

The Geography of Japan

This unit of eight lessons aimed at Year 7 and 8 classes not only allows students to investigate aspects of Japan's human and physical geography, but also incorporates activities introducing them to Japanese culture. Over the course of the unit, pupils learn about Japan's location, climate, wildlife, population, natural hazards, and tourism industry. They will also consider the ways in which Japan is unique as well as drawing comparisons with other countries, including the UK. In addition to the main topics covered in each lesson, cultural topics are introduced throughout the scheme, giving students a deeper insight into Japan beyond common stereotypes.

CURRICULUM LINKS

This unit covers criteria outlined in the 'Geography programmes of study: key stage 3. National curriculum in England' including:

Location knowledge: 'deepen spatial awareness of the world's countries using maps', with a 'focus on...Asia' as well as study 'environmental regions', and their 'key physical and human characteristics'.

Place knowledge: 'understand geographical similarities, differences and links between places through the study of...a region within Asia'.

Human and physical geography Through the 'use of detailed place-based exemplars' learn about 'key processes in physical geography: plate tectonics, weather and climate' in addition to 'key processes in human geography: population and urbanisation, international development, use of natural resources. 'Students will also 'understand how human and physical processes interact to influence, and change landscapes, environments and the climate; and how human activity relies on effective functioning of natural systems'.

Geographical skills and fieldwork gain knowledge of maps including 'topographical and other thematic mapping'.

Source: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239087/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Geography.pdf Department for Education (2013).

RESOURCES

Each lesson has an accompanying lesson plan. See individual lesson plans for external resources and optional additional resources.

Lesson 1 – Location and Resources Presentation, Opportunities and Challenges Worksheet.

Lesson 2 – Climate Presentation, Calendar worksheet, Climate Information Sheets.

Lesson 3 – Animals of Japan Presentation, Map Worksheet, Wildlife Information Cards.

Lesson 4 – Japan’s Population Presentation, Japanese Prefectures Map, Population Data Sheet, Population Density Map Worksheet (Choropleth Map Template).

Lesson 5 – Volcanoes of Japan Presentation, Sakurajima Fact File Worksheet

Lesson 6 – The Tohoku Tsunami Presentation (Part 1 and optional Part 2) Printable Timeline, Comic Strip Worksheet (Blank or Pre-illustrated), Fumio Obata’s ‘Comic Reportage’, Anne Kaneko’s Blog ‘Message from Fukushima’.

Lesson 7 – Japanese Buildings Presentation, Building design worksheet.

Lesson 8 – Tourism in Japan Presentation (Part 1 and optional Part 2), Impacts of Tourism Worksheet, Alternative Travel Destination Fact File Worksheets (standard and differentiated versions)

Keywords

location, resources, hazards, opportunities, challenges, archipelago, tectonic plate, ring of fire, typhoon, monsoon, hot springs, earthquake, volcano, climate, variations, temperature, rainfall, seasons, rainy season, zodiac calendar, wildlife, species, endangered, population, distribution, density, rural, urban, tourism, economy, choropleth map, eruption, crater, steep, base, lava, ash, composite, destructive plate boundary, social, economic, environmental, anime, manga, tsunami, plate boundary, Tohoku (Northeast region), impacts, radiation, nuclear power, katana, iron, shrine, building, construction, earthquake-proof, materials, cross-bracing, base isolation, shock absorbers, critique, tourism, tourists, overtourism, sustainable tourism.

Lesson	Learning Objective	Suggested Activities
1	Location and Resources Learning objectives: - Describe the location of Japan. - Investigate the hazards and other challenges of living in Japan. - Analyse the opportunities of living in Japan.	Warm up and starter Students guess the country they will be studying from a series of images, then write their ideas of what they can learn solely from looking at a map of Japan. Task 1 Using compass directions and lines of latitude, students describe the location of Japan. Task 2 Students learn about tectonic plates and the ring of fire before answering the question 'what makes Japan a hazardous place to live?' Task 3 Assess the challenges and opportunities of living in Japan by categorising the statements. Plenary Ask for opinions on whether the opportunities outweigh the risks of living in Japan and discuss as a class.
2	Climate Learning objectives: - Describe the climate of Japan. - Investigate the climatic variations across the country and throughout the year. - Evaluate when would be the best time to visit Japan.	Warm up and starter From looking at several images, students come up with ideas of what Japan's climate is like, then suggest how the climate may vary from North to South. Task 1 Look at a climate graph showing the average rainfall and temperature in Tokyo. Students answer a series of questions based on the data. Task 2 Students complete a carousel task, collecting and adding information from the climate information sheets to their own climate calendars. Plenary Discuss seasonal festivals in the UK.
3	Animals of Japan Learning objectives: - Identify animals found in Japan. - Locate where each animal can be found.	Warm up and starter Students learn about the zodiac calendar then play higher or lower and discuss why so many animal species are found in Japan. Task 1 Using wildlife information cards students create an annotated map of wildlife in Japan. Task 2 Students use their maps to answer a series of questions about the animals and think about threats to Japan's wildlife in the future.

