ACTIVITY

Facet: Culture

The U.S.–Japan relationship today spans many facets, from military and business to politics and pop culture. As Professor Peter Duus writes, "The relationship today appears to be more durable than it ever has in the past. But as history has demonstrated, there always remains the possibility that the pendulum might swing again."

Working in groups, your class will research and learn about six different facets of modern U.S.–Japan relations and assess how they affect the overall relationship between the two countries.

Your group's topic is the role of culture in the U.S.–Japan relationship. Conduct research into your topic, focusing on the research questions provided below. Then prepare and deliver a 5-minute presentation to the rest of the class.

Research Questions

Use the questions below to guide your research and structure your presentation.

1. What is the history of cultural exchange between the United States and Japan? What American ideas, traditions, cultural practices, and pop culture have been imported to Japan, and vice versa? (Possible areas of research: American influence on Hokusai's woodblock prints; Akira Kurosawa's influence on American film and vice versa; food culture; holidays; loan words.)
2. What is the current status of cultural exchange between the two countries? (Possible areas of research: trade volume of Japanese pop culture items in the United States; popularity of American music and movies in Japan; trends in tourist visits between the two countries.)
3. Professor Duus lists the following as key themes in the U.S.–Japan relationship: friendship and hostility, conflict and cooperation, admiration and criticism, interdependence and rivalry, war and peace. What themes are most relevant to your topic, and why?

Assessment

Your research and presentation will be graded using the following criteria:

- clarity of presentation;
- thoroughness and relevance of research to the research questions;
- thoughtful analysis of the role your "facet" plays in the overall U.S.–Japan relationship; and
- even distribution of researching and presenting responsibilities among group members.