The Sun Rises: Sakamoto Ryōma and His Stand for Japan

Senior Group Dramatic Performance

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Asian history has always been a topic of interest amongst our group. We chose Japan due to its interesting relationship with the West, especially after its isolationist period. Meiji Japan was the greatest turning point of Japanese modern history, as Japan moved rapidly out of its technologically stagnant isolationist period and industrialized, while the people’s mindset became more liberal. We wanted to bring up the question of the benefits and detriments of the Restoration in our project, as Japan’s industrialization and nationalism directly related to its imperial expansion and involvement in the World Wars. Because of our interest in theatre, we decided on a dramatic performance. Although Sakamoto would likely be more difficult to research, as there would be less available primary sources, because of his short life, we decided upon Sakamoto because he advocated for westernization despite his background in the Tosa Loyalist Party, and it was interesting paired with the place that he has in popular culture today.

Despite that Sakamoto did not craft many works himself, we conducted a great deal of research with sources from other points of view, or from other prominent figures in this time period. Our wide range of primary sources includes letters, newspaper articles, legal documents, photographs, propaganda, memoirs, journals and diaries, and books and textbooks from the time period, many of which were found on university archives. Our secondary sources mainly consisted of scholarly books, and university websites. We reached out to a doctorate specialist in Japanese history and utilized his knowledge to add more depth to our understanding.

For the construction of our performance, we wanted to include as many different elements to our performance as possible, including music, images, videos, and a variety of props and costumes. We incorporated details to make our play more authentic, and had Sakamoto’s Ghost wear his haori in the fashion that one would dress the dead, differing to how one alive would wear
the same jacket. The script was the most difficult to create since we had to compress all of our research and ideas into a mere ten minutes. However, with the use of select scenes to depict parts of Sakamoto’s life that detail his significance, we proved our thesis in a few short scenes. We decided to set the play in the present day to greater show the impact that Sakamoto had on the modern history of Japan.

We believe this project represents an important stand in history, as Sakamoto was able to take a stand for his beliefs in many different ways, which helped Japan modernize in the long run. While some were completely against foreigners, and wanted only to preserve the Japanese national identity, Sakamoto recognized that adopting Western ideals would help Japan industrialize and advance in the long run. However, he also wanted to maintain cultural ideals of nationalism to help their country to be strong. In essence, Sakamoto represents a synthesis of multiple ideas, which together helped Japan grow and advance during the Meiji Restoration and onwards.
Works Cited

Primary Sources

Memoirs, Diaries, Letters, Scrolls, and Accounts


This book contains diaries, journals, and letters written by Western diplomats, merchants, missionaries, and other men who visited Japan. These manuscripts were taken from between Japan first opening up to the West, in 1853, to well past the Meiji Restoration, at the brink of the Second World War. Some of the most interesting ones are from the early Meiji period, when Japan is beginning to accept trade and diplomacy from the West. For example, the letters of Sir Edwin Arnold, a British poet and journalist, and his exchanges with Takaaki Kato, the Japanese Ambassador in London, depict the growing acceptance towards diplomacy with Europe, as the letters discuss the complexities of Anglo-Japanese relations. Similarly, the papers and letters of John Caldwell Calhoun Newton, who was an American missionary in Japan in 1888 to 1897, discuss US-Japanese relations and the initial difficulties he had living as a foreigner in Japan. His letters in particular provided us with great insight into the domestic and religious lives of people in Meiji Japan.

Jan Cock Blumhoff, the head of the Dutch East India Company factory in Nagasaki in the early 19th century, wrote in this private account about his journey to Edo to meet with the Tokugawa shogun in 1818. The details of this journey and account by Blumhoff show the Tokugawa house’s foreign policy during Japan’s period of isolationism. During the time of the *Sakoku* policy of the Tokugawa shogunate, the Dutch were one of the only Westerners that had access to Japanese ports and could trade in Japan. His wife, Titia Blumhoff, was one of the first European women in Japan, producing many artworks and facilitating the earliest diffusion of European culture in Japan.


This source is a primary source document of Ito Hirobumi’s diary from the time of his travels and studies in Europe, mainly in the United Kingdom, at University College. Ito Hirobumi was originally a samurai of the Choshu domain, who became extremely influential during the Meiji period. He eventually became Japan’s first Prime Minister, and was the chair of the bureau that drafted the Meiji Constitution. This source is provided by the National Diet Library of Japan, which is the main legislative library of Japan, similar to the United States’ Library of Congress. Through the World Digital Library, this source has been digitized for educational
purposes. We have used this source to analyse the education of Ito Hirobumi, because he may be considered the main architect of the Meiji Restoration and it would be interesting to see what he learned from the British that influenced much of his policy both internationally and domestically.


This letter was written by Iwasaki Yataro, the person who started the modern corporation Mitsubishi based on Sakamoto’s company, the Kameyama Shachu. Iwasaki Yataro was originally a member of his company, and when Sakamoto left Nagasaki to draft his Eight Point Plan, he left Iwasaki in charge of the company, not knowing that he would be assassinated before his return. Iwasaki would take what was left of the Kameyama Shachu after the restoration and create Mitsubishi. From this document, we were able to see what values Mitsubishi had when it was first started, and how it related to what we knew about Sakamoto’s values. This document was important to us because it showed us one of the legacies that Sakamoto left after his death. We project this letter as well in our play to help support our thesis.


This book, published by scholars from the University of Tokyo in 1983, is a translation of the diary of Kido Takayoshi, who was a statesman during the Bakumatsu period and early Meiji Restoration. He was one of the leaders of the Choshu domain played a part in overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate. Following
the fall of the shogunate, Kido took a large role in the Meiji Restoration, initiating policies of centralization and modernization in the government, such as his drafting of the Charter Oath, making him known as one of the “Triumvirate of the Restoration” which also includes Okubo Toshimichi and Saigo Takamori. In his diary, Kido describes his worries for the aims of the new government and of rebellion. Unlike many official documents, Kido’s diary shows the impact of political negotiations that might have went on in teahouses and at sake parties. It also shows the motives of the samurai within the Choshu domain: while they were intent on overthrowing the bakufu, Kido expresses worry that they do not truly understand what the aim to overthrow the shogunate is really about. This same worry was shared by Sakamoto Ryoma, and thus used in our project to show that Sakamoto, while having been a low-class samurai, truly wanted to change Japan for the better. Unlike the samurai that Kido mentions in his diary, who only seek to gain greater social standing for themselves by overthrowing the shogunate, Sakamoto cared more about the fate of his country. Throughout his diary, Kido displays a broad understanding of what the Restoration might mean for Japan. However, this source has many limitations, as although Kido wrote very frequently, he did not always go in-depth about political negotiations, often times simply writing that “confidential matters were discussed.” However, his diary is still a very valuable source for understanding the social and political changes of that time period.

This letter is from a western merchant to Minomura R. from Mitsubishi corporation speaking of shipping details.


This is a primary source document as it is a book commissioned by the United States government and written by Commodore Matthew Perry after he visited Japan in the early 1800s. Commodore Perry played one of the most important roles in Japan’s opening to Western ideas and government through his visit to Japan in which he essentially forced the government to open the country utilizing gunboat diplomacy. In his book, *Narrative of the expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, 1856*, Perry describes his actions as bringing the good of Western civilization to this far-off country. Therefore, this source is very significant as it shows how Perry’s negotiation and diplomacy managed to subjugate the Tokugawa government and enforce the opening of trade ports through treaties. This shows the significance of Commodore Perry’s actions on the future of Japan, as it led to the eventual rebellion against the bakufu by nationalist groups. His book not only records his actions, but also showed his motives to opening the ports and spreading Western influence. Since it is a primary source document, it obviously has limitations in that it only depicts the Western point of view during this conflict. However, when coupled with other sources that originate from Japan, it provides a good picture to the conflict that led to the weakening of the Tokugawa bakufu. We used this source to provide much of the context for the turmoil that Japan was going through, with the end of the *Sakoku* (closed country) policy. We also used it to understand how people from the other
countries, particularly the West, viewed Japan before its period of modernization: as a
country that was weak, technologically stagnant, and could be economically
dominated. We were able to compare this to the modern Japan after the Meiji
Restoration in order to support our thesis.

Preble, George Henry. The opening of Japan: a diary of discovery in the Far East, 1853-1856, from the
original manuscript in the Massachusetts Historical Society. University of Oklahoma Press,
1962. 30 May 2016.

George Henry Preble was an American naval officer, who also wrote many original
manuscripts. He went with Commodore Matthew C. Perry to Japan, and surveyed
many harbors in the Far East. Preble’s diary from his journeys in the Far East was
collected into this book after his death by the Massachusetts Historical Society. This
book allowed us to gain insight into how the West viewed Japan, particularly in an
economic sense. This manuscript mostly comes from before the Meiji Restoration,
during the late Tokugawa period. Thus, it greatly relates to the motives and incentives
that men such as Matthew Perry did when they wanted to enter Japan and other ports
in East Asia. Preble’s description of the Asian ports allows us to see how valuable
East Asian trade was seen by the West. His descriptions of ‘spreading Western
culture’ also showed us the incentives that the West had for entering Japan.


This source helped us understand the way that Sakamoto Ryoma communicated with
those from the Choshu clan. It highlights a document that Sakamoto Ryoma
exchanged with Kido Takayoshi, one that describes the six points in the treaty that
the Satsuma Choshu Alliance was based off of. This document is especially interesting as Kido Takayoshi writes straight on top of Ryoma’s letter with red ink instead of responding with one of his own, as if he was in a hurry when he wrote back to Ryoma. It is an important document as it shows Sakamoto Ryoma’s involvement in brokering the Satcho Alliance, which the Boshin War could not have been won without.


This scroll is issued by Sadakichi Chiba, Sakamoto Ryoma’s swordsmanship master, and outlines Nakamoto’s mastery at swordsmanship. This document allows us to understand Sakamoto Ryoma past as a swordsman in training better, as well as give us a more concrete time on when he became a master. The scroll outlines several sword techniques the Sakamoto is assumed to have mastered. It is used as a prop in our play, and is one of the documents that we include in our exhibit.


This letter was written from Sakamoto Ryoma to Mutsu Munemitsu, the Minister for Foreign Affairs after Sakamoto’s death. It was written most likely just before Sakamoto’s assassination. This source helped us understand that Sakamoto was one, always corresponding with others and trying to change the country for the better, and two, also influencing other people, many of which who took on governmental positions after the Meiji Restoration

In this document, Sakamoto Ryoma writes to Takayuki Sasaki, a person he would often write to and a supporter of his push for the Taisei Hokan, or the restoration of imperial power to the emperor. He is writing about the state of the government, and about a peaceful restoration of power. After Sakamoto Ryoma died, Takayuki Sasaki would lead Sakamoto’s company, the Kameyama Shachu into the Boshin War. This letter helped us more so understand and justify the stand that Sakamoto took for Japan in his push for a change in government in his Eight Point Plan.


