

Lesson: Japanese Work Ethic: A Source of Pride and Challenges

Subject: Current Events, AP Human Geography

Grade: 9-12

Length: three 90 minute classes (one day intro, one day project work, one day presentations)

Lesson Objective:

Students will be able to examine the concept of karoshi in Japanese current events, with an emphasis on the government’s response to the issue. Students will be able to analyze reasons for valuing strong work ethic in Japan while also considering challenges that come from emphasis on this same cultural value.

Standards Addressed:

(Missouri Learning Standards and ISTE Standards)

SS5 1.6, 3.5: Analyze major patterns and issues with regard to population distribution, demographics, settlements, migrations, cultures and economic systems in the United States and world

SS5 1.10: Describe physical characteristics and human characteristics that make specific places unique

ISTE Standard 3c: students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.

ISTE Standard 7c: Students contribute constructively to project teams, assuming various roles and responsibilities to work effectively toward a common goal.

ISTE Standard 7d: Students explore local and global issues and use collaborative technologies to work with others to investigate solutions.

Materials/Resources and Preparation

article: “Overworked in Japan: why it is an epidemic” by Edoardo Campanella, *Foreign Affairs*. Oct 12, 2016
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2016-10-12/overworked-japan>

article: “The Japanese Art of (Not) Sleeping”, by Brigette Steger, *BBC- Future*. May 6, 2016
<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20160506-the-japanese-art-of-not-sleeping>

access to digital source: OECD website
http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV

lecture: Japanese Work Ethic: A source of pride and challenges

handout: Public Service Announcement Proposal Guidelines- instructions, rubrics and templates included
- students can complete the project digitally (student laptop required) or by creating a physical artifact (poster board, markers, etc. required)

Essential Question(s):

1. What causes groups of people to be associated with specific cultural values?
2. Why might people associate Japan with a hard working culture?
3. What contributes to the value of work ethic in Japanese culture?
4. What positive results have come from Japanese work ethic?
5. How might Japanese emphasis on long working hours and devotion to work cause challenges for the country?
6. How should the government and businesses address the problem of karoshi?

DOK or Bloom’s Taxonomy

- Bloom’s IV: Analysis; DOK 4
- Bloom’s I, II, III: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application; DOK 3, 4
- Bloom’s III: Application; DOK 3, 4
- Bloom’s V, VI: Synthesis, Evaluation; DOK 4
- Bloom’s III: Application; DOK 3, 4
- Bloom’s IV, V: Analysis, Synthesis; DOK 3, 4

Learning Progression – Instructional Sequence:

1. Students will be posed with the following questions:
 - *Do you think there is such a thing as a collective “work ethic” that can be applied to specific groups of people?*

For example:

 - *Are Americans associated with a “work ethic”?*
 - *Do regions of the United States have a “work ethic”?*
 - *Are specific generations associated with a “work ethic”?*

How do groups of people acquire a label in regards to work ethic?

- *Possible answers: shared history, homogeneity, work ethic is explicitly taught*

When thinking of Japan, what comes to mind in terms of work ethic?

2. Students will read and annotate the article, “Overworked in Japan: why it is an epidemic”, written by Edoardo Campanella of Foreign Affairs Magazine. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2016-10-12/overworked-japan>
3. After completing the article reading, students will take notes over a lecture and discussion about Japanese work ethic and karoshi. See lecture summary:

Claim: Japanese culture is regarded as having devoted work ethic.

