Meiji Japan Foreign Policy

9-12 Grades World History/AP World History Periods 5 and 6

This activity is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

Two class periods of 45-60 minutes

Description of activity: Examine and analyze primary source documents related to Japanese foreign policy during the late 1890s and early 1900s.

Focus Question: What were the military and political goals of Meiji Japan? What allowed Japan to become an imperialistic nation?

Context: In a unit on Japan following the end of isolation and the establishment of the Meiji government.

Objectives: Sorting out military actions by Japan, understanding their goals and motives, examining international perceptions.

Virginia SOLs
STANDARD WHII.1a, b, c, d, e, f
The student will improve skills in historical research and geographical analysis by
a) identifying, analyzing, and interpreting primary and secondary sources to make generalizations about events and life in world history since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
b) using maps, globes, artifacts, and pictures to analyze the physical and cultural landscapes of the world and to interpret the past since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
c) identifying geographic features important to the study of world history since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
d) identifying and comparing political boundaries with the locations of civilizations, empires, and kingdoms from 1500 A.D. (C.E.) to the present;
e) analyzing trends in human migration and cultural interaction from 1500 A.D. (C.E.) to the present;
f) analyzing the impact of economic forces, including taxation, government spending, trade, resources, and monetary systems, on events from 1500 A.D. (C.E.).

STANDARD WHII.9d, e
The student will demonstrate knowledge of the effects of the Industrial Revolution during the nineteenth century by
d) explaining the rise of industrial economies and their link to imperialism and nationalism;
e) assessing the impact of European economic and military power on Asia and Africa, with emphasis on the competition for resources and the responses of colonized peoples.
Assessment: Students answer analysis questions which could be assessed, followed by class discussion, finally a summative assessment task as a SAQ.

Activity Details
Primary Sources: see below
Procedure: Students will analyze primary sources, answer questions, then take part in a class discussion. Students could be paired up to work together on this or grouped and given a portion of the sources to analyze, with groups reporting back to the class and leading the discussion. Finally, a short answer question is included as a summative assessment task.

What you will need before implementing: You will need color copies of every document and description information on the back.
Improving Historical Thinking Skills through Source-Based Instruction
Paige K Solomon, Norfolk Collegiate

Battle scene - soldiers storming a fort, engaging troops defending the fort
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661174/

What is the subject of this painting?
What details do you notice?
What is the historical context?
What was the author’s purpose?

Gaiheijō daigekisen no zu
View of the great attack on Gaipingcheng.
1895.
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008660419/

What is the subject of this painting?
What details do you notice?
What is the historical context?
What was the author’s purpose?
General offensive of the allied armies against Tʻien-chin -- Co. 8, Reg. II Infantry crashing into Tʻien-chin through the south inside gate

Kasai, Torajirō, artist
1900 August
https://www.loc.gov/item/2009631620/

What is the subject of this painting?

What details do you notice?

What is the historical context?
Who probably commissioned this painting?
Why might this painting have been commissioned?
Examine the message of this pol. cartoon

What is the subject matter?

Can you explain the artist’s message?

What could be his motive?
Victorious Japanese crossing the harbor to "Tiger Tail" -- after the surrender -- Port Arthur
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005678341/

What is the subject of this stereograph?
What details do you notice?
What is the historical context?

Tako no asirai (Octopus treading)
Kobayashi, Kiyochika, 1847-1915, artist
1904
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009615031/

Examine the political cartoon.
What is the subject matter?
Can you explain the artist's message?
What could be his motive?
“What makes Japanese soldiers so strong?” asks Russia. "We are filled with Yamato Damashii" [spirit of old Japan] says Japan. "Please give me some Yamato Damashii" [says] Russia

Kobayashi, Kiyochika, 1847-1915, 1904 or 1905
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009630472/

Examine the political cartoon.

What is the subject matter?

Can you explain the artist’s message?

What could be his motive?

Explain what is meant by the “spirit of old Japan”? 
"The yellow peril"
Udo Keppler
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.25833/

What is the subject matter?

How are Japan and Russia portrayed?

What perspective does this provide?

Note the timing of the publication. How does it fit with the events?

Can you explain the artist's message?

What could be the artist's motive?
"Good offices"

W. A. Rogers.


https://www.loc.gov/item/2010645521/

How was Theodore Roosevelt portrayed in this image?

How was Russia shown?

How was Japan shown?

What was the overall message?

Possible motivation/purpose of the author?
Summative Assessment Task:

This could be scored as a short answer question.

a. Identify and explain the major foreign involvement by Japan in the late 1800s and early 1900s. What motivated them?

b. How successful were they and what accounts for that success?

c. What were the implications? How was Japan perceived by the US and the western world in general?