This book was published in order to present and preserve history with primary source accounts. Bayard Taylor, an American diplomat, visited Japan in 1853, with Matthew C. Perry’s expedition. He was also a poet and literary critic. In his A visit to India, China, and Japan, in the year 1853, he described his experiences in East and South Asia. This book is quite interesting, as it compares these three countries and their interactions with the West. Through his American point of view, as well as his point of view as a literary critic and diplomat, Taylor’s accounts depict to the reader the perception of these countries by American travelers.

Newspaper Articles

This 1905 newspaper article describes the education system in Meiji Japan from a Western perspective. The article talks about the increasing numbers of schools in Japan and the reforms that the country underwent regarding its education system. This source is from a Western point of view, but is from the time period of the early Meiji period, thus making it a primary source. This source could be used to describe the changes in the Meiji education system, which completely reformed public education in Japan. More students were enrolled in schools in Japan than ever before, and more girls went to school. The literacy rate in Japan increased extremely rapidly. Thus, this article shows one of the major consequences of the Meiji Restoration, and how Japan’s rapid development in public education was viewed by the rest of the world. It also shows how Westerners and their ideals had an impact on the new public education system in Japan, as more Western ways of schooling and teaching, as well as sciences and philosophies, were taught in Japanese schools.


This source is a translated primary source document. The Datsu-A Ron is a rather famous Japanese nationalistic theory written by a political thinker and visionary, Fukuzawa Yukichi. It was published in the Japanese newspaper *Jiji Shimpo* on March 16th, 1885, post Meiji Restoration. In this theory, Fukuzawa suggests that Japan
should “leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast [their] lot with the civilized nations of the West.” He explains that other Asian nations, such as China and Korea, are very different from Japan, as they have not gone through a new industrial change as Japan did during the Restoration. Fukuzawa claims that civilization is like the spreading of measles, and it is impossible for them to attempt to avoid it. When examining this source, it is very important to consider the author’s point-of-view; Fukuzawa, as a scholar and political thinker, does not represent the thoughts of the masses in Japan during the time period. However, his opinion and point-of-view are very interesting for understanding how many reacted to the changes that occurred during the Restoration and how much Japan changed not only in economy and politics, but also in the mindset of the people. As the Meiji Restoration flourished, many famous political thinkers, such as Fukuzawa, began to express modern and Western viewpoints. Most of these thinkers were liberals or civil rights activists; Fukuzawa, for instance, advocated for parliamentary government, women’s rights, and public education. The growth of newspaper agencies, such as the *Jiji Shimpo*, which happened to have been founded by Fukuzawa, allowed these thinkers to become more influential and have a wider audience for their works, as well as giving the common people more access to the ideologies of these thinkers and scholars.

“Education in Japan: Great work accomplished at small cost.” *The West Australian*, 2 January 1914. 8 October 2016.

Understanding the education of the Meiji period helped us to recognize what was one of the largest priorities of the government at the time. This primary source of *The West Australian*, a newspaper that circulated in Australia around the end of the Meiji
period, explains the patriotism displayed by many of the Japanese citizens. This is critical to understand as it directly ties in with the Westernization of the nation. As western ideas were being implemented with many of the educational system in Japan, it also implemented to patriotic attitudes that the Westerners displayed. This greatly impacts the political and economic flow of the government, which is critical in understanding the effects and the significance of this event. As this is a primary source, it holds a high level of credibility as it was written during the period, and provides a less filtered factual base. However, we do recognize that as a Western source, particularly one that was published on the brink of World War I, this source may view the patriotism and nationalism beginning to take root in Japanese education as an extremely negative occurrence.


In this article, Donald Keene, a Japanologist, looks back on his experience in Japan starting from the first time he arrived in the country in 1945, after World War II. He comments on what he witnessed regarding the culture and lifestyle of Kyoto from 1945 to 1959, the changes that he notices, and his thoughts on them. He also elaborated on one of his experiences in Japan after World War II interviewing both Japanese and non-Japanese people at a conference sponsored by the Asian Pacific Affairs on their thoughts on the country’s economy. Their responses provided us with a concrete depiction of the Japanese as well as non-Japanese opinions after the war, which compares to what we read about in our textbooks. While this source does not relate specifically to Sakamoto Ryoma, it is significant in the fact that Keene
describes Japan retaining their culture and identity through kabuki theatre or
woodblock art, both of which were popular medias in the Edo Period.

**Legal Documents**


Columbia University’s *Asia for Educators* program uses various articles, translated primary source documents, timelines, images, and videos to provide access to
information about various aspects of Asian history. One such example is the excerpts from the Meiji Constitution. The Meiji Constitution consists of a preamble and seven chapters, each focused on a different sector of the government. The complexity of the setup as well as the fact that it was much more modernized was interesting to see compared to the Tokugawa House Laws. The preamble clearly showed the adoption of nationalist sentiments in the Japanese government, with the use of heavily nationalistic language. On the other hand, the laws were rather succinct, suggesting that they were not influenced by these nationalist sentiments. Instead, they were made merely to be efficient in keeping the country running, and thus even the way the laws were codified were in keeping with the Western inspiration of the Meiji Restoration. We used this source to better understand the changes that Japan went through because of the Meiji Restoration, and how much of an effect the Meiji Period had on Japan becoming a more open and modernized country. The Meiji Constitution granted rights that were previously mostly considered Western ideas: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and equality before the law. However, although many of these
laws granted rights and freedoms de jure, the actual practices were not always in keeping with these laws, especially in terms of equality of social classes. However, the fact that these Western institutions were at least formally recognized shows how Japan began to accept Western ideas. In our project, we can use this to show how Sakamoto’s advocating for Western institutions and practices began to be accepted. Many of the laws in the Meiji Constitution can be compared to Sakamoto’s Eight-Point Plan, and it is evident that his ideas were incorporated into Meiji legislature.


This is a primary source document, written by Ito Hirobumi, the first Prime Minister of Japan. He was an important statesman during the Meiji Restoration and helped to draft the Meiji Constitution. This document shows how the political changes that went on during the Meiji Restoration led to Japan having a more centralized government that was modeled after Western governments. In this text, Ito describes how the new constitution included a House of Representatives and other government structures that were modeled after and in competition with Western governments. This source is significant because it shows how the Restoration led to a great deal of political modernization and Westernization within the Japanese government. However, it is limited because it only comments upon the constitution itself, and does not account for any social or cultural differences. Thus, it only shows the *de jure* aspects of the Meiji period, not accounting for the social zeitgeist that greatly defines
this period; nor does it discuss the past itself, only discussing how Japan will continue to develop.


This is a translated primary source document. In this document, Sakamoto proposed his eight-point program of political reforms that would be performed by the imperial government. It suggests that trade and diplomacy be established with foreign countries. Since this program was written by Sakamoto himself, it obviously shows his point-of-view as far as aspirations and dreams for his country’s future. This not only is an important document to consider when studying context about his life, it also shows much of his beliefs and opinions about the current state of government and how it can be changed for the better in the future. This document can be used to gain understanding and prove how Sakamoto’s beliefs and his actions upon those beliefs made him an important reformer. Since the Eight-Point Plan was appealed to the last Tokugawa shogun, and was instrumental in encouraging him to step down and return power to the emperor, this plan can be considered one of the most important contributions that Sakamoto made towards the Meiji Restoration. The Tosa domain submitted the Taisei Hankan, the transfer of power back to the emperor, to the shogunate, inspired by Sakamoto’s plan. Nowadays, many Japanese historians consider Sakamoto’s Eight-Point Plan as one of the most influential conceptions of the form of government before the Meiji Restoration.

This is an excerpt from the book Modern Japan: A Brief History, in which the author covers Japanese history from the end of the Bakumatsu period onwards. In this excerpt, the author incorporates the Meiji Constitution, which was the constitution enforced in the Empire of Japan after the Meiji Restoration. It shows how power, both political and religious, is directed straight to the imperial family, and the emperor controls the military as well. Since this source is a primary source and was a political document that was worded and set in place by high-ranking officials, it should be noted that it does not convey the social standings that were about in the country, especially in the lower classes. This constitution, however, does show how post-restoration Japan took many western ideas, such as the idea of a constitution itself. It is also noted that it shares some similarities with western law, such as the United States constitution. Therefore, it can be used to show how the Meiji Restoration led to political modernization within Japan. This source is also important because it includes not only the constitution itself, but also the author, a Western scholar’s, views of it. Although it’s unlikely that he harbors dissent towards Japanese nationalism, due to his profession as a scholar, this could impact the wording of the translation and the way he presents this famous document.


The Tokugawa Edicts are a very valuable primary source. They discuss the domestic affairs of the military house of Tokugawa during the early Tokugawa period. This document helps us gain context about the legal system that existed in Japan during the early Tokugawa period, as well as how the society was structured. This provided
us with a way of viewing and analyzing the society that existed when Sakamoto took
his stand for Westernization, which allowed us to assess just how difficult it was for
him to take this stand against the current society, which strictly rejected the ideas of
the West. From these edicts, we gained a good view on how the Tokugawa Period
was like, how complex its legal system was, and the motives of the Tokugawa
shogunate. We used this information to understand deeply the motives and aspirations
that the government held for the Meiji Restoration.


This primary source is about the laws that were placed to enforce the closing of Japan.
Being a primary source, while this gave us a lot of good information on what kind of
state Japan was in after it became closed, it offers no opinion. We used this source to
better our understanding of the context of the eventual restoration of Japan. By
understanding the motives of the people who closed the country, we were able to see
Japan’s journey in reopening itself clearer.


This is a source that provides a translation of and analyzes the Charter Oath, which is a
statement released by the new Meiji leaders after the Meiji restoration about the new
government establishments that would allow for a change in society. This oath shows
new visions for the role of common citizens in the society. It also shows a reformist
mindset as it shows how the government is taking a newer stance that looks to the future.
This source is a primary source that was translated and published by scholars. Therefore,
it is important to consider the historical context of these oaths. They differ in point-of-view from Sakamoto’s Eight-Point Plan because they were dictated by a group of governors, and did not simply express the view of a single politician. However, this clearly shows the impact of Sakamoto’s political ideas and plans, as the Charter Oath became the basis for Meiji legislature, drawing upon ideas from Sakamoto’s plan. This source is very limited in showing the state of the country after the Restoration; however, the Charter Oath was known to have taken many elements from Sakamoto’s Eight-Point Plan, which shows how he managed to impact the future government with his ideas after the Meiji Restoration.

