

Theme

C

Flavors of Japan

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PURPOSE

To compare and contrast diets of Japan and the United States in order to address stereotypes pertaining to Japanese food.

THEME STATEMENT

Cultures, Continuity & Change (CCC): Throughout periods of time, human beings have sought their historic roots while creating, learning, and changing their cultures.

SUGGESTED TIME

One class period of forty to fifty minutes.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Any Japanese recipe book; Culturgram® of Japan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The traditional Japanese diet consisted mainly of rice, fish, and vegetables. Rice, the traditional element of the meal, is reflected in their language; the word for “meal” (*gohan*) is also the word for “cooked rice.” To identify the particular meal, a prefix is added to *gohan*, such that breakfast becomes *asa-gohan* (morning rice), lunch becomes *hiru-gohan* (noon rice), and dinner becomes *ban-gohan* (evening rice).

Japan is an island nation, and fish has long been a major part of the Japanese diet. The Japanese eat fish in a variety of ways: raw, fried, boiled, steamed, or broiled. The Japanese also eat other sea products including *nori* (a type of seaweed), sea urchin, kelp, squid, eel, and prawn.

Miso (soybean paste) and soy sauce give Japanese food its flavor. The purity and freshness of each ingredient is important in Japanese cooking, so most food is purchased fresh at local markets.

While traditional food is still an important part of the Japanese diet, Western-style food is becoming quite popular today. Most of the fast food restaurants common in America (*e.g.*, McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, Dunkin’ Donuts) have become very popular with the younger generation in Japan.

SUMMARY

Adaptable Levels
Grades 5-9

Related Themes
PPE

Values
Understanding, appreciation of others

Skills
Analyzing, communicating, cooperating

Integration
All subjects

INITIATION (Inquiry, Preview, Involvement)

1. The day preceding this lesson, students keep a journal of everything that they eat during an entire day. In addition, have the students talk with their parent/s and record the foods that they ate (Student Handout #1).
2. Students should put an asterick by the those foods on the list that they consider to be traditional American food and a check-mark by those foods that might be traditional to their own ethnic origin.
3. Divide students into groups and have them share their lists with others.
4. As a class, have students discuss how their two lists (food consumed by classmates and food consumed by parent/s) varied.

DEVELOPMENT (Instruction, Data Collection, Organization)

1. In small groups, ask students to generate a list of foods which they think Japanese people eat. Record the foods on a black board for the entire class to see.
2. Ask students which of the foods they think would be popular with Japanese students of their comparable age in Japan.
3. Distribute to each student a “menu” depicting types of food typically eaten by traditional Japanese families and a “menu” listing types of foods typically consumed by the younger generations in Japanese society (Student Handout #2).
4. Students will compare and contrast both diets within Japan and within the U.S. as well as compare and contrast the diets between Japan and the U.S. Several aspects to consider might be (1) taste, (2) commonality, and (3) preparation.

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT (Idea Articulation, Ownership, Experimentation)

- Have students conduct a search in their own local communities for a Japanese/Asian market or store selling traditional Japanese foods, spices, etc.
- Have students locate a person/s of Japanese heritage in their community and interview this person/s about food and food preparation. In addition, find out what stereotypes they might have had about American cuisine.
- Have students prepare at home a Japanese dish to be brought to school for classmates to taste. Students should be prepared to explain how their particular dish is traditionally prepared and when (time of day and/or season) it would be consumed in Japan.

ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT

In the case that students bring prepared Japanese dishes to school for a tasting party, each student will write an essay comparing and contrasting the differences between Japanese and American cuisine. If they would, indeed, move to Japan, how would they adapt to the different foods?

Construct a rubric for assessing food preparation and the essay, such as the following:

- 5 = Student fully completed essay and participated willingly in food preparation and tasting.
- 4 = Student fully completed essay but was reluctant to participate in food preparation and tasting.
- 3 = Student partially completed essay but participated in food preparation and tasting.
- 2 = Student partially completed essay and was reluctant to participate in food preparation and tasting.
- 1 = Student did not complete essay and did not participate in food preparation and tasting.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Are there generational differences in diet in Japan and the U.S.? If so, what are the differences as well as the similarities.
- How is our complete understanding of the Japanese diet constrained by our stereotypes of traditional Japanese foods?
- How are foods prepared differently in Japan and the U.S.?
- How much of the food consumed in both countries is pre-packaged versus fresh?

REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *Culturgram*® (Japan and many other countries): Brigham Young University, P.O. Box 24538, Provo, UT 84602-4538; tel. (800) 528-6279.

STUDENT HANDOUT #1:

Record of Food Consumption

STUDENT NAME: _____

DATE: _____

	YOUR CONSUMPTION	PARENT/S CONSUMPTION
BREAKFAST		
SNACKS		
LUNCH		
SNACKS		
DINNER		

STUDENT HANDOUT #2:

Similarities and Differences in Diets of Japanese People

	TRADITIONAL	NON-TRADITIONAL (younger generation)
BREAKFAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● salted pickles ● rice ● miso soup ● dried fish (salty) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● toast with jam ● salad ● eggs ● ham
LUNCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● noodles (<i>udon, soba</i>) (not much time, fast lunch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● noodles (<i>udon, soba</i>) ● fast food (Western style)
DINNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● rice ● bread ● rich foods ● fresh vegetables ● seafood ● fruit ● sushi (uncooked fish usually embedded in rice and wrapped in seaweed) for special occasions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● rice ● vegetables ● meat ● Western-style food

