

Theme

A

Geography of Japan

Lonnie Curtis
Alexandria Middle School

PURPOSE

The student should understand the following geographic ideas about Japan:

- location of major cities and bodies of water
- Japan's elevation levels are a determinant of places people live
- geographic isolation has served to protect Japan from invasion and has allowed Japan to develop a sense of identity
- scarcity of resources (*e.g.*, minerals) on the islands are a cause for Japan to seek an empire

THEME STATEMENT

People, Places & Environment (PPE): Humans create spatial views and geographic perspectives of the world to make informed and critical choices about relationships.

SUGGESTED TIME

Two or three class periods of fifty minutes each.

KEY VOCABULARY & CONCEPTS

- isolation = condition of being set apart from others, physically or otherwise
- empire = major political unit having a territory of great extent or a number of territories or peoples under a single sovereign authority
- archipelago = a group of islands
- population density = average number of people per unit area (*e.g.*, square mile)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- outline map of Japan (Student Handout #1)
- grid of latitude and longitude (Student Handout #2)
- map instruction sheet (Student Handout #3)
- classroom charts/posters to display in front of the class with the following questions:
 - Where do the people in Japan live?
 - Why do they live where they do?
 - How has Japan been effected by its surroundings?
 - What are Japan's mineral resources? How have they affected Japanese history?
 - What would you like to learn about Japan's geography?
- atlas
- colored pencils

SUMMARY

Adaptable Levels
Grades 5-12

Related Themes
CCC, IPG

Values
Understanding

Skills
Drawing conclusions,
researching, observing,
comparing

Integration
Social studies, science, art

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

(see “Alternatives” section)

INITIATION (Inquiry, Preview, Involvement)

1. Put up the large charts/posters which display the five questions (see “Materials” section) in front of the class. Have students get into groups of four or five and discuss the answers to all five questions within their group.
2. Have one student from each group write the answers to one of the questions directly on the chart/poster.
3. Discuss the definitions to the key vocabulary words with the class.
4. Encourage other groups to add to the initial answers if they wish.

DEVELOPMENT (Instruction, Data Collection, Organization)

1. Distribute the grids, outline maps, and map instructions to each individual student.
2. Explain that the lines of latitude and longitude that pass through the Japanese islands are labeled on the blank grid (Student Handout #2).
3. Demonstrate how to draw an enlarged map of Japan by looking at the outline map (Student Handout #1) and drawing the borders of Japan in the correct place on the blank grid. A sample student map is included for teacher reference (Teacher Background #1).
4. Instruct the students to draw their own maps and follow instructions on the instruction sheet.
5. Provide a reasonable amount of time for the students to complete their maps in class.

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT (Idea Articulation, Ownership, Experimentation)

Have the students get back into their groups and write answers to the questions in “Key Questions” section below.

ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT

1. Have the groups exchange their answers to the “Key Questions” and evaluate the other groups’ answers using the following rubrics:
 - 4 = excellent answers; provides clear thoughtful responses to all questions
 - 3 = adequate answers; provides satisfactory responses to most questions
 - 2 = weak answers; provides insufficient responses to most questions
 - 1 = incorrect or inadequate responses to questions; needs further assistance
2. Have each group return the answers to the original group. Each group may revise their original answers before turning in their papers.
3. Guide the class as they discuss and revise the original responses that they wrote on the charts in the front of the class. Have students from each group write revised answers on each of the charts/posters.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why are Japanese cities located along the coasts?
- What could the surrounding seas provide for Japan?
- What could be the military advantage of occupying an island?
- How do Japan's natural resources of coal, oil and natural gas compare with the same resources found in Europe? (Encourage students to look at maps in atlases.)
- Why would these natural resources be needed?
- How could the lack of resources account for Japan's interest in building an empire?
- What advantages could a colony provide for a country? Would these advantages also exist simply by establishing a trading relationship with that area/region/country, without colonization?

