



LESSON 4:

A LOOK AT JAPANESE SOCIETY THROUGH THE FAMILY

Introduction:

In this activity, students use the case studies provided by the seven Japanese student photo essays to investigate family life, including social traditions, social institutions, family organization, and values in contemporary Japanese society. An optional first activity involves students in identifying information about family life presented in their textbook. Students then “read” the photo essays created by the seven Japanese high school students for information about Japanese families and society, developing their skills of data collection and organization, data analysis, and hypothesis formation. Next, students “interrogate” the quality and reliability of first-person data and learn to be questioners of data.

This lesson is best used early in a unit of study on Japan or as an introduction to classroom use of the Deai kit. In its focus on the process of data analysis and hypothesis, this lesson is comparable in objectives to Lesson 1 in this unit. It is recommended that the teacher choose one or the other for use with a single class.

Organizing Questions:

- What can we learn about society and the individual?
- What can we learn about tradition and change?
- What can we learn about global connectedness?

Objectives: At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Categorize data about contemporary Japanese society and make hypotheses based on the data.
2. Identify ways in which Japanese families have blended aspects of traditional and contemporary culture.
3. Cite examples of both diversity and homogeneity across families in Japan.
4. Consider the validity of the term “a typical Japanese family.”
5. Analyze and evaluate source materials, particularly considering strengths and shortcomings of first-person narratives.

Time Required: 2-3 class periods

Materials:

1. Class textbook; in advance, identify pages in the text with information about Japanese society and family. Note these pages for assignment to students.
2. Entire set of Deai photo sheets or access to the Deai CD-ROMs or website
3. Copies of Handout 4-1, “Data Collection Sheet: Examining Textbook Coverage of Japanese Family and Society,” and Handout 4-2, “Data Collections Sheet: Seven Japanese High School Students,” for all students
4. 6 sheets of posting paper with one of the data categories from Handout 4-1 at the top of each sheet
5. Markers and tape

Procedure:

Day 1 (Optional)

1. Introduce the activity by asking students how one learns about other societies. (*Possible answers include television, movies, textbooks, newspapers and magazines, foreign-born students or neighbors, international travel, textbooks and school study, and the Internet.*)
2. Distribute Handout 4-1, “Data Collection Sheet: Examining Textbook Coverage of Japanese Family and Society.” Review the sheet, making sure students understand the kind of information being sought for each category. As homework or an in-class assignment, have students work alone or in pairs to fill in the chart with as much information as they can gain about the categories of Japanese society and family life listed, using their textbook chapters on Japan.
3. Discuss student findings as a large group. Ask what facts and impressions emerged about Japanese family life and/or contemporary society, particularly people’s daily lives, roles of family members, social traditions, and so on.

Day 2

1. Explain to students that they will be looking for data on the same topic from an alternative source—specifically the photo essays from the seven Japanese high school students. Explain that, by using an alternative source, the class will try to enrich its understanding of Japanese family life and contemporary society. Show several random photos from the photo essays. Ask the class to look for clues that might help them describe aspects of society.
2. Divide the class into seven groups. Distribute the complete set of photo sheets for one of the Japanese students to each group or direct students in using the CDs or website. If the class has not previously worked with the materials from the Deai kits, explain the premise of these seven photo essays—namely, that students around Japan were invited to participate in a contest to portray their lives through a collection of photos. Explain that the seven photo essays in the kit were based on the submissions of several winners of that contest, held in the late 1990s. Point out that, because the basis of the contest was to show one’s own life through photos, the photo essays are highly subjective. That is, they represent what each student wanted to show about his or her life in a few pictures.

3. Distribute Handout 4-2, “Data Collection Sheet: Seven Japanese High School Students,” to all students. Instruct groups to “read” their assigned photo essay. Point out that, in the context of visuals, the term “to read” means to examine closely to find information. Students should read the photos and then record data about their assigned Japanese student and his or her family on Handout 4-2. At this time, students should not read the accompanying narratives on the back sides of the photos. Caution students that all photo essays may not include information on all aspects of society and family shown on the handout.
4. Because each photo essay contains about 45 photos, students must pull a great deal of information from these resources. It may be helpful for each student group to subdivide, with one student in each group assigned to look at a specific set of pictures. Students can then share the information they have collected with others in their group before making their report to the class. It might be useful to provide each group with a clean copy of Handout 4-2 and have them compile their information on the master sheet, condensing the information by picking the five most important things found under each category.
5. While students are working, hang a posting sheet on the classroom wall for each category provided in the “Data Collection Sheet.”
6. Next, ask each group to send a scribe to record their group’s findings for each category on the master charts you have posted around the room. The student scribe should write the name of the Japanese student whose photo essay his/her group studied, then the data the group collected. When students have finished recording, allow students some time to read the posted findings and look for similarities and differences across families recorded within categories.