Images

“Allegory of Japanese Power: Japanese Man Kicking a Cowering Chinaman and a Fearful Westener,”


This primary source is an image that depicts the anti-modernization and anti-foreigner sentiments held by Japanese common people during the late Tokugawa period. This image was published by the MIT Visualizing Cultures Programme, a programme founded in 2002 in order to create a database for visual learners to gain insight on various cultures, such as Japanese, through primary historical sources. This source was used to understand the general societal paradigm of the late Tokugawa period and how the modernization during the early Meiji period was viewed in the eyes of the common people. In this image, a Japanese man kicks two foreigners: a Chinese man and a European man. The title, ‘Allegory of Japanese Power’, shows that the artist most likely meant to depict the Japanese man as strong and powerful, while the foreigners are fearful
and afraid. This shows the anti-foreigner sentiment prevalent and even idealized in the Japanese people during the late Tokugawa period.


We use this Satsuma Domain backdrop in our presentation when the radio voice is talking about Sakamoto’s efforts in brokering the Satsuma-Choshu Alliance.


The Charter Oath was the oath that opened up the country after the Meiji Restoration, impacted by the Meiji Constitution, which was mainly based off of Sakamoto Ryoma’s Eight Point Plan. It was a major turning point for Japan, as it officially opened the country to the rest of the world and paved the way for modernization in Japan. We decided to include a picture of it in our presentation so that one could know exactly what document we were talking our when we mentioned it in our play.


While less well known than the Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji, Hiroshige’s Famous Views of the Sixty-odd Provinces was also a well known ukiyo-e collection during the time. It highlights many of the places, giving a very serene depiction of life in the Edo Period. We are offered a glimpse of the life in each of the different provinces in Japan, which is important for our project considering the fact that Sakamoto traveled a lot
during his lifetime, whether if it was to Nagasaki to work on his corporation, or between Satsuma and Choshu to handle brokering the Satcho Alliance.


This image is of the one of the *ukiyo-e*, or woodblock prints, in Hokusai’s famous collection, the Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji. These images were mass produced and were commonly seen among commoners in Japan, rooting itself deep into Japanese culture during the Edo period. Some of these prints were even taken by westerners, where they inspired artists such as Monet. We decided to use this image to depict Edo bay in the scene which first shows young Sakamoto in our play because we thought that it was not only a good representation of his thoughts during the time, which were much like everyone else, something that is similar to the way that *ukiyo-e* is mass produced, and does not have any western influences, just like Sakamoto during the time.


This picture was used in our presentation during the scene in which Sakamoto Ryoma tries to assassinate Katsu Kaishu.


This collection of Japanese WWII propaganda images depict Japanese propaganda pieces that denounce Japanese enemies during the Second World War. Several of the posters compare Japan to its enemies, which shows the nationalist sentiments instigated in the people. Japan had been using the ideal of catching up to and surpassing the
Western nations in modernization during the Meiji Restoration, quickly getting its citizens on board with their plan through the use of propaganda. Many of these images feature crude caricatures of American leaders, and encourage the people to contribute to the industry, so that Japan would be able to compete and trump Western countries through rapid industrial advancement. While the posters clearly do not accurately portray Japan’s enemies, it serves to show the relationships that the government attempted to foster between the Japanese people and the Western nations. This source is useful for understanding how Japan’s industrialization was able to succeed, while industrialization in other nations, such as China, was relatively stagnant.


This picture is of the group of people that were in the Kameyama Shachu, Japan’s first modern corporation. Sakamoto Ryoma is in the picture, the fourth from the left. We show this picture in our presentation when we mention the Kameyama Shachu.


We used this photo of the Katsurahama beach as a backdrop in our first scene of our play. We wanted this to be reminiscent of the fact that Ryoma often wanted to travel the ocean and the world after the Meiji Restoration. This photo, used as one of the photos for Sakamoto’s museum scenes was crucial in verifying the accuracy of the actual presence of Sakamoto. The backdrop was artificially removed through extensive technological manipulation to add to the theatrical experience. The source, as one of the
Japan’s official websites for illustrative resources of historical data provides a accurate representative of the live model of the statutes and preservations of historical data today.


This picture is the one that we use when Sakamoto’s ghost appears in the play.
Sakamoto’s portrait and family tree are in the background, which is fitting considering that we are introducing his character.


This source is a splendid collection of first-hand primary source drawings from the era around the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and the Meiji Restoration. It especially contains depictions from that time of traditional Japanese life that was wiped out partially by the arrival of modernisation along with the Meiji Restoration. The publisher, the MIT Visualizing Cultures programme, as stated above was founded by two professors at MIT to combine “images and scholarly commentary in innovative ways to illuminate social and cultural history”. We used the collection of drawings to analyse the way the British drew the Japanese and the way life was lived in pre-Restoration Japan, much of which was and is unknown due to various reasons. This source also provided us with several of the images that we used in our presentation, including the artworks of the ships in Edo Bay. We used it not only to put in our presentation, but also to help us gain an understanding of how the Japanese depicted the Western ships.
This is a translated primary source document. In this document, Sakamoto proposed his eight-point program of political reforms that would be performed by the imperial government. It suggests that trade and diplomacy be established with foreign countries. Since this program was written by Sakamoto himself, it obviously shows his point-of-view as far as aspirations and dreams for his country’s future. This not only is an important document to consider when studying context about his life, it also shows much of his beliefs and opinions about the current state of government and how it can be changed for the better in the future. This document can be used to gain understanding and prove how Sakamoto’s beliefs and his actions upon those beliefs made him an important reformer. However, it has some limitations as far as how much context can be provided about it, since there is not much known about when Sakamoto crafted this program. This document, however, is one of the most important accomplishments of Sakamoto’s life. His friend, Goto Shojiro, presented the document to the daimyo, or feudal lord, Yamauchi Yodo. Yamauchi was inspired by this document and encouraged the last Tokugawa shogun to enact the Taisei Hokan, which would restore legitimate power to the emperor. Thus, when the Restoration began, many of Sakamoto’s political ideas expressed in the Eight-Point Plan were applied in the Charter Oath, which was the basis of Meiji period legislature. This allowed Japan to be more open to foreign trade and diplomacy.

This is a physical picture of the Eight Point Plan that we use in our presentations. We have elaborated on our understanding of the plan above in the Memoirs, Diaries, Letters, and Accounts section.

Yoshikage, Goto, “Illustration of the Imperial Diet of Japan,” Sharf Collection, Mit Visualising Cultures, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1890, 1 May 2017

This letter was written by Iwasaki Yataro, the person who started the modern corporation Mitsubishi based on Sakamoto’s company, the Kameyama Shachu. Iwasaki Yataro was originally a member of his company, and when Sakamoto left Nagasaki to draft his Eight Point Plan, he left Iwasaki in charge of the company, not knowing that he would be assassinated before his return. Iwasaki would take what was left of the Kameyama Shachu after the restoration and create Mitsubishi. From this document, we were able to see what values Mitsubishi had when it was first started, and how it related to what we knew about Sakamoto’s values. This document was important to us because it showed us one of the legacies that Sakamoto left after his death. We project this letter as well in our play to help support our thesis.

663highland, "Kochi Castle in Kochi, Kochi prefecture, Japan," Wikimedia Commons, Wikimedia Commons, 28 Feb. 2008, 17 May 2017

This image is an image of Kochi castle that we used in our presentation.
Books


“The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa” is a highly significant primary source as it is mainly in the form of a collection of flashbacks by Fukuzawa himself. The organization and translation of these often short recollections by Fukuzawa however, is left to the translator, Eiichi Kiyooka, who incidentally also happens to be Fukuzawa’s grandson. The limitation here is that there could possibly be a slight bias towards favouring Fukuzawa on a more positive side than negative. As it is an autobiography, that is to be expected; However, many Japanese today do not necessarily agree with Fukuzawa’s ideas. This book helped us gain more insight to what one of the main reformers and nationalists during that time actually felt and thought of his past actions when reflecting upon them.


This textbook was one of the textbooks that were published during the Meiji Restoration. It outlines many of the different kanji that Japanese elementary schoolers had to learn and memorise. We use this book as a prop in our play to show how Japan had to reform its education systems in order to unify, since the feudal system had made schools in Japan very varied.

This book outlines mathematical and scientific concepts, but interestingly, is written in English with Japanese subtitles, likely from a person trying to decipher what the English meant. We thought that this book was interesting, because it was a blend of both English and Japanese, and included it as a prop in our play.


Nakae Chomin, a Japanese author who studied abroad in France, originally wrote his political allegory, *A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government*, in 1887. It was translated into English in 1992. Nakae was an intellectual who translated works of thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rosseau into Japanese, and coined the Japanese term for “democracy”. The three drunkards in his famous political allegory are arguing about the future of the government, and each one represents the three main archetypes of politicians that existed during the early Meiji Period. One is pro-Western, an intellectual, and strongly supportive of democracy. Another is more conservative, strongly nationalist, and wishes to preserve Japanese conservatism. Finally, the last man is representative of Nakae Chomin himself. As the three men discuss politics, especially the idea of democracy, this political allegory shows the varying viewpoints of various Meiji period politicians on the Western institution of democracy. This shows us Sakamoto’s political legacy in terms of affecting the political views on Western political ideas and institutions after the Restoration. While some became greatly in favor of Westernizing, and heavily supported democracy, others were strongly against it.

This elementary textbook was used as a prop in our play. It was published in 1883, which is considered as the second wave of the educational movement that came with the Meiji restoration.


This elementary school textbook was used as a prop in our play. It was published in 1876, which is considered as the first wave of the educational movement that came with the Meiji restoration.


This is the first volume of a music book collection. This music book collection was published right after the Meiji Restoration. They are short in length, and each book has about three to four songs as well as some poems, which are usually about nature. However, we are able to discern a lot by looking at both the cover and content of these books. We can see how Japanese culture and society changes through the illustration on the cover, with the Japanese people dressed in western styled clothing looking over at what seems to be the Japanese Imperial Navy. We can also see how the children of the Meiji Restoration were taught to value their country through some of the titles of the songs that we read in the book. These books are used as props in our play to show how
both education as well as the nationalism developed in Japan after the Restoration. This document also shows the importance of the Navy, which Sakamoto sought to strengthen in his eight point plan.


This is the second volume of the music book collection that we found. We use this book as a prop in our play. It has the same cover as all of the other music books, only in a different color. It was published a year after the first volume. There is a book in it that describes the Japanese navy, and a little boy’s dedication to his country in it that we found interesting.


This is the third volume of the music book collection that we found. There is a song in it called “A Mother’s Love (母の愛)” that we found interesting within it. For some of the members in our group, it reminds them of the fact that although Japan was striving to change its educational system to strengthen itself, these books were still made for elementary students.

This is the fourth volume of the music book collection that we found. One of the song titles describe that one must be strong in order to strengthen their country. There is also a poem in this book that talks about a river, and nature.