ALTERNATIVES

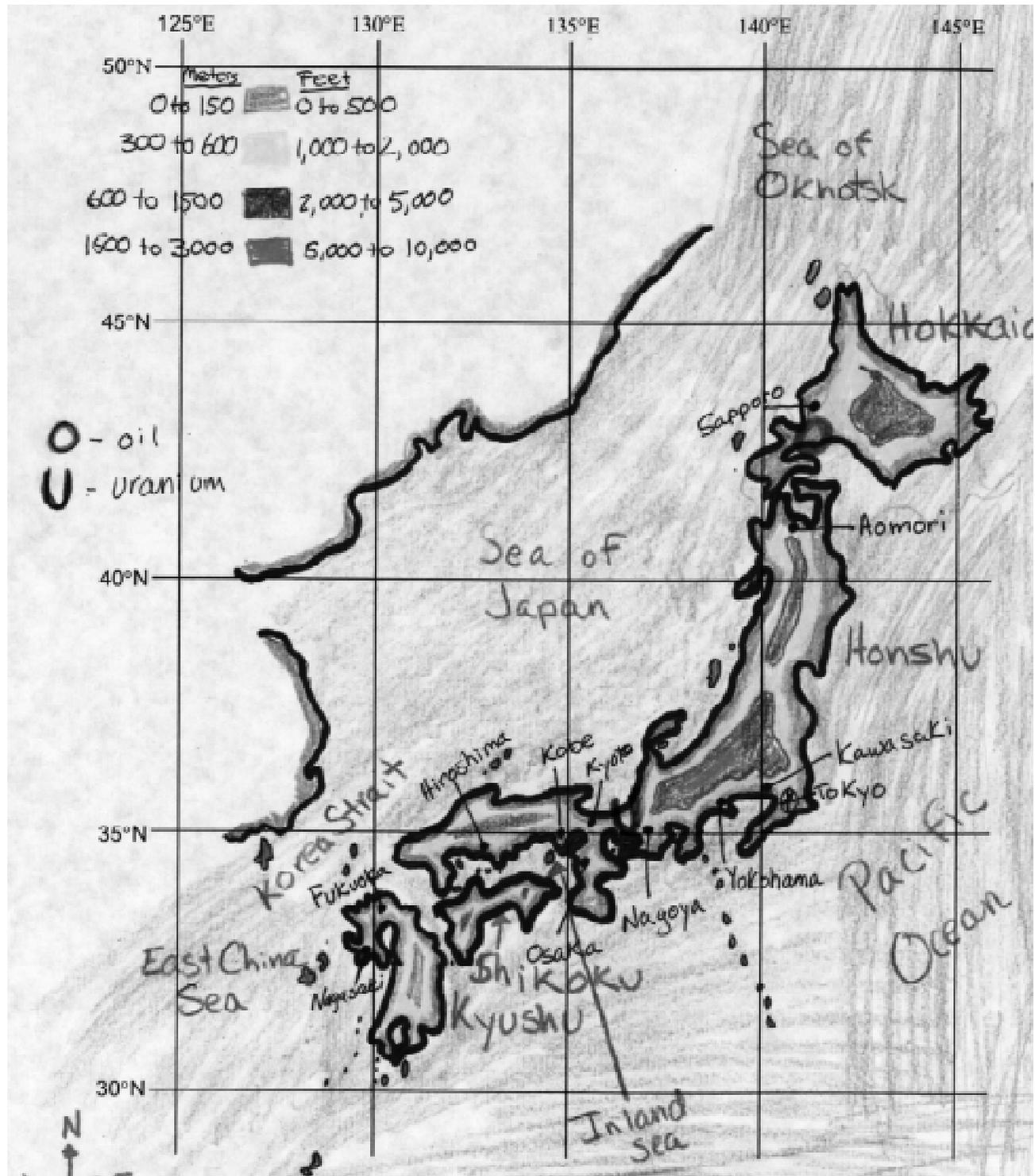
This lesson could be adapted to different grade levels by having more advanced students draw their own blank grids and providing less structure by the teacher, allowing students to create their own structure. This lesson could be integrated into the subject area of science in connection with a unit on earth science (e.g., mineral resources). It could also be integrated into the subject area of art by having students decorate their hand-drawn maps with Japanese art and symbols.

REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *World Cultures: A Global Mosaic*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1996.
ISBN: 0-13831-801-8
- *Nystrom World Atlas*. Chicago: Nystrom (Division of Herff Jones), 1995.
ISBN: 0-88463-480-9. Publisher tel.: (800) 621-8086

TEACHER BACKGROUND #1:

