

## **Asian anger at Japanese school history books** (Wed 6 Apr, 2005)

### **WARM-UPS**

**CHAT:** Talk in pairs or groups about Japan / China / South Korea / World War Two / correct history / Nanking Massacre / invasion, liberation and occupation. Change topics and partners every few minutes.

**HISTORY BRAINSTORM:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “history”. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

**MY COUNTRY’S HISTORY:** In pairs / groups, talk about what you learnt in school about the history of your country. Is what you learnt true? Are you proud of your country’s history? Are there any regrettable parts of your country’s history?

**OPINIONS:** Look at this list of opinions about the above text. Tell your partner/group what you think of each opinion:

- a. Japan would greatly help relations with its neighbours by owning up to a few historical truths in its school history books.
- b. German school children learn about the Holocaust. It is important to know your real history.
- c. Every country glosses over its past. British schoolchildren do not learn about the destruction of cultures and peoples throughout its empire building.
- d. I’m not sure which is worse – the glossed over version of history in the Japanese textbooks or the anti-Japanese sentiments in Chinese textbooks.
- e. Describing the Nanking Massacre as an “incident” shows a total lack of respect for China.
- f. It is hard to believe an educational publisher can justify Japan’s war actions and receive government approval.
- g. Japan’s Ministry of Education should not be bullied by other countries.
- h. How about a textbook written by a United Nations team? That should provide balance.
- i. Perhaps Japan doesn’t want its children to know about its past atrocities.
- j. I wonder what Chinese schoolbooks say about the near-destruction of Tibetan culture.
- k. The Japanese Government should be adult about this: say it happened, apologize and then move on.

## PRE-READING IDEAS

**WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'school' and 'history'.

**TRUE FALSE:** Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

- a. Japan's relations with its neighbours improved yesterday. T / F
- b. China and South Korea are incensed at Japanese versions of World War Two. T / F
- c. China has said some new school history books will poison Japanese children. T / F
- d. The textbooks will be vehemently condemned by a few Asian countries. T / F
- e. There is great concern over the correct interpretation of the Nanking Massacre. T / F
- f. Thirty thousand people were killed in the Chinese city of Nanjing. T / F
- g. There are some disputed islands that Japan is illegally occupying. T / F
- h. The school books admitted Japan committed unfair murder and abuse. T / F

**SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                      |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| (a) worsened         | infuriated   |
| (b) incensed         | view         |
| (c) gloss over       | archipelago  |
| (d) indignation      | avoided      |
| (e) remorse          | deteriorated |
| (f) perspective      | seizure      |
| (g) massacre         | guilt        |
| (h) occupation       | distort      |
| (i) island chain     | genocide     |
| (j) steered clear of | ire          |

**PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article:

- |  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| (a) gloss                              | condemned          |
| (b) China and South Korea are incensed | chain              |
| (c) past                               | perspective        |
| (d) expressed equally                  | at the books       |
| (e) vehemently                         | clear of           |
| (f) has attracted                      | over               |
| (g) historical                         | occupation         |
| (h) military                           | wrongdoing         |
| (i) island                             | greatest concern   |
| (j) steered completely                 | strong indignation |

## GAP FILL

### Asian anger at Japanese school history books

**BNE:** Japan's relations with its neighbours \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday over the Japanese Ministry of Education's approval of some new school history textbooks. China and South Korea are \_\_\_\_\_ at the books, which they say gloss over or glorify Japanese militaristic actions during World War Two. South Korea's Foreign Ministry said some of the textbooks "still include contents that justify and beautify [Japan's] past \_\_\_\_\_". China has expressed equally strong indignation, saying the books will "cause severe harm to people from all Asian countries and poison Japanese juveniles". A spokesman stated: "The textbooks will be \_\_\_\_\_ condemned by people from all Asian countries that were victimized by Japan, including the Chinese....We strongly urge the Japanese government to honor its commitment of expressing \_\_\_\_\_ for its militaristic history."

*vehemently*  
*worsened*  
*remorse*  
*wrongdoing*  
*incensed*

A textbook from the \_\_\_\_\_ Fushosha company has attracted greatest concern over its historical \_\_\_\_\_. It describes the Nanking Massacre, in which 300,000 people were killed by Japanese troops in the Chinese city of Nanjing in six weeks, as an "incident" in which "many people" died. Fushosha \_\_\_\_\_ the word "invasion" when referring to Japan's military occupation of Asia; it describes the invasion of Southeast Asia as an "\_\_\_\_\_ " for those countries to gain independence. South Korea is also angry over the textbook describing it as "illegally occupying" a small island chain, known as Takeshima in Japan. South Korea has claimed control over the territory it calls the Dokdo Islands for 1,500 years. The book does state that "no single country \_\_\_\_\_ completely clear of killing or abusing unarmed people", and admitted Japan committed "unfair murder and abuse".

*perspective*  
*opportunity*  
*nationalist*  
*steered*  
*avoids*

## HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on the Nanking Massacre. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. MY COUNTRY'S HISTORY:** Make a poster about an event in your country's past you are not proud of. Show your poster to your classmates in your next class.
- 4. LETTER TO JAPAN:** Write a letter to the Japanese Ministry of Education expressing your feelings about the new history schoolbooks.

## DISCUSSION:

- a. What was interesting in this article?
- b. Were you surprised by anything in this article?
- c. Were you angered by anything in this article?
- d. What do you think of the Japanese school history books?
- e. Are China and South Korea right to feel angry?
- f. Why do you think the Japanese government doesn't insist more facts be given?
- g. Should the Japanese Prime Minister make a public apology to China and South Korea for Japan's militaristic actions during World War II?
- h. Would a schoolbook written by the United Nations solve this problem?
- i. Will Japanese children be poisoned by these books?
- j. Are you proud of your country's history?
- k. Does your country have anything to apologize to other peoples / countries for?
- l. When you studied history at school, did you learn that your country was great? Is it true?
- m. Was there anything you learnt in history class that you now know was glossed over?
- n. Is it easy to agree on a "correct" version of history?
- o. Will history show America's entry into Iraq as an invasion or liberation?
- p. Did you like history at school?
- q. Which area of history did you like best?
- r. Do you think China accurately reports its own history in its schoolbooks?
- s. Do you think Chinese-Japanese relations might become a serious problem for the world?
- t. Did you like this discussion?
- u. Teacher / Student additional questions.

## TEXT

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A textbook from the **nationalist** Fushosha Company has attracted greatest concern over its historical **perspective**. It describes the Nanking Massacre, in which 300,000 people were killed by Japanese troops in the Chinese city of Nanjing in six weeks, as an "incident" in which "many people" died. Fushosha **avoids** the word "invasion" when referring to Japan's military occupation of Asia; it describes the invasion of Southeast Asia as an "**opportunity**" for those countries to gain independence. South Korea is also angry over the textbook describing it as "illegally occupying" a small island chain, known as Takeshima in Japan. South Korea has claimed control over the territory it calls the Dokdo Islands for 1,500 years. The book does state that "no single country **steered** completely clear of killing or abusing unarmed people", and admitted Japan committed "unfair murder and abuse".

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