

# Exploration of the Utilization of Foreign Museum Resources in Junior High School World History Contextual Teaching – A Case Study on the Meiji Restoration



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**Abstract:** Addressing common issues in junior high school world history learning, such as unfamiliar content and weak spatial awareness, effectively using foreign museum resources in teaching through contextual methods proves to be a successful strategy. When selecting contextual teaching resources, it is crucial to adhere to principles based on student needs, teaching content, and the correct value orientation. Implementation should be based on students' experiences to achieve significant teaching results.

**Keywords:** museum resources; contextual teaching; Meiji Restoration;

## 1. The Value of Museum Resources in Junior High School History Contextual Teaching

The compulsory education history curriculum is characterized by its ideological, humanistic, comprehensive, and foundational aspects. For junior high school students, world history facts are relatively unfamiliar compared to Chinese history, "leading to challenges in forming a correct understanding of history" (Xiang, 2009). Therefore, it is essential to "employ various methods to recreate historical scenes, turning distant, unfamiliar, and abstract historical facts into vivid, tangible scenarios to stimulate students' learning emotions and open up their thinking space" (Feng, 2014). Contextual teaching, promoted vigorously in recent years, is one of the effective teaching methods in junior high history classrooms.

The application of contextual teaching requires an abundance of teaching resources. The 2022 version of the "Compulsory Education History Curriculum Standard emphasizes the selection of

diverse teaching resources and the exploration of various teaching methods" (Beijing Normal University Publishing Group, 2022).

Utilizing museum resources for contextual teaching brings the advantage of tangibility and intuitiveness. "Museums are non-profit permanent institutions that serve society, researching, collecting, protecting, interpreting, and showcasing material and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums promote diversity and sustainability. Museums operate and communicate in an ethical and professional manner, providing diverse experiences for education, appreciation, contemplation, and knowledge sharing with the participation of the community" (Wei, 2023). Museums organize and display exhibitions with a large number of physical objects, using physical examples to convey information to various senses and channels of the audience. One way is to enable students to achieve abstract and rational enlightenment from the perception of images, which helps to strengthen conceptual memory and promote their thinking and understanding. The two physical

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examples have a strong infectious power compared to other textual or visual materials, which is easy to stimulate students' learning emotions and interests, making learning activities active and conscious for students. As Czech educator Comenius once said, "All knowledge begins with sensory perception." (Comenius & Fu, 1979) Intuition can concretize and visualize abstract knowledge, making students immerse or feel like they are. By showing students vivid and concrete images, it helps students form intuitive knowledge. In addition, the breadth of the field involved is also a characteristic that distinguishes museums from other cultural and educational institutions. Museums collect and study a wide range of objects, including from nature to human society; From ancient times to real life; From one's own country to a foreign land; From macro to micro aspects.

To promote the use of museum resources for learning among primary and secondary school students, the Ministry of Education and the National Cultural Heritage Administration issued the "Opinions on Using Museum Resources for Primary and Secondary Education" in October 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020). This directive aims to push students to use museum resources for learning continually. Therefore, the effective utilization of foreign museum resources for junior high world history contextual teaching is a new topic in educational reform. This article specifically analyzes this issue using the Meiji Restoration as an example, exploring resource selection, contextual creation, implementation, and effectiveness.

## 2. Resource Selection

Museums offer a wealth of resources, including historical, artistic, and scientifically valuable sites such as ancient cultural relics, tombs, ancient buildings, stone caves, temples, and carvings. They also encompass modern and contemporary significant historical sites, tangible objects, representative structures, precious art and craftwork, documentary materials, manuscripts, and books with historical, artistic, and scientific value. The support

of domestic museum resources for the teaching of Chinese history can be said to be very rich. Compared with the teaching of world history, there are significant differences in how to choose and utilize museum resources. Therefore, when selecting museum resources for world history situational teaching, the following principles should be adhered to:

### 2.1 Based on teaching content

The Meiji Restoration is the first lesson in the first unit of the ninth-grade (second term) history curriculum in the series. World history content is relatively challenging for students to grasp, especially when the reform context, content, and impact differ significantly from China's historical reforms. Therefore, choosing relevant museum resources from Japan itself can help students gain a better understanding of the Meiji Restoration.

### 2.2 Adhere to scientific value orientation

Selecting specific Japanese museum artifacts may not be as effective as choosing a comprehensive museum related to the Meiji Restoration. During the selection process, relevant museum resources such as the Tomioka Silk Mill and the Silk Industry Heritage Sites and the Meiji Industrial Revolution Sites were identified. The Tomioka Silk Mill, established in 1872, was the first modern silk mill funded by the Japanese government after the Meiji Restoration. It is considered a "model government factory" (Wang, 1994) and "played a significant role in the emergence of Japanese labor women". (Yang, 2017) The site was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2014, and a museum was established on its premises. On the other hand, the Meiji Industrial Revolution Sites include facilities like the Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard, third dock, large tower crane, old model room, and the Takeshima Naval Arsenal remains. However, some of these facilities were involved in forced labor and resource plundering from neighboring countries during World War II, leading to protests from several victimized countries, including China, Korea, and North Korea. As historical education should aim to "explore historical truth, summarize historical experience, understand

historical laws, and recognize historical development trends under the guidance of Marxism,"(Beijing Normal University Publishing Group, 2022) selecting a site with a positive educational impact is crucial. Therefore, the Tomioka Silk Mill was chosen as the teaching resource.