Sample: Student-Drawn Map of Japan

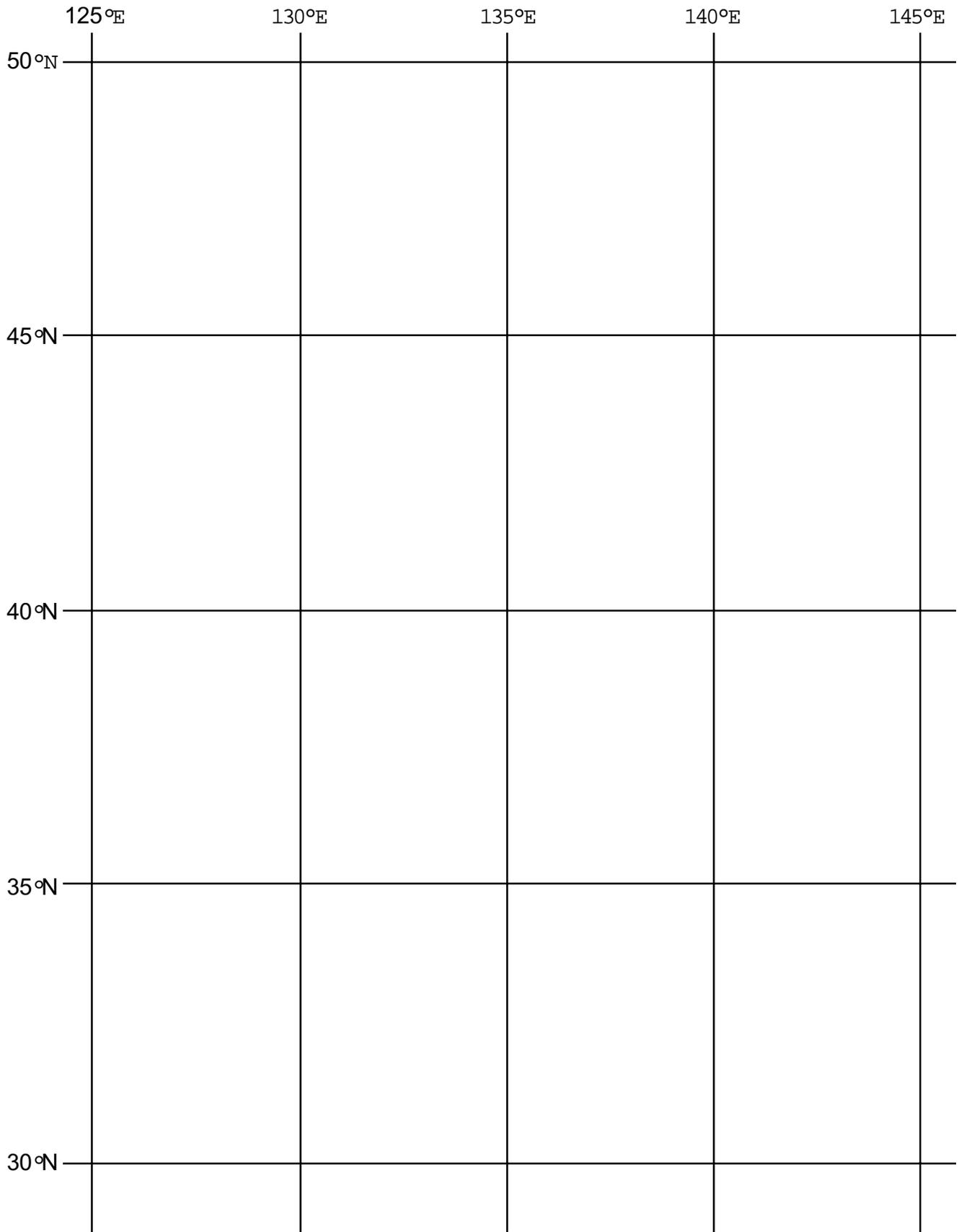


STUDENT HANDOUT #1:

Outline Map of Japan



STUDENT HANDOUT #2:



STUDENT HANDOUT #3:

Map Instructions

1. Draw Japan within the grid form making sure you pay close attention to the latitude and longitude lines.
2. Color Japan's elevations as shown in the atlas and make a color-coded legend of elevations.
3. Put symbols in your legend for the following mineral resources:
 - coal
 - natural gas
 - oil
4. Label the following bodies of water:
 - Sea of Japan
 - Pacific Ocean
 - Philippine Sea
 - Inland Sea
 - Korea Strait
 - Sea of Okhotsk
 - East China Sea
5. Locate and label the four major islands of Japan:
 - Honshu
 - Kyushu
 - Shikoku
 - Hokkaido
6. Locate Tokyo with a star and label it.
7. Locate with a dot and label the following major cities of Japan:
 - Nagasaki
 - Kobe
 - Yokohama
 - Fukuoka
 - Osaka
 - Aomori
 - Hiroshima
 - Nagoya
 - Sapporo
 - Kyoto
 - Kawasaki
8. Be sure your map contains a compass rose.

