



David Janes, Program Officer and Assistant to the President of the United States-Japan Foundation, presents the Elgin Heinz Outstanding Teacher award to Patricia Burlison.

Integrating Study of Asia into the Curriculum

By Patricia Burlison

Co-recipient of the 2003 United States–Japan Foundation Elgin Heinz Outstanding Teacher Award—Humanities Category

For further information about the award, visit the USJF Web site at www.us-jf.org or contact David Janes, Program Officer at USJF at djanes@us-jf.org, or call 212-481-8757.

In the context of state standards, high-stakes testing of reading, writing, and math skills, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the renewed sense of patriotism in our country, it can be quite difficult for a teacher to justify teaching about the world. But what if we don't? What if students leave our classrooms with no sense of global responsibility?

As a classroom teacher and an instructor for the National Consortium for Teaching About Asia, I hear this fear from classroom teachers as we face erosion of the importance of social studies in the eyes of education reformers. However, I believe that regardless of what state and federal requirements highlight, classroom teachers know what their students need to become active citizens in the global society of their future.

Our task now is to address those needs within the confines of state and federal standards. A colleague, Mary Cingcade of the East Asia Resource Center, University of Washington, states the goal this way: "Students will demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of states, societies, key individuals, and issues around the globe." In the middle grade classrooms, fourth through ninth grades, this can be accomplished with a little effort and a list of resources. Thanks to organizations such as the United States-Japan Foundation, the National Consortium for Teaching About Asia, the Stanford Project for International and Cross Cultural Understanding, and the Asia Society (to name just a few), there are excellent resources readily available for classroom use. The examples of curriculum integration that follow are focused mostly on Japan, but the ideas for integrating study about the world into the curriculum apply to any country and/or culture.

LITERATURE IS A GOOD PLACE TO START

Teachers can readily integrate a study of the conventions of good literature into a global perspective. One book that meets this need is *Pacific Crossing* by Gary Soto. Soto follows two Hispanic-American boys from San Francisco as they cross the Pacific to spend the summer with a family in Japan. There are ample opportunities to teach about life in Japan through the experiences of these two main

characters as they learn to communicate, learn the proper respect for the martial arts, experience new foods, and share American traditions with their Japanese families.

Three of Katherine Paterson's novels lead readers through some of the major periods of Japanese history and culture while dealing with common human experiences like poverty, war, and family issues: *Of Nightingales that Weep*, *Sign of the Chrysanthemum*, and *The Master Puppeteer*. These novels can be used in the middle grades to address reading standards, and the teacher can add historical information about Japan to place them in context for students.

Christian Haugaard has published books for the middle level reader that capture the readers' attention and give a picture of the Samurai culture of historical Japan. *The Samurai's Tale* and *The Boy and the Samurai* take place in sixteenth-century Japan, and *The Revenge of the Forty-Seven Samurai* recounts the famous tale of the Forty-Seven Ronin from the perspective of a young servant to one of the warriors. These tales are full of references to time, place, and events in historical Japan, and lend themselves well to reading comprehension skills, descriptive language, and literary analysis. To break the stereotype of the Samurai warrior that seems so prevalent among our middle grade students, follow up with study about tea ceremony, Zen Buddhism, and the Code of the Warrior as they relate to Samurai values and practices.

Excerpts from a classical piece of Japanese literature from the eleventh century, *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shōnagon lends itself well to the interests of middle level students. When taken from *Masterpieces of the Orient*, edited by G. L. Anderson, there are useful bits of literary information that connect the work to the Japanese language and give the reader some understanding of the difficulties involved in translations. Students will readily identify with Shonagon's lists of "Depressing Things," "Hateful Things," "Things that Give a Pleasant Feeling," and little anecdotes about events in the daily life of the palace; this leads easily to writing their own lists and anecdotes.



2004 SUMMER SESSION OF ASIAN STUDIES Sophia University, Tokyo

Sophia University's 44th Summer Session of Asian Studies will take place from July 27 to August 18, 2004. Among the courses to be offered are: Basic Japanese, History of Edo and Tokyo, Japanese Theater, Contemporary Japanese Economy, Contemporary Japanese Politics, Japanese Business and Management, Japanese Literature and the City, Survey of Japanese Art, Contemporary Chinese Society, Contemporary Japanese Society, and Comparative Asian Industrial Systems.

