

## **Object & Ritual in Japanese History- Lesson Plans**

6th Grade Core

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“Object Biographies”

### **Rationale:**

For 6th grade English & Science, students will focus on researching and writing about the creation of an object through the perspective of that object. They will also look at how use and discarding of objects affects our natural resources and environment.

In our lecture, we used a portrait painting of Tokugawa Ieyasu and the objects included to tell his biography. We also looked at the art and process of sword making in historical Japan. As a class, we will develop an informational text about the creation of a samurai warrior’s sword, then read one written from the sword’s perspective. Students will also watch “Possessions”, a short anime film, and use it as a discussion about discarded but repairable objects and how that refuse affects our planet’s natural resources. Students will then write an informational autobiography of an object they own and have fixed, or a reusable object they will plan to keep.

### **Skill Objective:**

Students will be able to explain the process of sourcing materials and manufacturing an object of their choosing based on research. Students will be able to support an argument that human growth and consumption of resources has impacted Earth’s systems.

### **Content Standards:**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
English	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
Science	NGSS MS-ESS 3-4	Construct an argument supported by evidence for how increases in human population and per-capita consumption of natural resources impact Earth's systems.

### **Prior Knowledge:**

Students can write expository text. Students can gather facts from expository text.

### **Day 1 Opening Activity**

Discussion will open about portraits and self-portraits and viewing the painting “Dream Portrait of the Toshogu Deity” by Kano Tan’yu (on next page [http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/fisher/detail.html?id=FISHER\\_n2008020892](http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/fisher/detail.html?id=FISHER_n2008020892)).

Students will discuss the following questions with partners and with the class:

*-From this portrait, what items or objects are important to this person? Or what can you tell about this person from the objects?*

*-What would you include in a self-portrait (selfie picture) that tells about you?*

Students can create a list of objects related to hobbies, important things, clothes or pets then share. Background about Tokugawa Ieyasu will be shared with students particularly relating to his swords and their prominence around his life. ([https://china.usc.edu/sites/default/files/pitelka\\_empire\\_of\\_things.pdf](https://china.usc.edu/sites/default/files/pitelka_empire_of_things.pdf))

## Activity

After hearing about Ieyasu's upbringing and rise to power, students will then discuss and create a "Know & Want to Learn" chart regarding nihonto, or Japanese swords, with their prior knowledge or interests.

Questions that could be discussed:

- Are all swords made the same?
- Were some more important or better than others?
- Would some have a special name?
- How do you think they were made?

As a class, we will read through an age appropriate resource (<https://kids.kiddle.co/Katana>) and gather facts about the making and use of swords. Additional resources can be found here:

[https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/japb/hd\\_japb.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/japb/hd_japb.htm)

[https://china.usc.edu/sites/default/files/roach\\_swords.pdf](https://china.usc.edu/sites/default/files/roach_swords.pdf)

<https://www.historyoffighting.com/samurai-sword.php>

<https://studyingjapaneseswords.com/>

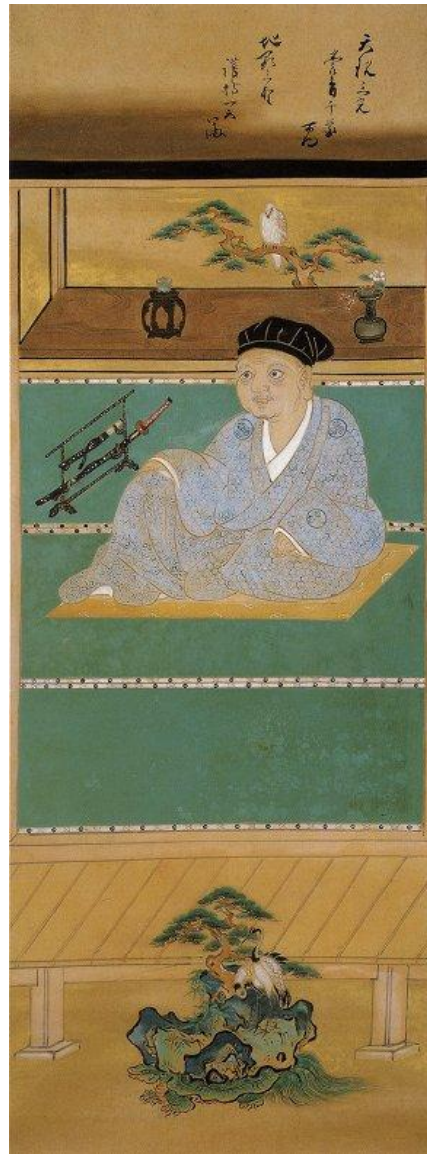
Using the "Katana Facts for Kids" resource, as a class, we will outline the steps and process of making a sword from sourcing the materials, to processing it. A vocabulary list for technical words will also be created. Students can also make a graphic organizer of the steps, if preferred.

## Debrief & Assessment

As a class, we've looked at an important historical figure and the importance of his swords throughout his life. We've also looked at the process of making these swords. Students will be practicing their informative writing skills with these topics. Using the outline of steps, students will write an explanatory text about the creation of a Japanese sword in a few paragraphs. Their text should include all the steps outlined as a class and be coherent from start to finish.

## Day 2 Opening Activity

Students will read a teacher created short, historical fiction about the creation and obtaining of a sword, told from the sword's perspective. This could either be about Tokugawa Ieyasu's sword or any samurai warrior. This should follow the same manufacturing process outlined in the previous lesson, but have narrative elements related to the owner's history and use of the sword.



## Activity

Students will choose an item from our first discussion, something that is important to them or their identity, like the sword that was represented in Tokugawa Ieyasu's portrait. With that object, they will research using the internet to find how it was made and what source materials were used. After that, they will outline the manufacture process for an object of that type, then create a timeline of when they obtained it and any key events that followed. Using the "sword story" from the opening activity, students will begin writing an explanatory text from the object's perspective of:

- How their object was made
- How their object was obtained
- How it has been used to present day

## Debrief & Assessment

Students will finish their writing outside of class and will present their stories, and object in class if possible, at a later date. The story should be told from the perspective of the object and include the three main explanations outlined above.

### **Day 3 Closing Activity**

Students will watch the 13 minute anime film “Possession” by Shuhei Morita (<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3rr0av>) and then can discuss the following questions:

- What do the spirits (yokai) represent or mean?*
- What is a theme of this story?*
- Considering your object from your story, where did the materials to make it mostly come from?*

These questions can be discussed with a partner and as a whole class before presenting their own stories and objects.

### **Activity**

Students will look at evidence of human consumption of natural resources using Google Timelapse videos (<https://developers.google.com/earth-engine/timelapse/videos>) and discuss how growing populations affect the natural resources of Earth. **\*\*Optional: an in-depth lesson based on Lake Mead and Las Vegas can be used from Google’s free science resources [MS-ESS3-4 Assessment: Las Vegas and Lake Mead](#) \*\***

Before presenting their stories to class, students can discuss the following questions with a partner or whole class discussion:

- How does the anime we watched relate to this topic in science?*
- How would our planet’s resources be affected if everyone in class had the same object you had?*
- How would continually replacing your object affect the planet’s resources?*
- What steps can you take moving forward?*

After the discussion, students can present their objects and stories to the class.

### **Closing Activity**

Students have looked at historical items that have been collected and the process of their manufacture. They have looked at sentimental objects in their possession and how they’ve been made of natural resources. Then students have reflected on the cycle of manufacture, use and end of a product or object’s life. As a closing activity, students can start to create a list of other objects they have that they can repair, reuse or continue to sustainably own moving forward.