



LESSON 16:

SAYING IT WITH PHOTOS: AN ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Introduction:

This lesson provides a culminating project for students who have worked with several of the lessons in this curriculum unit. In the *Deai: Lives of Seven Japanese High School Students* kit, seven Japanese high school students were challenged to create personal photo essays—a collection of images and words that would describe their lives to students in other parts of the world. Similarly, this culminating project asks students to use their own words in combination with the Japanese students' photos to demonstrate what they have learned about Japan. Students work in groups to answer one of the four organizing questions of the unit and to create a photo essay that responds to that question. This project provides an authentic assessment of student understanding of content and skills emphasized in this curriculum unit by asking students to evaluate data, create an argument with supporting data, and synthesize information to reflect their own knowledge.

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?
- What can we learn about place and the relationship between society and the environment?

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

1. Plan and write an essay with a thesis statement and supporting paragraphs.
2. Select data in support of an argument.
3. Synthesize information they have gained from this unit and share it with others.

Time Required: 2-3 class periods

Materials:

1. Four photo packets, each containing 15 to 18 photo sheets from the Deai kit. The photo packets should be compiled in advance:
 - **Global Connections Packet**
Oishi Kanta: P07, P12, P13, D03, D07, D08
Sakai Michi: P07, P09

- Tamaki Shun'ichi: P07, D11, D12
 Yoshida Kojiro: P04, D08
 Yamamoto Takayuki: P06
 Yoo Yoo Jin: P08, D08, D13
- **Individual and Society Packet**
 Mizushima Yu: D13
 Oishi Kanta: P02, P09
 Sakai Michi: P02, P05, D03, D04, D07
 Tamaki Shun'ichi: D10, D13
 Yoshida Kojiro: P02, D10
 Yamamoto Takayuki: P04, D01
 Yoo Yoo Jin: P03
 - **Tradition and Change Packet**
 Mizushima Yu: P05, P11, D01, D05
 Tamaki Shun'ichi: P05, P10, P12, D08
 Yoshida Kojiro: D06, D13
 Yamamoto Takayuki: P05, P08, P15, D07, D10
 Yoo Yoo Jin: D06
 - **Place and Environment Packet**
 Mizushima Yu: P08
 Oishi Kanta: D02
 Sakai Michi: P03, P08, P11, P12
 Tamaki Shun'ichi: P03, P08, P13, P14
 Yoshida Kojiro: P09, D07, D11
 Yamamoto Takayuki: P10, P13, P16
 Yoo Yoo Jin: P12, D14
2. Photo sheets to illustrate the sample essay to be read to students. These cards should be arranged in the following order: YK-P08; MY-D04; MY-P10; MY-D06; MY-D12, MY-D09, YY-D11; MY-D10, MY-D11, YY-D04, YY-D03
 3. Copies of Handout 16-1, "Parts of an Essay," for all students
 4. Copies of Handout 16-2, "Photo Essay Directions," for all students
 5. Lists of hypotheses and conclusions generated by students in Lessons 1 and/or 4 (optional)

Procedure:

Day 1 (Optional)

1. In Lessons 1 and 4, students were asked to generate hypotheses about Japan, Japanese culture, and/or family life in Japan. If time permits, as a review prior to the assessment, return to the list of hypotheses. Ask students if they have gathered enough information in their subsequent study of Japan to (1) change any of the hypotheses into conclusions or (2) refute any of the hypotheses. Have students tentatively identify hypotheses that might fall into either of these categories.
2. Organize students into groups of four or five and assign each group one or two hypotheses identified by the class in Step 1. For those identified as having reached conclusion status, have groups identify the evidence supporting the conclusion. For those identified as having been refuted, have groups identify the

evidence refuting that hypothesis and propose a possible revision to the hypothesis.

3. Allow time for the groups to report out on their findings.

Day 2

1. Organize students into four groups for a final project—a photo essay exploring one of the organizing questions of this unit. Each group’s assignment is to create a photo essay in which both photographs and written text present a thesis statement, five to six paragraphs of supporting information, and a conclusion statement that answers the organizing question based on the students’ collective learning throughout the unit.
2. Discuss the goals and structure of a good essay and how photos can be used to create an essay, as students will do with this project. If students have learned the essay form, ask them to review by describing how to write an essay; post this information on the board.

