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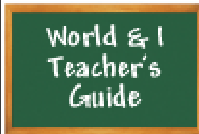
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Activity 9

EMBRACING CYBERSPACE

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Embracing Cyberspace is far more than an essay about Japan's acceptance of the Internet. It encompasses Japanese history and culture and provides insight into the characteristics that differentiate Eastern and Western thought.

Author William Underwood casually mentions the Meiji Restoration. In fact, he might have said that the events from the time Commodore Perry's ships steamed into Japan until the Meiji was restored almost directly parallel the advent of the Internet to Japan.

1. How did Japan change after Commodore Perry's arrival?
2. What was the Meiji Restoration? What changes did Japan undergo afterward?
3. How does the evolution of Japanese acceptance of the Internet seem similar to the changes in Japanese society after the Meiji Restoration?
4. Underwood explains the dichotomy of cultures represented by America and Japan. What attributes does he cite to demonstrate that the Internet reflects traditional American personality and attitude?
5. In a few brief sentences, the author makes a case for tracing the origin of the information revolution to the rise of anthropocentricity in the Age of Reason.
 - a. Explain his reasoning.
 - b. Do you think his argument is valid? Explain.
 - c. How does liberalism fit into his explanation?
6. Underwood mentions, almost in passing, that slavery was merely the proximate cause of the American Civil War, that the true issue was states' rights.
 - a. What basis is there for his assertion?
 - b. Do you agree with his assessment?
7. Underwood cites cultural critics who maintain that in America rights are exercised with an absence of responsibility and liberty has descended into license. Do you agree with them?

- a. What is the distinction between liberty and license?
 - b. What examples does he cite to support the theory?
 - c. How does that premise apply to the Internet?
8. How does Underwood define libertarianism?
- a. Is his definition fair and accurate?
 - b. How does libertarianism apply to the Internet?
9. Underwood quotes Dan Rosen, who equates the libertarian mind set with many heavy users of the Net. What other group does Rosen mention?
- a. Do these characterizations seem fair?
 - b. What effect does equating the two have on the reader?
10. According to Underwood and a commentator he quotes, how did the Internet come of age in 1998?
11. The author sees a danger in what he terms the sheer overload of unmediated information. What is it? Is his concern well-founded?
12. According to Underwood, how is the American regulatory philosophy nearly the opposite of Japan's?
13. What are two examples of disintermediation? What is the economic downside of this brand of consumerism?
14. How did the relationship between the state and the individual inhibit growth of the Internet in Japan?
15. Underwood writes that World War II solidified the transfer of power and authority from individual states to Washington, and that the Cold War cemented that transfer by establishing a national security state.
- a. How did the attacks of September 11, 2001, affect the balance of power between federal and state governments?
 - b. What is the source of the doctrine of states' rights?
 - c. Have political events unconstitutionally diminished states' rights?
16. How has the Internet affected American culture? Specifically, explain how has it changed the nature of our:
- a. social interaction
 - b. shopping
 - c. correspondence
 - d. work
 - e. research
17. Underwood offers almost a dozen reasons why Japan's Internet culture lags behind our own.
- a. What are three cultural reasons he presents?

b. What are three business reasons?

18. What are three ways the Japanese government discourages the growth of the Internet in Japan?

19. What are three ways the Japanese government now actively supports growth of Japanese IT?

20. How does the Internet promise to transform Japan's government?

21. Underwood provides many reasons why Japan was slow to embrace the Internet. What two aspects of their character does he suggest draw Japanese to the Internet?

22. What two specific examples of changes in Japanese attitudes toward the Internet does he provide?

23. What is a bamboo ceiling? How has it been affected by growth of the Internet culture in Japan?

24. What are some of the dangers the Internet presents to users?

25. Explain the author's statement that the Internet and societal change in Japan are part of a synergistic process.

26. The wireless i-mode is probably the best example of Japan's leapfrogging into the Internet age.

a. What are four features of the 3G DoCoMo wireless?

b. Is the 3G likely to become popular in the United States? Explain.

27. Write an essay about the bifurcated evolution of the Internet in Japan and the United States, using the cultural, political, and historical content in Embracing Cyberspace.

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