

## ***The End of Japanese Isolationism (2 days)***

- **Purpose**
  - Through this lesson, students will explore the diplomacy and pressure that occurred between the US and Japan that resulted in the end of Japanese isolationism.
- **Background**
  - The nation of Japan passed laws that made it illegal for any foreigners to come into Japan and for any Japanese to leave. This period of isolationism lasted from the 1630s to the 1850s when Matthew Perry, an American naval commodore, sailed into Edo Bay with 4 warships. He delivered a letter from President Fillmore to the Japanese requesting better treatment for sailors who shipwreck on Japanese islands and for Japan to open up trade with the US. Several months later, he returned with more ships to intimidate the Japanese into accepting his demands.
- **Standards**
  - Ohio's New Learning Standards: *Modern World History*: Content Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 12
- **Resources**
  - 1844 - Dutch Letter to Japanese & Japanese Reply - <http://goo.gl/oWRM4>
  - 1852 - President Fillmore's Letter to Japan - <http://goo.gl/3Wtl6>
  - 1853 - Perry's Letter to Japan - <http://goo.gl/lgtDM>
  - 1853 - Aggressive Daimyo Suggestion - <http://goo.gl/pKh9I>
  - 1853 - Conciliatory Daimyo Suggestion - <http://goo.gl/1zTAj>
  - 1854 - Japan's Response - <http://goo.gl/zGe0C>
  - 1854 - Perry's Reply to Japan's Response - <http://goo.gl/eYppG>
- **Assignments and Activities**
  - Day One:
    - In class, read together the Dutch letter warning the Japanese that they could find themselves in a situation similar to China if they don't make some drastic changes (as well as the Japanese reply to the Dutch).
      - Also read the letters from Fillmore and Perry to the Japanese. Discuss with the students the differences in tone in each letter and the context in which they were delivered.
  - Homework: Have the students read the suggestions from the Daimyo lords on their own. As a writing assignment, they should imagine that they are a personal assistant to the emperor. To help him decide what to do, the students must summarize the main points raised in the Daimyo suggestions, and then advise the emperor of a course of action he should take
  - Day Two:
    - Together in class, read the Japanese emperor's reply and discuss how well it matched the advice the students would have given him. Then have

them work in partners or small groups to decide what they would recommend to Commodore Perry if they were one his assistant.

- Read Perry's actual reply and compare/contrast it with the suggestions the students would have given.

- **Expanding the Lesson**

- There are some fascinating pieces of Japanese artwork that can enhance Perry's mission to open Japan from the perspective of the Japanese. Depictions of Perry as a hairy, blue-eyed barbarian or of the Black Ships he sailed on can be helpful for students who are more artistic or visually-oriented and need more differentiation. A useful website with many such images can be found at MIT's Open Courseware site at [http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/black\\_ships\\_and\\_samurai/bss\\_essay01.html](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/black_ships_and_samurai/bss_essay01.html)

- A possible way to utilize this resource is to have students compare and contrast the depictions of the opening of Japan from Western perspectives and Japanese perspectives. They can do so by studying documents, letters, or pictures and works of art.