

Japan: Exploring Different Cultural Components of Japan Through Education, Declining Population, and Immigration

Lesson Background:

Japan has been struggling with population decline for many years and what solutions Japan will use to battle this is to be seen. Japan's population growth rate has declined, because of a low birth rate (about 1.4 per women). By the year 2050 over one third of Japanese will be over the age of 65. Solutions to the population decline could be solved with a change in immigration policies. Currently Japan's strict immigration policy has been kept in place with no sign of change. Japan has been adamant in keeping their immigration policy and finding other solutions to solve their population problem. Japan has been a nation with a strong sense of nationalism and "one culture", which has affected their immigration policy in the past. In this lesson, students will be looking at the education culture of Japan and its immigration policies to determine how Japan's culture could be affected by changes in immigration.

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to comprehend and explain how Japanese and American education systems affect their culture

Students will be able to explain how Japan's culture has affected their population decline

Number of Class Periods

This activity is intended to be done throughout the Japan unit. It will take three 50 minute class periods to complete.

Grade Level

10

Standards:

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1 -- Reading

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2 -- Reading

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6 -- Reading

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10 -- Reading

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1 -- Writing

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

***CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2 -- Writing**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

***CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4 -- Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

***CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9 -- Writing**

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Materials:

- Article: [“How are Japanese schools different from American’s”](#)
- Topography map of Japan
- World in a Balance handout
- Article: [“Immigration is Tough for Japan”](#)
- Handout for “immigration is Tough for Japan”

Procedure

- **Students will already have background knowledge about their own culture** and have identified cultural aspects of different cultures prior.
- Students will reflect on a connection between their education and their culture
- Students will learn about the Japanese educational systems and draw connections to how it influences their culture.
- All sources are web-based and cited. Links provided directly where used
- Student instructions and activity follow:

Day 1

Directions:

1. Bell Ringer: Discuss research findings on how Japanese Education System affects their culture
 - a. Hand formative assessment from yesterday
2. Map of Japan handout: Looking at your maps, star two places you believe would have the most population in Japan and explain why.
 - a. Find a partner and compare your answers
 - b. Class discussion
 - c. Show students an actual map of the most populated cities
3. Explain to students that though Japan’s major cities have a large population density; the population of Japan, overall, is declining.
4. Watch clips of the film, *World in a Balance*
 - a. As students watch they will fill out the handout ‘World in a Balance’
 - b. Discuss video questions
5. Exit Slip: What action should Japan take to fix their declining population?

Homework: Read article below - <https://newsela.com/articles/japan-smallschools/id/8844/>

Day 2:

Directions

1. Bellringer: Pick three of the strongest exit slips from yesterday to show the students have them think, pair, and share why one of them would work or not work for Japan
2. Reflect on how your educational experiences in American public schools affects your personal culture. Discuss as a class student responses.
3. Read article, "How are Japanese schools different from American's"
 - a. Find the main idea, support main idea with reasoned evidence
4. Find a partner and make a T-Chart comparing and contrasting school differences and similarities and choose two ideas and explain how this may affect Japanese or American culture.
5. Class discussion of main idea and reasoned evidence.
6. Using the whiteboard create a class chart that depicts differences in education system and have students explain their ideas of how this may affect culture
 - a. Focus on American culture to give students ideas for their formative assessment
7. Formative Assessment: Using the ideas posted on the board, students will research one of the ideas to explain the inquiry question: How has the Japanese Education System affected their culture.

Day 3

Directions:

1. Bell Ringer: Discuss research findings on how Japanese Education System affects their culture
2. Students will read article, "Immigration is Tough for Japan"
 - a. Students will answer questions on handout
3. Students will brainstorm why Japan does not want to change their immigration laws.
 - a. Discuss as a class
 - b. Teacher will lead into the discussion of reasons why Japan doesn't want to change their laws including cultural homogenous etc...
4. Give students inquiry question and have them research their stance on the following question.
 - a. Inquiry Question: Will Japan's culture be affected by changing Japan's strict immigration laws?
 - b. Remind students to look at the feedback on their formative assessments to help guide them in their writing

Modifications:

Day 1: Articles from newsela can be read in different lexile scores to meet the needs of students with different reading levels.

Day 2/3: Students can create T-charts with a partner or if they need more of a challenge can do it on their own. Teachers can pre-group students into mixed level groups.

