**My Neighbor Totoro: A Timeline of Japanese Modern History**

*This lesson plan was created by Sarah Brown, outreach coordinator of the Carolina Asia Center*

\*You will need laptop cart for this lesson or a visit to your library\*

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| **Grade Level** | High School World History, AP World History |
| **Duration** | 1-2 days |
| **Learning Objectives** | * Construct a timeline of Japanese modern history from the 1950s to the 1990s * Analyze visual and literary sources to summarize themes of different Japanese time periods, including the impact of modernization and new technology * Compare and contrast different time periods and how the difference is portrayed in Japanese media |
| **NCSCOS Essential Standards** | World History:  WH.H.1.1, WH.H.1.3, WH.H.1.4, WH.H.7.5, WH.H.7.6, WH.H.8.1, WH.H.8.2, WH.H.8.3, WH.H.8.4, WH.H.8.5 |

**Mini-Lesson**

Start off with a daily question either on the board or pose it in a discussion.

1. *What is something in the past that you wish still existed in 2017?*
2. Ask them *does anyone know what manga or anime is?*
   1. If someone is passionate about it in the class, ask them to share why they like it.
   2. Explain manga is a type of Japanese comics that is drawn in a certain artistic style, such as big eyes.
   3. Anime is the TV or movie form of it. Many stories are told today in multiple platforms as manga, anime, live action, and video games.
   4. Manga exploded in popularity during the post-war period of Japan.
3. Today students will explore the post-war period of Japan to the burst of the Japanese economy bubble (1950s-1990s). They will utilize different types of media to analyze themes of the historical narrative, including the film *My Neighbor Totoro*.

**Activities**

Day 1:

1. After the mini-lesson, ask students to review what happened in the Showa period of Japan. For example, what major events occurred? What trends emerged? (This unit follows nicely after WWII).
   1. What happened in World War II?
   2. How did Japan rise to power in the 1930s and what constituted its empire?
   3. Why was Japanese victory over Russia in 1905? How is this pinnacle victory a major turning point?
   4. What occurred at Hiroshima and Nagasaki?
   5. How did Japan surrender?
2. Explain to students how media can be a window into Japanese culture during a given time period and help historians reconstruct the historical narrative.
3. Use the PowerPoint to show the two pictures of the 1950s.
4. Ask students to do Think-Pair-Share.
   1. First, students will write down what stands out to them in the picture.
   2. Then, students will share with a partner.
   3. Lastly, students will share as a class.
5. Point out the start of modernization, but there are still traditional clothes and you can point out trees. It is important students understand modernization did not happen overnight or equally across Japan.
6. Next, show the video of Lyle Hiroshi Saxon's visit to Tokyo in 1990-1991.
   1. What do you notice differently from the other images we've seen?
   2. What do you notice that is the same?
7. Point out the technological improvements of the post-war decade.
8. Tell them today we are going to analyze if people thought these technological innovations helped or hurt the standard of living according to the people in the 1950s.
9. Ask students to split into 8 groups.
10. Explain how today students are going to research a certain event in Japanese history and come up with 3 pictures and a paragraph to describe this post-war event or theme.
11. Together students will put it up in one massive online timeline.
12. Assign each group one of these themes
    1. US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty and other US relations in the 1950s
    2. Economic Growth in the 1950s
    3. The royal family as symbolic of the "professional housewife" and "salaryman" in the 1960s
    4. Olympic Games held in Tokyo and the television in 1964
    5. Pollution-Related Health Damage Compensation Law in 1972
    6. Japanese car firm Honda opens its first plant in the US in 1982
    7. Japanese Education in 1980s
    8. Burst of the Japanese economic bubble in 1990s.
13. What they do not finish in class, they finish for homework.

Day 2:

