Classroom Connection

WHAT CAN FLAGS TELL US?  A GLIMPSE INTO EAST ASIA – A lesson activity for Middle School Geography, History, or Civics classes.
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Why do kids love flags?  Give them a miniature flag and watch them enthusiastically wave it in the air.  Put up a poster of world flags and watch their interest be piqued!

This handout provides an opportunity to combine students’ natural interest in flags with the development of global awareness, a vital 21st century skill.  Every exposure students have to diverse cultures helps them to understand others and to feel more engaged in the world.  By exposing students to various flags from East Asia, and providing them an opportunity to consider the beliefs and values represented by the colors and symbols, students will gain insight into the similarities and differences between western and eastern societies.

PROCEDURE
•  Ask students to think-pair-share in response to the question “What beliefs and values does the American flag represent?”  Discuss, then introduce the activity.
•  Distribute the handout to each student.  Provide colored pencils or crayons.
•  Together, read the introduction and instructions.  Students read each flag description, and match each with the appropriate flag graphic.  Using the appropriate color found in the description, students color each flag.  Vocabulary that may need explanation:  justice, fruition, wisdom, vitality, Yin-Yang, communism.
•  Students label the flags and summarize what values and beliefs are displayed by each.
•  When finished, students record similarities between all four East Asian flags.

ANSWERS
Flag 1 – Japan, Flag 2 – Taiwan, Flag 3 – China, Flag 4 – Republic of Korea

What do all these flags have in common?  Possible answers:  Colors:  Red, white, yellow, blue.  Symbols:  Sky elements such as the sun and stars, elements of earth, focus on the citizens of the country, ideals such as purity, elements of nature and balance, cultural traditions.

POSSIBLE LESSON EXTENSION:  Have students create their own flag representing themselves, family, class, or school, explaining why they selected various colors and symbols.

RESOURCES:
•  Outline flags available at etc.usf.edu/clipart/galleries/245-world-flags-black-and-white
•  www.worldatlas.com
•  https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/flagsoftheworld.html
WHAT CAN FLAGS TELL US? A GLIMPSE INTO EAST ASIA

Flags have been used throughout all cultures and time periods to represent the beliefs and values of nations. As you know, America’s flag uses colors (red, white, and blue) to symbolize values such as democracy, bravery, and justice, and symbols (stars and stripes) to represent the 13 original colonies and the 50 states.

Each flag is a beautiful, unique statement of what the country believes in and values. What can we learn about a world region by viewing the flags from that area?

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Read the flag descriptions below.
2. Identify and label the flags using their descriptions.
3. Color each flag according to the description and describe what beliefs and values each flag communicates.
4. Answer the question “What do all these flags have in common?”

FLAG DESCRIPTIONS

1. REPUBLIC OF KOREA – This flag has a white background symbolizing the spiritual cleanliness of the Korean people. The symbol in the middle with the Yin (negative aspect on the bottom in blue) and Yang (positive aspect on the top in red) held in perfect balance together represent the origin of all things in the universe. The four trigrams represent many ideas like elements of nature (sky, sun, moon, earth), the four seasons, and ideals (justice, fruition, wisdom, vitality.)

2. JAPAN – This flag has a white background symbolizing honesty, peace, and purity. The large red circle in the middle represents the sun without rays. The color red represents bravery and strength.

3. TAIWAN – This flag has a white sun on a blue colored background in the upper left hand corner. The blue color symbolizes both the sky and democracy. The rays of the sun represent the hours in a day and the months of the year. The rest of the background is red which is the traditional color representing the Han Chinese people as well as love for their country.

4. CHINA – This flag has a red background which is the traditional color of the Chinese people and of communism. The large yellow star represents the Communist Revolution and the smaller yellow stars stand for the four categories or social classes of the Chinese people.
This flag belongs to ____________________
What do the symbols and colors stand for?

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