	Explain why there are so many animal species found in Japan.	Plenary Look at traditional Japanese patterns and guess the animals they represent. Potential to design a pattern to represent UK wildlife.
4	Japan's Population Learning objectives: - Describe the population change and distribution in Japan. - Demonstrate the population distribution of Japan. - Suggest reasons for the population distribution of Japan.	Warm up and starter Students guess how the pumpkin artwork helped Naoshima, then match key population terms to their definitions. Task 1 Students study a population graph and describe how the population has changed using TEA (trend, evidence, anomaly). Task 2 Students use data to make a choropleth map showing population density. Task 3 Practice the exam-style question 'Describe the population distribution of Japan'. Plenary Encourage students to make connections between the areas with high/low population density and the climate.
5	Volcanoes of Japan Learning objectives: - Describe a volcano and its location. - Categorise the effects and responses of an eruption. - Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of living near a volcano.	Warm up and starter Introduce hatsu-yume, (the first dream of the new year) and 'lucky dreams' including My. Fuji. Then students match the lesson's key terms to their definitions. Task 1 Students learn the location of Sakurajima and compare it to Mt. Fuji before writing a description using key terms. Task 2 Students consider the effects of living near a volcano and categorise statements into social/economic/ environmental impacts. Task 3 Assess learning with a short true/false quiz. Plenary Introduce Yuru-chara (local mascots) to students and task them to come up with one for their school/town or an alternative for Sakurajima.

6	The Tohoku Tsunami Learning objectives: • Outline how an earthquake can cause a tsunami. • Illustrate the sequence of events on the day of the Tohoku Tsunami. • Describe the effects of the Tohoku tsunami.	Part 1 Warm up and starter Explain what manga is and ask students which manga/anime they know of. Students then complete the description of how tsunamis are formed. Task 1 Think, pair, share activity – students consider how manga can be used to educate people and look at the work of Fumio Obata as an example. Task 2 Students start to create their own manga about the tsunami, including data in their work from a timeline. Plenary Discuss what hazards we are at risk from in the UK. Part 2 (optional) Warm up and starter Students learn about Kintsugi. Play the clip of 'Music from Fukushima' and consider how survivors of the tsunami have been affected. Task 1 Continue the manga task from the previous lesson. Information about long-term impacts can be added as an extension using the 'Message from Fukushima' blog. Plenary Display students' work. Opportunity for self-assessment after viewing peers.
7	Japanese Buildings Learning objectives: • Identify building materials and design aspects suitable for earthquake prone areas. • Explain some aspects of earthquake proof design. • Evaluate the effectiveness of an earthquake proof building design.	Warm up and starter Students guess how the images could be related. Then show the old temple versus the modern building for students to consider. Task 1 Show information about building design and materials. Students select what they think is most appropriate for an earthquake-proof design. Task 2 Students produce their own building designs (either by drawing or with playdoh etc.) Plenary In pairs, students offer feedback to their peers.

8	Tourism in Japan Learning objectives: • To understand why Japan attracts tourism • To understand some of the positive and negative impacts tourism is having on Japan • To recognise how sustainable tourism can be a solution to the problem of overtourism in Japan (part 2)	Part 1 Warm up and starter Discussion of tourism Task 1 Show information and graphs about tourism in Japan and facilitate the discussions. Task 2 Students complete the Impacts of Tourism activity using the worksheet Plenary Ask students to fill in the blanks on the reflection slide Part 2 (optional) Warm up and starter Students discuss ideas about what ‘overtourism’ means Task 1 Use the example of the cancelled festival in Fujiyoshida in Japan to discuss overtourism and its impacts Task 2 Introduce sustainable tourism. Students must create a fact file for an alternative travel destination in Japan from the three options (Akita, Wakayama, Kagoshima). Plenary In pairs students do a 30 second “elevator pitch” of their alternative destination.
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