

Moral and Ethical Beliefs: Proverbs

Purpose:

Students will look at the cultures of Japan and the United States by comparing proverbs from each country.

Target Grade Levels: 6-7

Essential Questions:

1. What is a proverb?
2. What are the universal beliefs which proverbs express from the two different countries?

Rationale:

Exposure of students to similarities in moral teachings of two different countries.

Materials:

- Japanese and English Proverbs (Handout A)
- Poor Richard's Almanack in Japanese? (Handout B)

Activities:

1. In small groups, students will discuss the answers to the following questions: "What is a proverb?" Have the students provide a few examples of proverbs. Then ask them, "Do you think Japan has similar or different proverbs than the United States?" Have them discuss this question.
2. Divide the students into small groups and list as many proverbs as they can in a fifteen-minute period? After approximately fifteen minutes, each small group will report their responses back to the whole group.
3. Distribute the *Japanese and English Proverbs* worksheet (Handout A) to each student. Allow a small amount of time for each student to complete. Share correct answers with the whole group.
4. With the whole group, discuss who Benjamin Franklin was and the writing of *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Distribute *Poor Richard's Almanack* in

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Japanese? Worksheet (Handout B); go over answers with the whole class after a short period of time.

Assessment:

- Teacher observation of student involvement in small and large-group discussions.
- Student completion of worksheets.

Grade Adaptation:

Target grade for this lesson is 6-7th grades. In order to modify for higher grades, address the following questions:

1. What are some proverbs from other countries that would give the same universal teaching as these explored from Japan and the United States?
2. After reading *Poor Richard's Almanack*, what are some of the essential truths you feel Benjamin Franklin was imparting to the American public?

Relationship to Social Studies Standards:

Grade 6, People in Societies, Grade-level Indicator 1

Compare the cultural practices and products of the societies studied including: (a) class structure, (b) gender roles, (c) beliefs, and (d) customs and traditions.

This lesson was developed by Marlene Henry, teacher, Northmont City Schools, Ohio, based on a previously developed lesson by Lewis E. Miller, teacher, Tiffin City Schools, Ohio.

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Handout A: Japanese and English Proverbs

Kotowaza are Japanese proverbs and sayings. Below are listed fifteen Japanese and English proverbs. For each Japanese proverb in the left column, find an English proverb in the right which corresponds in meaning. As you read the Japanese proverbs in translation, try to read the proverbs also in the Japanese language.

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| 1. Don't complain about a gift | ___Jack of all trades, master of none <i>Moraimono ni kujo</i> |
| 2. Crude tactics are the source of a big wound
Nama-byoho wa, okizu no moto | ___Ignorance is bliss |
| 3. The same kind gather together
Rui o motte atsumaru | ___Tomorrow is another day |
| 4. One who has gone is forgotten day by day
Saru-mono hi ni utoshi | ___A fly in the ointment |
| 5. Ignorance is Buddha
Shiranu ga hotoke | ___Misery loves company |
| 6. Too many accomplishments, no accomplishments after all
Tagei wa mugei | ___Blood is thicker than water |
| 7. A flaw in the gem
Tama ni kizu | ___Beggars can't be choosers |
| 8. Relatives are better than strangers
Tanin yori miuchi | ___Out of sight, out of mind |
| 9. One stitch now is worth ten stitches afterwards
Ima no hitohari, nochi no tohari | ___When in Rome do as the Romans do |
| 10. Tomorrow blows tomorrow's wind
Asu wa asu no, kaze ga fuku | ___A little knowledge is a dangerous thing |
| 11. People suffering from the same disease have mutual sympathy
Dobyō ai awaremu | ___It's no use crying over spilt milk |
| 12. Spilt water never returns to the tray
Fukusui bon ni kaerazu | ___Where there is smoke, there is fire |
| 13. Obey the customs of the place where you are
Go ni irite wa, go ni shitagae | ___Birds of a feather flock together |
| 14. Where there is no fire, there is no smoke
Hi no naki tokoro ni, kemuri wa tatanu | ___A stitch in time saves nine |
| 15. Single effort, double gain
Ikkyō ryōtoku | ___Kill two birds with one stone |

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Handout B: Poor Richard's Almanack in Japanese?

Benjamin Franklin has been referred to as one of the leading eighteenth century thinkers in the western world. Printer, publisher, inventor, scientist, diplomat and author, Franklin is probably best known for helping to frame the *Declaration of Independence*.

In *Poor Richard's Almanack* (the word "almanac" in Ben Franklin's time was spelled with a "k"), Franklin compiled hundreds of proverbs that praise honesty, industry and prudence. Many of these proverbs were borrowed from various European cultures and some were created by Franklin himself. To show the universality of sayings that sum up bits of wisdom and morality, a number of proverbs from Japan have been collected which correspond to the themes of Franklin's writings. Match the saying from *Poor Richard's Almanack* on the left with their Japanese counterparts on the right.

POOR RICHARD'S ALMANACK

1. 'Tis easy to see, hard to foresee
2. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation
3. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation.
4. Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary action.
5. Here comes glib-tongue, who can outflatter a dedication and lie like ten epitaphs
6. If passion drives, let reason hold the reins
7. There are no ugly loves, nor handsome prisons
8. Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it
9. Make haste slowly
10. An egg today is better than a hen tomorrow

JAPANESE COUNTERPARTS

- __Sanitation first, medicine next
Ichi ni yojo, ni ni kusuri
- __Money controls even the order of Hell
Jigoku no sata mo, kane shidai
- __Short temper is liable to loss
Tanki wa sonki
- __It is the effect of one's own fault
Mi kara deta sabi
- __The mouth is the entrance of calamity
__*Kuchi wa wazawai no moto*
- __Easy to say, hard to do
Iu wa yasuku okonau wa katashii
- __Not to say is better than to say
Iwanu wa, iu ni masaru
- __When hungry, all tastes delicious
Himotoki toki no, mazui-mono nashi
- __Love is beyond consideration
Koi wa shian no hoka
- __Where there is comfort, there is suffering
Raku areba ku ari.

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ANSWER SECTION

JAPANESE AND ENGLISH PROVERBS

1. (6) Jack of all trades, master of none
2. (5) Ignorance is bliss
3. (10) Tomorrow is another day
4. (7) A fly in the ointment
5. (11) Misery loves company
6. (8) Blood is thicker than water
7. (1) Beggars can't be choosers
8. (4) Out of sight, out of mind
9. (13) When in Rome do as the Romans do
10. (2) A little knowledge is dangerous
11. (12) It's no use crying over spilt milk
12. (14) Where there is smoke, there is fire
13. (3) Birds of a feather flock together
14. (9) A stitch in time saves nine
15. (15) Kill two birds with one stone

POOR RICHARD'S ALMANACK IN JAPANESE?

1. (2) Sanitation first, medicine next
2. (8) Money controls even the order of hell
3. (4) Short temper is liable to lose
4. (9) It is the effect of one's own fault
5. (5) The mouth is the entrance to calamity
6. (1) Easy to say, hard to do
7. (3) Not to say is better than to say
8. (10) When hungry, all tastes delicious
9. (7) Love is beyond consideration
10. (6) Where there is comfort, there is suffering