The Summer Session also provides opportunities for students to attend Noh and Kabuki performances, visit the headquarters of a new religion, participate in the arts of the tea ceremony and flower arrangement, visit some of Tokyo's major museums, and attend special lectures by prominent experts on Japan. All of Tokyo is also available for study and exploration.

As much as possible, courses are conducted in such a way as to allow students to relate their studies to what it is possible to see and do in Tokyo. Tuition for six credits is 140,000 yen.

For further information, contact:

Richard Gardner
Summer Session of Asian Studies
Sophia University, Ichigaya Campus
4 Yonban-cho, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo, Japan 102-0081
Fax: 81-3-3238-4091
Email: r-takeda@sophia.ac.jp
Homepage: <http://133.12.40.67>

Kamishibai are a traditional storytelling format that students can use for a variety of writing and art projects. These traditional story cards were used by traveling storytellers in Japan, mostly during the 1920s through the 1950s. The storyteller might sell candy, and if a child made a purchase, they were given a front row seat to the performance. Holding the set of cards in front of themselves, the storyteller sees the words on the back of the last card that address the illustration on the front card that is being seen by the audience. Put the first card in back, the audience sees the second illustration and the storyteller sees the words for the second illustration. *Kamishibai* are available for purchase here in the states through *Kamishibai for Kids* (Web site: <http://www.kamishibai.com/>). Once students learn how to use these story cards, they can make their own *kamishibai* to record stories or reports they have written. One middle level teacher uses the *kamishibai* structure as a way for her students to record their research about the whaling history of the Makah peoples of our Pacific Northwest.

MIDDLE LEVEL STUDENTS HAVE A STRONG DESIRE TO LEARN ABOUT RIGHTS, JUSTICE, AND "WHAT'S FAIR"

In a course about ancient civilizations, take advantage of that interest and study the philosophical beliefs of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism with the SPICE unit *Religions and Philosophies in China*. Compare and contrast the teaching strategies of Confucius and Socrates to teachers students know today. While studying the founding of the United States and the writers of the US Constitution, look at the Constitution of Prince Shōtoku, and that of the Iroquois Nation. Read *Animal Farm*, interrogate the text, and struggle with the issues of equality, justice, and leadership inherent in all of these documents.

Geography is a wonderful area in which to introduce world cultures. Have students start with the usual vocabulary of geographic terms. Assign a few terms to each of five or six small groups to define and find examples. Following the *Storypath* process by author Margit McGuire, have the class construct a large island/continent on a bulletin board. Each group is responsible for placing geographical features representing their vocabulary terms on the map. Next, lead students to determine what kinds of resources, vegetation, water sources, and climates might be found in each section of the land mass. Decide where people might establish villages and assign one group to each village area. Students then create roles for themselves as members of the village. Based on available resources, what forms of shelter, beliefs, values, foods, music, and art might these people develop? What might happen when people from one village travel far enough to encounter people from another, living in a different environment? The constructivist process allows students to develop a sincere understanding of how cultures around the world develop their own unique characteristics. When we did this project in my classroom, students made an easy connection to the collection of beliefs and traditions the Japanese classify as Shintō. Powerful learning and sincere understanding. Of course, we then made the connection to Native American cultures, about which they are already familiar, and the traditions and cultures that grew out of their natural surroundings as well.

THE ARTS ARE ALWAYS AN APPEALING WAY TO INTEREST STUDENTS

The rich art traditions of Asia can be intriguing to the middle level student. It is important to balance the “exotic” attitude toward Asian art with concrete information about what the art represents. To understand Japanese art, for example, one must learn the aesthetic values of reverence for nature inherent in Japanese traditions. Soetsu Yanagi says that western artists found beauty in the human form and therefore in symmetry, while eastern artists found beauty in nature, leading to an appreciation of asymmetry. Study the elements and characteristics of Japanese, Chinese, and western gardens, and compare the symmetry in the palace gardens of Europe to the traditional gardens of China and Japan, where carefully planned asymmetry and “natural” looking rocks and trees are carefully groomed.