If students are novices at essay writing, introduce the structure of an essay to them, using Handout 16-1 to guide discussion. Students should be clear about the definition and function of (1) an opening thesis statement: an introductory paragraph that states what the writer plans to prove in the essay, (2) the body of the essay: multiple paragraphs that provide evidence and examples to support the thesis statement, and (3) a concluding statement: a paragraph that summarizes what has been proven in the body of the essay.

3. Explain that, for this essay assignment, the student groups will select one photo to represent each point they want to make. Students will then develop a written paragraph explaining how the photo provides an example that proves the group’s thesis statement. To provide a concrete example of how students will create a photo essay, read the sample photo essay in the **Teacher Background Notes**, showing the accompanying photo cards as you read.
4. Explain that essays generally have page limits. Ask students what a page limit requires of the writer. Lead students to understand that a page limit requires the writer to make points and state arguments succinctly. Students should also recognize that a page limit requires that the writer synthesize what he or she knows, to determine which are the most important pieces of evidence in his or her argument, and to be selective in presenting evidence.
5. Explain to students that this culminating project will require them to put into practice these essay skills. Working as a group, they will have to pick the most important ideas and examples they want to convey, because they have only six or seven paragraphs allowed to them. Explain that, to further practice this skill, they are allowed to use no more than 10 photos from the 15- to 18-piece photo set their group will be given. These limits will require that they make choices about what they want to say and which photos best support their points.
6. Point out that the group can work together throughout the entire process. Alternatively, once they have selected their points and supporting photo cards,

individuals can draft paragraphs for group review. Depending on time, this individual work might be done as homework.

7. Distribute Handout 16-2, "Photo Essay Directions," to students. Talk about each question briefly as a large group to spark students' thinking about what they have learned from other lessons in this curriculum unit that could be applied under each organizing question.
8. Assign each group one of the four organizing questions and distribute a photo packet to each group. Give groups the rest of the class to study the photos, identify a thesis statement, and begin to plan their essay. Check groups for understanding of the photo essay style.

Day 3

1. Have students return to the work groups of the previous day. Allow half the class period for groups to complete their essays.
2. During the second half of class, allow time for student groups to present their photo essays. Ask each group to select an essay reader. Others in the group should take the roles of photo presenters, holding up photos to the class as each paragraph of the essay is read. Groups can turn in their work for a group grade.

Teacher Background Notes: Sample Photo Essay

The following is provided as a sample photo essay, to give students a better understanding of this summative assignment. Note that the photo sheets should be pre-arranged in the order in which you will use them, as noted under **Materials**. Read the essay, showing the photos as indicated. After the reading, debrief the essay with students, making sure that students understand (1) the parts of the essay and (2) how the photos presented concrete examples of the information provided in the essay. This will be their task in the culminating assignment of this lesson.

Comparing School Days in Japan and the United States

Photo Sheet YK-P08

A typical school day for a high school student in Japan has many similarities with a school day in the United States, but there are also significant differences. Evidence suggests that students in Japan may have more rules and responsibilities than those in the United States, but for students in both countries, the school day combines work with important social activities. (Introduction: thesis statement)

Photo Sheet MY-D04

In Japan, as in the United States, the school day starts with getting dressed and ready for the day. In both countries, selecting an outfit for the day is the first step, and being up with the latest fads is important. A fashion that has not made it to the United States is very baggy socks, which high school girls in Japan glue to their legs to get just the “right” look.

Photo Sheet MY-P10

In some schools in Japan, as in the United States, high-schoolers must wear very basic outfits as school uniforms. One reason that schools require uniforms is to keep the pressures of fashion and clothes off students. Unlike American schools, the schools in Japan require that students spend time taking care of the school building. They clean the school building and grounds. This may give Japanese students a greater sense of responsibility to their schools.

Photo Sheet MY-D06

In keeping with their responsibility to keep the school clean, students take off their street shoes when they arrive at school and put on special indoor shoes. This also reflects the Japanese custom of taking off dirty street shoes when entering a house. In this way, schools are seen as special places, just like people’s homes.

Photo Sheet MY-D12, followed by Photo Sheet MY-D09

In both Japan and the United States, classes involve a combination of students working together with the teacher, and students working on their own at their desks or in laboratories. Many subjects are also similar, such as foreign language instruction and world history.

Photo Sheets YY-D11 and MY-D10

Schools in both countries offer non-academic as well as academic courses, including physical education and music classes. PE classes vary in the two countries. Sometimes, the same sport is offered in both countries; volleyball is an example of a sport taught in both countries. One sport students in Japan learn in school that is not typically available in American high schools is judo, a traditional Japanese martial art.