This book was published sometime after the Meiji Restoration, and outlined Shakespeare for the Japanese to read, full of images of Shakespeare himself as well as description of his history and his plays. This book for us really showed us concretely how western culture manifested itself in Japanese society after the Meiji Restoration. We could tell this not only from the contents of the book, but also how the book was bound in a western styled way, a hardcover, differing from the binding that the Japanese would use when they were isolated. We use this book as a prop in our performance to outline the increase in education and literacy rates in Japan after the restoration.


This textbook, despite its lack of a cover, was also very helpful for us in understanding how Japan changes its education systems after the Meiji Restoration. In our performance, we show a page inside the book with an illustration of the world, an image which gave us perspective in how Japan because more open in what it taught its students and included information about the rest of the world, not just itself.

**Videos**
Only on in M, 1900 “StaL r. cSc tpc M Wn J: o or O sa hve e inat o and tchno.

Secondary Sources

Books


In this book, Andrew Benedict drew on the origins of nationalism, and how it makes communities partly superficial, or “imagined.” The perspective on this topic is very controversial, because while most people think that nationalism has always been prevalent in history, Benedict argues that it is a fairly modern thing. We found this argument to fit well with the Meiji Restoration causing nationalism. I’m using this book to understand one of the several perspectives on nationalism and just to learn more on the topic in general. This was used to demonstrate complexity in our project, as it allows us to draw on the different perspectives of nationalism, and whether most see it as a cohesive or disruptive factor.


This is a very interesting book that describes the change in Bushidō, or the Way of the Samurai, throughout history. It describes how it changed along with the social influence
and roles of samurai in Japan, as well as how it modernized along with the impact of Western influence on Japan, adopting more Western ideas such as being a gentleman or chivalry. This book also relates the Way of the Samurai to the social changes the country went through during the Restoration and the new nationalistic ideas that are being expressed by many modern groups. This is a valuable source because it offers new insights into how the modern history of Japan influenced its current-day military and education systems, by examining the social role and values of historical samurai groups. It shows how the changes in the samurai class can reflect the cultural and social change in Japan’s modern history. However, this source has some limitations for our purposes because it doesn’t cover that much of our time period, rather discussing the change in the samurai class and Bushidō throughout the years. It looks at the Meiji Restoration mostly through social changes, particularly that of the samurai class, doing little to relate it to Japan’s mass political changes.


This book discusses the causes and effects of the Meiji Restoration, in terms of social, political, and economic factors. It covers a broad time period from before the Restoration, and shows how its impacts are developing and will develop in the future. It provides a very detailed background into the many different forces that resulted in the Meiji Restoration, not only the social and political unrest, but also the way the opinions and mindset of the people themselves began to change. The book discusses how Western impact, particularly American influence during the time, led to some of the effects that the Meiji restoration had. It also questions whether or not the modernization of Japan
was “inevitable” or if some other impacts may have occurred if not for the Restoration. Overall, this is a very interesting source, as it gives an interesting “outsider” perspective on the Restoration and its causes and effects. It has social, political, and even religious factors from a historian’s point of view, but also supports modernization as a Western source. This may be a limitation as the author, who, while being a lecturer on Far East Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, still has a British upbringing and thus may have a Western point-of-view that believes in the advancement of Western civilization. However, it can be used to understand the many far-reaching effects of the Restoration that changed the country drastically. It also includes many helpful statistics.


This book tackles the mystery of the idea of Japan developing from a feudal society to a modern industrial nation after the Meiji Restoration from a cultural and religious perspective. It asserts that Japan’s modern industrialization was caused by the the religious beliefs of the Japanese towards the emperor, which caused for the Japanese to have an extremely intense work ethic that helped it develop. We took this information of change and tried to incorporate it into our play by showing how the nationalism in Japan grew with its development during the Meiji period.


We found this source interesting as it was another example of a modern corporation such as Mitsubishi, and thought it would be interesting to compare to Sakamoto Ryoma’s Kameyama Shachu, as that was the first modern corporation in Japan. It is interesting
because the book talks about Japanese companies having their place in national politics, which makes us wonder whether or not this has to do with Sakamoto Ryoma’s influence, as the Kameyama Shachu was also involved in the Boshin War, serving as a navy. Japanese companies today are also independent and not government run, of which Sakamoto’s was the first.


This source deals with the situation of the Japanese left wing in politics spanning from 1918 to 1952. This era of time is when much of Japan modernized and emerged as a leading actor in Asian and world politics. The world in that time was generally also very polarized, with both ultra-rightists such as the fascist movements and ultra-leftists such as the communists emerging as serious players in world politics. The viewpoint that this article gave us is the view of the Japanese left on the topic of Japanese nationalism. Gaining the view of the left is also interesting during this era as there was a period in which the liberal movement rose to prominence during the 1920s but then died out in the mid-30s.


This book discusses the various actions and motives of Samurai of the Choshu domain during the Bakumatsu period and restoration. This book is useful because it explores the causes and effects of the restoration, particularly on low- or middle-class samurai groups. This book lists many useful statistics, compiling several outside sources to show
the relationship between, for instance, the recorded economic output under the feudal system and the actual output of many of these domains. Through these statistics, the article explains how domains such as the Choshu domain were able to rise to power during the Bakumatsu period. Therefore, it is very useful both for context and causation. One limitation to this article is that it looks at the historical causation with more of an economics standpoint, rather than expanding on the social issues of the time.


This source relates the foundations of Meiji period nationalism with philosophers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi. This comprehensive educational source of Fukuzawa explicitly links his work with the Meiji restoration. While it is a long read, it provides detail political development of the Meiji restoration as well. This source connects and ties well with the first round of sources, which mainly focused on background information.


This is a book written by a scholar on Japanese history that describes how the political changes during the late Edo period had an impact on social stratifications, particularly the nationalist way of thought of many groups of people. It explores the rise of nationalism by equating it to a shift in political power and focuses on how the development of “nation” and “people” created a sense of identity within Japanese
people, particularly the higher class. It shows how the different variants of nationalism originated and developed and compares it with other ideologies on a global scale. However, this source is somewhat limited at it puts the idea of “nation” and “people” in a Western context and thus provides a Western take on the idea of patriotism and nationalism. Despite this, this source is still very useful for understanding how the events in modern Japanese history led to a development of nationalist views that can be seen in society and politics even today.


This book introduced the idea of amae to us, which is the Japanese idea that one should be in good favor as well as be able to depend on ones other than themselves. Takeo describes that while in the West, it is seen as a need for attention or a sign of dependency, it is seen in a more positive light in Japanese culture, where it is seen as more of being close to another human being. We were not aware of this idea before reading this book, and knowing about amae allowed our group to better portray our characters and act in our play.


In this book, Andrew Gordon elaborates upon the transition of Japan into the Meiji Restoration and beyond extensively, providing details on many specific events in the Bakumatsu Period. He describes the changes from aspects such as the lifestyles of the masses to the country’s relationship with the rest of the world, allowing us to
understand more about both sides of history, and how Japanese lifestyles were affected by the changes made regarding the opening of the country as well as the changes made in the Meiji Restoration. Gordon also provides much information surrounding Sakamoto Ryoma and how he played a role in these transitions whether in his involvement in the Tosa Party, or his drafting of the Eight Point Plan. This book ultimately allowed our group to see the ripple effect between events during this period, and thus, more about how Sakamoto Ryoma took a stand for Japan.


This book discusses and questions the ideologies of the Tokugawa government before the Meiji Restoration and the influx of western ideas into Japan. Harootunian talks about the Japanese identity, how it appeared with the influence of Chinese culture, and beyond. While Harootunian is not Japanese, he is a credible source due to the fact that he researches extensively on the subject as a professor. We used this document to understand the things that differentiate Japanese nationalism from other countries’ nationalism.


Politics In The Tokugawa Bakufu talks about the Bakufu’s point of view during the decline of the Tokugawa period. The most interesting and relevant to us, however, is where Johannes expands on the occurrences that took place after Commodore Matthew Perry’s visit and the perplexing dilemma the Tokugawa government was forced to face
from the repercussions of this. This aided us on our viewpoint on Sakamoto Ryoma from the Tokugawa government. The source of this book, Mr. Hirschmeier, is a Roman Catholic priest and academic from Germany who specialized in interfaith dialogues in Japan, and worked at the Nanzan University in Nagoya and served as its president from 1972 until his death in 1983. This book helped us understand the different viewpoints as it is written by a westerner who also has extensive knowledge of Japan. In addition, it helped us evaluate both sides of the situation because most articles online mainly focus on how the government’s decisions affected the citizens and the country in a negative way.


This book is a secondary source by Marius Jansen, an American historian and professor of Japanese history at Princeton University. It covers much of the contextual history of the time period, as well as Sakamoto’s contributions to the events of the Meiji Restoration. Jansen first takes care to explain the social and political norms that Japan was living under before and during Sakamoto’s life. He also details much of Japan’s reaction towards Western ideas and culture. This brings in Jansen’s own point of view as a western scholar surveying the bringing of western ideas into Japan—his own historical point-of-view may lead him to take a negative stance towards the nationalistic rogue samurai and a positive one towards reformers such as Sakamoto for bringing western culture and ideas to Japan, which may be a limitation of this text as it can impact his writing. Nevertheless, this source has very detailed and credible facts about the contextual history of the time period and can also provide an insight from a western
perspective as to how Sakamoto’s actions changed Japan. This book was one of the most important sources that we used for this entire project, as it is both a good overview and provides important details. Jansen provides many quotes and valuable insights on Sakamoto’s life, and draws interesting connections about Sakamoto’s legacy, which truly point Sakamoto out as a great contributor towards the Meiji Restoration.


This books delves into the reasons behind the success of Japanese corporations, especially in post-war Japan. It highlights the MITI, or the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and how it has been a leading player in the development of the Japanese economy. It then elaborates on how Japanese companies could not be where they are now without the assistance of the government that they receive from the MITI, and how while the Japanese economic strategy is not exactly like the West’s, it is still very successful. This provides us with more knowledge about business and economics and allows us to more so understand Sakamoto, who was an advocate of Western market strategies but also enthusiastic to learn about politics.


This book outlines the development of Kabuki theatre, and its history in the Edo period. Since Kabuki theatre was developed and a popular piece of entertainment during Edo Period, we wanted to learn more about it in order to establish a context for our play.
Also, we wanted to learn more about Kabuki theatre to try and incorporate aspects of it, which we ended up doing with the music in our performance.


This book discusses the effects of the Sakoku Edicts 1635 which locked the country and regulated the interactions between Japan and Europe. This book shows how the edicts didn’t only regulate Japan’s relations with foreigners, but also had widespread social consequences as a result of the clampdown on religion. It also shows how the tensions arising from these edicts led to the eventual overturn of the bakufu and, in modern times, the sense of nationalism that lasted past the Restoration. This source may be limited in that it does not discuss the actual social and political changes immediately prior to and during the Restoration; however, it is a valuable context source that explains how the Sakoku edicts established the social system that led up to the Restoration.

