

# “Itsukushima”: Exploring Transient Cultural Heritage

Subjects: Social Studies, World Cultures

Suggested Grade Levels: 6

Time Frame: Variable

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## Overview

Culture is the global crisscrossing of peoples in time and space. The Itsukushima Shinto Shrine in Japan (probably built originally in the 6th century CE, added on to in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE) can be used as a model for exploring the fluidity of cultural heritage. “Living” cultural sites carry important symbolic connections even though they might be transient, changeable, and accessible to people in everyday life.

## Connection to Philadelphia World Heritage Tool Kit’s Goal

This lesson explores a World Heritage Cultural site in Japan. It asks if a similar site could be found in Philadelphia.

## Core Curriculum Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.B
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.10

## Objectives

This lesson explores the Itsukushima Shinto site and possible Philadelphia sites as examples of transient, accessible and/or “living” cultural heritage. Students will enter into a discussion of the following concepts:

1. Cultural heritage can be viewed from many contexts.
2. The 12<sup>th</sup> century Itsukushima *jinja* (*jeen-jah*), or Shinto shrine, in Japan is in continual use by visitors. Its *torii* (*tor-ee*) gate was constructed in a way that it would be visually altered by the daily tides of the bay.
3. What Philadelphia site might carry some of the qualities as the Itsukushima Shinto Shrine?
4. Is a fluid or “living” World Heritage Cultural site effective? Why or why not?

## Essential Question

Can important cultural sites be “living” sites; that is, transitory and accessible to all? Is culture dynamic? Why or why not? What Philadelphia site might have some of the same qualities as the Itsukushima Shrine?

## Materials Needed

Globe, World Atlases with maps of Asia, Japan, Western Japan, Honshu Island, Philadelphia, and the United States; books and online resources about Japan, Itsukushima Shrine, Shintoism, Buddhism, Philadelphia; chalkboard or Smart board; pencils, pens, drawing paper, colored markers or colored pencils, writing journals

## Procedure

**Introduction:** Students will examine various historical and cultural aspects of the Itsukushima Shinto shrine, and the island where it is located to better understand key elements of Japan's cultural heritage. Then, they will broaden their understanding of key cultural concepts by examining sites within their own city, Philadelphia. Students will study numerous vocabulary words, including culture, heritage, Shinto, Buddhism, malleable, transitory, fluidity, symbol, world heritage, ancestors, static, dynamic, torii, temizu, kami, ancient, modern, current, religion, philosophy, accessible. Students will do reading, writing, visual, mapping, experiential, and, possibly, some trip activities. The lesson's duration can be 1+ days (40-60 minute slots). Teachers can adjust the sequence of the lesson or scale content to different grades. It can be brief or in-depth. Previous exploration and discussion of World Heritage Cultural sites would be best, but it is not mandatory.

### Key Questions:

1. Can important cultural sites be transitory, "living" and accessible to everyone?
2. Is culture be dynamic? Why or why not?
3. What site in Philadelphia might carry some of the qualities as the Itsukushima Shrine?
4. How do you view "culture" and "heritage"?
5. Can cultural sites be transitory, changing and/or accessible in daily life?
6. What sites in Philadelphia might have similar qualities as Itsukushima Shrine?
7. Can culture and heritage be dynamic; can it be constantly changing?

**Step One:** Begin with an exploration of Itsukushima, an ancient shrine in Japan. Create a mapping of heritage for Itsukushima, using maps, Power point, and timeline. This step may include these ideas and questions:

- Where is Itsukushima Shrine? What are special geographical features that surround it? How do people get there?
- Maps: Japan, Asia, Honshu Island
- Look at surrounding buildings and architecture. Think about tides.
- What is its history? Use a timeline to better understand its history.
- What was the purpose of Itsukushima? What did people get out of it?
- Draw a map of site and/or draw Itsukushima.

