8.1 Isolation and Adaptation

Japan: An Isolated Society

Culture

Culture is the customs, way of life, worldview, history and identity of a group of people.

Society

A society is a group of people, linked by common activities or interests, who share a public place.

Worldview

Worldview is the way people of a culture see the world around them. A culture’s worldview can be changed by events, such as contact with other cultures or the invention of new technologies.

Isolation

Isolation is the separation of a group from the world outside its own community. Isolationism is when a society resists being involved in the rest of the world’s affairs.

Facts about Japan’s History:

- Japan’s economy was based on agriculture (farming).
- Land owners became very powerful.
- The Edo period lasted for nearly 300 years until 1868.
- During the Edo period, people were divided into different castes (or classes) that had different powers and wealth. At the top were the samurai, followed by farmers, artisans, merchants and the outcasts.
- Much beautiful artwork was created during this period.
- During this period, Japan had limited relationships with other countries.
- During this period, Christianity was illegal.
- For more than two hundred years during the Tokugawa Era, Japan shut its doors to the outside world.
1. Describe what Japan was like in the past and how it was isolated from other countries. Use the questions below to guide your research, and your own questions, then work with a group to create a presentation for the class.

- How did the Japanese people meet their basic needs, such as shelter, food and clothing?
- With whom did the Japanese people trade?
- In what ways was Japan isolated from other countries?
- How was Japan governed (e.g., Who was in charge? What rules did they have?)?
- How did the Japanese government feel about other countries?

My Questions:

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Use these tools and information sheets:

- Strategies for Evaluating Information Sources
- Evaluating Sources I
- Taking Notes
- Note Taking I
- Thinking About Form for Presentations
- Thinking About Purpose for Presentations
- Thinking About Audience for Presentations

Where to Start on the Web

Japan:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo_period
http://www.robertfulford.com/EdoCover.html
http://web-japan.org/index.html
2. How did the geography of Japan isolate it from other societies? How did this affect Japan’s view of the world?

Using the map of the world below, describe examples of how Japan was isolated from others, including such things as distances from other countries, length/difficulty of trade routes, Japan as an island.

Where to Start on the Web

Maps of Japan:
https://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/asia/japan/
3. Isolation affected how Japan viewed the world. Fill out the cause and effect chart below to show how isolation affected Japan’s worldview. For example:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Effects</th>
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<td>Did not have access to many technologies from other societies, such as the steam engine or the printing press.</td>
<td>• Could not travel long distances easily.</td>
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<td>• Geographic view of the world is smaller than other societies and focuses on the local environment.</td>
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<td>• Could not quickly and easily print and distribute written materials; therefore, the culture focused more on oral tradition and writing as art.</td>
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4. How do you think Japan’s view of the world make it want to stay isolated from other countries and cultures? Discuss this question in groups and write the key points made in your discussion below.

Current Events

5. How does Japan’s geography affect its view of the world today? Do you think its distance from some countries and closeness to others is as much a factor today? Why or why not?