Lincicome, Mark E. Principle, Praxis, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan.


This source is mainly about the internal aspect dealing with the Meiji Restoration, particularly dealing with the education system in Japan. The author of this book, Mark E. Lincicome, is an Associate Professor of Humanities in the Asian History Department of the College of the Holy Cross. The publisher, the University of Hawaii, has a strong background dealing with Asian Pacific relations, due to its location and the unique diversity of both faculty and students attending. The part of this source that we found
the most helpful is the fourth chapter, which mostly deals with the relationship between politics and education in Meiji Japan. This helped us understand much more about the rise and shaping of early Japanese nationalist thought.


The Iwakura Mission was a mission conducted by the Japanese after the Meiji Restoration in an attempt to revise the unequal treaties signed by Japan with many Western countries including America, Britain, the Dutch, and more. While the the Iwakura Mission failed in the fact that the countries that Japan visited were not willing to conduct treaty talks, the people learned a lot about the science and technologies that were developed by the west to incorporate into their own systems. This was something that Sakamoto had not lived to see, but had stood for and pushed for in his Eight Point Plan.


This book was published in 1905, a few years after samurai were abolished in the Meiji era. It is interesting because bushido is characterized as “the samurai code of honor,” but became romanticised and used to encourage people in propaganda after the samurai were abolished. Nitobe describes the Boshido that was used after the samurai were abolished to increase nationalism, which is referred to as the “new” Bushido in this text. From this source, we not only are more informed of the culture that the samurai had, but also of the
reformed version, which shows the legacy of the samurai like Sakamoto after their death, though it may not be exactly accurate.

Nishiyama, Matsunosuke. Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868.

This source allows us to really more so understand the ongoings of Edo-period life. It is divided into three sections: the first talking about the history of Edo city and how it was shaped by merchants and samurai, the second elaborating about the interactions between urban and rural areas during the 1800s, and the third, about the development of music and theatre during the time, such as kabuki theatre, and the involvement of entertainment in places like Yoshiwara, a light red district that would be visited by commoners and samurai alike, though samurai were not allowed to go. This book was very helpful in understanding the mannerisms and culture between people during this period, and helped a lot in our drafting of our play.


This source is mainly about the Anglo-Japanese alliance in the early 1900s as Japan rapidly industrialized and expanded its power projection throughout Asia. The perspective of this is from an academic at Cambridge University who has extensively studied modern history dealing mostly with the Asia-Pacific region. The use of this source to us is that it would helped with the British perspective of Japan’s modernization.


This book describes both Saigo Takamori’s stand before and after the Meiji Restoration. For our group, this book is extremely useful because it allows us to understand better how others were affected by Sakamoto Ryoma’s stand, whether or not it was their values or something more concrete such as a decision that they would make. This book also has helped us a lot in understanding Japan’s invasion of Korea, and Saigo’s as well as Katsu Kashu’s, two people that Sakamoto knew well, roles regarding the matter. By understanding the stances of the people that Sakamoto worked with, we can more so understand Sakamoto himself, especially on what his stance would be regarding matters after his death, something that we try to discern to the best of our abilities in our play.


While this is not the whole book, this segment is still really helpful in cases of terms. Watanabe’s whole book is supposed to be about the ideologies of Asian countries, but in order to explain it, he says that some terms need to be defined first. He analyses Japanese terms such as “bafuku,” and “.” While it would be great if we had access to the whole book, this first chapter in itself is very helpful in defining some of the terms we were confused about. Being a Japanese person, Watanabe probably has a deeper understanding about these terms than other would. However, because this is a translated
document, it might not be as accurate. We kept this article in mind when we look over other documents with said terms.


This book describes the developments of Japanese law since the *From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, it gives a more political side of the time period. Wilhelm Rohl, being an emeritus, makes us believe that this source is very credible. We used this source to understand better the changes to the legal system that the Meiji Restoration brought unto Japan, and the effects of those changes.


Kafu the Scribbler was one of the more famous Japanese writers. He focused his writing on the Edo culture that was vanishing at the time in the emergence of Meiji era culture, being one of the first Japanese writers who wrote literature that had its roots in Japanese traditional culture while also incorporating global ideas in the face of Western contact. This source was important to us as it not only gave us a reality of what disappeared with all of the rapid modernization in the Meiji period, it also reflected Sakamoto’s character, as while he was for modernization, he did not want Japan to give up its culture and heritage.
Lectures and Interviews


While this lecture does not relate directly to Sakamoto Ryoma, it offers a unique perspective of both Japanese culture as well as the intermixing of cultures and languages through the lens of literature. As our project deals with the arrival of western culture into Japan and later touches upon the invasion of Japanese culture on Korea, which this talk also mentions, this lecture was helpful in helping us understand the difficulties and changes that people went through when they first because exposed to western culture, and later, when they were trying to incorporate it into their own cultures after the Meiji Restoration. Levy speaks about his personal experiences as first a Japanese-English translator, elaborating on how languages have different cultural contexts to them, and thus are hard to translate, offering the example of how Japanese often does not use plural because it just is there. From this source, we are able to gain a deeper understanding on the culture and values of the Japanese identity, which we try to incorporate into our play.

Gluck, Carol. “Carol Gluck Discusses Pearl Harbor’s 75th Anniversary and the Politics of Memory.” Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University, Columbia University, 8 Dec 2016. 5 May 2017.
This interview with Carol Gluck, a Japanologist at Columbia University, gave us insight on the state of Japan in the world politically regarding the events of the Second World War that were both conducted by and against Japan as well as the denial by Prime Minister Abe about the atrocities involving the Korean comfort women committed by Japan. From this interview, we were also able to gain a wider knowledge on the visits that American and Japanese leaders have both gone to and are planning to go to involving Pearl harbor and the atomic bombings. This interview was crucial to our topic as it reflects the current situation of Japan after the Meiji Restoration. It also is interesting to know about because Sakamoto Ryoma pushed for nationalism and caused the Meiji Restoration to have stronger militaries and a government that was more western, something that may have lead Japan astray. It is also interesting to wonder, since Japan has demilitarized, what Sakamoto Ryoma’s reaction would be to the current political state of Japan.

Gluck, Carol, et. “Politics of Memory in East Asia and Eastern Europe Today.” Global Thought ICU, Columbia University, 2 Mar. 2015. 5 May 2017

This lecture is conducted by several historians, and touches upon several topics, including those of the comfort women in Japan as well as the politics of memory in different countries, namely those affected by World War Two and Europe. From this lecture, we were able to gain several insights on how Japan has reached the current political standing that it is at today in relation to other countries, and more about their denial of the comfort women in Korea as well, which is slowly being brought up into the spotlight in the world. We use this lecture to gain a better understanding on the
effects of the ideas of nationalism and militarization that Sakamoto stood for, and incorporated its ideas to add nuance into our play.

Student-Conducted Interviews

Demura-Devore, Ted. Personal interview. 5 June 2017.

We were able to have the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Demura-Devore, a person well-versed in the Edo period. Our teacher had a connection to Ms. Linda Walton, who is a professor in mostly Chinese history. She redirected us to Dr. Demura-Devore, who was kind enough to answer our thirty or so questions. We were able to get information that we could not get access to by simply searching things online; not only did Dr. Demura-Devore offer us facts, he also gave us his extremely valuable opinions and insights on the developments of the Meiji Period. For example, when we asked him a question on how the ronin samurai and samurai acted during this time period so we could improve the authenticity of our script, he was able to offer his own speculation on the topic, and told us that despite the fact that we really cannot tell for sure–since we only have written accounts to tell what happened back then, really–he gave us a throughout explanation about how different samurai classes had different mannerisms and described each for us. Dr. Demura-Devore also kindly connected us to many primary sources that we had not been able to find by ourselves. His expansive knowledge and personal opinions and connections made of this period of time helped us to gain many new perspectives about this time period. His opinions, perspectives,
and points of view allowed us to see many varying viewpoints and nuances that we had not acknowledged before.

**Newspapers and Magazines**


This source is on the first diplomatic delegation that was sent out to the West by Japan, thus ending over three hundred years of *sakoku* policy in Japan. It talks about the encounters the Japanese delegation faced. This is sourced from the History Today magazine, which was founded in 1951 and is contributed mainly by independent authors. This source, especially since it includes a section on Fukuzawa Yukichi, was important to us to determine what formed the sentiments leading up to the Meiji Restoration, especially in the future elite class that the delegation mostly consisted of.


This article discusses rising nationalist sentiments in modern day Japan. Hayashi Yuka talks about how a portion of the Japanese are still affected by their regrets regarding World War II, and how that causes tensions to rise with China and Korea. Because this only surveys a portion of the Japanese population, this source cannot fully represent the state of Japan. However, it does provide a glimpse of a part of it. We’ve this article to help measure the significance of Japan’s rising nationalism in the Meiji Period. Much of the nationalist sentiments that grew during the Meiji Era continued through the
Interwar Era and World War II, and still exist today. Thus, nowadays, many scholars
debate the negative aspects of nationalism, such as it causing strife and tension between
Japan and other Asian and Western countries.


This source is a concentrated summarization of the experiences of 27 witnesses during
the Meiji Restoration which are published in the book Britain and Japan: Biographical
Portraits III by J.E. Richmond. The source of the article is from The Japan Times,
which leans slightly to the right on the political scale. However, this should not be an
issue since it is simply a concentration on material that is independently published. The
significance of this article to us is that it aids in our examination of the Meiji
Restoration society on the macro level. In the article, the author examines portraits of
famous figures of the Meiji Era, allowing us to gain more insight about the various
politicians and reformists that emerged during the Meiji period.

Jun, Hongo. "Sakamoto, the Man and the Myth | The Japan Times." Japan Times RSS. Japan

This source helped us understand more about Sakamoto himself, his historical
achievements and legacy, and his ideology. The source is from The Japan Times,
Japan’s oldest English newspaper that was founded in 1897 and has a long history of
independent management. While independent, it can still be considered a centre-right
newspaper, as its parent, Nifco Corporation, is a donor to the Liberal Democratic Party
of Japan. The use that this document has for us is that it provides the point of view of
the Japanese mainstream movement and their relationship to Sakamoto. This source shows us how Sakamoto’s actions give him a heroic, almost mythical legacy in modern-day Japan. As many TV shows and comic books were written about Sakamoto, his legacy became dramatized, showing how the Japanese people view this famed historical figure today.


