# 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?