

## **Famous People of Japan:** **Literature, Politics, Film, Television, Sports,** **and the Imperial Family**

### **Purpose:**

Students will become familiar with some famous Japanese and their contributions to Japan and the United States.

**Target Grade Level:** Middle School (may be adapted for elementary and high school)

### **Essential Questions:**

- Who are some famous Japanese people?
- What are the effects of these famous individuals on Japanese culture and U.S. culture?

### **Rationale:**

Students will learn how the U.S. benefits from the contributions of famous Japanese people.

### **Materials:**

Library books

Internet sites on Japan, famous people

### **Activities:**

1. Introduce the lesson by discussing fame and brainstorm a list of famous Americans. Try to come up with at least one name for each letter of the alphabet. Record the names on a transparency or chart for everyone to see. Discuss the characteristics or accomplishments of each person. Discuss the questions, "How have these people influenced our culture?" Ask the students to name some people who are not Americans who have influenced our culture. List these names on a chart or transparency for everyone to see. Discuss the question, "How do you think famous people in Japan can influence American culture?"
2. Give students a list of famous contemporary Japanese in the areas of literature, politics, sports, film, television, sports, and the imperial family. Provide them with a short description, but no details, of each person on the list (example: Junichiro KOI ZUMI -Prime Minister). Discuss the list

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and allow students to select a person to investigate. Provide students with internet and library access. Students should plan a biographical presentation about the person selected. Some suggested formats for the presentation follow.

- Oral report to the class.
- Assume the identity of the individual and speak to the class. Wear a costume and/or use props.
- Create a multi-media presentation using a computer program such as Hyperstudio, Kid Pix Slide Show, i-movie, or Power Point.
- Small groups may work together to create a Japanese Hall of Fame for other classes to visit.
- Write, illustrate, and bind a picture book biography.
- Develop and perform a skit or other role play situation for an individual or small group.

3. Students should discuss similarities and differences of Japanese and U.S. criteria for fame. Discussion should encourage students to draw conclusions about cultural values in the U.S. and Japan. Students should also discuss and compile a list of the impact these individuals have upon our culture.

### **Evaluation:**

The teacher and/or students should evaluate the research projects for content and evidence of knowledge gained using an appropriate rubric (see sample).

Students and teacher could generate a list of questions about content learned from the student investigations and presentations. Students could answer selected questions.

### **Adapting to Various Levels:**

For elementary students: Students should first generate lists of famous contemporary Americans, and then discuss a similar list of famous contemporary Japanese. The teacher could provide each student with a copy of a short biography from the internet site on Famous Japanese. The students

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use these biographies to create a prop box and present their biographical information to the class.

For high school students: In addition to research on the internet, students could contact a local Japan / America group and interview Japanese living in the U.S. about their thoughts, opinions, etc. on contributions of famous Japanese. This information could be compared to what was found during research and incorporated in an essay or editorial commentary. Students could also use a newspaper format to write feature articles for sports, entertainment, or business sections of a fictional newspaper. The newspaper would then be published and shared with the class.

### **Relationship to Social Studies Standards:**

Grades 6-8, People in Societies, Benchmark B

Analyze examples of interactions between cultural groups and explain the factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict.

Grades 6-8, People in Societies, Benchmark C

Explain how contact between different cultures impacts the diffusion of belief systems, art, science, technology, language and forms of government.

### **Suggested Individuals to Investigate:**

Literature- Matsuo BASHO (Haiku); Oe KENZABURO (Nobel Prize- writer)

Film- Akira KUROSAWA (Director); Natsuko TODA (Film Caption Translator)

Imperial Family- Crown Prince NARUHI TO; Princess MASAKO

Television- Kenichi CHEN (Iron Chef); Hiroyuki SAKAI (Iron Chef)

Politics- Junichiro KOI ZUMI (Prime Minister); Chiune SUGI HARA (Japanese "Schindler")

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Sports- Hideo NOMO and Ichiro SUZUKI (Baseball)  
Yuko ARIMORI (Female Athlete)  
Midori ITO (Female Figure Skating)  
Masashi OZAKI (Golfer)  
Yasuhiro YAMASHITA and Ryoko TAMURA (Martial Arts)  
Kazu and Rui RAMOSU (Soccer)  
Shunichi KAWAI and Yuichi NAKAGAI CHI (Volleyball)  
Shuzo MATSUOKA and Kimiko DATE (Tennis)  
Taro AKEBONO, Antonio INOKI and KONISHIKI (Wrestlers)

### **Sample Rubric for Famous Japanese Research Project:**

Exceeds the Standard(s)= includes more than the required elements/content, is exceptionally well organized, and uses superbly executed oral and visual media.

Meets the Standard(s)= includes all required elements/content, is well organized, and uses clearly executed oral and visual media.

Does Not Meet the Standard(s)= lacks required elements/content and / or is not clearly organized, and / or uses poorly executed media.

### **Resources:**

#### **Japan-Related Internet Sites:**

<http://www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/information/famous/index.html>

Short biographies of various famous Japanese

<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/-dee/ANCJAPAN/contents.htm>

Synopsis of historic eras and some information about people

<http://www.ironchef-USA.com/>

General information about the television program and its participating chefs

<http://www.ironchef.com/ironchefs.shtml>

Meet the current iron chefs: current and retired

<http://www.japan-zone.com/modern/index.shtml>

Information on the Imperial family and famous Japanese, and a Famous People Quiz.

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**A Book on Famous Japanese:**

**Who's Who in Japan, No. 9** by the Japanese Travel Bureau- *a collection of short biographies*

This book is available on the web at Amazon.com or at the Institute for Japanese Studies to borrow for free. Please contact the office at japan@osu.edu or 614-292-3345. Books on famous Japanese people were generally difficult to find, except for a few specific biographies. The web sites were the best sources of information.