This article discusses the current state of conservatives and liberals in Japan regarding nationalistic views. It describes a growing nationalistic group within the country that is backed in the presence of a Japanese national identity. This is a very limited source as it mostly describes the exception rather than the norm, which is that of extreme conservatives in the country; however, this group is rapidly growing with historical backing. It has quite a small scope and mostly discusses certain groups in modern-day Japan. This source, however, can be used to show the significance of the Bakumatsu period and the Restoration on modern-day Japan. While the country became more open to foreign influence and modernization, many still believe in more nationalistic viewpoints and will leave social influences on the country in the present day and the future.

Research Papers and Academic Journals

Being an academic research journal, it is critical to understand the point of view of the article. This article, like many exhibited, seems to hold its goal in revealing many of the economical development, and the growth during the Meiji period. This source was a critical resource in expanding our current knowledge in the topic as a whole. This academic journal introduces characters such as Ito Hirobumi, which widened our view towards this topic. However limitations still may exist, the economical point of view of this journal, and the fact that there are multiple authors might raise the question of limitation of existence of multiple point of views within the journal. With further research and investment, this aspect of this trusted source may or may not be verified to provide a new outlook on the topic.


Backed with multiple renowned educational publishers, this source provides some creative insight to Fukuzawa Yukichi’s perspective on education. Like the previous source, it seems to glorify Fukuzawa’s works calling him, “truly great figures in modern Japanese history”. However, it is interesting to point out that he was an educational centered leader. This source showed us much of Fukuzawa’s viewpoints, especially as he was a great proponent for Western education. As Japan entered the Meiji period, many thinkers emerged, similar to the age of Enlightenment in the West.

This source greatly signifies Fukuzawa Yukichi’s works during the Meiji Era. This source views Fukuzawa as an “influential thinker” during the Meiji period. It is interesting to see the author’s point of view towards the Meiji restoration and Fukuzawa’s dedication to Western learning. This source as well connects to Keio University, which seems to be an overarching theme of this historical leader. This journal describes the many thinkers that emerged during the Meiji Restoration period, and compares many of them with each other. This source is highly critical as it connects to the current Japanese model of education and politics, even economy, highlighting its significance.


The controversy of Japanese history is something that can not be ignored. It is a area of topic where so many various points of view exist. The author of this journal, William Hauser suggests that the Economic History of Tokugawa Japan is misinterpreted, where it traditionally static, however the author suggests otherwise. This source will come in to great use to provide multiple points of view rather than a binary factual evidence and literature provided by multiple other academic journals and articles. The credibility of this research is very high as it was written for the Society for History Education, in which factual accuracy is held very importantly, allowing this source to be assumed as quite credible source compared to other journals. However, this academic journal is
very concise, and does not provide extended detail about many of the synthesis the
author makes. However, when put together with various other sources, it becomes very
useful, with the existence of a long list of various sources which is useful in extending
research and also entertaining more point of views on the topic.

Hunter, Janet, “Institutional Change in Meiji Japan: Image and Reality,” London School of Economics
and Political Science, 2005, Nov, 6, 2016

This academic journal highlights the changes that Japan went through both industrially
and culturally after the fall of the tokugawa period. Janet Hunter takes great care to
explain Meiji Japan’s transformation, and how it was worse than what people usually
see it as industrially. Although the industrialization during the Restoration is commonly
regarded in a positive sense, similar to the Industrial Revolution in Europe, Japan’s own
industrial revolution did not completely have positive benefits, especially for the
working class people or the environment. Being a person who is not from Japan, she
has a more objective view of the Meiji Restoration, which is probably what makes it
easier her to draw the conclusions that she does. We used this document to help fulfill
our understanding the ‘other side’ of Japan’s transformation, allowing us to achieve
more nuances in our project.

Harootunian, Harry D. “Commentary on Nationalism in Japan: Nationalism as Intellectual History.” The

In this article, Harootunian includes three different perspectives on nationalism by three
separate historians in three different articles. However, all three commentaries are
similar in the fact that they believe the concept of nationalism as it is viewed in history
as a relatively negative concept, and thus affects the tone of their articles. They all attempt to understand and explain how Japanese nationalism has its place in its history. This source is relatively credible not only because it has been published by a professor, but also because it has three different perspectives. We used this article to understand the rise of nationalism in Japan, and the different views that people can have on the idea. While some believed heavily that it was a cohesive force that could unite the people, others were against it. In the modern day, many Western scholars view nationalism in Japan quite negatively, as it is closely tied with Japan’s militarism and its actions in World War II.


This secondary source is a review of Michael S. Layer’s book, The Sakoku Edicts and the Politics of Tokugawa Hegemony. It gives a summary of Layer’s arguments for his thesis: that although the Sakoku edicts seemed like they were about foreigners, they were actually aimed to strengthen the shogunate’s rule. Robert ends with his opinion on Layer’s piece, saying that although Layer gives a good view on Japan’s foreign relations at the time, it doesn’t “shed any new light” on the topic. As this source is a book review, it can be considered as bias to the author. It can also be withholding of some information. However, it was nice to have all the main points of Layer’s work pointed out, summarized, and commented on for me. We consider this source to be credible, seeing that the author is a professor from Wake Forest University. We used this source to understand more about the reasons behind the Sakoku Edicts. That way, we will be able to more so understand Japan’s reluctance and reasons to open itself.

Marius B. Jansen’s paper summarizes the going-ons in the Tosa Loyalist Party during the period leading up to the Meiji Restoration. He elaborates on Sakamoto Ryoma’s participants in the Party as well, highlighting how Ryoma joined the Party through the influence of Takechi and how he eventually left and became a ronin. Jansen’s description on both what the Loyalist Party was to both the members and outsiders during the time period as well as his discussion near the end of the paper on the impacts made by those who joined the loyalist party provided great context and substance to our research and aided us when we were writing the script. By knowing the role that Takechi played in the Tosa Loyalist Party and the Bakumatsu Period, we were able to moreso understand Ryoma’s past, and how it shaped his decisions in the future. It is also crucial to note that Jansen’s footnotes served as a great help as well as they provided us with direct quotes from Sakamoto as well as his companions, which we incorporated into our play.


This article analyzes the relationship between taxation and rebellion in the Tokugawa Period methodically through the analysis of several different variables including tax changes, rebellions, natural disasters, and more. This paper provides a background on rebellions other than the ones that were conducted by the samurai after the Shogunate’s
submission to foreign power and informed us of the fact that rebellions in fact were not rare but rather common during this time period, although they were conducted mainly by peasants; this piece of information allowed us to more so realize the influence that samurai had during this time as although peasants could affect tax rates if they were united in their rebellions, samurai had much more freedom and power—one can see that as the Tokugawa period progressed, the income paid to samurai had increased by 10 percent. This document, overall aided us in giving us more knowledge on the context of rebellions in Japan and on how the feudal government system worked in relation to different classes during the time.


This source while it may seem minor, plays a big role in the final project plan. The main character of our research, it is essential for us to capture the essence of his background. From the National Diet library of Japan, this modern Japanese historical figures website provides a database of many Japanese historical figures with a short biography. While limitations are clear as this only provides a short biography, it must also be noted that this source is from a National Diet library of Japan, which might signify a bias towards the glorification of some historical happenings. However, we must also understand that this source includes a critical primary source, a portrait of Fukuzawa.

This source is a simple and concise article on the general relations between the UK and Japan from the point-of-view of the British. It covers many topics from British colonialism to the diffusion of eastern shunga art in Britain. The publisher, *The Independent*, is an online newspaper published in the UK since 1986. The political view of the newspaper is centrist, with a slightly more liberal fiscal output. Thus, we believe this source would and should be trusted as a reliable one. We used this to also gain an understanding of what the British viewpoint on Anglo-Japanese history and relations are.


Ravenell writes about both the development of modern Japan and the role of Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of the prominent western writers during the time, and his stand for westernisation. He describes Fukuzawa as a person who researched extensively and sought to develop Japan through the influence of western civilisation. This article also mentions Japan’s invasion of Korea, and talks about the nuance of Fukuzawa’s viewpoint, talking about how by adapting western ideas into their development, Japan also would eventually repeat history and commit atrocities against other countries. This article also provides a description of several other important events that impacted Japan’s modernisation, which was helpful for us when looking at the bigger picture.


This journal article provides a glimpse on how modern Japan views Sakamoto Ryoma’s legacy today. Henry D. Smith II talks about the different things left by people in
Ryoma’s memorial, Ryoma memorial day, some historical sites relating to him, and much more. This article is published by someone who isn’t Japanese, and while this is a primary source of Smith’s experiences in Japan, it takes place long after Ryoma’s death. Thus, it is somewhat bias, and “uninformed.” However, we consider this source to be quite legitimate for the reason that Smith is a professor of Japanese history. I’m using this source now to understand how the history from the Tokugawa and Meji periods are affecting the Japanese today. We used this source much more in NHD, as it gives insight to how Sakamoto Ryoma’s actions ended up being viewed in history.


In this article, Hiraku Shimoda explores Meiji Japan’s efforts to take away the dialects and use a common language for communication. This article is written by a Japanese man, but published by a western press, so we would consider it to be more neutral. Also, this article isn’t written in an opinionated fashion. We used this article to understand better the needs and motivations that Japan felt after the Meiji Restoration and how it had an affect on the growing nationalism of the country at the time.


This article highlights the prevalence of Confucianism in the Edo period, but more importantly, how it was received differently in after the Meiji restoration, and how that affected gender roles. Sugano looks at prominent writers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Hokudo Hirahara and analysis their reaction to Confucianism as well as their
influence regarding the topic. More importantly, however, this article shows how times have indeed changed since the Edo period, where books like the *Onna Daigaku*, which was criticized by Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nakagawa Zennosuke, were widely used and promoted.


This article speaks about rakugo, which is a less known type of storytelling compared to the well-known kabuki theatre of the Edo Period. Unlike kabuki, rakugo was first performed by Buddhist monks in the 9th and 10th centuries, but it also began to disappear in Japan after the Meiji Restoration with the arrival of westernization. This source outlines a lot of the details regarding how rakugo is performed, and how the hierarchy system in rakugo works, from the *minarai*, or the apprentice, to the *shu‘ichi*, the top level in the four levels of hierarchy. This was a reminder to us about how in Japanese culture, social class hierarchies are always very important to the people, and people would act very differently to one of higher social class stature or of one that they respected as compared to a person that one was not below in terms of class. More importantly, however, we also learned about the art of rakugo itself. We learned that unlike other types of Japanese performance, rakugo storytellers often improvise based on what their audience is saying or reacting and that rakugo is also very casual in how it is worded, something that diverges completely from kabuki theater. However, it does use the same instruments and playing style as kabuki theater does. We used this source to mainly learn more about other types of Japanese performance in order to see if we
could incorporate some of it into our play, but we also learned more about how western culture took away more than just the kabuki performing arts in Japan along the way.