Day 3

1. Discuss group findings as a class. Possible questions to guide discussion follow:
 - Within specific categories, what similarities, if any, were there across all seven families? (To determine this, ask students to identify specific data posted on the board by other students that seemed to correlate with information they recorded about the family they studied.)
 - What differences were there within categories? (To determine this, ask students to identify specific data posted on the sheets by other students that seemed at odds with what they learned about the family they studied.)
 - What evidence of influence or exchange of ideas, institutions, or values between Japan and other cultures were found in the photo essays?
 - What similarities or differences do you see between the Japanese family you studied and your own family? Between Japanese and American culture?
2. Ask students if, based on their study of these seven families, they could agree on the characteristics of a “typical” Japanese family and create a profile of such a family. Ask students to elaborate on and support their answer with data. (*While students may be able to agree on some common characteristics, the in-depth look at seven families should yield the impression that there is no “typical” family in Japan.*) Ask students to discuss what, if anything, this exercise has revealed as pitfalls in characterizing a “typical” Japanese family.

3. Ask students if they feel confident in making any hypotheses about Japanese society based on their data collection in this activity. List these on the chalkboard or posting paper. Next, ask them to think about why their ideas have been labeled as hypotheses rather than conclusions. Use the following questions to lead students to recognize the limited nature of their information:
 - Is it safe to generalize about a society based on data from a set of photos?
 - What is the difference between forming a hypothesis and drawing a conclusion based on limited information?
4. If this activity comes at the beginning of a unit of study on Japan, explain that one of the goals for that unit will be to test their initial impressions and hypotheses from this activity against information gained throughout the unit.
5. Turn the students' attention to analysis of the process by which they collected data and formed hypotheses. Questions that may guide discussion follow:
 - What are the limitations of making generalizations from limited data? From the seven photo essays here? (*Seven is a very small sample from which to generalize. The number of photos students could take was limited.*)
 - What questions should students ask to ascertain the credibility of this or any data? (*Possible responses: Who developed the photo essays? What was the goal of the photo essay content and how did the goal affect the Japanese students' choices of photos?*)
 - Did the Japanese students mean to represent all of Japan in their photo essays? (*Student photos were limited, thus the essay was selective, which would affect the overall "story." The essays are subjective—based on what each Japanese student wanted to show about him or herself.*)
 - How is Japanese society filtered through each student's life and experience? (*Answers will vary; students capture what is important to them and what they have personally experienced.*)
 - How might more case studies support or refute the data collected so far?
 - How can you test the hypotheses you made about contemporary Japanese families and society based on the photo essays? As a result of this photo analysis, what further questions do you have about this society?
6. Next, ask students to compare the information available in their textbook vs. the information available through the photo essays:
 - Was there information in the text that did not come out in the photo essays?
 - Did the photo essays add to the information in the text, and if so, how?
 - From this activity, what are the advantages of using multiple sources?

Enrichment and Extension:

1. Have small groups of students identify what they would photograph if they were required to capture essential characteristics of their family life in 10 photos.
2. Assign students to conduct Internet or library research to answer questions that they generated on Day 3, Step 5.



Handout 4-1

Data Collection Sheet: Examining Textbook Coverage of Japanese Family and Society

Write down all the information you can find about the following aspects of Japanese family life and society by examining your textbook chapters on Japan. If you need more room, you may write on a separate sheet of paper.

Education	Occupations and Standard of Living	Hobbies and Interests	Arts and Aesthetics	Beliefs and Values	Family Members and Their Roles



Handout 4-2

Data Collection Sheet: Seven Japanese High School Students

Japanese student's name _____

Hometown and prefecture _____

Write down all the information you can find about the following aspects of Japanese family life and society by examining the photo essay of your Japanese student. If you need more room, you may write on a separate sheet of paper.

Education	Occupations and Standard of Living	Hobbies and Interests	Arts and Aesthetics	Beliefs and Values	Family Members and Their Roles