

ESSAYS

Editor's Note:

The author of the short essay that follows is Patience Berkman, high school teacher and co-recipient of the first Elgin Heinz Outstanding Teacher Award. Named after a pioneer in educating American students about Asia, the Heinz award is sponsored by the United States-Japan Foundation. This annual award is presented to two pre-college teachers, one in humanities and one in Japanese language. We are pleased to publish Ms. Berkman's essay and look forward to publishing co-recipient Norman Masuda's essay in a future issue.

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.



Photo courtesy of Patience Berkman.

Behind the Headlines

Suggestions for Teaching about Japan and Asia

By Patience Berkman

Superb materials on Asia await the motivated teacher/learner. Following introductory suggestions, topics that can serve as "points of connection" for humanities and social science courses are listed.

GETTING STARTED

- Attend National Consortium for Teaching About Asia (NCTA) seminars, now available in 44 states. Participants receive 30 hours of instruction, \$500 in free materials, \$500 stipends, and build a network of colleagues and experts (www.nctasia.org).
- Look up the Japan and China Workbooks at the *Asia for Educators* web site, Columbia University (<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>). Exemplary materials abound. Ron Knapp's geography section on China is a standout.
- *Introduction to Japan: A Workbook*, published by Youth for Understanding International Exchange, is the best introductory text for middle and high school students, touching on history, "mutual perceptions," economics, education, U.S.–Japan relations, and more. It was researched and written by Linda S. Wojtan in 1998. The web site for Youth for Understanding International Exchange is www.yfu.org. Readers who want to purchase the material can call 1-800-TEENAGE or send an inquiry to 6400 Goldsboro Road, Suite 100, Bethesda, MD 20817.
- Humanities units on China and Japan, published by the Social Science Education Consortium in Boulder, Colorado (SSEC), are packed with useful materials. For JAPAN, note units on Tokugawa, Meiji, and Imperial Japan, and the Occupation; for CHINA, find new units on the Song and Ming Dynasties, and Revolutionary China. These materials include scholarly historical essays, a wealth of primary source material including art and literature, carefully crafted lessons, and resource lists that provide for a year's course on East Asia. SSEC is in transition, but units are available for loan at NCTA sites, which house excellent resource centers (www.nctasia.org). Materials on Asia from the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE) at Stanford University are also outstanding; the thematic unit *MEGACITIES* focuses on demographics and the

environment (<http://spice.stanford.edu/>). A unit under development is entitled *Ethnic Minority Groups in China*.

- National Clearinghouse for U.S.–Japan Studies publishes *Japan Digests*, short, lucid, eminently useful pieces covering a range of topics. www.indiana.edu/~japan/Digests/index.htm.
- Subscribe to *Education About Asia*, and order back issues. Articles initiate scholarly and pedagogical conversation, and take neophyte and expert alike into new realms. For subscription information, see <http://www.aasianst.org/eaatoc.htm>.

EXCELLENT LITERATURE AND FILM CAPTURE VOICES

FROM AFAR AND BRING THEM INTO FOCUS

Taking time to probe behind the headlines can dispel myths, sharpen understanding of differences and commonalities, and greatly enrich one's teaching. The topics listed below provide points of connection for a variety of disciplines. Newcomers to Asian studies should begin by reading the background articles, or by developing one unit well and building out from there.

Belief Systems: "Chinese Religion: Ideas for Effective Instruction at the High School Level" by Diana Marston Wood. *Education About Asia*, Spring 1997 (Volume 2, Number 1).

History: "Using the Concept 'Feudalism' to Compare Japan with Europe: Words of Caution," also by Wood. *Education about Asia*, Winter 2000 (Volume 5, Number 3). A related literature unit, *Knight/Samurai and Lord/Daimyo: Should We Compare Europe and Japan?* is available at www.smith.edu/fcceaas/home.html.

EDOMATSU Web site provides woodblock prints and a delightful virtual tour of Edo (Tokyo) during the 18th century, age of the Tokugawa shoguns www.us-japan.org/EdoMatsu/.