This article describes the changes in early Meiji textbooks in three periods from 1868, at the time of the Meiji Restoration, all the way to 1897. It focuses on the fact that many of the textbooks had huge western and nationalistic influences, which it concludes is because of the fact that Japan was trying to make up for its ignorance in its isolationist period, rushing to make itself into a more ‘civilized country.’ What is interesting about this paper, however, is its analysis on race and how the ideas of Social Darwinism, which emerged in Tokyo amongst intellectuals in the 1880s, and how it may have related to the fact that in these textbooks, countries such as China were interpreted as half-civilized compared to nations such as Europe and America, which were considered as civilized. This source allows us to see the nuance in Japan’s rapid modernization, as well as the nationalism that Sakamoto Ryoma had stood for.


This article comments on the widely known Japanese author, Shiba Ryotaro, and his role in the Meiji period and beyond. Shia Ryotaro was a prominent historical novelist, and was the person who brought back Sakamoto’s role into history’s spotlight. Sakamoto was originally widely forgotten after his death, however, with Shiba’s publication of the book *Ryoma ga Yuku* (Ryoma Goes his Way), Sakamoto regained recognition in Japan. This article is important because it touches upon the nuance of his
actions, addressing both the fact that Shiba’s writing style romanticized Sakamoto’s and other samurai like him’s roles but also how it impacted government officials such as in the case where people such as the late Prime Minister, Obuchi Keizo, commented on how they were inspired by Sakamoto’s stand for his country as well as his good character. From this article, we are able to see the nuance in Sakamoto’s place in popular culture, as someone who is idealized, but also inspiring to others.


In this article, Sinh Vinh elaborates on the concept of globalization, and how Ryotaro Shiba played a role in Japan’s modernization in the Meiji era. Sakamoto Ryoma was the main character in one of Ryotaro Shiba’s most famous novels, Ryoma ga Yuku, and was brought into light by it, so it is important to understand Ryotaro Shiba’s intentions behind his works, and the contributions that his writing made to Meiji Japan, because it shows the impact that Sakamoto Ryoma’s stand had on others.


This article's point of view heavily lies on the economic impacts of the Meiji restoration. This can be easily discovered by the department in which this article was written for, "the department of economics". This, however, may come very useful in our topic as the economical build up and its after effects are massive. The Economical changes may provide us with quantitative data related to the Meiji restoration. With further reading of this document, the bias in the significance of the event can be
discovered. The author tends to exemplify the outcome of the event, to an extent where he connects modern businesses to the Meiji restoration. This source comes greatly impactful in showing the economical impact of the Meiji restoration by using both qualitative, and quantitative data, backed by strong contextual evidence. One of the last limitations that the source’s author contain is the fact that, even with the Phd in Yale, a respected level of education, the author, Thayer, majored in Economics which holds its limitations in the realm of history.


This is an article written by a university professor about the late Tokugawa period and the eventual fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate. It describes the societal hierarchy under the Tokugawa, in which the military class dominated and the commercial class was at the bottom. The article discusses how Commodore Perry’s interference in 1853 weakened the legitimacy of the shogunate and led to tensions between the military and nationalistic groups such as those in the provinces of Satsuma and Choshu. This article has some limitations as it covers the tensions between the military leaders in Japan and the nationalistic groups, as well as military and industrial changes, but does not go in depth about the social tensions and political ideologies that drove the rebellion against the shogunate and the subsequent restoration, as it was intended as a scholarly informative article without an argument on its own. This article also has a limitation because the author, Thayer Watkins, is better versed in the Economics Department rather than history. However, information from this article can be used to determine and understand causation and effects during the Bakumatsu period and how the rebellion
against the shogun actually led to improvements in accepting modern ideas and
technology, especially in terms of economics and industry.

Yabuta, Yukata, “Rediscovering Women in Tokugawa Japan,” Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of

This paper, presented at the Japan Forum, a lecture series, is on the role of women and
their influence on Japan during the Edo period. Professor Yabuta attends to the
abnormal disappearance of the role of women in the Edo period by highlighting studies
of Edo women made by other professors as well as by analysing the Onna daigaku, a
code of morals for women, showing how women behaved and the rights that they had
during the time. It is noteworthy that the lowered role of women during the Edo period
was related to the prevalence of religions including Buddhism, Confucianism, and
Shintoism, which encouraged samurai classes to rise above women. This source was
also very important to our project because it allowed us to see the impact that the Meiji
Restoration brought to the rights that women had in society such as access to education.

2016

This article gives insight to the political situation in Japan during the Tokkugawa
period, but from a governmental point of view. It highlights the the existence of social
class, such as the elites holding powerful influence over the political decisions. This
source hold its credibility as a academic journal recognized by the university of
Chicago.
Websites


This scholarly article explains the effects of the Meiji Restoration. It shows how, in “a little more than a generation,” Japan changed its entire society into an industrialized and modern country. This article explains how the changes that took place during the Restoration led to a change in the country, not only politically and industrially, but socially as well. First, the article goes in-depth about industrial changes, such as the development of a transportation and communication system, and a rapidly growing industrial sector. It then discusses political changes, such as the establishment of the constitution and the changes in political hierarchy. Finally, it goes into the changes in social stratification and social norms, including the role of samurai. This article is a secondary source and a western account, although scholarly, on the Meiji Restoration. Its point of view is most likely that modernization and westernization is entirely good and beneficial to the future of all countries. This article is very useful as it not only discusses in-depth about the effects of the Meiji Restoration, but it also talks about its ideals to improve in the future. This article is very helpful in showing the significance of the Restoration and also shows how many of Sakamoto’s political programs were implemented after his death.

We used this source on one of the details in our play. If you notice, the Ghost of Sakamoto is wearing his kimono folded right-over-left instead of left-over-right. This is because when Japanese die, they are usually dressed in this fashion. This website elaborates more on the whole process. If you see on one of its pictures, yurei, or spirits, in Japan also dressed in this style. We wanted to make this play more authentic and connected to Japanese culture, and decided to add the change in our costuming.


Although there were numerous websites that discussed Commodore Matthew Perry and the memorable “black ships” that entered Japan, MIT Visualizing Cultures was by far the best website that was found. The website was clearly well organized with an introduction, background about Perry, the entering of Japan and sources. Along with the extremely well organized website, there were innumerable pictures depicting both the Japanese points of view and the Americans points of view. This source helped with our understanding about the historical context of the Japanese modernisation and reactions to that. It also provided valuable primary sources that may prove to be helpful later on.


This scholarly article describes the historical development of nationalism in Japan. It discusses how the growth of nationalism in the late Edo period and the Meiji period led
to a Japanese national identity that still lasts today. This source is important because it explains how the social changes that began after the Sakoku edicts and continued through the late Edo period led to a development of Japanese nationalism even today. It also provides useful information about the change in social stratification during the Meiji Restoration and how that influenced patriotism and nationalism in the higher class. It is also interesting as it discusses how the media continued to perpetrate nationalism in the modern day. Despite this, this source may be limited in that it covers a long time period in a very broad way, without describing in detail any certain time period. However, it is very useful for seeing how the social changes in each time period affected the next.


This source is a simple and rather broad biography on Fukuzawa Yukichi, who is also one of the main actors during the time around the Meiji Restoration. This article is published in the Encyclopedia Britannica, a renowned source for much information. This source helped us in gaining information about another major actor, where there was definitely a connection with the UK since he was also educated there when he was young.

This webpage describes the several textbooks that were published after the Meiji Restoration from 1872 to 1879, and their contents. It not only describes each of the books, and how their contents contrasted the Edo period’s textbooks by including western aspects, but it also highlights the challenges that textbook writers and school system organizers at the time had in creating a program that would both unify the schools that had all began to vary with the feudal system of the Edo period and also have Confucian and western aspects. This source was very helpful for us in understanding how Japan became more nationalistic with its education systems as well as with the process of making props for our performance.


History.com is a commonly used website that is useful for gathering basic context of many historical events. However, due to the nature of a revenue generating medium of resource, the point of view of the article cannot be ignored. It is likely that this article was written for students, therefore, often times simplifying events. However, the credibility of this source is still not affected. Compared to many other producers of historical work, History.com is one of the most respected author, providing accurate context to expand students’ knowledge in history. At first, the topic of Meiji restoration and its link with the Shoguns were unclear. With this source, Tokugawa's connections with the restoration was made clear, making this source crucial in not only displaying the context of the event, but the significance the shoguns left on the society of Japan.
However, this website is not very detailed, and more in-depth research was done from other sources.


This source while may be short, but it covers necessary background information on the Meiji Restoration. This source provides the context for the end of the shogunate, the Boshin War, and the Meiji Restoration, thus providing context for much of Japan’s modern history. It describes the viewpoints, aspirations, and achievements of the famous political and intellectual leaders of this era. This website also provides several primary sources, allowing for more in-depth research to be done on this topic.


This article, despite being a grave memorial, gives a detailed history of Katsu Kaishu, one of the people that Sakamoto Ryoma worked with in the course of his life. Katsu Kaishu was the man that introduced the idea of the importance of Westernization to Ryoma, and this article highlights some of the interactions that the two people had during the course of Katsu’s life. This is quite an interesting and unorthodox source, but provided a good amount of insight. This was a big help in creating our Katsu Kaishu scene in our play.


The point of view of this source may display the most controversial point of view. This website is a website dedicated to a shinto shrine which is a forest in which emperor Meiji’s demise is commemorated. This may be a issue in multiple levels, The articles in
this website may show a bias toward the glorification of the Meiji emperor, limiting the
availability of unfiltered literature, and second, it may include marketing material to
convince tourists and other people alike to visit the memorial. These limitations were
thankfully dismissed as the article simply defined factual events that occurred with the
Charter Oath. The source captures the essence of the cause and effects of many of the
western influence, and how it impacted Japan. This ties with directly with the Charter
Oath which later became the foundation of modern Japan, which allowed spread of
foreign especially western ideas.


This source is critical in understanding the World’s view on the subject of the Meiji
restoration. It is new to understand UNESCO’s point of view on an international
standing on this topic. It describes the end of the Tokugawa era, and the beginning of the
Meiji period. This source is quite broad, and is mostly just an overview of the Meiji
Restoration. It also covers the ideals and works of many of the famous thinkers and
intellectuals of the time period, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi. It helped our group
understand the cultural background of Japan before the Restoration

“People at the End of the Edo Period and the Meiji Restoration,” Autograph Manuscripts and Original
Artwork of Well Known People, National Diet Library, Japan, 2017, 15 May 2017

This source is helpful in providing more information on the different actors in the Meiji
Restoration, some of which Sakamoto Ryoma knew and worked with. It also provided
us with several primary sources that we were able to analyze and use to understand
more about one, how the people communicated and acted towards one another during
the time, and two, of the different documents that were drafted for the Meiji Restoration. One notable document from this collection would be the documents of Saigo Takamori, as he represented the Satsuma clan in the Satsuma Choshu Alliance that Sakamoto conducted with Nakaoka Shintaro.


