

CURRICULUM MATERIALS REVIEWS

U.S.-Japan Relations

The View from Both Sides of the Pacific

PART 1: Episodes in the History of U.S.-Japan Relations: Case Studies of Conflict, Conflict Management, and Resolution

By Gary Mukai et al.

Stanford, CA

Japan Project, Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE),
LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 1993

For the past decade, at least, and probably for the past two, there has been a steadily increasing demand for useful materials on East Asia for use in K-12 classrooms. There are numerous reasons for this demand. In some parts of the country there has been a dramatic increase in the number of East Asians, particularly Japanese, resulting from the establishment of American operations by Japanese companies, or of Japanese-American joint ventures. In some areas, school systems have mandated the study of East Asia at various points in the curriculum, and in many cases, there simply has been an increase in curiosity among teachers, students, and others, as Japanese and other East Asian peoples have become more visible in American life and have come to play a more prominent role in America's changing fortunes.

In response to this growing need, institutions of higher education around the country have produced large quantities of material intended primarily to provide K-12 teachers either with basic substantive knowledge about Asia or with information about sources of such materials as videos, films, texts, study guides, bibliographies, and the like. There also has been a steady stream of classroom materials for students. For a number of reasons, the quality of these materials has varied widely.

In this setting, one of the most welcome developments in recent years has been the appearance of classroom materials developed by Gary Mukai and his colleagues in the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE). The unit under consideration here is an excellent illustration. As the author himself puts it, Unit One "introduces students to conflict on personal, group, international, and global levels and to basic conflict resolution/management alternatives" (p. 9).

The core of the text consists of six lessons, each one based on a phase of U.S.-Japan relations. After an examination of the broad topics "Early Interactions" and "Japanese Immigration to the United States," the focus of the guide is upon "Pearl Harbor," "Hiroshima," "The Occupation," and "The Fiftieth Anniversary of Pearl Harbor." Each lesson begins with a concise historical narrative that places the topic in context. This is followed by materials ranging from government papers, letters, and other primary documents, through photographs and excerpts from published materials, including prose works, political cartoons, and comic books. There is also a VHS



Unit One "introduces students to conflict on personal, group, international, and global levels and to basic conflict resolution/management alternatives" . . . Gary Mukai

video containing numerous images that further enrich each lesson. (Earlier editions came equipped with sets of slides rather than a video, and users undoubtedly would have differing opinions as to which visual format is more effective in K-12 classrooms.)

In each lesson, students are given the information needed to make policy decisions on the topic, so that they can approximate the challenges confronted by those who actually made the decisions at the time and then had to handle the consequences. They are also given guidelines for conflict management and resolution, so that they can experiment with alternative approaches to each example, and in the process gain some insight into decision making. Each lesson also makes it possible for students to review and evaluate what they have learned.

In sum, the text has multiple aims. On one level, it seeks merely to inform students in more detail about relations between Japan and the United States, and in particular, to inform them more accurately about the range and nature of conflict between the two countries. On another level, it seeks to educate students about the nature of conflict, its causes and dynamics, and approaches to its management and/or resolution. Thus, the text is at once a primer in the history of trans-Pacific relations, a set of practical exer-

cises on conflict management and resolution, and an introduction to some of the basic precepts of peace studies.

Effectively combining these three characteristics, the guide cannot fail to play a vital role in helping students not only to overcome egregious stereotypes about trans-Pacific conflicts, but also to begin learning how to move beyond international relations predicated on confrontation and conflict toward more cooperative and constructive ways of interacting with Japanese and other East Asian peoples. ■

Chuck Yates

CHUCK YATES is a Professor of History at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, where he has been on the faculty since receiving a Ph.D. in East Asian Studies from Princeton University. He has published essays in journals in both Japan and the U.S. and is the author of a book on Saigō Takamori, published by Kegan Paul in 1995.