Lesson Plan
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7th Grade Social Studies
Ancient History/Korea/Choson Dynasty

This lesson meets Ohio’s Learning Standards HI.1. HI.1 describes historical events and issues from the perspectives of people living at the time, avoiding evaluating the past in terms of today’s norms and values. This lesson plan focuses on the essential understanding Tier 2, which includes description, perspectives, norms and values.

Before beginning the lesson, The Whoosh, put up the following essential questions:

1. What does this story tell you about the belief systems of the people?
2. What did you learn about the government?
3. What surprised you about the end of the story? What does it tell you about the people’s norms and value systems?

*I post these on the wall and after the Whoosh activity I hand out sticky notes, so we can post have the students post the answers for group discussion as an informal assessment.

The Whoosh

This is a technique to get students on their feet and out of their seat in the learning process. The Royal Shakespeare Society uses this to help students learn complex texts. It is helpful in telling stories in the Social Studies realm.

The teacher arranges the chairs in a circle large enough that the students can walk around within. The teacher remains outside of the circle and guides the story. The instructor taps a student on the shoulder and the student then goes in the circle to silently act out what the teacher is reading. Students may be tapped to be inanimate objects, characters, pets, etc. When the idea is complete for one section of the story, the teacher says the word whoosh and that group of students sits down and the teacher begins reading the text again.

I have loosely adapted the story of a Choson Dynasty King, Yangjo and his son Sado, as an introduction to Korean History. My students love to hear the stories behind historical fiction and this should interest them.

Sources:
Korea’s Place in the Sun A Modern History By Bruce Cummings pages 67-72.
The Throne 2015 historical drama movie directed by Lee Joon-Ik

Yangjo and Sado Whoosh

Yangjo was an ideal ruler. He was smart, well read, a great politician and a follower of Confucian rules! His pain and agony was that his son, Sado, next in line for the throne was the
worst prince in Korean History! The young man had no idea how to be a prince or he just didn’t like it! This story ends in tragedy. Whoosh.

Sado appeared to show only weakness and absolutely zero strengths. He had every royal privilege growing up; several ladies waiting to serve his every need and his mom and dad spoiled him rotten. He was worshipped by his subjects. But that didn’t prevent him from behaving badly. Whoosh.

The King wondered if his boy was just too honest or too stubborn. Something just wasn’t right. Meanwhile, the servants continued to spoil him giving him anything he wanted and played sword fighting games and other war like activities with him. Whoosh.

By the age of 13, Sado and his father were constantly butting heads! The King constantly picked on Sado for being lazy, not being an excellent student and rude. Sado hated meeting with his father to hear this criticism so he would become sick to his stomach. Whoosh.

He was so afraid of the meetings with his father that he could not get dressed in the mornings. He would try on robe after robe until there was a giant pile on the floor! When the King found out he got angrier. He viewed this habit as nothing more than a stall technique and another weakness in his son’s personality. So the King continued to harshly criticize Sado and bring him down. Once Sado was so upset after a meeting, he threw himself into a well, hoping to die. He was unsuccessful. Whoosh.

By the time he was 23, there were more signs that he was mentally unstable. In fact, he was completely mad. The thought of getting dressed in the morning terrified him. He would tear up and destroy robe after robe. Finally he would find one that he could bear to wear. Whoosh.

Sado was married, but took mistresses from ladies in the waiting. He began to murder the court eunuchs, first by beating them to death then by cutting off their heads. One time he entered his wife’s royal chambers carrying the bloody severed head of one of his victims. And, he tried many times to kill himself.

Out of anger and frustration, his father asked him why he killed innocent animals and people. Sado replied that he was feeling hurt by none other than the King himself. He then proceeded to tell Yangjo about all of his grisly murders in detail. Yangjo was mortified. Whoosh.

No one would do anything about his murders because he was royal. He murdered more people of the court, servants, shamans and any one he wanted. Sado started dressing up and going into town to kill civilians at random. Whoosh.

His mother was so upset, she asked the King to put her son to death. She knew this was sure to curse her. Sado’s mom was in pain thinking that she should not have said that. Oddly enough, soon after she died. Whoosh.

Slipping further into madness, Sado slept in a box that resembled a coffin. He then moved into a hole in the ground covered with planks and dirt. His wife thought of him as two different people.
He would act normal at times and read and pledge to do better. Then he would turn around and begin plotting his dad’s murder. Oddly, at the same time, his dad was plotting to kill him. Whoosh.

The king began asking his son to kill himself. Sado tried, but was unsuccessful. Finally, the king took Sado and a military guard to a shrine. He ordered Sado to kill himself again. Again, he failed. His father told him it would be better if he was dead, so he brought out a rice chest, closed the lid and let his body lie in there for 13 days. Sado died a harsh death. Whoosh.

The King felt he had to do this, for to execute his son for his crimes would tarnish the reputation of the royal family. To simply murder his son to save them from his evil actions, was a crime. Most Koreans backed the King in his act.