

Dear Teacher:

It has never been more important for Americans to learn about Asia. Our nation's essential trading partners are in Asia, and Asian influence on the world economy has grown to new heights in the past decade. According to the most recent census, Asian-Americans are one of the fastest-growing demographic groups in the United States, numbering more than 12 million people. Massachusetts is home to the fourth largest Chinese population in the country. And yet our knowledge of Asian history and culture is woefully inadequate. According to a 1999 survey from the Asia Society, 95% of American teachers say they do not have enough background to teach effectively about Asia (*Asia in the Schools: Preparing Young Americans for Today's Interconnected World*, New York: Asia Society, 2001, p. 29).

It is essential that American teachers and students become knowledgeable about Asia's profound influence on our world. Art museums with Asian collections, such as the Peabody Essex Museum, have an important role to play in engaging students in this enterprise. We can support teachers in their efforts by providing access to primary source material, rich curricular resources, professional development opportunities, and knowledgeable staff.

PEM has important Asian collections to share with you and your students, including a 200-year-old house complete with furnishings from rural Anhui province, China; Japanese objects collected by Edward Sylvester Morse, known as the father of modern Japanese archaeology; and a rare group of objects representing life in Joseon dynasty Korea presented by a member of the first Korean delegation to the United States. These collections yield important insights into the ways of life, values, and artistic accomplishments of these complex and fascinating cultures.

PEM educators and curators have created the source materials contained here to support you in your efforts to learn and teach about Asia. Recognizing the limitations of most standard textbooks, we wanted to provide a rich array of resources to motivate student interest and to extend the amount of class time spent on learning about the art and culture of China, Japan, and Korea. You will find: 1. Three Teacher Sourcebooks that provide basic background information; 2. Lesson Plans for each of the three cultures, with reference to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; and 3. Art Cards, photographic reproductions of objects in the PEM collections. These materials are meant to be complemented by student reading assignments, classroom activities, and one or more visits to PEM. Since many of the excellent books about Asia for young people may be difficult to obtain, we have put together a lending library for classes preparing for a visit to the museum.

We are excited about the impact that museums and schools, working in concert, can make in students' understanding and appreciation of the arts and cultures of Asia. We invite you to visit PEM (admission is free for teachers with ID), to explore our Web site at [www.pem.org](http://www.pem.org), and to contact our school programs manager at 978.745.9500, ext. 3060 to discuss plans for your class visit. We also look forward to hearing how your students respond when you introduce these materials.

Finally, we want to thank you for the work you are doing with young people. Fine teachers make such a difference, often influencing students throughout their lives. We at the Peabody Essex Museum support your efforts to expose your students to new cultures and ideas. This work is essential to global harmony in today's increasingly interconnected world.

All the best wishes!

Ray Williams  
Director of Education

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*Project directors:* Vasundhara Prabhu and Ray Williams

*Lead writers:* Joshua Lawrence, Karin Oen, and Midori Oka

*Curatorial consultants:* Susan Bean, Nancy Berliner, Karina Corrigan, Bruce MacLaren, William Sargent, and Sam Scott

*With the assistance of:* Alyssa Dodge, Jeff Dykes, Jim Forrest, Melissa Kershaw, Gerald Marsella, Christine Michelini, Michelle Morello, Keiko Thayer, Gail Wang, and Yiyan Zhou

*Special thanks to:* John Teramoto, curator of Japanese Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art

*Designer:* Jennie Malcolm

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*Peabody Essex Museum Teacher Resources: China, Japan, Korea*

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