Possible reasons for the collective Japanese ethnicity being assigned this label:

- *History of agrarian and craftsmen lifestyle- where hard work was necessary and valued*
- *Confucian ideas spread to Japan- emphasis on pride and honor to family*
- *Post-WWII, Japan rebuilt its economy based on human capital*
- *Work ethic and collective responsibility is taught in schools- students clean their classrooms, they are required to take stringent entrance exams (requiring devoted work time)*
 - o *(Give example of 11th grade student who I asked in Kyoto about sports or club involvement- her answer was that she had “retired” from the handball club. When asked about “retiring” from a club, students responded that they gave up participating in clubs and extra activities in order to devote time to school and cram schools in preparation for their college entrance exams)*
- *Due to regimented schedules surrounding preparation for entrance exams, perhaps Japanese aren’t sure what to do free time?*
- *Cultural attitudes make it difficult to change working patterns for fear of appearing like a poor worker*
- *Other reasons?*

What positive outcomes can come from this value for work ethic?

Possible answers:

- *Source of national pride*
- *Collective responsibility results in safe, clean environment*
- *Good reputation on international level*
- *Good for business investment opportunities*
- *Time spent working is less time spent on vices*

What negative outcomes can come from this value for work ethic?

Possible answers:

- *Karoshi- discuss the article (see above)*
- *Mental health issues; sleep deprivation*
- *Inemuri- “present while sleeping” – example from train in Tokyo*
 - o *Read the article, “The Japanese Art of (Not) Sleeping”, by Brigitte Steger, BBC- Future <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20160506-the-japanese-art-of-not-sleeping>*
- *Negative international attention*

- People choosing to not have relationships- no time for marriage, kids
- Women not participating in the workforce due to need for elderly care, child care- hurts economy
- People not involved in leisure activities meant to stimulate the economy
- People not involved in community building
- Inefficient working habits
 - o Share GDP per hour worked was \$39.40 in Japan in 2014- by comparison, Germany's GDP per hour worked was \$59, France was \$60.3, the UK was \$47.70, and the U.S. was \$62.50; collectively the EU GDP per hour worked was \$46.80 and the G7 countries was \$54.50- (of which Japan belongs) - http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV

What is the government doing to prevent these negative outcomes, particularly karoshi?

Possible answers:

- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addressing the issue- put "work reforms" at top of policy agenda in August 2016
- Abe plans on chairing a council for the "Realization of Work Style Reforms"- intends to create a proposal that would restrict overtime hours- due In March 2017
- Government will have to work with corporations- may find resistance to penalty proposals
- Some local governments are already at work on the issue
 - o Tokyo's governor established teams to force municipal employees to leave work by 8pm
 - o Turn off lights to signal end of work day
 - o Other city leaders addressing work-childcare-nursing balance- paternal leave idea, no-overtime days
- The government began "public-enlightenment" programs to bring attention to the risks of overwork and implemented counseling systems
- Government proposed passing a law to make it a legal requirement for Japanese workers to take at least five days of paid vacation each year

4. Assign performance-based assessment: Public Service Announcement Proposal: Addressing Overwork in Japan

Summary of performance-based assessment: (see handout for complete project guidelines)

- Students (assigned to groups of 3) will do further research on the issue of karoshi and will create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) proposal for the Japanese government that communicates their understanding of the issue, raises awareness about the causes and consequences of overwork, and motivates people to make changes in their working habits.

Culminating Performance Task: Each team will present a PSA proposal and storyboard to the class for critique.

Differentiation Strategies (Enrichment and/or Extensions):

(modification/extension) Students can create a non-linguistic representation of the impacts (both positive and negative) of the cultural value for long working hours in Japan.

(extension) Students can research steps being taken by the Japanese government to prepare for the 2020 Olympics. Are there initiatives in place to address challenges or promote areas of pride they would like highlighted during the games?

(extension) Ask students to create a filmed PSA based off of their proposal and storyboard. Students will use Adobe Premier to create their 30 second PSA, complete with visuals (either video of themselves or open source images from the internet), voiceovers, and music. Each group will then present the video to their peers.

(extension- for fun) Have students vote on the best project proposal and award the winning team with Japanese treats!

Describe the formal/informal assessment used throughout this lesson to meet student's needs and evaluate learning?

Student understanding will be informally assessed during interactive lecture through the form of questions

Students will be formally assessed through the creation of a public service announcement proposal (see rubric)