Imperial Japan: Expansion and War by Jonathan N. Lipman, Kathleen Woods Masalski, and Alan Chalk. Published in 1995 by the SSEC. Lessons move students beyond the traditional historical narrative and include

provocative excerpts from literature. For further information about availability of this publication, contact the Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., P.O. Box 21270, Boulder, CO, 80308-4270, 303-492-8154.

The Prize video series. Program 4, *War and Oil*, will launch animated discussion about economic motives in Japan and Germany preceding World War II. Produced and directed in 1992 with Daniel Yergin as historical advisor. Available through Cambridge Energy Research Associates (CERA), Cambridge, MA, www.cera.com. To purchase, send inquiries to info@cera.com or call 617-497-6446.

"Top Ten Things to Know About Japan in the late 1990s," by Carol Gluck. *Education About Asia*, Fall 1998 (Volume 3, Number 2). The Master speaks.

Mysteries: "Stories of Crime and Detection: Using the Mystery Formula as an Introduction to Asian Literatures and Cultures," by Joan Cook Wilson. *Education About Asia*, thematic issue on teaching Asian literatures, Spring 2001 (Volume 6, Number 1). Try one of the Judge Dee mysteries from China.

Points and Lines, by Seichō Matsumoto, enthusiastically reviewed by students, is compelling, with train and ferry routes (geography!) central to contemporary plot. (Kodansha International, 1986). Available at www.amazon.com.

For adults, *Death of a Red Heroine*, by Qiu Xiaolong, is a sophisticated mystery set in 1990's Shanghai, touching on sensitive issues of political loyalties and temptations among high party cadres. (Soho Press, Inc., 2000). Available at www.amazon.com.

Asia through Film: *To Live*, directed by Zhang Yimou, presents an epic sweep through 20th century China, following one family's misfortunes. Available at www.amazon.com.

This film, used with *Asian Educational Media Service* (AEMS) materials (background essays, propaganda posters, lesson plans, and more), could form the cornerstone of a course (<http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/html/lessonplans/guides.html>).

Shall We Dance? This poignant take on the salaryman in Japan is also featured at the AEMS lesson plan web site.

Not One Less. This coming of age film by Zhang Ziyi presents an irrepressible female protagonist in a needy school in rural China, building to a powerful finale. *The Road Home* is another winner by director Zhang. Both are available at www.amazon.com.

DEBATE THIS!

Engaging students through controversy

Democracy for China? *Gate of Heavenly Peace*, directed and produced by Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon, is a feature-length documentary that presents the Tiananmen Square incident and opens discussions exploring the feasibility of democracy for

China. Rental and purchase information can be obtained from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gate/>. Students can debate this issue, using PBS Frontline materials found at the same site, and U.S. Institute of Peace, "Muddling Towards Democracy," <http://www.usip.org/pubs/reports.html>.

Independence for Tibet? What is fact? What is opinion? Pit www.china-embassy.org/ vs. "Free Tibet" web sites and help students discern bias.

The U.S. bombing of Hiroshima was justified/not justified. An excellent starting point is a unit in Brown University's Choices for the 21st Century Education Program titled *Ending the War Against Japan: Science, Morality, and the Atomic Bomb*. Information can be obtained about this unit at <http://www.choices.edu/edsummaries/bombpage.html>.

Dam it? "The Three Gorges Dam: Energy, the Environment, and the New Emperors," by Patience Berkman. *Education About Asia*, Spring 1998 (Volume 3, Number 1). Teachers love this balanced article, with BIG MAP directions and lesson plans. Do the problems of the Big Dam outweigh the benefits?

PATIENCE BERKMAN chairs the History Department at Newton Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Newton, MA, teaching World History and Twentieth Century History. She regularly presents workshops on Asia at local, regional, and occasionally national conferences. Her article, "The Three Gorges Dam: Energy, the Environment, and the New Emperors," appeared in the Spring, 1998 issue of *EAA* (Volume 3, Number 1).



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