# JAPAN: Places, Images, Times & Transformations

Suggestions for the Middle and High School Classroom

# Japanese Conversation - Gail R. Benjamin and Hiroshi Nara

* **Objectives:**
	+ Identify differences in communication styles, verbal and non-verbal, between English and Japanese.
	+ Understand how these communication differences represent social values in their respective cultures.
* **Suggested Units for Inclusion:**
	+ Early Japanese units that explore the differences between English and Japanese, as well as units that cover keigo and social relationships in Japan.
	+ ELA units that explore topics related to the social construction of language and communication styles.
* **Lesson Ideas:**
	+ 1. Individual Research Homework
		- Students can be assigned the *study questions* or *develop questions for the class to discuss*
	+ 2. Negative Question Practice
		- Have Japanese students create their own questions using the -ませんか construction. Then have students practice asking and answering these questions in both English and Japanese to illustrate the differences in how each language answers these questions.
	+ 3. Non-verbal Communication Skits
		- Have students put on short skits where they show the differences in back-channel signals, as well as non-verbal communication, between English and Japanese.
* **Study Questions:**
	+ What are some features of the English language that might make studying the language difficult for Japanese speakers?
	+ Explain the difference between answering a question asked in the negative in English and in Japanese. How is answering this type of question different?
	+ What are the three types of status relationships in Japanese that the author lists? What are some of the factors that go into determining these relationships?
	+ For the Japanese, why might directness be viewed as a negative trait in conversation? Why might courtesy be viewed as negative to an American?
	+ Define back-channel signals. What back-channel traits do Japanese and Americans share? What differences are there?