

## **Retelling the First Encounters between Japan and the United States**

The *Black Ships and Samurai* Core Exhibit is quite dense, with hundreds of images. You have been asked to condense the Core Exhibit to create an actual exhibit that will fit into a hall of your school or a PowerPoint essay. Think of your exhibit or PowerPoint as a historical narrative, or story. That is, how the exhibit or PowerPoint progresses from the opening panel to the final panel, the way visual information is ordered, and what visual information is included all contribute to telling a particular story.

Because there are space limitations in your school hallway, you can only have four panels and 20 images for the space you have. This means you will have to leave quite a bit out, and this, in turn, will mean that you cannot tell all the details of the U.S.-Japanese encounter for which you have data. Your task is not quite as hard as that of a textbook writer, who has very little space to tell about any one historical event, but it is still very challenging. Faced with these constraints, what information will you include, what will you leave out? How will you make your decisions? How can you design a meaningful exhibit for the space you have?

1. Select a focus topic for your exhibit from the list below or from your own analysis of the *Black Ships and Samurai* Web site. The topic will help you narrow and select visual material for your exhibit. You must choose a topic that has not been addressed in the *Black Ships and Samurai* Core Exhibit or Visual Narratives.

Possible topics for your exhibit:

- Technological exchange
- Economic exchange
- Cross-cultural communication and miscommunication
- The human face of the “opening” of Japan
- The U.S.-Japanese encounter as social history
- The “opening” of Japan as economic history

2. Working with the topic you have chosen, develop a thesis statement for your exhibit. A thesis statement presents a point of view or a position on the theme topic, which you will then support through visual and written “narration.”

3. Working with the images in the sections of the Core Exhibit that your group read, select 20 images to support your thesis statement. This will be a very selective process; select the images that make the strongest case for your position.

4. Order your images so that they create a visual story that supports your thesis statement. For each image, write a short paragraph explanation.