

The “Opening” of the East

Differing Perspectives

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Lesson Plan Summary

This primary source lesson is designed to introduce students to the various perspectives of foreign influence in Asia from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. It best fits after students have some knowledge, either through lecture or reading, of European interests (such as trade and missionary efforts) in Asia.

Objectives

The student will be able to:

- summarize primary source documents
- analyze documents to determine nationality of the speaker/writer
- defend their rationale for each speaker’s nationality
- benefit from multiple perspectives regarding trade and imperialism during the opening of Asia

Length

This lesson plan will take about one hour when students work in groups, and one and a half hours when students work individually.

Materials

Copies of the handout “The ‘Opening’ of the East: Differing Perspectives,” one per student.

Steps

Anticipatory Set: To introduce the lesson, ask students their opinions on a significant and controversial global issue (i.e. the Iraq War). Then discuss with students how there can be many perspectives on one issue, even among a classroom that has a majority of students from one country and in one age group.

Process: After the brief discussion on a contemporary issue, explain to the students that multiple perspectives are nothing new in history, and the opening of Asia clearly falls into that category as many countries fought for East Asian hegemony. Pass out the handouts (minus the answer sheet) and split students into eight groups. The group numbers can correspond with the document number, and each group will be responsible for reading, summarizing, and analyzing each document. (Depending on the students’ skill level, the teacher may want to model analysis of a document before splitting the students into groups.)

Debriefing: After about ten minutes, have student groups “report out” to the classroom. One student in each group should read the document aloud, and another can give the summary, nationality guess, and rationale. If the group gives an incorrect nationality, ask the rest of the class to respond. Students not in the current “reporting group” should record the information on their handouts. After all

groups have reported, the teacher can end class by asking students about the multiple perspectives shown in the documents. Sample questions:

What were some of the perspectives you saw in these documents?

Did you find European attitudes to be similar or different along national lines?

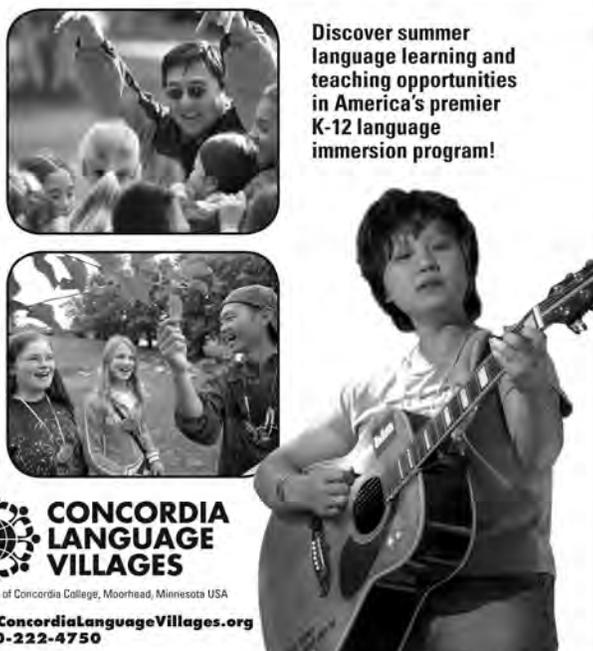
Is there a perspective that makes the most/least sense to you?

Independent Practice: For an optional assignment, students can write a diary entry from either a Chinese, Japanese, British, or Dutch perspective. The diary entry should be dated and include information relevant to the era.

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Editor's Note: Educators who would like to use this lesson can print "classroom friendly" versions of these handouts at our Web site, <http://www.aasianst.org/EAA/supplemental.htm>

HANDOUT

The "Opening" of the East: Differing Perspectives
AP World History

For each of the following passages, provide a brief summary and identify the nationality of the speaker. Include a rationale as to why you chose that particular country.

Document 1 (early nineteenth century)

People from all over the world refer to Japan as the land of the Gods, and call us the descendents of the gods. Indeed it is exactly as they say: our country, as a special mark of favor from the heavenly gods, was begotten by them, and thus so immense a difference between Japan and all the other countries in the world as to defy comparison. Ours is a splendid and blessed country, the Land of the Gods beyond any doubt, and we, down to the most humble man and woman, are the descendents of the gods . . . Japanese differ completely from and are superior to the people of China, India, Russia, Holland, Siam, Cambodia, and all other countries, and for us to have called our country the land of the Gods was not mere vainglory.

Summary:

Nationality/Rationale:

Document 2 (late sixteenth century)

When the Portugalls came to Guangzhou in China to trafficke they must remain there but certain days. And when they come in at the gate of the city they must enter their names in a booke, and when they go out at night they must put out their names. They may not lie in the towne all night, but must lie in their boates without the towne. The Chinians are very suspicious and do not trust strangers.

Summary:

Nationality/Rationale:

Document 3 (1755)

The products of China are abundant; what need have we for the small and insignificant goods of the distant barbarians? Just because you wanted to trade we have had compassion for men from afar and did not prohibit you from coming. Now you are not able to keep your place and obey the laws . . . The laws will be upheld and feelings will be pacified. Everyone will return to harmonious cooperation.