Articles can be read to students by teacher or google doc read. For the formative and summative assessment, students who struggle with writing, provide a graphic organizer to help students organize their thoughts. These students can also be provided different pieces of evidence that support the inquiry question. Struggling students can provide 2 pieces of evidence and reasoning instead of 3. For students who are high fliers, ask them to come up with their own inquiry question that will connect Education and Culture.

Extensions:

Students who complete the final task early will work on reading the article link below and will find the main idea and reasoned evidence to support the main idea. They can use the article link below to explore a different solution to the immigration problem that Japan is facing.

<https://newsela.com/articles/japan-refugees/id/11953/>.

World in a Balance - Japan's Population

1. What has caused Japan's population to decline?
2. What cultural changes and components are involved in the population decline?
3. How has Japan's people been affected by the population decline?

Article, "Immigration is Tough for Japan"

1. What is Japan already doing to battle declining population?
2. In your opinion what action that Japan has taken to battle declining population has been most effective?
3. What are problems with Japan's immigration today?

Editorial 1:

AONE, Japan — In the historic wooden schoolhouse nestled in the mountains just 50 miles from Tokyo, there are just two classrooms. Each one contains just three desks in a space designed for many more.

"It's a little bit lonely," said Taiki Kato, 11, who said he was looking forward to going to middle school next year. "It's a bit bigger and there might be kids from other elementary schools."

The middle school has eight students. The elementary school has six, and two of them, the only girls, are from the same family.

That meant Principal Yukari Sudo had just six names to learn when she began working at the elementary school in this small village.

Learning the staff members' names took a little longer — after all, there were twice as many of them.

Deserting The Countryside

Aone, population 638, has two small general stores and a grimy restaurant that some say may serve some of the worst food in Japan. The average age here is 62.

This scene is played out across Japan, from the island of Hokkaido in the north to the mountains along the west coast to here, close to the capital.

For decades, people have been deserting the countryside and heading to the skyscrapers and better job opportunities of Tokyo, Japan's capital city. Now, almost a third of Japan's 127 million people live in the greater Tokyo area.

With a rapidly aging society and a low birth rate, the situation is only going to get worse, experts say. By 2050, the number of children younger than 14 is expected to be half what it is now, as fewer people have fewer children and the proportion of people of childbearing age shrinks. By the middle of the century, there will be about 5 million Japanese in their 90s.

Like Aone, nearly half the public elementary and junior high schools in Japan are too small.

The government in Tokyo would like to close these small schools and fold them into others nearby.

"If a small school has less than five classes, it should seriously and aggressively consider integrating with another school with a sense of urgency," said Hiroto Iwaoka. He is the chief of education reform at the Education Ministry.

From 254 To 6 Students

The high cost of running these schools isn't the only factor. Officials also worry that kids at small schools won't develop the social skills they need in the wider world, because they see the same handful of classmates every day, year in and year out.

Local districts are resisting the strong suggestion to close their tiny schools. Kyoko Inoue, chief of educational affairs in Sagamihara, the area that incorporates Aone, says there's no plan to close the elementary school here, even though there's a much bigger school, with about 80 kids, 5 miles away.

"A school often functions as a core of a community," she said. "We want a school to be something a local community desires."

Aone's elementary school began about 142 years ago. At its peak, in 1945, 254 students sat in its classrooms, and in the 1960s, it still had close to 200 students.

Even now, the whole building is open, although the rooms are heated only when they are used. Its music room is complete with a grand piano, the science room is stocked with lab equipment and the library is filled with books. All of this is now for just six kids.

For a class one day recently, the six students walked to a field where they planted potato seeds.

Next they had lunch — grilled fish, rice, and soup with tofu, bamboo shoots and asparagus — while classical music played. Afterward the six students collected shiitake mushrooms from the forest, then did stretching exercises in the gym.

"We Stick To The Subject"

The school does manage to have sports days, even though there aren't enough players to form a whole soccer team. The teachers also have to be careful not to put too many kids in the cheering squad at once or there will be no one to play.

There are educational limitations, too, including the fact that teachers have to teach kids of different ages at the same time.

"When you have a bigger class, you can divide them into small groups and get them to come up with ideas, present them to the class," said teacher Sachiko Kaneko. "But when they're only one student in each grade, you can't do that."

"In a bigger school, children learn social skills and how to live in the real world," said Kotoe Arakawa, who teaches the younger children. "These kids are so well behaved and so gentle, so when they get into a bigger group they sometimes find it hard to speak out."

But there are some advantages to having such a small school, the teachers say. "There are no students that get left behind here, because we stick to the subject until each kid gets it," Arakawa said.

