

Disasters and Decision Making

Purpose:

Comparing two similar disasters, the Northridge Earthquake and the Kobe Earthquake, gives insight into different economic, political, and cultural decision-making style.

Target Grade Level: 6-9

Essential questions:

1. In what manner was government a part of the cause or cure for the disaster?
2. Did economic policies positively or negatively affect the disaster?
3. What attitudes and practices were in place before the earthquake that demonstrated concern for prevention and protection from destruction?
4. What attitudes and practices were changed as a result of the earthquake?

Rationale:

Decision making style can affect political and economic outcomes.

Materials:

1. Background information (Handout A)
2. Decision making compass student (Handout B)

Activities:

1. Introduce the following problem to the students:
The date is January 17, 1995. It is early in the morning in downtown Kobe, Japan. An earthquake measuring 6.9 has hit the heart of the city causing vast destruction, loss of life, and paralysis of government. Later, in the United States, a similarly strong earthquake hits in the mountains neighboring Northridge, California. Less destruction and death occur than in Japan but nevertheless, the gravity of the situation is great.
The question is, "Assume you are Japanese. What would you do in Kobe that day and the next?"
Have the students discuss their answers.

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2. Have each group read the Background Information (Handout A) and answer the questions on the Decision-making compass Handout B from the perspective of its assigned country.
3. Chose randomly representatives from each reading team to serve on an international investigation committee sponsored by the United Nations.
4. Have the 3 teams develop a list of 4 questions they wish to learn from the other country?

Suggested questions:

- a. The natural environment affects ways in which cultures respond to living styles. How does the environment affect life in California and Japan?
- b. How does business affect the use of resources in these earthquake prone areas?
- c. Did government and business work together to prevent a disaster?
- d. What kept order when the government was disrupted?
- e. What role did the family play?
- f. In which culture was the government more involved?
- g. How did people immediately respond to the disaster?
- h. In what manner did consensus become important in Japan's/ USA's respond to the disaster?
- i. Why did volunteerism not exist to any great extent in Japan before the Kobe quake?
- j. In what manner, did individual needs become important in the USA's/Japan's response to the disaster?

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- k. What should Japan learn from the USA and vice versa with regards to prevention of destruction or relief from destruction?

Assessment:

1. Use student written responses from the Decision-making compass Handout B for evaluation.
2. Ask students to change the Decision making compass's questions to make it a better tool.
3. Ask students to write a United Nations Protocol for other Earthquake prone areas containing:
 - a. Attitudes necessary for disaster prevention
 - b. Attitudes necessary for disaster relief
4. How does studying a country's response to disaster offer insight into the manner in which decisions are made?

Grade Adaptation:

Elementary Level:

1. Brainstorm different places to go for help if you have a problem?
 - a. Personal problem
 - b. Community problem
 - c. National problem

Middle Level:

1. Present a problem to students and ask them to list in order what they would do and why?

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Relationship to Social Studies Standards:

Grade 6, Government, Grade-level Indicator 1

Explain reasons for the creation of governments such as (a) protecting lives, liberty, and property, and (b) providing services that individuals cannot provide for themselves.

Grade 9, Government, Grade-level Indicator 1

Explain how various systems of government acquire, use and justify their power.

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Grade 9, Government, Grade-level Indicator 2

Analyze the purposes, structures, and functions of various systems of government including: (a) absolute monarchies, (b) constitutional monarchies, (c) parliamentary democracies, (d) presidential democracies, (e) dictatorships, and (f) theocracies.

This lesson was developed by Roberta Mucha, teacher, Westerville South High School, Westerville City Schools.

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TEACHER HANDOUT #1

Background for Discussions about Japanese Behavior and Decision-Making Styles

Before 1945:

- Japan's Emperor was considered by the Japanese to be divine and not subject to the will of the people.
- Zaibatsu (large family monopolies) possess great economic power.
- Japan did not have compulsory education.
- The military had enormous dictatorial power.
- Equality for women did not exist.