Photo Sheets MY-D11 and YY-D04

School is about study, but it is also about socializing and building relationships. In both countries, the time before school, at free periods, and at lunch is very important; it gives students time to catch up with friends, talk about what is going on in their lives, and relax.

Photo Sheet YY-D03

Teenagers in both countries balance educational demands with social life in very similar ways, despite some different customs. In either country, when the school day is over, life is about linking up with friends. (Conclusion)



Handout 16-1

Parts of an Essay

The purpose of an essay is to present a position and provide evidence to support it. Essays have three major components: (1) an introduction or thesis statement, (2) examples and discussion, which make up the body of the essay, and (3) a conclusion, a paragraph that summarizes what has been proven in the body of the essay.

Thesis Statement

In the first paragraph of an essay, the writer should describe an idea and explain how he or she intends to prove that idea in the essay. A thesis is not a statement of unarguable fact. Rather, it is a statement of opinion that the writer believes can be proved through evidence presented in the remainder of the essay. A thesis statement can take many forms. The following are just three examples.

- A thesis statement may state that a relationship does or does not exist between two things or events. Example: “The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the right to keep and bear arms (weapons). However, when the Founders created that protection, they did not know what the world would be like by the early 21st century. Access to handguns has led to an increase in violent crimes and made the United States a dangerous place.”
- A thesis may be a statement of cause and effect. Example: “Entry of the United States into World War II in December 1941 turned the tide of the war, resulting in the victory of the Allied forces four years later.”
- A thesis statement may outline the role that an individual or event played or is predicted to play in history. Example: “Although Jimmy Carter had a troubled presidency, history has already begun to show that he accomplished a great deal in terms of strengthening America’s foreign policy.”

Body of the Essay

The body of the essay may be a few paragraphs or many pages. The body of the essay consists of paragraphs devoted to providing examples and other evidence, as well as discussion of how the examples and evidence prove the thesis statement.

For example, for the first thesis statement above, the writer might include a paragraph discussing statistics on handgun purchases in the United States, a paragraph discussing statistics on the number of violent crimes committed using handguns, and several paragraphs of case studies—examples of crimes using handguns.

For the second thesis statement above, the body of the essay might include separate paragraphs that show that the Allies were losing the battles against Japan, Germany, and Italy before 1941, that the United States contributed large amounts of manpower and weaponry to the war, and that the Allies won decisive victories following the U.S. entry into the war.

Conclusion

A concluding statement or paragraph closes the essay by reviewing what the author set out to prove and how he or she has proved it in the body of the essay. The conclusion may also include discussion of the significance of the author's thesis.



Handout 16-2

Photo Essay Directions

Organizing Questions

As you have looked at the lives of the seven Japanese high school students, you have been devising your own answers to an important question: “What can American students learn about Japanese people and themselves by looking at the lives of seven Japanese students?” Specifically, you have been thinking about the following questions:

- What can we learn about Japanese society and individuals?
- What can we learn about tradition and change in Japan today?
- What can we learn about global connectedness—that is, how Japan is connected to the rest of the world?
- What can we learn about place and the relationship between society and the environment?

Directions for the Photo Essay Project

1. As a final project in your study of Japan, you will work as a member of a group to create a photo essay that uses words and pictures to answer one of the four focus questions listed above. Your teacher will assign your group a question and a set of photos from the Japanese high school student collection. To complete your assignment, use the information in Handout 17-1 on the components of an essay and the steps below.
2. With your group, create a thesis statement that says something about Japan and also answers the question you have been assigned. Your thesis statement can be several sentences long and should form your essay’s introductory paragraph.
3. As a group, examine all the photo sheets in the set you have been provided. Select a photo from your collection that illustrates your thesis statement. Then select six to eight photos that provide examples of your thesis statement. Remember, you will need to be selective. There may be photos that you like that you cannot use, given the limit. Select the photos that provide the strongest examples to prove your thesis statement. For each photo, compose a paragraph that explains the point made by the photo.
4. Finally, compose a concluding paragraph that sums up the points made in your photo essay. Select a final photo from the images remaining in your set to illustrate your conclusion.
5. Select one person to read the essay aloud to the class. All other students in your group should be prepared to show photos as the essay is read aloud.