# JAPAN: Places, Images, Times & Transformations

Suggestions for the Middle and High School Classroom

# Japanese Writing System I - Hiroshi Nara

* **Objectives:**
	+ Understand how and why the kanji system was adopted in Japan.
	+ Identify other writing systems used in Japan today and their historical use.
	+ Analyze the development of Japan’s writing systems
* **Suggested Units for Inclusion:**
	+ Social Studies or Japanese units that explore the relationship between Japan and China.
	+ Social Studies units that explore the development of languages and their writing systems.
	+ ELA units that explore the evolution of language, the development of writing systems or how meaning is conveyed through writing systems.
	+ Japanese units that introduce hiragana, katakana, or kanji.
* **Lesson Ideas:**
	+ 1. Individual Research Homework
		- Students can be assigned the *study questions* or *develop questions for the class to discuss*
	+ 2. Writing System Project
		- Students could be tasked with creating their own writing system for English. Students should decide what kind of writing system they will make (Syllabic vs Logographic) and translate a predetermined passage into the writing system they development. Students should also justify the decisions they make through a paper or journal.
	+ 3. Compare and Contrast
		- Students can compare and contrast the development of the Japanese writing systems to changes they see happening in the English language.
* **Study Questions:**
	+ What is the significance of the Chinese gold seal found in Fukuoka?
	+ According to the *Kojiki*, who brought kanji over from China? When? To whom was kanji taught?
	+ Who were the kenzuishi and the kentoshi? Why did they need to study kanji? What did they bring back to Japan with them?
	+ What happened to the meaning of Chinese kanji when they were first used to transcribe Japanese mora?
	+ If you were to read the *Man’yōshū* in its original language, what difficulties would you have? What would you have to know to fully understand everything in this writing?
	+ What two other writing systems were created in the Heian period?
	+ Who originally used katakana? What was katakana used for? Who originally used hiragana?
	+ What are these writing systems used for today?
	+ Why do some kanji have more than one reading?