Lesson Plan

Course: Advanced Placement U.S. History  
Period: 1/3/4

Teacher: Don R. Haven  
Week/Day: TBD

Unit: Imperialism  
Lesson: TBD

Topic: General Sherman Incident

Purpose or Rationale: To show that the early attempts to open trade with East Asia were dangerous and badly handled. The General Sherman Incident is a clear example.

Instructional Objectives: 
  a. Provide an explanation of the details of the incident
  b. Place the incident within the umbrella of American imperialism
  c. Provide the students an opportunity to find a better way to meet the country’s goals for establishing trade routes

Standards/Benchmarks: History/Grade 11 & 12 Imperialism

Materials and Resources:

East Asia; A Cultural, Social, and Political History. Patricia Ebrey, Anne Walthall, James Palais

A History of the Modern World. R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton

American Military History. Edited by John Whiteclay Chambers II

Korea’s Place in the Sun. Bruce Cumings

Essential Question: How do we justify American involvement in imperialism in East Asia?

Instructional Procedures:

  Focusing Event: Review of handout on the William Sherman Incident (5 min)  
  (www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/General_Sherman_incident)

  Connection Event: Put the incident in the context of imperialism for the students (3 min)

  Content Presentation: Mini lecture on the incident (15 min)
Assessment Event: Students will make a list of cultural misunderstandings on both sides of the incident. (15 min)

Preview Event: Introduction of the Boxer Rebellion (5 min)

Homework:  Read handout on the Boxer Rebellion
TIP 2: Mini-lecture on General Sherman Incident

I. What happened?
   a. Hostilities between a U.S. ship (SS General Sherman) and the Koreans in Pyongyang in 1866
   b. The ship was American owned, had an American Captain and mate, but the crew was foreign and the mission was to open trade for a British company based in China

II. Background
   a. Korea as isolated from the West (The Hermit Kingdom). Even shipwrecked sailors were not allowed to go home
   b. Early 1800’s had seen the wholesale slaughter of Christians (as many as 10,000)
   c. In 1866, SS General Sherman sailed from China with a load of cotton, tin and glass and British businessmen. They sailed up the river to Pyongyang.
   d. Koreans told ship it wasn’t welcome; trade was not allowed and it had to leave. At that point the ship went aground on a sandbar making leaving not an option.

III. Hostilities began
   a. Ship fired on soldiers and civilians ashore killing several
   b. Battle raged for four days
   c. Fire ships sent to catch fire to the General Sherman; it works.
   d. Some of the crew burned to death, some swam to shore and were beaten to death.

IV. Aftermath
   a. Koreans recovered the ship and rebuilt it into Korea’s first modern warship
   b. After threats were made by Admiral Sherfeltdt, the ship was returned to the U.S.
   c. Admiral Sherfeltdt successful in getting a treaty signed in 1882
TIP 2  Activity General Sherman Incident

Nearly everything that could go wrong did in the General Sherman’s mission. How could this mission have succeeded without the loss of life? Make a list of all the things that you can think of that caused the cultural misunderstandings leading to the disaster. Then come up with a plan that could have allowed trade to begin with Korea that would have been successful. You may work on this outside of class and turn it in tomorrow for a homework grade.