

**NCTA Lesson Plan on Japan**  
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**Purpose:** To understand discrimination based on caste in two different societies.

**Rationale:** In the United States students are very familiar with discrimination based on race; however discrimination based on caste is a less familiar concept. This lesson provides students with the opportunity to investigate the *Eta* (*Burakumin*) of Japan, a topic rarely discussed in textbooks on Japan, and compare their situation with that of the Untouchables (*Harijan*) of India, a more openly discussed and politically debated issue.

**Materials:**

**Websites:**

<http://www.mrdowling.com/612-caste.html>  
<http://www.mrdowling.com/616-homogeneity.html>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalit\\_%28outcaste%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalit_%28outcaste%29)  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burakumin>  
[http://www.unesco.org/courier/2001\\_09/uk/doss22.htm](http://www.unesco.org/courier/2001_09/uk/doss22.htm)  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/globalcaste/caste0801-03.htm>  
<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/world/archives/2004/08/01/2003181260>  
[www.untouchables.org/home.php](http://www.untouchables.org/home.php)  
[http://scbs.stanford.edu/calendar/1999-00/dogen\\_zen/papers/nara.html](http://scbs.stanford.edu/calendar/1999-00/dogen_zen/papers/nara.html)  
<http://homepage.mac.com/rumineko/articles/burakumin.html>  
<http://www.asiafinest.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=40117>  
<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/caste/presskit.htm>  
[http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2006/03/07/anti\\_discrimination\\_law\\_sought\\_in\\_japan/?rss\\_id=Boston.com+%2F+News](http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2006/03/07/anti_discrimination_law_sought_in_japan/?rss_id=Boston.com+%2F+News)

**Books:**

Jansen, Marius B., *The Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge, MA: 2000. pp. 96-126(esp. pp. 122-123).  
Anand, Mulk, Raj, *Untouchable*. 1990. (novel)  
Sumii, Sue and Sue Umii, *The River with no Bridge*. 2006. (novel)  
Jadhav, Narendra, *Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India*. 2005.

**Activities:** The teacher should read ahead of time the chapter on "Status Groups" in Jansen's book and then present to the class an overview of the five status groups in Tokugawa Japan. The class should be encouraged to consider why merchants had lower status than peasants and contrast their position to that of businessmen today. Then the class will be divided into groups. Each group should divide up the following questions and use the Websites above to help

answer them.

### Japan

1. How did the *Eta* class in Japan come to exist?
2. How has this class distinction been perpetuated in Japan's current democracy, and what political problems does it present for the Japanese government and Japanese society?
3. How do you think the problem should be solved? Develop a solution that you think would be politically and socially viable.

### India

1. How did the Untouchable class in India come to exist?
2. How has this class distinction been perpetuated in India's current democracy, and what political problems does it present for the Indian government and Indian society?
3. How do you think the problem should be solved? Develop a solution that you think would be politically and socially viable.

**Assessment:** After having worked on researching in groups, students will write individual essays structured as follows: 1. Introduction. 2. A summary of what was learned about the *Eta* in Japan. 3. A summary of what was learned about the Untouchables in India. 4. How are their situations similar (compare)? 5. How are their situations different (contrast)? 6. What solutions do you propose for resolving these social/political problems? Solutions can be discussed either separately or jointly, but be sure to discuss what might be needed to bring change about and what might be the consequences of the changes you propose.

Papers can be read aloud in class, and the various solutions can be debated on their merits. Students can also consider to what extent social classes exist in modern America

Students should be graded not only for their written work but also for their group work, according to a teacher-developed rubric.

**Extension:** Students can read one of the novels listed above and write a review of it. Students can write a creative piece (poem, story, or short play) about the life as an *Eta* or Untouchable. Students can assemble a collage depicting life as an *Eta* or Untouchable.

**Grade Adaptation:**

**Target –  
Gifted grades 6-7**

**Younger Students –  
The teacher could duplicate the two *Wikipedia* articles,  
read and discuss them with the class, and then ask the class to  
write *Haiku* about being an *Eta* or Untouchable.**

**Older Students –  
Could read the Anand and Sumii novels listed above and write  
a compare/contrast essay based on them.  
Could investigate more closely the politically active groups  
in India and Japan and the changes they are trying to effect.**