

<http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu>: *Yokohama Boomtown*, Lesson 04

Site Quest: Creating a Guide to the “Foreigners”

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Introduction

When Yokohama was established as a trading port between Japan and Western nations in 1859, people from the West flocked to Japan to take advantage of new commercial opportunities. Japanese woodblock prints depicting Yokohama in the 1850s and 1860s capture interactions between Westerners and Japanese, and convey Japanese fascination with foreign ideas, customs, styles, and pastimes, as well as the gradual adoption of Western ways among Japanese. In turn, Western photos and prints convey aspects of Japanese culture of particular interest to Westerners. The artwork of both sides conveys the great interest each had in the other’s way of life. Many aspects of this encounter are presented and analyzed in *Yokohama Boomtown*—the focus of this site quest.

Your Task

You will be assigned the role of either a Japanese or an American writing a Cross-Cultural Training Guide to the other culture. This guide will be provided to people in your country to educate them and prepare them to interact with members of the other culture. You will refer to the visual material provided in *Yokohama Boomtown*—Japanese woodblock prints and Western photos and engravings—and identify examples of one culture’s customs that were novel to the other culture. Your goal is to use this visual material and your own written explanations to teach your cultural group about the “foreign” culture.

You will work in a team. Each team member will take a specific role—spokesperson, art director, writer, or producer—and a specific fact-finding task, as outlined in Processes and Resources (below).

Process and Resources

1. Your teacher will assign your group a specific culture (either American or Japanese) and a specific category of custom to research. You will conduct your research and develop your guide from the perspective of the assigned culture, explaining the other country’s customs to your own countrymen/women.

In your work group, select work roles:

Spokespersons (1–2): responsible for the classroom presentation of your work.

Art Directors (1–2): responsible for preparing the visuals or drawing illustrations for the Cross-Cultural Training Guide.

Writers (1–2): responsible for preparing the written explanation to accompany each cultural example in the guide.

Producer (1): will keep the group on schedule and insure that the final product contains all the required elements and is ready to present to the class.

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In addition to the roles above, all members of the group will work as fact-finders. Within your group, decide who will be fact-finder #1, #2, #3, and #4. Depending on the number of people in your group, more than one person may be assigned to the same fact-finding task. Each of you will conduct your research in a specific section of *Yokohama Boomtown* according to the list below:

- Fact-finder #1: Core Exhibit: Commerce
- Fact-finder #2: Core Exhibit: Boomtown
- Fact-finder #3: Core Exhibit: Interactions
- Fact-finder #4: Core Exhibit: Internationalism

In the space below or on your own sheet of paper, write the important information about your role and assignment in this site quest.

1. My group is taking the cultural perspective of (circle one):
 - Americans writing a guide to Japanese customs
 - Japanese writing a guide to American customs
2. My group has been assigned to research the following customs:
3. My individual work role is _____.
4. The section of Yokohama Boomtown that I will research is _____.

Each fact-finder is to complete the following research and interpretation, based on the historical records you uncover:

1. Identify a minimum of three concrete examples or “case studies” of your assigned topic.
2. Decide what information and advice about the other culture’s custom would be necessary to help your countrymen understand and, perhaps, adopt this custom comfortably.
3. Be prepared to explain your three examples to others in your group.

Resources

Your resources are all the visual images (Japanese woodblock prints, Western photos and engravings) in the Yokohama Boomtown section assigned to you.

The Presentation

Each member of your group has researched the same custom in a different section of the unit. As your group prepares its presentation, discuss the information each group member has collected. Each of you should present your “case studies” from your own research.

Next, work together to sort through your case studies and decide on the five examples that your group wants to present in your Cross-Cultural Training Guide. Work together to create a guide that will inform others in your country about the customs of the “foreigners.”

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Your guide may be a PowerPoint presentation or a printed booklet, using visual examples copied-and-pasted from the unit. Your guide must include:

- A one- to two-paragraph introduction to the other culture.
- Five case studies (examples) of customs practiced by the other culture.
- An explanation of each custom: a written paragraph, set of directions, or set of warnings on how to avoid a problem when encountering the custom.
- A piece of artwork from Yokohama Boomtown to illustrate each case study.