

## Planning a 2 week trip to Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima

Purpose: This lesson is designed to provide students with a broad overview of Japan and to serve as the opening of a short series of lessons on Japan in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade humanities class.

Essential Questions: As a first-time traveler to Japan what are some things that it would be helpful to know before my visit? What uniquely Japanese things can I expect to see and experience while I am there?

Materials: The website for the Japan National Tourist Organization [www.japantravelinfo.com](http://www.japantravelinfo.com) is very complete and easy to navigate. It, and the links it suggests, can be used as the primary source for the activity. Some additional websites are:

Japan Information Network	<a href="http://www.jinjapan.org">www.jinjapan.org</a>
CIA The World Factbook: Japan	<a href="http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html">www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html</a>
Japan Reference Page	<a href="http://www.jref.com">www.jref.com</a>
IB World Schools /Japan	<a href="http://www.ibo.org/country/JP/">www.ibo.org/country/JP/</a>
Japan Guide	<a href="http://www.japan-guide.com">www.japan-guide.com</a>

In addition, a selection of excellent travel guides on Japan (Frommer's, Fodor's, Eyewitness, Lonely Planet, etc.) are available at the library and could be borrowed and made available to students in the classroom during this activity.

Activities: The essential task is for students to attack the accompanying questions by dividing the list among small groups who will research answers independently and prepare a brief presentation to share findings with the whole group.

The questions vary in depth and breadth, so it would be good to parcel them out to the various groups with a mind to creating more or less equal workloads.

To add a feel of authenticity to the task.....

I intend to frame the class as new employees of a temp agency who have been engaged by a local travel agent to field questions from a school group that is planning a two week trip to Japan. The trip will happen in the latter half of June and involve travel in and out of Tokyo with visits to Kyoto and Hiroshima and afford two full days of completely free time in which individuals may choose from an offering of optional side trips. The group is from an IB school and the travel agent has promised that they will be able to visit an IB school in one of the cities.

The travel agent has asked the "temps" to scan through the list of questions in the attached memo and to suggest others that they anticipate the traveling group may come up with later. The agent has also asked that the answers to the questions be word-processed on 8.5 X 11 paper, illustrated with photos, maps, or sketches where appropriate

and presented in a manner that will help to build enthusiasm and sell the trip to any members who may be wavering.

Time required: After about 15 minutes to frame the activity, set the task, and form the groups, if a sufficient number of computer stations are available students could feasibly complete the minimal research necessary inside one typical class period and prepare to present their findings on the following class day. As an alternative the research could be done overnight outside of class.

Assessment: Assessment would be based on quality of the prepared answers and the presentation.

Grade Adaptation: Though designed for 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the activity could easily be used as is across a range of grade levels. The basic framework could also be easily adapted to use as an introduction to other countries of interest.

To: Acme Temp Agency

From: Mercury travel service

Re: Questions from school group. Here's the questions they've come up with so far. Quite a variety. Please add ones you think they'll ask later. Thanks and good luck.

"I've heard that Japanese people bow to each other as a greeting. Is this true? Will we be expected to do this also? Are there other social customs and expected behaviors that we should be aware of?"

"Is tipping of hotel employees, waiters, etc. expected in Japan?"

"I know Japan is an island, but it's more than one island, isn't it? Are the cities we're visiting all on the same island? Is it possible to visit other islands while we're there?"

"How far is it to the mainland of Asia? What is the closest country?"

"What will the weather be like? Does Japan have distinct seasons like Ohio, or is the weather more or less the same the year round?"

"I know that the Japanese are famous for their gardens, but I've never seen one. What are they like? Will we be able to visit some gardens?"

"Will there be performances of Kabuki theater that we can see while we're there? What is Kabuki theater like anyway?"

"I don't know much about Japanese history except what I learned from the movie The Last Samurai and about World War II, of course. I'm very interested in learning more. What historical sights will we be able to visit?"

"Will we be able to visit a Buddhist temple? Is Buddhism the main religion in Japan or is it something else?"

"What about art museums? And important buildings? I'm interested in traditional and contemporary art and architecture.

"Will schools still be in session, or will they be out for the summer? Where is the school that we plan to visit?"

"Where are the cities we are visiting in relation to one another? I have also heard of Osaka, Nagasaki, and Nagano—where the winter Olympics were held. Where are they?"

"How long does it take to fly to Japan? How much will I save on the trip cost if I use my frequent flyer miles to buy my plane ticket?"

"Where is Mt. Fuji? How high is it compared to the Rockies Mountains? Is it easy to visit? Is it possible to go hiking in the area of the mountain?"

“Is Japan mostly flat or hilly? Are there mountains besides Mt. Fuji? Are there natural areas we can visit? What about wildlife?”

“I’m worried about being able to communicate. I don’t know any Japanese. Do most Japanese people speak some English?”

“What is the currency called in Japan? What is the exchange rate in dollars? Is Japan more expensive, cheaper, or about the same as here? Do they take credit cards?”

“What is the time difference between Columbus and Japan? Are they ahead or behind us in time? If it’s 6 p.m. here, what time is it there?”

“During our two days of free time should I think about renting a car to get around, or is there good public transportation in Japan?”

“What about the bullet train? How fast is it? Will we get a chance to ride it?”