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Lesson Plan "On Leaving Asia"

Lesson Title: "On Leaving Asia (Datsu-A-Ron)": Meiji Reforms and the De-Asianization of Japan

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STANDARDS

Advanced Placement World History (College Board)

- Key Concept 5.1. Industrialization and Global Capitalism
 - V. The development and spread of global capitalism led to a variety of responses.
 - C. In a small number of states, governments promoted their own state-sponsored visions of industrialization.
- Key Concept 5.2. Imperialism and Nation-State Formation
 - II. Imperialism influenced state formation and contraction around the world.
 - A. The expansion of US and European influence over Tokugawa Japan led to the emergence of Meiji Japan.

Excerpt from Datsu-A Ron "On Leaving Asia"

From the *Jiji shinpō* newspaper, March 16, 1885

International communication has become so convenient these days that once the wind of Western civilization blows to the East, every blade of grass and every tree in the East follow what the Western wind brings. Ancient Westerners and present-day Westerners are from the same stock and are not much different from one another. The ancient ones moved slowly, but their contemporary counterparts move vivaciously at a fast pace. This is possible because present-day Westerners take advantage of the means of transportation available to them. For those of us who live in the Orient, unless we want to prevent the coming of Western civilization with a firm resolve, it is best that we cast our lot with them. If one observes carefully what is going on in today's world, one knows the futility of trying to prevent the onslaught of Western civilization. Why not float with them in the same ocean of civilization, sail the same waves, and enjoy the fruits and endeavors of civilization? The movement of a civilization is like the spread of measles. Measles in Tokyo start in Nagasaki and come eastward with the spring thaw. We may hate the spread of this communicable disease, but is there any effective way of preventing it? I can prove that it is not possible. In a communicable disease, people receive only damages. In a civilization, damages may accompany benefits, but benefits always far outweigh them, and their force cannot be stopped. This being the case, there is no point in trying to prevent their spread. A wise man encourages the spread and allows our people to get used to its ways.

Source: Kazumi Hasegawa (blog) at <http://tinyurl.com/hbpb4wh>.

The complete primary source is available in this issue's online supplements.

World History and Geography (Tennessee)

- W.16 Analyze the political, social, and industrial revolution in Japan (Meiji Restoration) and its growing role in international affairs. (C, E, H, P).

OBJECTIVES

Upon completing this lesson, the students will:

- Identify the characteristics of Western imperial powers described by Fukuzawa Yukichi in the editorial "On Leaving Asia" that was published anonymously on March 16, 1885, in the newspaper *Jiji Shinpo* and generally attributed to Fukuzawa.
- Identify the characteristics of the traditional Asian powers described by Fukuzawa Yukichi.
- Analyze the reasoning behind Fukuzawa Yukichi's recommendation that Japan break away from the traditional approach of its East Asian neighbors.
- Evaluate the attitude of Fukuzawa Yukichi and other Meiji reformers toward Western imperial powers and methods, and ascertain the place they see for Japan among world powers at the conclusion of the nineteenth century.

PROCEDURES

Introduction

Ask the students to share their perceptions of what it means to be Western and Eastern. As they share their thoughts, follow up with questions that require the students to cite specific events from previous historic coverage to support their perceptions. Steer the discussion to the context of previous discussions on Western imperialism in the nineteenth century.

Political Setting

Give a brief lecture (or review readings or past materials) on the Meiji Restoration period. Emphasize the experience of China in the Opium Wars and Japanese reactions to the unequal treaty demands of the United States and Europeans in the period leading up to the Meiji Restoration. Characterize the Meiji reformers and their goals, and provide a brief background on Fukuzawa Yukichi.

Primary Source Reading

Fukuzawa Yukichi, "On Leaving Asia (Datsu-A Ron)," *Jiji shinpō* newspaper, March 16, 1885. Document provided by Kazumi Hasegawa, Lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Washington. Available at <http://tinyurl.com/hbpb4wh>.

Hand out the primary source reading by Fukuzawa Yukichi and hand out or display the focus task and questions. Ask the students to read the piece and answer the questions. Pause during the reading and ask the students to share a few of the earliest criteria they have found for either

Western or Asian nations. Walk them through the textual reference to support these criteria to model the process for the rest of the exercise.

Student Focus Talk and Questions

(Handout or Displayed on Board/Projection):

- Create a chart that shows Western nations in one column and Asian nations in a second column.
 - As you read the primary source, list at least five qualities in each category.
 - Support each quality you list with a specific reference to the text that best supports your claim.
- Answer the following questions in a short response narrative form when you have completed your chart:
 - Why does Fukuzawa Yukichi believe that Japan must embark on a program of de-Asianization?
 - How does the author feel about Westernization and the Western powers?
 - What place in East Asia and the world does the author propose for a reformed Japan?

Conclusion

Time permitting, lead the students in a brief discussion of their narrative responses. Try to draw out conclusions about Fukuzawa Yukichi's perspective on the Western nations, and the place that he and other Meiji reformers saw Japan occupying in East Asia and the world stage at the conclusion of the century.

Evaluation

Formative

Observe the students' comments as they contrast their ideas of Western and Eastern culture in the context of the mid-nineteenth century. Adjust discussion and lecture to the level of familiarity with the historic context that the students illustrate during the opening discussion.

Summative

Evaluate the students' charts and written responses to the focus questions. Pay particular attention to the quality of the text they cite to support their claims.■

RESOURCES

Commentary on "Datsu-A Ron" and later Japanese scholars' perceptions of De-Asianization.

Korhonen, Pekka. "Leaving Asia? The Meaning of Datsu-A and Japan's Modern History." *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 12, issue 9, vol. 3 (2014). <http://tinyurl.com/zf7azmj>.

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