

Nakahama Manjiro

Purpose

This lesson will present the story of Nakahama Manjiro and allow students the opportunity to respond to his experience.

Target Grade Level: 7-Special Education Resource Setting

Concepts:

19th Century Japan
Rules of Isolation
Manjiro's Experience outside of Japan
Manjiro's return to Japan

Materials:

Shipwrecked! The True Adventures of a Japanese Boy
Rhoda Blumberg, HarperCollins Publishers, 2001

Nakahama Manjiro's Hyosen kiryaku A Companion Book
Rosenbach Museum and Library Philadelphia, 1999

Key Idea:

In the era of the *Great Peace* a rule was enforced that any person who left the Japan will be put to death upon his return.

As a result of Manjiro's experience in the Western world he was a great help to Japan in dealing with the intrusion by Commodore Perry on July 8, 1853.

Skills:

Application- Given the isolationist rules of 19th century Japan, students will apply them to understand the reasons why it took so long for Manjiro to return back to his country.

Synthesis-Given Manjiro's situation and era of the time period

students will problem solve to figure how he is to return to his family in Japan.

Procedures:

- 1) Have students make a K/W/L chart for the country of Japan.
- 2) Students will discuss the idea of individual and country isolation
Read *An Isolated Empire*, pp. 15-20

Why would an individual choose to be isolated?

What situations cause an individual to choose to isolate?

What benefits are there to a country isolating?

What are the draw backs for an individual or country choosing to isolate itself?

- 3) Have students read the text *Shipwrecked!* (with support from the Companion book of Manjiro's manuscripts) and complete these activities:

a) Read *Shipwrecked!* chapter 1 to discuss Manjiro's life as a poor fisherman and his responsibility of being the soul provider of his family at age nine.

What other cultures/civilizations must sons follow the career footsteps of their fathers?

How is it in today's culture are children left without a parent and own responsibility in the household? How may have this contributed to the situation where Manjiro had to work in dangerous situations?

b) Read chapter 2 *Marooned*.

What went wrong on Manjiro's vessel that it became shipwrecked? How did they survive? Write a journal entry to describe their experience.

Use Manjiro's drawings of his crewmembers in the Companion book. Encourage students to use drawings in

their journalizing.

c) Read *Rescued* (Ch. 3) and *The Whaling Ship* (Ch. 4).
Have students discuss the details of Manjiro's crew's rescue.
Have students discuss elements of *Point of View*. What was
Manjiro's initial Point of View of the Americans (see his
first account drawings)

*Why do you think that people who are from an unfamiliar
place may look strange to Manjiro?*

*How did the Americans' behavior or appearance conflict
with Japanese culture of Manjiro's time?*

Use these sources for information about Whaling and the era
of Whaling.

Nimrod and the Seas, William Davis

Men and Whales, Richard Ellis

Moby Dick, Herman Melville

See Manjiro's drawings of whales and ships.

d) Have students read *Honolulu* (Ch. 5).

Have them compare Manjiro's drawings to Hawaii today.

*What was the significance of Hawaii to Japan's trade in
the 19th century?*

(See the maps and manjiro's drawings.)

e) Read *A Japanese New Englander* (Ch. 6)

Discuss Manjiro's decision to leave with Captain Whitfield
to Massachusetts on the *John Howland*.

*How was it that Manjiro made this decision to stay with
Captain Whitfield?*

Review Manjiro's writing and drawing text, especially those
when he was drawing cultural objects (violins, railroads,
tools, etc.) and was learning to write the English alphabet.

How is it that Manjiro came to learn to write?

What opportunities was he provided in America?

f) Read *Digging for Gold* (Ch. 7)

Discuss Manjiro's determination to be with his family and what sacrifices he made to see them again.

How may have Manjiro's motives to pan gold been different than others in the Gold Rush?

g) Read *Arrested* (Ch. 8) and *Imprisoned* (Ch. 9)

Discuss the set backs that Manjiro experienced in returning to Japan. How was he still determined and patient and trusting of the Japanese government?

Create a *For and Against* Chart to discuss the viewpoints of the students for Manjiro staying or leaving the United States and returning to Japan.

What risks did Manjiro face in deciding to return to Japan?

h) Read *Home at Last* (Ch.10)

Examine Manjiro's drawings of Commodore Perry and the Americans.

How was Manjiro a help to his country? What skills did Manjiro acquire that were needed to help Japan deal with the Americans?

How was it that the Japanese government adapted in order to survive and retain their culture while at the same time breaking their own rules of isolation?

i) Read *Honored Samurai* (Ch. 11)

Tell how Manjiro is a hero figure in Japan.

How is it that he is still honored today?

Do a search engine for the *Manjiro Festival* which is held on a yearly basis in Fairhaven Massachusetts. Another search engine can be brought up for the *Manjiro Society of International Exchange in Virginia*.

- j) As a final response to the text have students write a play that outline's Manjiro's life and adventures and it's relevance to Japanese history.
- 4) For further reference do a search engine on the Manjiro Festival in Fairhaven, Massachusetts as well as the Manjiro Society of International Exchange in Virginia for students to learn how Manjiro life is remembered and honored today.
- 5) For an interesting comparison, compare Manjiro's life to that of Ranald McDonald, a Scotts/Native American (Chinook) who purposefully shipwrecked himself in Japan during the same unique time period in Japan's history. Both of these individuals are courageous and commemorated today. McDonald became the first teacher of English in Japan.

Sources for Compare and Contrast:

Native American in the Land of the Shogun, Frederik L. Schodt
Stone Bridge Press, 2003.

Pacific Rim Adventurer, Jo Ann Roe
Washington State University Press, 1997.