials is inevitable, but perhaps more frequent link checks by the Webmasters would help to keep these materials current.

Providing all of this information in a single Web site is quite an achievement. I applaud the efforts of the AFE developers and all of the contributors for the creation of an excellent resource for use across a board range of topics in Asian Studies. Among the “Related Links” at the foot of the main page, I found information about travel, school exchanges, and even hosting teachers from abroad to be informative and even inspiring. Beyond its usefulness in the classroom, this site could be used to plan for other cultural activities on campus, and even for collaboration with Asian institutions to exchange teachers and foster institutional links for the benefit of students and faculty alike. In this way, the Web site furthers the goal of internationalizing education in an interconnected world. ■

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Asia for Educators in the High School Classroom

Reviewed by Ian Tiedemann

Columbia University’s *Asia for Educators* Web site is an invaluable tool for high school social studies teachers who want to incorporate East Asia into their curriculum. To say the least, the amount of information available to a visitor is staggering. The site includes maps, timelines, and primary sources from several East Asian cultures, as well as specific examinations of art, religion, geography, the humanities, literature, dynastic studies, and cross-cultural interactions. Navigating this labyrinth of resources will yield valuable teaching tools at every turn, so much so that it is easy to find oneself in a nearly infinite number of tangents. With this review, I hope to guide you to some of the many applications of Columbia’s impressive collection of materials.

The first step to enjoying the *Asia for Educators* site is to decide how you want to locate your information. You may search through the timeline sections, which will include resources from within your desired range of dates; these sections are also divided into five distinct Asian cultures. You may also search by type of resource; sections on the main page include timelines, central ideas, and primary sources. If you are looking for literature ideas, you can find suggested reading lists for each grade level based on Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese history. The site’s featured modules, each with their own units, lessons, and resources, are on the right margin of the main page. The bottom of the main page offers external links and teacher opportunities. Teachers interested in travel or online courses can start their education about Asia right here!


Teachers looking for primary sources can find selections from China, Japan, Korea, and Việt Nam/SE Asia. As I looked through the primary sources, I was impressed with their organization and breadth. Primary documents, each including introductory explanations and discussion questions, are sorted into chronological and thematic units. For instance, the section China 1950–2000 includes a subsection on “Socialism and Democracy after Mao Zedong” that neatly collects primary sources related to that theme. Some subsections develop their resources into teaching units with broader background readings and class activities. “China’s Political System since 1949” links documents to one another and sets up a comparative study of Chinese and American politics and culture. “The Atomic Bomb,” found in the Japan section 1900–1950, uses its primary sources to set up a class debate. Both of these units were accessible to my students. The sources themselves vary in difficulty (good for differentiated instruction); the questions, both for individual and collected sources, promote hypothetical thought, perspective, and persuasive reasoning.

“East Asia in Geographic Perspective” includes lesson plans by geographical themes and standards. This module uses seven essential units to explore the complex interaction between East Asian cultures and their environment. With every essential unit including lesson plans spanning a range of countries, one could incorporate this resource into any number of high school courses. The first unit, “The World in Spatial Terms,” includes an excellent introduction into reading different types of maps.

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Other interesting topics include geographic philosophies (“What is Asia?”), environmental challenges, and the competition for scarce natural resources. These themes are of course evident in current issues, and the site makes these connections clear with contemporary and historical examples. Overall, this entire module will make one overarching theme clear to students: just as people shape their surroundings, geography determines peoples’ lifestyles and interactions.

I enthusiastically recommend the module titled “Living in the Chinese Cosmos,” which provides insight into China’s major religious philosophies. The readings included in this module will resonate with high school students. For one, the Cosmos Module challenges the Western concept of religion with which students are most familiar: that you abide by only one set of beliefs. Readings are well organized, and they explain the complicated philosophies well; there are links to external sites that take students to additional primary and secondary sources. Another strength of this unit is that religion is put into context across important eras in modern Chinese history. Any survey course would benefit from a comparison of religious beliefs and policies during the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

Any study of modern Chinese history requires an understanding of its final dynasty. “Recording the Grandeur of the Qing” is a successful module for many reasons. Materials are categorized thematically under the headings Emperors, State, Economy, Art, and Southern Inspection Tours. Each unit’s reading is easy to comprehend, and a few units include interactive aspects. The economic section’s interactive guide brings three shopping districts to life through artistic depictions of the time. You can scan a map based on district or type of store; you can see the whole panorama at a distance, or zoom in to appreciate the intricacies of everyday commercial life. A similar interactive in the art section allows you to view scenes from court life through two different types of scrolls. Students of art can compare the different styles of the scrolls, one influenced heavily by European standards, the other by more traditional Chinese techniques; students of history in general can use both styles to enjoy the ceremonies of the day.

I particularly enjoy the “Song Dynasty in China” for its in-depth analysis of one dynasty’s lasting contributions to Chinese history. It is easily navigated and beautifully designed. The maps will make difficult boundary situations easy to understand, and its broader tabs contain related topics. Some of these big ideas, like the “Economic Revolution,” beg comparison to China’s current status: population boom and commercialization are two subjects within this topic. Of course, the Song dynasty eventually fell to Mongol conquest, and your students can read about the Mongols in more detail on the *Asia for Educators* site as well.

Browsing the *Asia for Educators* site for use in a high school classroom is a must. Be careful, though—you may end up with more material than you ever could have imagined. The best part? The site is growing. Soon it will include more lesson plans and hopefully continued opportunities for professional learning. How to choose between all of the course offerings could also prove challenging. Fortunately for you and your students, these are all good dilemmas to have. ■

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