Chiharu Yamaguchi, the mother of the only two girls in the school, moved to Aone nine years ago and was shocked by how small the town was.

"I was worried about sending my kids to the school, but we decided to try it and I got to know the school and the parents and the teachers," she said, as she waited by the school gate to walk her daughter's home. "And that got rid of my worries."

Editorial 2:

How are Japanese schools different from America's?

29JUL

The only experience I have with the American public school system is when I was a student in the '70s – '80s in West-central Florida.

But I'm sure Florida's public schools aren't too different from schools in other parts of America. And even though I graduated from high school in 1988 I guess American schools aren't too different today (with the exception, of course, of fashion and music tastes. And there are probably computers in U.S. classrooms now.)

My experience with the Japanese school system is from having three teenagers who attended Japanese public schools from kindergarten to the high school they're currently attending (college).

Some differences between these countries' school systems are:

– In **Japan**, the school year begins in April and ends in March. In **America**, the school year starts around September and ends in June. Also, students in Japan have fewer days off than American students.

– There are **no school buses in Japan**. In Japanese public kindergartens, mothers take their kids to school (often by bicycle). Public elementary schools and junior high schools are close enough for the students to walk to* (*in urban areas, like Tokyo, students must walk to school...no bicycles allowed. But in more rural areas of Japan, kids are often permitted by ride their bikes to school.)

High schools in Japan require passing an Entrance Exam to attend...so these schools usually require the students to take a short commute by train.

(*Private* schools in Japan, on the other hand, aren't usually within walking distance from the students' homes...so kids who attend private schools (even elementary school) can be seen commuting by train with their classmates.)

– In **Japanese public schools**, elementary school kids wear street clothes to school (like in American schools), but starting in junior high, they must wear a **school uniform**.

– In Japanese schools, everyone must remove their shoes at the entrance and change into 上履き (**indoor shoes**).

– In Japanese elementary and junior high schools students and teachers all eat the **same school lunch**. There are no choices.

In most high schools, students and teachers are required to bring a 弁当 (packed lunch) from home.

And very few Japanese schools have a cafeteria. Students eat lunch in their classroom at their desk.

In **American** schools, there are “lunch ladies” who prepare the school lunches and then serve the students, but in **Japan**, the “lunch ladies” cook the lunch but students take turns serving lunch to their classmates.

– Japanese school children don't take a shower after gym class.

- There are no janitors in Japanese schools. The **students clean their school everyday**.
- In junior high and high school in Japan, **almost every student** joins a after-school **club or team**.
- 夏休み (**summer vacation**) is about five weeks long in **Japan**. It was about twice as long in America, if I remember correctly.

And during summer vacation, Japanese students have to **go to school many times** for their school club / team practice. Also, Japanese students must do a lot of **homework** during summer vacation.

- In American schools, there are no 入学式 (“School Entrance Ceremony”), and 卒業式 (“School Graduation”) isn’t until high school has been completed.

But in Japan, there are both 入学式 (“**School Entrance Ceremonies**”) and 卒業式 (“**School Graduations**”) for kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, high school and college.

- In **America**, school grades are counted as **1-5** for 小学校 (elementary school), **6-8** for 中学校 (junior high) and **9-12** for 高等学校 (high school).

In **Japan**, 小学校 (elementary school) is six years (grades 小**1-6**), 中学校 (junior high) is three years (grades 中1-3 (equal to grades **7-9**)), and 高等学校 (high school) is also three years (grades 高校 1-3 (equal to grades **10-12**)).

There are many other differences...such as the way homework and tests are administered and checked, the manner that classes are arranged, the fact that Japanese students stand and greet their teacher at the beginning and end of each class, the way that students are trusted in empty classrooms alone...even in kindergarten.

I’d say that schools in Japan and America have more differences than similarities. And I think education and school life that my children are getting in Japan is superior to what I had in America.

Immigration Is Tough for Japan

By Noah Smith

The big long-term problem with Japan's economy is demographics. A declining population means that even if productivity and per capita gross domestic product rise at a decent clip, total growth will be low or even negative. That makes Japan's mountain of debt -- the highest as a percent of GDP among rich nations -- hard to service. Meanwhile, an aging population means fewer workers to support each retiree.

Many solutions have been floated for this demographic problem. Work-life balance, it is hoped, will boost fertility, as women are no longer forced to choose between careers and raising children. Corporate governance reform should give productivity a boost. And robots, many believe, will substitute for human workers. But once in awhile, someone asks me: Why doesn't Japan try mass immigration?

