

Japan Lesson Plan

Eric Erickson, 2025 KKC Fellow

Designed for high school U.S. History students

(specifically catered to Como Park High School students in St. Paul, MN)

Objectives:

Students should understand the historical context of World War 2.

Students will evaluate the military and civilian atrocities between Japan and the U.S.

Students will examine the reformed relationship and partnership between Japan and the U.S. after World War 2.

Students will examine the modern relationship between the two nations including trade, security, and civilian diplomacy.

Students will analyze multiple perspectives and apply critical thinking skills at several times during the lesson.

Timing:

1-3 class periods, depending on teacher's intentions, pacing, and available time.

Resources:

Google Slides deck with embedded materials from KKC, international and local media

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1zPcIsVtwYFsStMVOmF8fAwO266s1OIG9PwDEcRRx6A0/edit?slide=id.p> - slide=id.p

Lesson Outline:

Go through the slides in order! (1-15)

Introduction and context of U.S.-Japan relations

- What is the relationship of the U.S. and Japan today? (slide 1)
- Japan in WW2 and the entrance of the U.S. in 1941 (slide 2)
- The end of the war and the atomic bombs (slide 3)
- CRITICAL THINKING: guided questions for students and video links to watch and analyze multiple perspectives on the use of atomic bombs or using conventional military warfare (students may do this in groups, or with teacher leading a class discussion) (slide 4)

Postwar Japan

- Reconstruction and Industrial Policy: Tetsuji Okazaki, Meiji Gakuin University
- Students will read the data and analyze the graphs (slides 5-8)
- CRITICAL THINKING: guided questions for students based on the data and graphs (students may do this in groups, or with teacher leading a class discussion) (slide 9)

Postwar Japan and U.S Relations / Civilian Diplomacy

- Introduce the concept of Civilian Diplomacy & St. Paul as Japan's first Sister City (slide 10)
 - Students will read the article "A Summer of Exchange and Remembrance"
- Students should record 3 or more specific St. Paul-Nagasaki Sister Exchanges, and also

record 3 curiosity questions (questions of wondering that were sparked by their reading) (slide 11)
Teacher will lead class discussion after 10-15 minutes of independent reading and analysis

-Students will be shown further evidence of Sister City exchanges between St. Paul and Nagasaki that took place in 2025 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombs (slides 12 &13)

***In St. Paul at Como Park High School, students will continue to take an annual walking field trip to the Nagasaki exchange sites located in Como Park.

-Japan's Security in the World Today

- A brief summary from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (slide 14)
- CRITICAL THINKING: guided questions for students based on Japan's present security concerns and current U.S. foreign policy. Final thoughts are on shared responsibilities of promoting peace and preventing any use of nuclear weapons ever again. (slide 15)

This lesson provides an overview of historical Japanese-U.S. relations and the change over time going from being enemies of war to postwar allies with a special and unique relationship that includes civilian diplomacy and an intentional effort to promote peace. This lesson provides several opportunities for critical thinking, as well as unique access to sources provided by political and economic leaders in Japan. Lastly, it broadens the community awareness of the historic St. Paul-Nagasaki Sister City relationship. Students in St. Paul and Minnesota have the opportunity to visit the sites at which Nagasaki has gifted, designed, and created public space to celebrate peace.