HIROSHIMA AND THE USE OF ATOMIC WEAPONS

Another topic I would suggest be addressed in the middle grades is that of Hiroshima and the use of atomic weapons. I was profoundly shocked when, after the September 11 destruction of the Twin Towers, I heard students stating that we should “bomb them back to the stone age,” “nuke them all.” Those of my generation grew up with a fear of nuclear weapons instilled through classroom drills to practice jumping under our desks or into bomb shelters in our neighborhoods. This isn’t to say that fear is the solution, but it does seem that if today’s students had a true sense of the horror of atomic weapons, perhaps they would be more hesitant to use these terms. So, within the context of United States history, or World War II, presenting some facts about Hiroshima (and Pearl Harbor) would be valuable. SPICE has a wonderful curriculum piece that does just that: *Hiroshima, Perspectives on the Atomic Bombing*. This curriculum includes various perspectives about the bombing, including that of Japanese and English history textbooks, and that of survivors, medical practitioners, descendants of victims, current citizens of Hiroshima, and government officials from Japan, Korea, China and the US. The culminating activity has students taking on the role of these interested parties and participating in a round table discussion about compensation and medical treatment for survivors. The multiple-perspectives focus of this unit teaches so much more than Hiroshima; it gives students skills with which to view other global issues. Learning about tragic events like this can leave students with a sense of powerlessness. A visit to the Hiroshima Peace Museum Web site (http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/index_e2.html) can offer ways for students to take action. The Kid’s Peace Station on this Web site has practical and easy-to-implement ideas for empowering students to feel that they can make a difference in the world.

LASTLY BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, STUDENTS NEED REAL EXPERIENCE

Students need to learn from teachers who have traveled, who bring their travel into the classroom through stories, photos, artifacts, and art. Once teachers feel comfortable with their knowledge of another country, they will find it easy to incorporate that knowledge into their classrooms in every possible way. Invite guests to do presentations about their travel experiences. When students travel, assist them to study about the country they plan to visit. Prepare them to

accept alternative perspectives, understand that people may have different values than their own, learn what is expected as polite behavior in another country, and learn to speak a little of the language to demonstrate their respect for the place and the people. Interact with peers by visiting schools and participating in homestay experiences. Learn to order food from a menu, navigate public transportation, shop in everyday markets. Of all the work I have done with students, this one thing, travel, is the most powerful and empowering. A student who traveled to Japan with my group during a 2003 sister school visit puts it so clearly: “If you think about why some nations and groups dislike America, is it really because the average American is a bad person, no, it’s because what they know about America is what they have gathered from American foreign policy and the media. I am not American foreign policy but I am an American and I am more an Ambassador than any corporation or politician will ever be. That is why my homestay on Ieshima Island was one of my very best moments in Japan.” Ben Nason. ■

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, G. L. (ed.). *Masterpieces of the Orient*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1977. ISBN: 0393091961
- Brown, Waka Takahashi. *Religions and Philosophies in China: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism*. Stanford: Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), 2002.
- Cheng, Amy. *Hiroshima: Perspectives on the Atomic Bombing*. Stanford: Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), 2000.
- Haugaard, Erik C. *The Samurai’s Tale*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1990. ISBN: 0395549701
- Haugaard, Erik C. *The Boy and the Samurai*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000. ISBN: 0618070397
- Haugaard, Erik C. *The Revenge of the Forty-Seven Samurai*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1995. ISBN: 0395708095
- McGuire, Margit. *Storypath: A Problem Solving Approach to Social Studies*. <http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/mm McGuire/storypath.html>
- Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. Signet, 1996. ISBN:0451526341
- Paterson, Katherine. *Of Nightingales that Weep*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1974. ISBN: 0-06-440282-7
- Paterson, Katherine. *The Master Puppeteer*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1975. ISBN: 0-06-440281-9
- Paterson, Katherine. *Sign of the Chrysanthemum*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1988. ISBN: 0-06-440232-0
- Soto, Gary. *Pacific Crossing*. Orlando: Harcourt Paperbacks, 2003. ISBN: 0152046968

PATRICIA BURLESON is a teacher in the Anacortes School District in Washington State. She serves as an instructor for educators through the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA), and as a frequent presenter for the Washington State Council for the Social Studies, the National Council for the Social Studies, and the East Asia Resource Center at the University of Washington. She has led several study tours to Japan for teachers and students in northwest Washington. Ms. Burleson is the recipient of the 2003 United States-Japan Foundation Elgin Heinz Outstanding Teacher Award, Humanities category, for her long-term commitment to teaching about Japan in the K-12 classroom. The World Affairs Council of Seattle also presented her with the World Educator Award for 2003 in recognition of her commitment to international education.