After 1945:

- Japan's Emperor remains on the throne and is considered divine but the Constitution limits the emperor totally to the will of the people.
- Zaibatsu were stripped of power by the constitution.
- Universal suffrage began in 1945.
- Compulsory education began in 1945.
- Women slowly began to receive legislative equality.
- Japan was demilitarized but permitted a Defense Force capability.

Majority Rule v Consensus:

Disputes in Japan are ideally solved by mutual understanding. Majority rule as applied to western law is superseded by the principle of rule by consensus in Japan. In Japan, mediation is the preferred method of resolving disputes. The win/win philosophy is tantamount to individual gain. The number of civil suits brought to Japanese courts is between 1/20th to 1/10th the number per capita in the U.S.A. or the U.K.

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The Individual v The Group:

The group historically takes precedent over the individual in Japan. Groups of individuals are classified together. Such grouping is evident in schools. Each person in a group has a role and works towards harmony and consensus within the group. Wa or the state of harmony is valued in Japan.

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Handout A

Disasters and Decisions

On January 17, 1995 both Northridge, California and Kobe, Japan were hit by earthquakes. The Northridge quake registered 6.7 and the Kobe registered 6.9. Both struck in early morning hours in a heavily populated area. The Kobe quake struck its full force in the heart of the city whereas the Northridge quake pelted it's kinetic force at the Santa Susana mountains which partly explains the reason why the numbers of deaths and financial losses were far more severe in Japan.

Japanese seismic engineering was then and now considered to be among the finest in the world but much of the damage was due to structure built before current Japanese codes were in effect. Due to land shortage, much of Kobe was constructed on extremely soft recent alluvial soil and areas near a shore, making it vulnerable to great damage. The 1995 quake destroyed more than 90% of the port's 1887 berth hand causing some shipping business never to return (Executive Summary 2).

The Kobe earthquake witnessed a renaissance of volunteerism in Japan. Professor Shigeo Tabsuki, Ph.D. studied the phases of volunteerism during this emergency. His studies point to a period when the city government was paralyzed due to shock of the disaster. During this time, the absence of government was replaced by individual efforts. Reuben Nelson felt the conditions for volunteerism were prime during the Kobe quake. He compared the "recognition of a person as individual and open psychological space" to the Western American frontier (Tatsuki 8). The harsh frontier required individuals to be inter-dependent. The values of tradition, authority, and regulations were stripped away by the frontier created during the emergency. In Kobe, the city government did not exist for nearly three months after the disaster. Yamaguchi-gumi, a Japanese organized crime syndicate started to provide relief in the way of food, diapers, and water. Victims felt that by taking over the government's job they showed "giri" (faithfulness) and "ninjo" (warm-heartedness). The development of a new sense of community changed the manner in which Japanese connected public interest to the government.

The absence of government caused both business and information systems to also redefine their image of society. A People's Channel began as a result of a volunteer center. On January 30, a Korean mini-station and a community radio movement began. The project continued after the disaster with funds from International Rotary Club Kobe Earthquake Relief Fund (Okabe 1).

A daily average of 20,000 volunteers worked during the first month of the disaster. The official estimate counted 620,000 people/day volunteering in all of the Hyogo Prefecture in the first month and one million in the first two months after the Kobe Earthquake. According to Aki Okabe, "volunteering and a nonprofit sector is a western and foreign idea. It does not work in Japan. The government takes care of everything in Japan and people need not do such things." Professor Tabsuki compared the Kobe earthquake experience with volunteerism to 1938 when war with China and the National Mobilization law was enacted. The 1940's changed Japan into a bureaucratic, highly centralized society. Despite a new

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constitution after World War II, the new post war government and businesses maintained the “spirit” of an efficiently planned and concentrated society. The 1995 Kobe quake changed the way Japanese think about public interest, society, citizenship, and community involvement (Tatsuki 10).

No legal framework existed in Japan to either facilitate the development or maintain the existence of volunteer organizations. Public benefit corporations (Koeki Hojin) required governmental approval and a level of government-approved assets. The Civic Activated

Promotion Bill of Dec.1995 was passed in record time by a coalition of political support.

