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Emulation and Innovation in the Meiji Period:
Japanese Baseball

Objective

- To illustrate the pattern of emulation and innovation in Japanese history (Meiji Period) through the example of baseball.

Level

- 6th – 12th grades

Time frame

- Lesson: three 45-minute class periods
- Optional Background Lesson: One 45-minute class period
- Optional research Project and Presentation: two weeks

Materials

- Primary Lesson on the Meiji Period
 - Chapter on the Meiji Period from a World History textbook (e.g. McDougal Little *Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction*)
 - Excerpts from *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukusawa*. DBQ. Asia for Educators
 - Letter from Emperor Meiji to Ulysses Grant. DBQ. Asia for Educators.
 - “Commodore Perry and Japan”
http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_perry.htm
 - For the teacher, Asia for Educators offers a synopsis of the Meiji Period at
http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_meiji.htm
 - “Baseball began on My Family’s Farm in Maine.” All Things Considered. NPR. Podcast.
<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/03/28/291421915/japanese-baseball-began-on-my-familys-farm-in-maine>
 - “Japanese Baseball is AWESOME <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0ldHbIQOc8>
 - “7 Ways Japanese Baseball is different from American Baseball”
<https://theculturetrip.com/asia/japan/articles/7-ways-japanese-baseball-is-different-from-american-baseball/>
 - Worksheet 1
- Optional Background lesson (For this lesson, students will need to have already studied the Tang and Song Dynasties in China)

- Chapter on early Japanese history (Nara Period, Heian Period, Kamakura Shogunate) from a World History textbook (e.g. *McDougal Little Ancient World History: Patterns of Interaction*, Chapter 12:2).
- Background Worksheet 1
- Project and Presentation on Emulation and Innovation in Modern Japanese Society
 - Access to the internet
 - Access to laptop computers with PowerPoint, Google Presentation, or other presentation software
 - Laptop projector and screen

Background Lesson (Optional):

Preparation:

Assign chapter and questions from chapter on early Japanese History for homework.

Lesson:

1. Distribute Background Worksheet 1
2. Have students use their books to define the terms on the worksheet.
3. Write the word “Emulation” on the board.
4. Ask the students, “Why would someone emulate someone else?”
5. Write student responses on the board. Discuss.
6. Write “Japan Before Nara Period” on the board.
7. Write the following characteristics of Pre-Nara Japan on the board and explain them.
 - a. Shinto was the primary religion of Pre-Nara Japan.
 - b. The geography of Japan made communication and organization very difficult.
 - c. There was an emperor, but feudal lords, called Daimyo, controlled regional territories and fought frequently with one another.
 - d. Japan was decentralized and chaotic.
8. Write “Why would the Japanese emperor want to emulate China?”
9. Write student responses on the board.
10. Write “innovation” on the board. Ask students to define “innovation”. Write student responses on the board.
11. Ask students, what motivates a person to innovate? Write student responses on the board.
12. Have students fill out the chart on Background Worksheet 1
13. Discuss answers.

Meiji Period Lesson:

Preparation:

Assign chapter and questions from Meiji Period Chapter/ Chapter section in the textbook for homework (eg. Chapter 12:2 of McDougal Little *Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction*)

Day 1:

1. If you did not do the above background lesson, write the words “emulation” and “innovation” on the board. Otherwise skip to step 5.
2. Ask students to define the terms. Write student responses on the board.
3. Ask, “Why would someone want to emulate someone else?” Write student responses on the board. Discuss.
4. Ask, “What motivates an individual to innovate?” Write student responses on the board. Discuss.
5. Write, “1854” and describe the arrival of Matthew Perry to Edo (Modern Tokyo).
6. Have students read “Commodore Perry and Japan” and the letters of Millard Fillmore to the Japanese government and answer questions 1-5. Complete for homework.

Day 2

1. Review questions 1-5. Perhaps write student answers on the board or have students write answers on the board.
2. Ask students, what do you think the Japanese are going to want to learn from the U.S. and other industrialized countries? Write responses on the board.
3. Have students read Letter from Meiji Emperor to Ulysses Grant and answer questions. Discuss.
4. Show pictures of Iwakura Japanese mission to the U.S. and Europe. Discuss.
5. Ask, what do you think will surprise the Japanese when they visit the industrialized countries?
6. Write responses on the board.
7. Have students read Yukichi Fukusawa’s memoirs and answer questions. Discuss.

Day 3

1. Go over questions and discuss Yukichi Fukusawa’s memoirs.
2. Say, Yukichi Fukusawa’s trip to the United States created a lot of interest in learning English in Japan.
3. Project the images from the NPR podcast page and show the picture of Horace Wilson’s family.
4. Point to Horace Wilson and say, “this man, Horace Wilson, was one of the Americans who went to Japan in the 1870s to teach English. He actually taught them Baseball. Since then, baseball has become the most popular professional sport in Japan and many Japanese players have been selected to play in the Major Leagues in the United States. This sport is one of many cultural changes that Japan underwent in an attempt to emulate the West during the Meiji Period. Over the years, the Japanese have changed this sport to make it uniquely Japanese.”
5. Play the 5 minute podcast from NPR. Discuss. Play a video of a Japanese baseball game like “Japanese Baseball is AWESOME.” Discuss the differences between American and Japanese Baseball and write the differences they observe on the board.
6. Some things to point out: In Japan, the fans only cheer when their team is batting. There is a different cheer for each batter. When your team is on the field, you sit down and let the other team’s fans cheer. The fans are very respectful of one another. The fans do not question the referees. The game can end in a tie.
7. Project “7 Ways Japanese Baseball is different from American Baseball.” Discuss each item.

Project on Emulation and Innovation in Modern Japanese Society:

Assign groups to put together a 5-minute presentation that shows how Japan copied (emulated) a cultural trait or technology from the west then created something new (innovated). Students may use the internet for their research.

The 5-minute group presentation must include:

1. Emulation—show that Japan copied the cultural trait or technology
2. Innovation—show how Japan improved on the cultural trait or technology or transformed the cultural trait or technology into something uniquely Japanese.

Possible Topics include:

1. Japanese soccer
2. Japanese Pop Music
3. 1964 Olympics in Tokyo
4. Japanese Trains
5. Japanese Cars (Toyota or Honda)
6. Japanese Motorcycles (Yamaha or Suzuki)