

Creating a Memoir of a Japanese Member of Society During the Edo Period Grade 8 Social Studies – Alberta, Canada

Introduction:

An overarching theme of the Grade 8 Social Studies course is “Worldviews”. Throughout the year, the students have been learning about how worldviews are formed, how various aspects can influence that formation, and how worldviews can change due to a multitude of factors. Earlier in the year, they looked at the shift in worldview that occurred in Europe from the Middle ages to the Renaissance – later they studied the chaotic worldview changes that occurred following the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, and how two opposing worldviews led to that outcome. Now the students are inquiring into how the isolation of Japan during the Edo period (under the Tokugawa Shogunate) affects a society, when they are completely closed off from the outside world, and what also happens to the worldview of a society that is then expected to rapidly adopt a more “Westernized” or “Industrialized” worldview during the Meiji Period.

Additionally, the students have been learning about “Primary and Secondary Sources” and have been involved in tasks in which they seek out sources and critically analyse the effectiveness in terms of the values and limitations of the sources.

In addition to this, the PBS Documentary – Japan:Memoirs of a Secret Empire – has been shown to the students (in small parts – not in it’s entirety) to provide an alternate visual-based source – also due to the fact that the content is largely based off of actual memoirs (primary sources) that were written by various members of society – as well as foreign visitors – during the Edo Period. In particular, the second part – “The Will of the Shogun” does a good job providing an overview of the lives of various members of society – including farmers, samurai, women, etc.

Task:

The students will write a “memoir” from the perspective of a member of Japanese society from the Edo Period. Through this memoir – they will express their understanding of how various members of society were affected by the isolation of Japan during the Edo period.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will show their understanding of how the Shogun was able to maintain control of Japan due to the strict isolation laws that were imposed
2. Students will learn that isolation created unique opportunities as well as challenges for various members of Japanese society.
3. Students will learn about how Japans general worldview was largely controlled by the will of the Shogun during this time period.

Resources:

PBS Documentary - *Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire*

<https://www.pbs.org/empires/japan/index.html>

A good resource to locate Japanese Primary Sources:

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/ps/ps_japan.htm

Student Instructions:

Drawing from the information that you have learned thus far about the Worldview of Japan during the Edo Period and the affect that the isolation laws had on various members of Japanese society, you will take on the role of any member of society from Edo-era Japan and write a memoir from their perspective.

Remember: As discussed in class and as was illustrated by the PBS documentary, a memoir is essentially a journal – or diary – written in the first person as an account of the person’s experiences.

The details:

Time: The year 1700CE

Place: Edo (or surrounding area)

People: Possible Roles: farmer, samurai, artisan, Christian missionary, laborer, a woman, book seller, Daimyo, guard, monk, or pick another role of interest if you like.

Elements you must address:

- a) daily life
- b) quality of life (how easy or hard it was)
- c) freedoms or lack of freedoms they were entitled to
- d) mention how someone in another role would have treated your person and indicate in the words of your character, why the other person would have responded to them that way (the purpose of this is for you to demonstrate your understanding of another perspective at this time).

Format: A memoir would be like a journal entry so it should follow the format of a journal.

- a) Date (could be multiple entries from multiple days if you wish – to show a progression)
- b) write in first person
- c) two pages in length
- d) Include a Chicago-Style bibliography at the end of the assignment to show where you got your information from.

Assessment:

My school is an IB World School – and the grade 8 social studies course falls under the IB’s Middle Years Program (MYP) Individuals and Societies. What follows is the assessment that I will be using as required by the MYP Standards and Practices – and specifically modified to suit this task (within the descriptors). The MYP uses a criterion referenced based system of assessment. In this case, I will be assessing two of the four criteria – Communicating and Thinking Critically.

Criterion C: Communicating

iii. create a reference list and cite sources of information

Maximum: 8

Achievement level	Level Descriptor
0	The student does not reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1-2	The student: iii. lists sources of information inconsistently – perhaps missing most sources and elements of the citations.
3-4	The student: iii. creates an adequate reference list though citations contain a number of errors.
5-6	The student: iii. creates an adequate reference list and usually cites sources in a consistent manner – though potentially with some minor errors.
7-8	The student: iii. creates a complete reference list and consistently cites sources using the proper style and formatting conventions – essentially error free.

Criterion D: Thinking critically

Maximum: 8

At the end of year 3, students should be able to:

- ii. summarize information to make valid, well-supported arguments
- iv. recognize different perspectives and explain their implications.

Achievement level	Level descriptor
0	The student does not reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1–2	<p>ii. In your memoir you begin to identify connections between information you have researched to make simple arguments as to why they would see their own lives that way.</p> <p>iv. In your memoir you identify different perspectives by only mentioning your character's perspective and another person's perspective, but you do not offer explanation or detail as to why they would see things this way.</p>
3–4	<p>ii. In your memoir you summarize information from your research to make some adequate arguments as to why your character would see their life that way. You include a few specific examples which may not clearly support your argument.</p> <p>iv. In your memoir you recognize different perspectives by stating what your character's perspective would be as well as another person's and suggests some of their implications for your character's life based on these perspectives.</p>
5–6	<p>ii. In your memoir you summarize information from your research in order to make usually valid arguments as to why your character would see his/her life that way. You include specific examples that clearly connect to your argument.</p> <p>iv. In your memoir you clearly recognize different perspectives by explaining your character's perspective as well as other people's perspectives and describes most of their implications on how society was structured and why your character would be viewed that way.</p>
7–8	<p>ii. In your memoir you summarize information from your research to make consistent, well-supported arguments as to why your character would see his/her life that way. You include specific examples that clearly connect to your argument and show insight beyond what is simply stated in the research.</p> <p>iv. In your memoir you clearly recognize different perspectives by explaining your character's perspective as well as other people's perspectives and consistently explain their implications on how society was structured and why your character would be viewed that way.</p>