Also, as a result of the Kobe Earthquake, a Disaster Relief Bill was enacted in April 1999 whereby victims of natural disasters in Japan are offered government compensation. An earlier bill offering public assistance was passed in 1998. Zenrosai, a cooperative insurer, helped victims with money, counseling, and psychological services. Trade and business groups such as Japan Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU), and the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development and Hygo Municipality, etc. lobbied to a national security system for disaster relief. Then, a major change happened. The National Congress changed from “legislation by government administration” to “legislation introduced by a Diet Member” (Yoshizawa 1-2). This led the way for the Diet Member's Council for Defending Japan against an Earthquake (DMCDJE). Numerous laws have since passed with regards to disaster relief. For the first time in Japan's history, public money is available to victims. . Today, dozens of nonprofit support centers are organized, more civil and governmental programs can be initiated as a result. The grassroots efforts permit private citizens to have a greater voice in the legislative process.

Hit possibly the hardest were the foreign residents. These foreign residents did not have well-established community organizations, and suffered from language barriers. Shortly after the quake, a newly formed Center for Multicultural Information and Assistance (CMA) came into existence. Such organizations gave foreign residence more voice in civic and community activities. Ethnic radio began first as pirate stations with secret broadcasts because these stations lacked government authorization. The public, upset with the lack of government assistance, supported the stations. The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, paralyzed by the quake, did little to stop the pirate stations but later, when able, gave official approval.

The Kobe earthquake generated a rise in civic mindedness unlike any other event in Japanese history. At the heart of problem solving, in the absence of a government, was the family. Research argued that the healthy family system and the heightened sense of civic-mindedness promoted adaptive coping in a post-disaster society. Speed by which families responded to the crisis was associated with the resiliency of family adaptability. A change from decision-making practices, which stress conformity and obedience to those, which stress high self-governance as well as by high community solidarity became evident in Japan. The press claimed that three months after the earthquake were days of lawlessness. Instead, the people became the law. A transformation occurred first for survivors then later for the country of Japan.

This handout was developed by Roberta Mucha, teacher, Westerville South High School, Westerville City Schools from the resources listed on pg. 236.

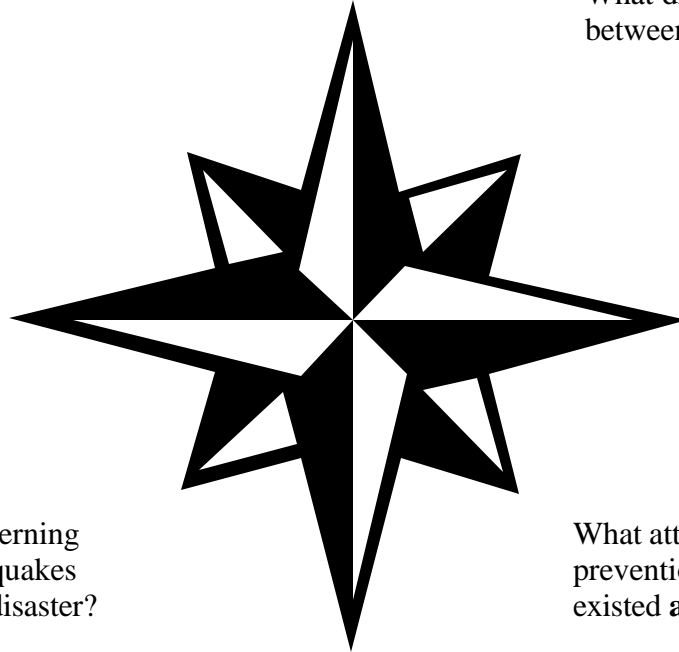
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Handout B

DECISION-MAKING STAR

What similarities are there between the two disasters?

What differences are there between the two disasters?



What attitudes concerning prevention of earthquakes existed **before** the disaster?

What attitudes concerning prevention of earthquakes existed **after** the disaster?

How did people react to the disaster?

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