Summary:

Nationality/Rationale:

Document 4 (1841)

The position of women in Japan is apparently unlike that of the sex in all other parts of the East, and approaches more nearly their European condition. The Japanese women are subjected to no jealous seclusion, hold a fair station in society, and share in all the innocent recreations of their fathers and husbands. The minds of the women are cultivated with as much care as those of men; and amongst the most admired Japanese historians, moralists, and poets are found several female names. But, though permitted thus to enjoy and adorn society, they are, on the other hand, during their whole lives, kept in a state of tutelage; that is, of complete dependence on their husbands, sons, or other relatives. They have no legal rights, and their evidence is not admitted in a court of jus-

tice. Not only may the husband introduce as many unwedded helpmates into the mansion over which his wife presides, but he also has the power of divorce, which may be considered unlimited . . . At home, the wife is the mistress of the family; but in other respects she is treated rather as a toy for her husband's amusement, than as the rational, confidential partner of his life. She is, indeed, kept in profound ignorance of his business affairs; and so much as a question from her in relation to them would be resented as an act of unpardonable presumption.

Summary:

Nationality/Rationale:

Document 5 (eighteenth century)

The men of the countries of Europe sail at will around the globe in ships which recognize no frontiers. In Holland, one of the countries of Europe, they consider astronomy and geography to be the most important subjects of study because unless a ship's captain is well versed in these sciences, it is impossible for him to sail as he chooses to all parts of the world. Moreover, the Dutch have the excellent national characteristics of investigating matters with great patience until they can get to the very bottom. For the sake of such research, they have devised surveying instruments as well as telescopes and helioscopes with which to examine the sun, moon, and stars.

Summary:

Nationality/Rationale:

Document 6 (late sixteenth century)

Tian-zhu Guo (Catholic state, presumably Italy) lies farther to the west from the Buddhist state (India). Their people understand literature and are as scholarly and elegant as the Chinese. A certain Lima-tou (Matthew Ricci) came from the said state and after four years reached the boundary of Guangdong by way of India. Their religion worships Tian-zhu (Lord of Heaven) just as Confucianists worship Confucius and Buddhists Buddha . . . I am very much delighted with his (Ricci's) ideas, which are close to Confucianism but more earnest in exhorting society not to resemble the Buddhists, who always like to use obscure, incoherent words to fool and frighten the populace . . . He is very polite when he talks to people and his arguments, if challenged, can be inexhaustible. Thus in foreign countries there are also real gentlemen.

Summary:

Nationality/Rationale:

Document 7 (1857–58)

It is impossible that our merchants and missionaries can course up and down the inland waters of this great region and traffic in their cities and preach in their villages without wearing away at the curst of the Chinaman's stoical and skeptical conceit. The whole present system in China is a hollow thing, with a hard brittle surface . . . Some day a happy blow will shiver it, and it will all go together.

Summary:

Nationality/Rationale:

Document 8 (1857–58)

It is monstrous in barbarians to attempt to improve the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire when they are so miserably deficient themselves.

Thus, introducing a poisonous drug for their own benefit and to the injury of others, they are deficient in benevolence. Sending their fleets and armies to rob other nations, they can make no pretense to rectitude . . . How can they expect to renovate others? They allow the rich and noble to enter office without passing through any literary examinations, and do not open the road to advancement to the poorest and meanest in the land. From this it appears that foreigners are inferior to the Chinese and therefore must be unfit to instruct them.

Summary:

Nationality/Rationale:

KEY—Note, Rationales May Vary

Document 1: Japanese, because Tokugawa Japan saw a new growth of nationalist feelings that asserted the superiority of Japan.

Document 2: British (from the *Journal of Ralph Fitch*), because the British did begin trading with China, but trade was restricted to certain ports and heavily regulated.

Document 3: Chinese Imperial Edict, because this shows the allure of Chinese goods and the lack of interest they had in unsophisticated European imports.

Document 4: Dutch, because the Dutch were the only Europeans allowed to trade with the Japanese at the port of Deshima.

Document 5: Japanese, because of their contact with the Dutch. Although limited, Dutch books were accessible to the elite, forming the “Dutch Studies” in Japan.

Document 6: Chinese, because this shows the early missionary efforts of Ricci and the competing influence of Confucianism and Buddhism.

Document 7: British, because this shows the economic and religious interest that the British had in China.

Document 8: Chinese, because this displays the concerns over opium usage and their esteemed opinion of the examination system.

EXCERPTS TAKEN FROM

Murphey, Rhoads. *East Asia: A New History*. Longman: New York, 2001.

Document 1 (page 258): From R. Tsunoda et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. II. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 39.

Document 2 (page 243): From the *Journal of Ralph Fitch, 1583–1591*, in W. Foster, ed., *Early Travels in India*. (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921), 41–42.

Document 3 (page 245): Quoted in R. Murphey, *The Outsiders*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), 10.

Document 4 (page 254): From P. F. Siebold, *Manners and Customs of the Japanese in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Murray, 1852), 122–124.

Document 5 (page 238): From R. Tsunoda et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. II. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 41.

Document 6 (page 242): Quoted in J. K. Fairbank and S.Y. Teng, *China’s Response to the West*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 13.

Document 7 (page 273): From G. W. Cooke, *China: Being the Times Special Correspondent from China in the Years 1857–1858* (London: Routledge, 1858).

Document 8 (page 273): From E. P. Boardman, “A Chinese Tract of the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *Christian*

Influence on the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), 129. ■

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