

# Asian Studies Unit

(6 weeks)

## Asian Literature Number One

### **Purpose:**

Although similar in some cultural and historical aspects, China, Japan, and Korea are distinct societies with unique histories, traditions, and lifestyles. There are many similarities and differences between Asian and American cultures.

Essential Questions:

1. How does learning about another culture affect your life?
2. What makes each country unique?
3. How is our life similar to and different from the lives of people living in various areas in Asia?

### **Rationale:**

We have prejudices and preconceived notions about Asian countries and cultures that influence our knowledge of others and interactions with them.

### **Materials:**

*Mountain Light: Golden Mountain Chronicles: 1855* by [Laurence Yep](#)

*Red Scarf Girl : A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution* by [Ji-li Jiang](#)

*The Sign of the Chrysanthemum* by [Katherine Paterson](#)

*Shizuko's Daughter* by [Kyoko Mori](#)

*The Kite Fighters* by [Linda Sue Park](#)

*A Step from Heaven* by [an Na](#)

Book reviews from Amazon.com or some other resource

Folders for storing journal entries

Class discussion sheets.

Monthly planner for scheduling (Write Source Educational Publishing House)

Literature Circle notes and worksheets (Jim Burke, Heinemann)

Book review sample (Nancie Atwell, *Lessons that Change Writers*, Heinemann)

## **Activities:**

1. The teacher will introduce the six books about Korea, Japan, and China to the class. Students will choose which books they want to read (two books for whichever culture is chosen). Each group will brainstorm a list or web of what they think the books will be about and what they might learn from the books.
2. The three groups will set up schedules for reading the “modern-day” books. In addition the students will set up a schedule for literature circle discussions. Each day, the students will begin class by holding a discussion of the nights’ reading following the literature circle format. After the discussions, which will last about ½ hour, students will work on their additional activities.
3. Groups will keep a journal about their reactions to the book. Each member will write one journal entry (one paragraph or longer) about his or her thoughts about the book—its characters, plot, conflicts, and so on—on a rotating basis. The journals, which consist of folders that the letters will be kept in, will be provided by the teacher. Additionally, and also on a rotating basis, each member will respond to the letters written by the other students in the group. Students will comment on what they think about the others’ comments.
4. Each group member must find two words in the book that are important to the culture of the story. All words must be different. Students must list the page number where the book was found and copy the sentence from the book. Students must explain what the word means, why it is important to the culture, and why they chose the word. The group must submit a typed list of their collective words to share with the rest of the class.
5. At the end of the unit, each group must submit a book review of the novel that will be submitted to an on-line book seller or student magazine that accepts student submissions of book reviews, such as [www.teenink.com](http://www.teenink.com). Students must write the review using a traditional format as in the example attached.
6. Each student must submit a list of ten items learned about the culture of the book. The list must include an explanation of what the cultural information is, why it is important to the culture, and why it was chosen for this project or what impact it has on the culture.
7. Each group will present their book reviews and vocabulary lists to the rest of the class.

## **Assessment:**

### **Reading and Literature Circle Discussions:**

Students will receive full credit for complete participation in the discussions (as noted on discussion sheet) and completing the novel.

### **Journal:**

Each group member will receive full credit for completing the required number of journal entries.

### **Cultural Vocabulary:**

Students receive full credit for completing the assignment accurately and completely.

### **Book Review:**

Reviews will be assessed based on the content and structure of the book review using the normal class writing rubric.

### **Cultural List:**

Ten items included will be excellent or “A.”

Seven items included will be good or “B.”

Five items included will be fair or “C.”

### **Group presentation:**

Rubric attached.

## **Grade Adaptation:**

These lessons are targeted to 7<sup>th</sup>-grade students in a World History/language arts inclusive class.

To use these lessons with elementary students, you would select books on their reading level and reduce the other requirements or the assessment levels. To use these lessons with high school students, you would select higher-level novels.

## **Books about China**

### **Mountain Light: Golden Mountain Chronicles: 1855** by [Laurence Yep](#)

Their families fought one another for generations, maintaining an age-old blood feud. But that changed when they found themselves on the same side of a new struggle against the tyrannical Manchu dynasty. By devoting himself fully to the revolution, Squeaky Lau wins Cassia's trust -- and her heart.

But winning Cassia's love is not enough. Now Squeaky must prove his worth as a man -- to Cassia, to his villa village, and most importantly, to himself. And the only way he can do that is by giving up everything he has worked for and traveling to the Land of the Golden Mountain, the place foreign demons call America.

