

Orientalism and Japanese Immigrants in America
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- I. **Subject:** United States History (Honors)
Topic: Orientalism and Japanese Immigrants in America
Grade: 11
Time: 2 hours
- II. **Goal:** To introduce students to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and to have them use this concept to analyze primary historical documents relating to nineteenth-century Japanese immigrants in America. Students will then engage in a writing assignment that will ask them to reflect on whether or not Orientalist thinking persists in modern day cultural exchanges between the United States and Japan.
- III. **Instructional Objectives:** Having read the Introduction and Chapter One of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, students will pursue mutual understanding of the concepts therein through student-centered in-class discussion. Two student moderators will prepare start-up and follow-up questions and then help navigate their fellow students through the material. Students will then break out into small groups, each of which will examine different primary source documents relating to the first Japanese delegations to the United States (1860 and 1871). Some documents will capture the American perspective, and some the Japanese. After 30 minutes, the groups will reconvene to share and discuss what they found in the documents.
- IV. **Content Outline:**
- a. Students should grasp the following about Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Introduction and Chapter One):
 1. Orientalism has an academic dimension that affects the ways we pursue knowledge.
 2. Orientalism has a material and cultural component that interacts with its academic manifestations.
 3. The Orient has served to define the Occident by contrast.
 4. Notions of the Orient and the Oriental are not objectively true but rather culturally constructed.
 5. These constructions reflect colonial power structures (that seek to dominate the imagined Oriental).
 6. The power dynamics of Orientalist discourse are flexible, but always tend to maintain Occidental hegemony intact.
 7. There is a personal component to Orientalism that can only be understood by cataloging its broader cultural dynamics.
 8. Formerly colonized peoples internalize some of the dynamics of Orientalism and project them on themselves or on others.

9. Although mostly a British and French construction, Americans have inherited Orientalist discourse, which has affected their interactions with Native Americans, Asians, and Middle Easterners.
10. Having grasped these main points, students should illustrate deeper understanding by discussing a few of Said's many examples.

b. Students will examine the following documents through the lens of Orientalism:

1. The Bakufu Mission of 1860
 - a. Fukuzawa Yukichi, from *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, 1898
 - b. Muragaki Norimasa, from *Kokai nikki (Diary of a Voyage Abroad)*, 1860
 - c. Two American Reports on the 1860 Mission, 1860
 - d. Walt Whitman, A Broadway Pageant (Poem), 1860
2. The Iwakura Mission of 1871
 - a. Kume Kunitake, Report on the Iwakura Mission, 1878
 - b. Kume Kunitake, from *Kume hakase kyujunen kaikoroku (The Memoirs of Professor Kume Kunitake)*, 1934
 - c. An American Report on the Iwakura Mission, 1872

V. **Instructional Strategies:**

Set: All students will be responsible for completing a close reading of the texts being discussed prior to class. Moderators will prepare lead-in and follow-up questions in order to stimulate and foster discussion.

Activities: Large-group discussion, small-group discussion, group analysis of primary source documents, student moderating of discussions, follow-up writing assignment

Closure: After discussion has run its course, ask the students to consider their own perceptions of Japanese people. Are they in anyway consistent with the views of nineteenth-century Americans? How are they different? Have the students reflect on modern day American popular culture representations of Japanese culture. How are these representations different from or similar to those found in Japanese popular culture?

VI. **Assessment:** Students will receive a discussion grade based on their preparedness, their willingness to engage the table, and the quality of their comments and insights into the material. Students will also be assessed through a short writing assignment (see below).

VII. **Materials:** Books (see below), documents (see below), and the Harkness table.

VIII. **Home Learning Extension:** Students will also be asked to reflect on the closure questions by writing a short paper that uses the ideas of Orientalism to examine, compare, and contrast an American and a Japanese popular culture production. Suggested popular culture pieces for such comparison include comic books *X-Men: Target Angel* and *Naruto (Volume 1)*, but students may find their own documents as well. Students will also revisit the issue of Orientalism at future points in the course (immigration policy, Japanese during WWII, Middle East conflict).

IX. **Bibliography**

- a. Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- b. Duus, Peter. *The Japanese Discovery of America : A Brief History with Documents*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1996.
- c. Claremont, Chris. *X-Men: Target Angel*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2000.
- d. Kishimoto, Masashi. *Naruto, Volume 1*. San Francisco, CA: VIZ Media LLC, 2003.