### 2.3 Based on student needs

Middle school students have already mastered systematic knowledge of Chinese history and developed study methods. They are lively, active in thought, curious about new things, emotionally inclined, and have a high enthusiasm for learning but lack rationality. Therefore, choosing a continuous and comprehensive contextual scenario that is beneficial for student development throughout a lesson, rather than limiting it to a specific stage, is essential. The Tomioka Silk Mill site, with its various components such as the main gate, two cocoon warehouses, silk reeling workshop, worker dormitories, exhibition halls, and mascot, is sufficient to meet the needs.

## 3. Teaching Design for Contextual Creation

### 3.1 Introduction

The teacher first uses ancient Chinese to read thousands of books and travel thousands of miles to start teaching (aiming to guide students from textbooks to action). Tell the students that they will take a cloud learning trip with their textbooks (into the context) and ask where they will go? (Encourage students to guess) Give full play to the teacher's personal drawing advantages, draw a national outline map, and let students use geographical knowledge to make judgments (cross disciplinary knowledge application). After the students guessed Japan, they showed a panoramic picture of the Fukuoka silk factory and went to the Fukuoka silk factory (with a clear destination).

Pointing out the relationship between the Silk Factory and the Meiji Restoration and its importance to the Meiji Restoration, it is a national treasure of Japan, a world cultural heritage, and an important witness to the Meiji Restoration. Considering the learning situation, choose the mascot "Xiaofu" with

the image of a female worker to stimulate students' interest. Let the mascot "Xiaofu" lead students to embark on a research and learning session with the theme of exploring the Meiji Restoration. Then, ask students to read the learning objectives on their own and clarify the learning tasks (on the blackboard).

### 3.2 Teaching process

In this lesson, we will study the Meiji Restoration from three aspects: background, process, and impact. Let's get ready to start.

#### (1) Background

The teacher, speaking in the tone of Xiaofu, proposed that it is necessary to do a good job in research travel strategies (entering the context). Students are required to understand the situation in Japan before the establishment of the Fukuoka Silk Factory, which is the background of the Meiji Restoration. Assign students to read the textbook content on their own and summarize it from both domestic and foreign perspectives.

Question classmates about the background of the Meiji Restoration. Based on their answers, summarize the social crisis and national crisis in Japan at that time, which could be described as a difficult national situation with internal and external troubles. The shogunate was unable to solve the crisis. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Emperor Meiji came to power, providing a prerequisite and possibility for changing the current situation in Japan.

#### (2) Overview

##### Reform purpose

What kind of prescription will the Meiji government prescribe? Students are required to analyze the five oath texts reflected in the textbook.

Ask students to clarify that the Meiji government should carry out reforms from top to bottom, with the aim of comprehensively transforming Japan by following the example of the West.

Teachers continue to ask how Japan should be transformed to resolve the crisis? Clarifying that enriching the country and strengthening the military is the fundamental goal of reform.

What measures will the Meiji government take to embrace the West and reform? Let students read the textbook for a preliminary understand .

### **Core reforms**

The teacher showcased the panoramic view of the silk factory and pointed out that students should follow Xiaofu to visit the Fukuoka silk factory and deeply learn about the measures of the Meiji Restoration. Clarify its spatial layout and visiting sequence. (Provide students with space to get to know each other).

### **Politically**

The teacher showed a picture of the main entrance of the silk factory and said in the tone of Xiaofu that the silk factory is located in Gunma County. Which measure is related to the establishment of county-level administrative institutions? Ask students to think based on the following two pictures.

After the students answer, bring out the abolition of feudal domains and the establishment of counties. County officials are directly appointed by the central government, which can strengthen centralization, abolish feudal separatism, facilitate the implementation of central policies, and provide a unified market for the development of factories.

The teacher showed photos of the silkworm cocoon warehouse and asked students to calculate based on the information provided by the cornerstone that Meiji Five Year Plan was 1872, which was only four years after the Meiji Restoration began (strengthening the Meiji Restoration). It was the first mechanical silk factory established in Japan.

### **Economic**

How was this factory established? Show pictures of the silk reeling workshop and have students continue to visit to find the answers. The picture shows technicians and machines imported from France at that time, including government official Rongichi Shibuya, who was responsible for building the factory. He asked which measure originated from the practice of being led by the state, learning from Western models, and developing modern economy?

The student's answer is that after the industrialization, the teacher displayed the Meiji Restoration commemorative stamps and continued to ask what does this mean? After answering, the students clarified that the government at that time also encouraged the development of postal, transportation and other industries. Continuing to ask, where do the funds for developing these industries come from? Based on the answers from classmates, point out that it comes from local tax reform. Land owners are required to pay land taxes, and the absolute proportion of land taxes to rental income.

