

Konnichiwa: Hello Japan

Summary

This lesson is designed to introduce students to the ideas of "similarity" and "difference" in identity and community relationships. Students will learn about Japan, Japanese customs and traditions, and Japanese people to understand how Japanese cultures and communities and U.S. cultures and communities are similar and different. Students will become aware of the role Japanese culture has played in their own community/communities here in Utah.

Time Frame

10 class periods of 45 minutes each

Life Skills

Aesthetics, Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Character, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

Day One

World Map
Note Cards (2)
String

Day Two

Tsutsui story from Missing Stories

Day Three and Four

Ingredients for "[rice balls](#)"
Popcorn
Chopsticks

Day Five

Pictures of popular sports in Japan--baseball, sumo, martial arts (see attached websites).
Kids sports information in Japan (see attached website).

Day Six

- [Pictures of Kimonos](#)

Day Seven

Items for tea ceremony (tea bowl, tea, tea cups, and napkins)
Construction paper
Crayons
Flower arrangement

Background for Teachers

Teachers should have an understanding of Japanese culture, how it is similar and different than U.S. culture. It is important to know a short history of Japan as well as the reason the Japanese practice the customs and traditions that are important to their culture. Teachers can learn much of this information from the handouts and websites attached to this lesson plan. Teachers can also refer to the attached vocabulary list to help students understand unfamiliar terms.

Student Prior Knowledge

Students should be aware that there are different countries in the world (even if they do not specifically know about Japan) and that the people who live in these countries practice different customs, traditions, languages, etc. This lesson will teach them much of this information, as well as

enhance their specific understanding of Japan and its relationship to communities in the United States (and specifically Utah).

Intended Learning Outcomes

- Students will become aware of Japan and its geographical location in the world.
- Students will be able to recognize the similarities and differences in Japanese and U.S. culture.
- Students will learn the ways Japanese culture has contributed to U.S. culture.
- Students will learn how Japanese culture is present in their Utah community.

Instructional Procedures

Day One

It is important to start this lesson plan with a conversation about "similarity" and "difference." Children need to understand that people, places and things are both different and similar. Make sure the class understands these two terms and how they relate to who we each are as people (for example, some children are tall, some are short, some have red hair and some have brown, and it is these things that make us similar and different).

Review the following list with students in order to help them understand how people are similar and/or different.

- We live in a big world with many people.
- People's physical features make them unique.
- People have similar personal/life needs: shelter, clothing, language, food, education.
- People meet their needs in different ways depending upon their culture and where they live.
- People live in many different parts of the world.
- The United States is home to people from many parts of the world.
- Some people live in a country called Japan.

Share with the class some facts about Japan (either the ones listed below or facts taken from the attached websites--"Japan Quick Facts" and/or "Interesting Facts about Japan").

- Japan is a small country with lots of people.
- Rice is an important food in Japan.
- The most common language spoken in Japan is Japanese.
- The Japanese language can be written four ways.
- 99% of elementary aged children are enrolled in school.
- Three of Japan's favorite sports include: Martial Arts, Sumo Wrestling, and Baseball.

Have the class decide which facts about Japan are similar or different than facts about the United States.

Children will locate Japan on a map.

Display a world map and review the seven continents with the students. Highlight (isolate in some way) the continent of Asia and several of its countries. Explain to the class that many different people live in Asia and many appear to have similar physical features, language, and cultural traditions. However, each country in Asia and its people have characteristics that are unique to them. Help the class locate Japan on the map and mark the country with a note card and a pushpin. Then help the children locate Utah on a map and mark it with a note card and a pushpin. Attach a string between the two countries (wrapped around the two pushpins) and estimate (using the map key) how many miles separates the two locations. Help the students understand how far away this is (for example, it takes 12 hours to fly to Japan).

Begin a Know-Want to Know-Learned (K-W-L) chart with the class. Begin with what they know or think they know about Japan, then what they want to know, and end with what they have learned in this class. (Repeat the process of completing this chart in each class session).

Day Two

Introduce students to the story of Hisaye Tsutsui from [Missing Stories](#) (pg. 234). Either read the story to the students or tell the story to the students through your own interpretation/reading of the story (depending on the level of your students).

While discussing the story, emphasize the journey to America, the cultural differences (marriage by proxy and traditional dress). Show students pictures associated with this journey (steamship, trunk, Kimono, etc).

Ask the students about any travel they have done (some students might have immigrated or relocated to the United States). Ask about their experiences. How are they similar or different?

Ask students what they would take with them on a trip of this distance. Brainstorm and make a list on the board.

Conclude by having students fill in K-W-L chart.

Day Three and Four

Begin by reading to the class some of the unique facts and information about [Japanese food](#). Make a list on the board of all the food the students eat that they think are Japanese or have their origins in Japan. Discuss how rice is one of the most important foods in Japan.

Make [rice balls](#) with the class.

Teach students how to use chopsticks (see attached website--"how to eat with chopsticks"). Explain that these are the primary eating implements used by the Japanese for eating. Provide popcorn for the students to practice with chopsticks.

If possible, this is a good (and fun) day to have a guest speaker come to class. Another teacher in the school who is Japanese might be able to talk to the class about their family experience in Utah. One of the students in the class might have a family member who could talk to the class or you might know someone who is Japanese and could talk to the students. If a guest speaker is not available to come to class, doing an origami project with the students (traditional Japanese art). If Origami paper is not available use construction paper cut into perfect squares (younger children might need help folding the paper, but this project can be done with students as young as Kindergarten). (see website, "how to fold an Origami cat and dog"). Learn more about [Origami](#).

Conclude class by filling in the K-L-W chart.

Day Five

Show children pictures of the three most popular sports in Japan (sumo, martial arts, and baseball). See which they know and why they think they are important/popular in Japan.

Explain that martial arts are studied to promote a healthy mind and body. Baseball was brought to Japan by American service men and television. Sumo wrestling is an ancient sport in Japan, it is both spiritual and athletic, combining ritual and battles of strength.(See attached website: "Kids Web Japan" for more information on sports in Japan).

Ask the class which of these sports they have participated in and which are different from the sports they play.

Discuss what they think the "meaning" of the sports they play are. What do they learn from the sports they play? (teamwork, winning/losing, athletic skill/health, etc).

If it is possible, invite a martial arts instructor (or someone in the school who does martial arts) to talk about the sport and teach the children some of the most common movements.

Conclude the class by filling in the K-W-L chart.

Day Six

Discuss the difference between Japanese and U.S. clothing. Discuss traditional clothing in Japan.

Discuss the significance of the Kimono. Return to the story of Hisaye Tsutsui and the importance of the Kimono (see attached website "Kimono" for more information).

Discuss the cultural differences between Japanese and western culture. Ask the students about the times that they wear "traditional" clothing or when are the times they have to dress "formal" or "traditional." How is this type of dress similar to and different from Japanese culture?

If you have access to a Komono bring it in and share it with the class.

If not, then share pictures with the class. Have them make observations about the Kimono (color, design, etc) and what these might mean.

Conclude by filling in the K-W-L chart.

Day Seven

Discuss the tea ceremony with students (see attachment "tea ceremony"). Have a tea ceremony with the students as a way to close their session on Japan and Japanese culture.

End the class period by filling in the K-W-L chart. Spend extra time to discuss the "Learned" section of this chart. Return to the idea of "similarity" and "difference," discuss with the students what they learned from this lesson.

Bibliography

Kelen, L.G, & Stone, E.H. (2000). Missing Stories: An Oral History of Ethnic Minority Groups in Utah. Utah State University Press. Logan, UT.

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