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.
1. Don’t complain about a gift
   _Jack of all trades, master of none Moraimono ni kujō_

2. Crude tactics are the source of a big wound
   _Nama-byoho wa, okizu no moto_

3. The same kind gather together
   _Rui o motte atsumaru_

4. One who has gone is forgotten day by day
   _Saru-mono hi ni utoshi_

5. Ignorance is Buddha
   _Shiranu ga hotoke_

6. Too many accomplishments, no accomplishments after all
   _Tagei wa mugei_

7. A flaw in the gem
   _Tama ni kizu_

8. Relatives are better than strangers
   _Tanin yori miuchi_

9. One stitch now is worth ten stitches afterwards
   _Ima no hitohari, nochi no tohari_

10. Tomorrow blows tomorrow’s wind
    _Asu wa asu no, kaze ga fuku_

11. People suffering from the same disease have mutual sympathy
    _Dobyo ai awaremu_

12. Spilt water never returns to the tray
    _Fukusui bon ni kaerazu_

13. Obey the customs of the place where you are
    _Go ni irite wa, go ni shitagae_

14. Where there is no fire, there is no smoke
    _Hi no naki tokoro ni, kemuri wa tatanu_

15. Single effort, double gain
    _Ikkyo ryotoku_

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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>POOR RICHARD’S ALMANACK</strong></th>
<th><strong>JAPANESE COUNTERPARTS</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “Tis easy to see, hard to foresee</td>
<td><em>Sanitation first, medicine next&lt;br&gt;Ichī ni yōjō, ni ni kusuri</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, clothes or habitation</td>
<td><em>Money controls even the order of Hell&lt;br&gt;Jigoku no sata mo, kane shidai</em></td>
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<td>3. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation.</td>
<td><em>Short temper is liable to loss&lt;br&gt;Tanki wa sonki</em></td>
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<td>4. Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary action.</td>
<td><em>It is the effect of one’s own fault&lt;br&gt;Mi kara deta sabi</em></td>
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<td>5. Here comes glib -tongue, who can outflatter a dedication and lie like ten epitaphs</td>
<td><em>The mouth is the entrance of calamity&lt;br&gt;Kuchi wa wazawai no moto</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. If passion drives, let reason hold the reins</td>
<td><em>Easy to say, hard to do&lt;br&gt;Iu wa yasuku okonau wa katashii</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. There are no ugly loves, nor handsome prisons</td>
<td><em>Not to say is better than to say&lt;br&gt;Iwanu wa, iu ni masaru</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it</td>
<td><em>When hungry, all tastes delicious&lt;br&gt;Himojii toki no, mazu-mon no nashi</em></td>
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<td>9. Make haste slowly</td>
<td><em>Love is beyond consideration&lt;br&gt;Koi wa shian no hoka</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. An egg today is better than a hen tomorrow</td>
<td><em>Where there is comfort, there is suffering&lt;br&gt;Raku areba ku ari.</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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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