

## Every Picture Tells a Story: Conducting a Detailed Analysis of a Yokohama-Era Woodblock Print

**Handout 01-A, page one of one**

### Creating a Narrative for a Woodblock Print

#### Introduction

The elaborate woodblock prints created by Japanese artists during the early years of the Yokohama treaty port (1860s-1870s) are valuable primary sources that captured intricacies of the society, economy, and interaction between Japanese and Westerners in Yokohama. Woodblock prints conveyed everyday life and routines in rich detail for people living in Yokohama and elsewhere. They still communicate about life in the treaty port to viewers today. As such, they are powerful historical source materials.

#### Task

Working in groups, your task is to create a historical story, or narrative, that captures the information of the woodblock print and conveys it in written form. For this activity, each student or pair of students within your group will need access to the Internet.

1. First, as a group, go to the *Yokohama Boomtown* unit and view the woodblock print you have been assigned. Imagine that you can fold the print in half horizontally and in half again vertically, so that the print consists of four quarters, or quadrants. Each student in your group should take responsibility for studying one quadrant of the woodblock print as closely as possible. (If you are a group of eight, two people should work together on each quadrant of the woodblock print.)

2. Working alone or with a partner on one quadrant of your group's woodblock print, try to pull as much detail and information from the quadrant as possible. If your woodblock has explanatory notes embedded in it, use these to help you dig deeper into the picture. Write down as much detail as you can about your quadrant. The following questions will help you. Use a separate sheet of paper for your notes.

A) How many people are in your quadrant?

B) Do they appear to be Japanese or Westerners? On what evidence (facial features, dress, etc.) did you base your answer?

C) Write down every action you see in your quadrant.

D) What do facial expressions tell you about what people are thinking and doing?

E) Make notes of objects in the picture and whether they are Japanese or Western. How do you know if they are Japanese or Western?

F) If Japanese people are interacting with Westerners, make notes about these interactions. What is taking place? How are people acting?