# JAPAN: Places, Images, Times & Transformations

Suggestions for the Middle and High School Classroom

# The Creation of the Modern Japanese Language in Meiji-Era - Paul H. Clark

* **Objectives:**
  + Understand how cultural, national, and international events led to changes in a national language.
  + Understand how the Japanese language has developed and what changes were made to the language over time.
  + Identify important figures and institutions in the development of the Japanese language.
* **Suggested Units for Inclusion:**
  + ELA units that explore language development and how cultural and historic events impact language.
  + Japanese units that introduce classical Japanese or the modernization of the Japanese language.
* **Lesson Ideas (Should be used in conjunction with the Vocabulary Borrowing essay):**
  + 1. Individual Research Homework
    - Students can be assigned the *study questions* or *develop questions for the class to discuss*
  + 2. Class Discussion
    - Along with other articles that talk about language development (Japanese or English), students debate how and when languages should change and adapt using examples from this article and others as evidence.
  + 3. Classical Japanese Reading / Writing Practice
    - Japanese students are given examples of writing from various periods throughout Japan’s history (literature, articles, government documents, etc.). Students try to understand these writings and attempt to write in the style of the document they were given. Students then discuss the different styles of Japanese they worked with and the challenges of reading / writing in that style.
* **Study Questions:**
  + How did China influence the Japanese language during the 6th and 7th centuries? What did Japan have to gain by adopting some of these practices?
  + What caused variant forms of kanbun to appear in during the Nara period?
  + Why was kanbun considered archaic by the Meiji Restoration?
  + As Japan was trying to catch up to Western powers, what realization did they make about the Japanese language and their education system?
  + What were some of the challenges one faced in becoming literate in kannbun?
  + What role did the Sino-Japanese War play in the development of the Japanese language? Why?
  + What role did foreign literature play in the development of the Japanese language? Why? What contributions did Futabatei Shimei make?
  + How did Genbun’itchi spread during the late 19th and early 20th centuries?
  + In what ways has Japanese been made to be more accessible and easier to learn since the Allied Occupation of Japan?