**Step Two:** There may be a more extended exploration of Itsukushima, expecting to connect the concrete to the abstract. This step may include these ideas and questions:

- Virtual Tour of Itsukushima. {Virtual tour; timeline}
- What do we know about ... (Shintoism, Japan, sacred/religious sites)?
- What is Shinto's history? (Use a timeline for context)
- What is the purpose of Itsukushima? What do people STILL get out of it? (Think about Japanese followers of Shintoism, visitors and tourists.)
- Why is it considered a World Heritage Site? What are the criteria?

**Step Three:** Students would then explore Changeability and Accessibility, the the Pros and Cons

- How a place maintains culture. [Take a poll]
- What is unique about Itsukushima: a changing and/or ever-accessible site?
- What are problems of Itsukushima: a changing and/or ever-accessible site?
- Do a poll. Write an opinion (writing journal) & discuss.
- If time: do an impromptu (short) debate over this question: “Should Itsukushima remain open and useable as a shrine/tourist attraction to the public?”

**Step Four:** East to West: The class would move from consideration of the concepts and details of the World Heritage Cultural Site of Itsukushima to considering possible Philadelphia sites

- Bring Itsukushima Shinto Site/World Heritage to Philadelphia. [Construct a site web]
- Brainstorm ideas for transient and/or accessible Philadelphia sites
- Write ideas in a web (or online tool, or board)
- Look online at some of the Philadelphia sites kids decide on
- Make a decision: decide on one Philadelphia site. [optional]
- Map it out in a similar fashion to Itsukushima site.

**Step Five:** There is also a possibility for extension time, going into Philadelphia and Itsukushima in further depth, and completion of any activity that gets students to extend information and essential questions can be applied.

- Build connections by conducting research or completing readings
- Create further opportunities to explore Philadelphia sites in depth
- Create further opportunities to explore Itsukushima more in depth
- Create power points, prezis, mini-debate, maps, models, and drawings; write brochures, etc.
- Host guest speaker(s)
- Take trip(s) (Art Museum, Penn Museum, Japanese Tea House—for instance)

A time for wrap-up, review, and reflection (Discussions, Activities and Writing Journals) will end the lesson, providing students with the opportunity to return to Essential Questions. Students will summarize and highlight their work, and give evaluate the lesson through their feedback.

As a final note, there may be additional extension activities such as these which may help students to internalize the lesson:

- Make a raised map, virtual map or a model
- Make a presentation connecting, comparing, and contrasting sites (poster, PowerPoint, prezi)
- Creative story, journal entry, magazine article, brochure
- Essay or Opinion Paper
- Design a Debate
- Watch a movie
- Go to Japanese Tea House or partake in Japanese living history session
- Go to a restaurant or have a Japanese meal
- Visit UPenn Museum Anthropology/Archaeology, Philadelphia Art Museum

## Outcome/Assessment

Students will write in writing journals. Teachers can assess written reflections and make them as formal or informal as needed. This lesson is not designed for formal assessment. It is designed to explore the essential questions of culture and heritage. If students complete extension activities, any number of assessments can be done.

## Special Education and English Language Learners Accommodations

Students may interview family members who were born in other countries, asking about memories of that given country. Students may compare/ contrast how their own feelings about being in America. In consultation with ELL teacher, other activities may be planned.

## Additional Resources

### Web:

Fact Monster: <http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0772923.html>

BBC: [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/)

World Heritage List: <http://whc.unesco.org>

Japan Guide: <http://www.japan-guide.com/>

Japan National Tourism Organization: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/>

Lonely Planet: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/western-honshu/miyajima>

Japanese Culture Blog: <https://www.tofugu.com/>

Miss Travelosopher Blog: <http://misstravelosopher.com/visiting-a-japanese-shinto-shrine>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/>

UNESCO YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/unesco>

Coggle: <https://coggle.it/>

Simple Mind: <http://www.simpleapps.eu/simplemind/>

Wordle: <http://www.wordle.net/>

PollEverywhere: <https://www.polleverywhere.com/>

### Print:

*Enchantment of the World: Japan*, Barbara A. Somervill. ISBN-13: 978-0531253540

*DK Eyewitness Books: Buddhism*, Philip Wilkinson & Peggy Moran. ISBN-13: 978-0789498335

*World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored and Explained*, John Bowker. ISBN-13: 978-0756617721