1. Put all the pictures on one PowerPoint or Google Slides.
2. Pass out timeline sheets.
3. Have each group present on their pictures in chronological order.
4. Have students fill out their timeline sheets during the presentations.
5. Talk about the modernization of Japan.
   1. The end of WWII challenged the existing economic and political power structures. This gave rise to a new balance of power in the world.
      1. What was the new framework? Where was Japan's place in that?
   2. Japan became a capitalistic, economically thriving country that was influenced heavily by Western Powers, especially the U.S.
   3. Click to the slide about the effect of US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty.
      1. Did everyone like the Western Powers getting involved?
   4. Then click on their economic growth: Yoshida Doctrine slide.
      1. What happened to the economy in the 1950s?
      2. Why did it grow so much?
         1. It led to modern luxuries of the 1950s (click to slide).
      3. Although the Japanese people felt ambivalent about the Western powers influence in their lives, how did they react to the new technologies, urbanization, and other modern comforts in the 1950s?
         1. In the 1950s, Japan embraced the industrialization whether it was washing machines, TV, Olympics, etc.
   5. Click to slide about housewife and salaryman.
      1. They also embraced the role of the "professional housewife" and the "salaryman."
      2. Television is an example of the Japanese embracing modernization in the 1960s (click to slide The Rise of Television).
      3. What else happened in the 1960s that opened Japan to the world? As time went on, did their opinion of modernization changed?
   6. Click to slide about pollution in 1970-1980.
      1. How did Japanese people feel about the amount of pollution caused by industrialization by the early 1970s?
         1. People started to realize pollution was a problem in 1972.
   7. Urbanization and industrialization has changed the physical environment of various nations.
   8. The people were also not sure about being "buddies" with the Western powers.
      1. They protested against the resigning of the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty.
   9. As the decades went on, people started to realize modernization is not without its downfalls. They worried about how the drive for strict Japanese education was affecting their children. In the 1990s, the economy crashed in the burst of the Japanese economic bubble, seen in slide Economic Growth.
      1. Between the 1980s-1990s, many people were becoming nostalgic for a time when the drive to be modern was not the forefront of everyone's mind.
6. Pass out the Venn Diagram.
7. Introduce the film "My Neighbor Totoro."
8. Explain how it is a film made in 1988 during the post-war modernization era. However, the movie itself takes place in 1950s in the idyllic country side.
   1. *Note: If you cannot get a hold of the movie, alternative clips from the movie and fan-made compilation of scenes can give you an idea.*
9. Students will compare and contrast the nostalgia portrayed of the 1950s on the left, overlapping themes in the center, and the reality of the 1980s-1990s on the right.
10. Afterwards, discuss with students what they saw. Use the example Venn Diagram to help lead discussion.

**Assessment:**

Ask students to get in the same groups and create a manga with a story about one of the issues discussed in the past two days about Japan. The drawings do not have to be exactly like Japanese-style ones but should include a social critique of Japan's postwar society.

**Extension:**

For High School students, pass out the McDonald Reading "Hayao Miyazaki's *My Neighbor Totoro"*as a way to solidify information and utilize critical reading skills. Then, ask them to watch another anime film *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, Princess Mononoke, or Spirited Away* in their spare time.Afterwards, they must write a critical analysis of the film similar to McDonald's reading. They might focus on similar issues by comparing/contrasting the young girl as heroine, the place of fantasy, or the quality of the environment.

*Optional DBQ for High School students on Article 9 and the US-Japan Security Treaty by****Asia for Educators****can be found in the Resources.*

**Resources**

[PowerPoint](https://carolinaasiacenter.unc.edu/files/2017/06/Slides-for-Lesson-Plan.pptx)

[Project Instructions](https://carolinaasiacenter.unc.edu/files/2017/06/Post-War-Japanese-Timeline-Project-Instructions.docx)

[Japanese Timeline Worksheet](https://carolinaasiacenter.unc.edu/files/2017/06/Japanese-Timeline-Worksheet.docx)

[Venn Diagram](https://carolinaasiacenter.unc.edu/files/2017/06/Venn-Diagram-of-1950s-1990s.docx)

[Teacher Copy Venn Diagram of 1950s-1990s](https://carolinaasiacenter.unc.edu/files/2017/06/Teacher-Copy-Venn-Diagram-of-1950s-1990s.docx)

[McDonald Reading - Totoro](https://carolinaasiacenter.unc.edu/files/2017/06/McDonald-Reading-Totoro.pdf)

[Asia for Educators DBQ](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1950_usjapan.htm)

Clips from Totoro:

[What Mei Found](http://video.disney.com/watch/what-may-found-my-neighbor-totoro-4d7fff1a343a7a973adbb234)

[At the Bus Stop](http://video.disney.com/watch/at-the-bus-stop-my-neighbor-totoro-4d7fff1b07bfda973adbb234)

[Making Acorns Grow](http://video.disney.com/watch/making-acorns-grow-my-neighbor-totoro-4d7fff18562dca973adbb234)

[Official 1988 Trailer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92a7Hj0ijLs)

[Fan-made Trailer: Shows more of the family aspect](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6B_nuHksvs)