The teacher used the tone of Xiaofu to add that some bankrupt farmers have left their land and entered factories. In this way, the development of factories has the most important technology, capital, and labor.

### **In terms of social life**

The teacher showed the restored work scene of the silk factory, and it can be seen that the staff are mainly female workers. Introduce female worker Yokota Ying, who is famous for writing about her life in a silk factory as "Fukuoka Diary".

Show pictures of employee dormitories, factory buildings, and diary content, and ask students to tell each other about Yokota Ying's factory life based on clues.

On the basis of student answers, further questions about the changes in building materials, the rise of vocational education, and changes in work systems reflect what trends? It is clear that the Westernization of Japanese society, culture, and education is the result of "civilized civilization".

Teachers point out that the government not only values vocational education, but also places greater emphasis on school education. Starting from 1872, Japan began to implement educational system, and in 1899, compulsory primary education was achieved. Education can cultivate a large number of talents for the sustainable development of silk factories, and the emphasis on education is most worthy of reference by other countries.

### **Militarily**

The teacher asked that female workers are

mainly present in the silk factory, so what kind of work are men doing? Show two pictures of the new Japanese military and assign students to understand the military measures at that time.

Based on student responses, clarify that Japan implements a conscription system and establishes a new type of military. This can provide military support for the development of the country.

### **(3) Evaluate**

The teacher, speaking in the tone of Xiaofu, showcased the activity room located in the West Cocoon Warehouse. There were many promotional materials and postcards from the silk factory on the table, indicating that the Fukuoka Silk Factory had become a demonstration factory for the Japanese silk industry. After it, mechanical silk factories were successively established in Japan. Organize activities for students to combine the development of the silk factory, fill in the measures in the table, and analyze the nature of the reform.

After completing the form, students should clarify that it is a reform with a bourgeois nature. Because these measures were modeled after the West to transform Japan, providing capital, labor, and market conditions for the development of silk factories, and transforming the silk industry from manual production to modern industry. From small to large, it can be seen that Japan wants to develop capitalism.

### **Impact**

The teacher requires students to discuss in groups based on the pre class study plan (including the comparison of the development speed of Japan's Meiji Restoration with other major capitalist countries, naval development, the visit of the Iwachang Mission, the 1889 Constitution, the Sino Japanese War during the First Sino Japanese War, etc.), paying attention to the changes in data and years in the materials, as well as key words.

Based on the responses from the group representatives, it is clear that on the one hand, the Meiji Restoration was a major turning point in Japanese history, as Japan's development speed exceeded that of major capitalist countries and it built

a modern navy. For Japan, as an island country, the navy represents military strength, indicating its achievement of enriching the country and strengthening its military. The revision of unequal treaties enabled Japan to achieve national independence, and after the Meiji Restoration, Japan transformed from a feudal backward country to a capitalist powerhouse. And Japan is also the only capitalist country and national independent country in modern Asia, which can be said to have left Asia and entered Europe.

On the one hand, the reform is not thorough, and both the Bushido and the supreme imperial system are remnants of feudalism with a strong militaristic color.

### **Status**

What is the position of the Meiji Restoration in the development of capitalism?

After asking the students, summarize the establishment of the capitalist system through the bourgeois revolution in England and France, the American Revolutionary War, and the establishment of the capitalist system. The American Civil War, the Russian Japanese reforms, and the expansion of the capitalist system from Europe and America to Asia demonstrate that the Meiji Restoration was an important part of the expansion of the capitalist system. (Clarify the position of Japan's Meiji Restoration in the content of this unit).

### **(4) Brief summary**

Teachers ask students about their gains and ask them to use mind maps to organize and discuss.

On the basis of student summaries, it is necessary to combine national conditions and choose a path that is suitable for the country's development; Reform is the path to a strong country. However, even a strong country cannot invade. Today, China is the world's second-largest economy, but we insist on pursuing the path of peaceful development and building a community with a shared future for mankind. As middle school students, we should establish a correct view of history and development in today's learning, and not disappoint the era's responsibility of "having oneself in a strong country"

on the path of deepening national reform.

### (5) Homework

Students are required to collect the industrial heritage related to the Westernization Movement after class and compare it with that of the Fukuoka Silk Factory. Announcing the end of the research journey, thank you to Xiaofu for completing the situational teaching.

### Conclusion

Incorporating foreign museum resources into junior high school world history contextual teaching is an innovative and effective approach. The case study on the Meiji Restoration, using the Tomioka Silk Mill as a teaching resource, demonstrates the benefits of this method in enhancing students' understanding, engagement, and critical thinking. The selection of museum resources, careful contextual creation, and thoughtful implementation contribute to the overall success of the teaching strategy. As educators continue to explore creative and engaging methods, utilizing foreign museum resources offers a promising avenue for enriching history education in secondary schools.

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

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