### **Red Scarf Girl : A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution** by [Ji-li Jiang](#)

In 1966 Ji-li Jiang turned twelve. An outstanding student and leader, she had everything: brains, the admiration of her peers, and a bright future in China's Communist Party. But that year China's leader, Mao Ze-dong, launched the Cultural Revolution, and everything changed. Over the next few years Ji-li and her family were humiliated and scorned by former friends, neighbors, and co-workers. They lived in constant terror of arrest. Finally, with the detention of her father, Ji-li faced the most difficult choice of her life.

Told with simplicity and grace, this is the true story of one family's courage and determination during one of the most terrifying eras of the twentieth century. Ji-li Jiang was twelve years old in 1966, the year that Chairman Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in China. An outstanding student and much-admired leader of her class, Ji-li seemed poised for a shining future. But all that changed with the advent of the Cultural Revolution, when intelligence became a crime and a wealthy family background invited persecution or worse. For the next three years Ji-li and her family were humiliated and reviled by their former friends, neighbors, and colleagues and lived in constant terror of attack. At last, with the detention of her father, Ji-li was faced with the most dreadful decision of her young life: denounce him and break with her family, or refuse to testify against him and sacrifice her future in her beloved Communist Party. Told with simplicity, innocence, and grace, this unforgettable memoir gives a child's eye view of a terrifying time in twentieth-century history and of one family's indomitable courage under fire.

## Books about Japan

### **The Sign of the Chrysanthemum**

by [Katherine Paterson](#)

Muna has never known his father -- a *samurai*, a noble warrior. But Muna's mother has told Muna how he will know him one day: *by the sign of the chrysanthemum*. When his mother dies, Muna travels to the capital of twelfth-century Japan, a bewildering city on the verge of revolution. He finds a haven there, as servant to the great swordsmith, Fukuji. But Muna cannot forget his dream: He must find his father. Only then will he have power and a name to be reckoned with. Only then will he become a man.

### **Shizuko's Daughter**

by [Kyoko Mori](#)

Yuki Okuda knows her mother would be proud of her grades and her achievements in sports if she were alive. But she committed suicide. And Yuki has to learn how to live with a father who doesn't seem to love her and a stepmother who treats her badly. Most important, she has to learn how to live with herself: a twelve-year-old Japanese girl growing up alone, trying to make sense of a tragedy that makes no sense at all....

## Books about Korea

### **The Kite Fighters**

by [Linda Sue Park](#)

In Seoul, Korea, in 1473, Young-sup and his older brother Kee-sup are excited about the New Year kite competition. Young-sup is an expert at kite flying. He knows just what his kite wants him to do. Kee-sup has trouble handling his kite, but can build and design a kite fit for a king.

Each brother knows his own talents as they practice together for the New Year kite-fighting competition. But according to tradition, Kee-sup, the first-born son, must represent the family. Young-sup knows he must help his older brother and stay in second place. But that doesn't stop him from hoping for the chance to show his great skill as a kite fighter.

### **A Step from Heaven**

by [an Na](#)

When she is five, Young Ju Park and her family move from Korea to California. During the flight, they climb so far into the sky she concludes they are on their way to Heaven, that Heaven must be in America. Heaven is also where her grandfather is. When she learns the distinction, she is so disappointed she wants to go home to her grandmother. Trying to console his niece, Uncle Tim suggests that maybe America can be "a step from Heaven." Life in America, however, presents problems for Young Ju's family. Her father becomes depressed, angry, and violent. Jobs are scarce and money is even scarcer. When her brother is born, Young Ju experiences firsthand her father's sexism as he confers favored status upon the boy who will continue to carry the Park name. In a wrenching climactic scene, her father beats her mother so severely that Young Ju calls the police. Soon afterward, her father goes away and the family begins to heal. Book descriptions from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) book reviews.

# RUBRIC FOR GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Group member names:

	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
All members participate	Group members equally share information learned.				One person presents all information for the group.
Language and Stance	Professional				Distracting, off-task behavior or comments
Vocabulary presentation	Each member shares two words.				Some members have no words to share.
Vocabulary explanations	Class could understand words and participated in discussion of them.				Class was not involved in presentation. No evaluation of knowledge of cultural terms.
Book review	Shared and written in an interesting manner.			Read from the paper with no voice inflections or added "drama."	Not done or not shared.

Comments:

GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_