

## EAST ASIAN LESSON PLANS

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### GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES (Lesson Plan-3 class periods (50 minutes each))

Purpose: To understand the tragedies of war suffered by the Japanese in WWII. through viewing, “Grave of the Fireflies.”

#### Essential Questions:

1. Is war a tragedy? Who “wins” and who “loses?”
2. How does war influence the human condition and our innocence?
3. How does the human spirit endure in times of tragedy?
4. What was the Japanese peoples’ experience like during and after the war?
5. How did the Japanese people treat each other (give positive and negative examples)?
6. How are children affected during war? What rights do children have during war?
7. What were Japanese culture and society like during and after the war?

Rationale: Students will better understand, appreciate, and reflect upon the horrors of war and its aftermath as experienced by the Japanese people in WWII.

Materials: “*Grave of the Fireflies*” (a release of Central Park Media, Original Japanese 1988 Akiyuki Nosaka/Shinchosha Co.)  
“Grave of the Fireflies” video guide handout

#### Activities:

Note: Students will have already had an in depth unit study of WWII including topics that relate to U.S. Japanese relations (for example) : pre-war economic and political tensions, Pearl Harbor and U.S. entry into the war, the Pacific theatre of the war, and student evaluations of the Japanese internment policy and the decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (both in evaluating these decisions at the time and in hindsight).

1. The teacher will ask students to write a short individual response to the following questions:  
Is war a tragedy? Who “wins” and who “loses?”  
How does war influence the human condition and our innocence?  
How does the human spirit endure in times of tragedy?

2. The teacher will ask for any volunteers to share their responses with the rest of the class and engage the class in a class discussion exploring these questions.
3. The teacher will inform students that they will now watch the movie, “Grave of the Fireflies” which explores these very issues. Students will complete the video guide as they watch the movie to be followed with further class discussion and reflection. The teacher passes out, “Grave of the Fireflies” movie guide.
4. After completing viewing of the movie and the movie guide, which the teacher will have collected, the teacher leads the class in a debriefing process. The teacher reviews the answers to the video guide to clarify the content.
5. Once more, the teacher now asks the students to respond in written fashion to the same questions posed before:  
Is war a tragedy? Who “wins” and who “loses?”  
How does war influence the human condition and our innocence?  
How does the human spirit endure in times of tragedy?
6. The teacher asks students to compare their answers from before and after viewing “Grave of the Fireflies.” Again, ask for any students to volunteer to share their responses to the class. The teacher furthers the discussion and reflection by sparking a class discussion with the following questions:  
Have any of your responses changed? If yes, how so? If not, why not?  
What did you think of the movie?  
What surprised you?  
How did this movie help you to learn about what the Japanese people experienced during and after the war?  
How did the Japanese people treat each other (give positive and negative examples)?  
How are children affected during war? What rights do children have during war?  
What were Japanese culture and society like during and after the war?

Assessment:

1. Students will complete and turn in their video guides as well as their written responses to the discussion questions. Participation grades may be awarded on the basis of class discussion as well.

Extension: Students may research the continuing ways WWII has shaped modern Japanese society.

Grade Adaptations:

Intended Grade Level: 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade (World History &/or U.S. History)

Scale down to middle school (8<sup>th</sup> grade only) by requiring a parent permission slip for viewing as parent discretion is advised due to violence even though the film is not rated and is animated.

Name:

*“GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES”*

1. What year does Seita say it is?
2. Is reverence shown for the Emperor even during this difficult war time?
3. Describe the destruction caused by the bombing and raids.
4. What types of feelings do the constant threat of the raids and bombings impress upon Seita, Setsuko, and the Japanese people?
5. Did being a high-ranking military officer carry prestige for the soldier and his family?
5. What is the symbolic significance of the fireflies?
6. What effect did the war effort have on the people?
7. Seita exchanges his mother's kimonos for what?
8. Why is Aunt upset with Seita?
9. How were Seita and Setsuko treated by their adopted family?
10. What do Seita and Setsuko decide to do?
11. What happened to the amount of rations as the war progressed?
12. What sweet provided comfort to Setsuko during this difficult time?
13. Describe Seita and Setsuko's relationship.
14. What did the fireflies provide for Seita and Setsuko inside the darkness of their shelter?
15. How did the kids visiting their shelter behave? What was their attitude?

16. How willing were others to help Seita and Setsuko?
17. What did everyone expect from Seita since he was the Admiral's son?
18. What happened to Seita when he was caught stealing?
19. What health problems does Setsuko experience?
20. What is Seita's strategy to get her food?
21. What did the doctor say that Setsuko needed?
22. How does Seita react upon hearing the news of Japan's surrender and of the destruction of the fleet?
23. Is Setsuko getting better or worse? What happens to Setsuko?
24. What is Seita forced to do?
25. Does Seita ever go back to the shelter again? Do his memories of his family stay with him?