For the U.S., Canada or Australia, mass immigration would be the natural solution to a labor shortage. In fact, immigration is the only reason that the U.S. has managed to keep its population growing about 0.5 percent to 1 percent a year in recent decades, even though the country's fertility rate is only enough to keep population constant. So isn't immigration a no-brainer for graying, shrinking Japan?

It isn't so simple. First, Japan's population is projected to shrink by about 500,000 a year during the next few decades. Canceling out that loss with immigration would mean importing almost 0.5 percent of Japan's population a year. Countering population aging would mean even more dramatic inflows. This would require Japan to be about as open to immigration as the U. S.

That would be extremely difficult for a country that has traditionally been closed to immigration. Japan, unlike the U.S., has no birthright citizenship law. People who get visas to work in Japan pass on their foreign citizenship to their children, unless those children go through the long process of naturalization. That tends to create a class of permanent outsiders, who suffer all sorts of institutional and informal discrimination.

This has happened at least twice before. Koreans who immigrated to Japan during their country's period of colonial rule ended up passing their Korean citizenship to their descendants.

These people, called “zainichi,” speak only Japanese and grow up with Japanese culture, but have Korean passports. Although many are highly entrepreneurial, they often endure discrimination and are the occasional targets of ugly racist movements. Only recently, due to high intermarriage rates, is this minority being assimilated into Japanese society.

A second example was the wave of Brazilian guest workers, called “dekasegi,” who moved to Japan in the 1980s and 1990s. These Brazilians were ethnically Japanese, but culturally distinct and didn't succeed at assimilating into Japanese society. In the late 2000s, with Japan's economy on the rocks, many of these guest workers were asked to leave.

Japan's closure to immigrants isn't a result of racism -- at least, not as people in the West conceive of the term. If so, then Japanese Brazilians or Koreans (who are ethnically indistinguishable from native Japanese) would have had little trouble assimilating. Instead, the groups were denied equal access to the economic totem pole.

Discrimination in Japan is based on nationality. Guest workers are not considered true immigrants, and their children and grandchildren are often seen as outsiders because of the absence of birthright citizenship. Employers tend to treat them as foreigners. Japanese individuals are generally very welcoming to foreigners -- many of my close friends are Japanese -- but corporations are a different story.

Without birthright citizenship, Japan can't engineer an immigration boom to offset its population loss. With conservative politicians in perennial control of Japan's government, there is little chance that the country will make big changes to its policies any time soon. Xenophobia, though not as common among the populace as many believe, seems to be rife at the higher levels of power.

So should we forget about the possibility that immigration will help Japan out of its funk? Perhaps not. Although mass immigration is probably off the table for now, high-skilled immigration is a different matter. With the country's talent pool shrinking, the government is eager to attract these kinds of workers. Last year, a law was approved to grant skilled workers permanent residency after three years of employment in Japan (down from 10 years). That

follows the implementation of a points-based immigration system in 2012, which favors skilled and educated workers.

These permanent residents will be different from the mass immigrant groups of earlier eras. Since they are entering as individuals instead of as groups, they probably will be in a better position to form Japanese friendships and marry Japanese spouses. They will most likely be highly proficient in Japanese, making the naturalization process easier.

Importantly, many of these immigrants will not be ethnically Asian. Their presence as naturalized Japanese citizens, with high positions in Japanese companies, will slowly acclimate the populace to the idea of true immigrants. Let's hope that will eventually translate into less discriminatory hiring practices at Japanese companies, and more public support for pro-immigration policies.

In other words, though Japan probably isn't ready for mass immigration, its new policy of high-skilled immigration may slowly change the country's institutional discrimination against foreigners. Perhaps in a few decades, Japan will be ready to open itself more.

Japan's Culture and Immigration Laws

Benchmark 3: Develop and/or answer essential questions to synthesize information and communicate ideas about their world.

Write an essay.

1. Choose your writing format. (blog, diary, newspaper, journal, PSA, script, letter, CER essay)
2. State your claim below. Remember that a good claim is arguable...your evidence will prove it.
3. Use 2 pieces of specific evidence and thorough reasoning to prove your claim. (be sure to cite your evidence within your essay)
4. Cite your sources below the essay.

Inquiry Question: Will Japan's culture be affected by changing Japan's strict immigration laws?

Claim (answers the inquiry question):

Source 1 (URL Link):

Evidence from source 1-

Reasoning (explain how the evidence proves your claim):

Source 2 (URL Link):

Evidence from source 2-

Reasoning (explain how the evidence proves your claim):