This source comes from the webpage memorial museum dedicated to Sakamoto Ryoma, which is located in his hometown of modern-day Katsurahama, Kouchi. This museum houses a collection of documents by him and his correspondents, as well as many books on the Meiji Restoration and other themes from this time period. On the webpage for this museum, an introduction to Sakamoto’s life is provided along with a chronological table of his advances and challenges. This page can be considered a very credible source as it was put together by many scholars and staff who work at the museum, but has a very strong point-of-view as the museum is dedicated to remembering and supporting Sakamoto’s positive influences on Japanese history. This is mostly because the people of Kouchi are very proud to be the hometown of this reformer, and thus, will do much to paint him in a positive light. Nevertheless, this source can be used as an excellent context source, especially as it depicts how Sakamoto’s early life influenced his decisions later on.

This source describes Sakamoto Ryoma Memorial Museum, and is an official website by the Kochi Prefecture. We directly quote this source in the beginning of our play after Sakamoto Ryoma dies.


This article describes the type of clothing that samurai wore over time and the significance of many of them, from the footwear to the headpieces. It is interesting not only to see how samurai dress varied over time but also how aspects such as color or way of putting a certain type of clothing on would signify a different meaning. We incorporate many aspects of this into our play. For example, Katsu Kaishu is seen in our play wearing a grey haori, as older samurai would wear such shades to keep up with their age. Sakamoto changes from wearing his waraji, which were sandals that samurai usually wore during the time to wearing western shoes after his meeting with Kaishu because of his change in perspective as well.


This news article was very helpful for us in terms of finding Ryoma’s quotes as well as other people’s commentaries on his life and work. We were able to learn about the letters that he wrote and the people that he talked to days before his death, which makes us wonder what could have been if he were not assassinated at the time.

This source is from a Korean educational publisher. It has formidable presence in Korea, running its own history channel, and setting standards of educational material. With this source, we wanted to observe a different point of view on this topic. This point of view, is from a Korean historian looking at the Meiji restoration. Korea and Japan does not have the cleanest relationship in terms of history, however, looking at different perspectives are crucial in gaining a better representation of the bigger theme. To our surprise however, this source did not have skewed views on this topic. Most content in the video was very similar to what other American sources were offering. This source was also useful as it focused heavily on the political aspect, and how activists, and different characters played a role. This is important in understanding the POVs of different people of the time, and gain a successful grip on the topic.


This source is a newspaper Op-Ed on contemporary Anglo-Japanese relations. The article encompasses a wide range of topics ranging from politics to economics, to domestic and international policy. It also offers highly engaging and analytical viewpoints on these subjects, rather than just regurgitating news. The source of this is a newspaper that deals primarily in foreign affairs, The Diplomat. It is published as a newspaper where academics can publish their opinions in a very independent manner. This source would was useful in helping us understand the opinions of the UK and also to see anything that may be synthesized from our project on the Meiji Restoration.

This is a scholarly informative article describing the roles and actions of samurai in feudal Japan from before the Ashikaga period to the end of the Tokugawa period. This article demonstrates the changes in the social influence of samurai throughout time. It is significant because it shows how the social tensions among the samurai class led to the downfall of the feudal system with the Meiji Restoration. While this source is very useful for providing the social and political context of the early Tokugawa period as well as showing how the loss of social power for the samurai class led to the downfall of the feudal system, it is very limited in that it is a very broad source, and thus does not contain very many specific details about the time periods.


This article on the influence of Confucian philosophy in Japan is published by the Stanford University’s Encyclopedia of Philosophy. The method of approaching the issue of this issue is comparatively holistic, examining Japanese Confucianism from both the Western perspective, but also offering analyses from Oriental scholars, such as those from Tokyo Imperial University (today the University of Tokyo), and Peking University in China. This article shows how Confucian influence manifested itself in Japanese society, and also analyzed the differences it had with Chinese Confucianism, the extent of its influence, and how the Japanese public perceived its influence. Our group utilized this mainly to examine the influence that Confucian philosophy and thought had on Japanese reformation movements.

“A Chronology of Japanese History” was an extremely useful source because it gave us a description of the event and what it was on the one side and the timeline on another side. This chronology helped identify the order of the Tokugawa shogunates and how much they accomplished within their reign. We found much of our evidence this way and it allowed us to narrow down some broad topics and the order in which to place them. This also helped with our basic understanding of the periodization of Japanese history.


This source is from an American perspective, and describes the aftermath of Japan after World War II, and the Japanese-American relations after the war. We have used this source to gain a wider perspective on the topic. The Meiji Restoration is regarded by most scholars as a positive time in Japan’s history, but our group wanted to link the Restoration to some of the darker times of Japan’s history, including their loss in World War II.


This is an article written by a university professor about the late Tokugawa period and the eventual fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate. It describes the societal hierarchy under the Tokugawa, in which the military class dominated and the commercial class was at
the bottom. The article discusses how Commodore Perry’s interference in 1853
weakened the legitimacy of the Shogunate and led to tensions between the military and
nationalistic groups such as those in the provinces of Satsuma and Choshu. This article
has some limitations as it covers the tensions between the military leaders in Japan and
the nationalistic groups, as well as military and industrial changes, but does not go in
depth about the social tensions and political ideologies that drove the rebellion against
the Shogunate and the subsequent restoration, as it was intended as a scholarly
informative article without an argument on its own. This article also has a limitation
because the author, Thayer Watkins, is better versed in the Economics Department
rather than history. With further reading of this document, the bias in the significance of
the event can be discovered. The author tends to exemplify the outcome of the event, to
an extend where he connects modern businesses to the Meiji Restoration. However,
information from this article can be used to determine and understand causation and
effects during the Bakumatsu period and how the rebellion against the shogun actually
led to improvements in accepting modern ideas and technology, especially in terms of
economics and industry. Watkins provided extremely specific economic statistics, such
as the annual coal production, number of Japanese merchant ships, and total railroad
length in Japan in the years before and during the Meiji Restoration. We used these
statistics provided to create line graphs and other graphics to show during our
performance. The author’s credibility in these quantitative statistics can be assumed as
he has a Ph.D. in economics and performed postdoctoral research at Yale University.

This source is on the Namamugi Incident in Japanese history where an Englishman was murdered by a Japanese samurai. The resulting of this incident was the signing of an embarrassing treaty that gave significant concessions to the UK, much like the treaty that was forced upon the Japanese by Matthew Perry a few months earlier. The source from a monthly historical journal based in the UK established in 1951 and is contributed by academics from all around the UK. This source was one of the sources that helped us more so understand the animosity that the Japanese really had towards the foreigners at the time. We tried to incorporate the feeling that the Japanese samurai had towards their country and the foreigners into the first parts of our play.

Weatherhead East Asian Institute. “The Meiji Restoration and Modernization.” Asia for Educators, Columbia University, Asia for Educators (AFE), 2009, October 10, 2016,

Also referred to as AFE, Asia for Educators is a initiative at Columbia university to bring accurate information of World History to pre-college and undergraduate students. The discussion questions not only helps readers to expand beyond the basic understanding of the topic, it also helps to reimagine different personal understanding of not only the source, but also of the topic itself. In the early stages of our project, this source’s information was crucial for us in understanding more about the Meiji restoration, and what changes Japan went through from the Edo period. It focuses on how Japan’s government changed to become more centralized, and what that led to in the subsequent wars that Japan fought with Russia, China, and Korea. They also speak about the resistance and rebellion that Japan faced from the inside right after the Restoration, which we had not known about at the time. We used this source as an
initial guideline for our project, and took the knowledge that we gained from it to go
more in depth research.


The Republic of Ezo lasted an incredibly small period of time, but is a major case
study when it comes to examining the history of Japan around the Meiji Restoration.
Since the Republic of Ezo was such a small and short establishment, most websites
describing Ezo’s background were Wikipedia websites. Eventually, we encountered
The Daily Beagle” which provided helpful visuals, background information and
connects to modern day as well. The examination of this website and the Republic of
Ezo is reflected many crucial sentiments in Japanese society around the time of the
breakup of the Tokugawa government, which the article elaborated upon. We used this
case in order to more so understand the sentiments of Japanese society and culture to
portray in our script.

Yonemoto, Marcia, “Tokugawa Japan: An Introductory Essay,” The Program for Teaching at East Asia,
University of Colorado at Boulder, 2010, Accessed 17 May 2017

This article by Marcia Yonemoto focuses the culture and interactions between
different social classes, mainly the samurai and commoners, during the Tokugawa
period. Yonemoto describes the emergence of places such as West Yoshiwara, a red
light district area, printing methods such as ukiyo-e, which is Japanese woodblock
printing, and of Kabuki theatre, as well as the idea of thoughts such as the ideas of
bushido and love suicide, which she suspects that were created in order to make the
commoners at the time feel more like the higher class samurai, who were celebrated at the time. She also points out that the rebellion that led to the end of the Bakumatsu period was largely led by the low class samurai, whom she says were incensed by their awareness of the fact that the social hierarchy in Japan was largely inherited as well as the fact that they thought themselves as more competent rulers, and were, as a result, not afraid to speak their mind. This article helped us to not only to have the idea of including ukiyo-e and aspects of bushido into our play, but also helped with the scripting of our dialogue, as we had an idea the etiquette of samurai such as Sakamoto.

**Music**


This soundtrack is used as background noise at the end of the play when the scene shifts to outside the Sakamoto Ryoma Memorial Museum.


We used this soundtrack in order to set the scene to Edo bay.


We use this soundtrack at the play inside the Sakamoto Ryoma Memorial Museum.

This soundtrack provided a sense of stress and mystery to the Edo bay scene, which is perfect as at the time, Sakamoto and the other Japanese commoners were not only against the Westerners, but also confused and did not know much about who they were and what power they held. This music is also one of the first more ominous pieces that we play, and offers an introduction to the conflict that would eventually lead to Sakamoto Ryoma’s stand for his country, though he would not be against westernization anymore.


This soundtrack is used in the scene where Sakamoto’s ghost describes his involvement in the Tosa Clan Party. We thought that this piece of music would be appropriate because it gave a calm vibe, something that suited a scene which gave context and would contrast the more lively music that would be played when we later talk about Sakamoto’s stands in negotiation and in starting up a company.


We use this soundtrack for Katsu Kaishu’s scene with Sakamoto Ryoma.


This soundtrack is one of the ones that we used when Sakamoto’s death is mentioned. It uses traditional Japanese instruments, which offer a cultural mood to the scene. The soundtrack’s ominous tone is reminiscent of the idea of Japanese yurei, which relates to the scene as it outlines his death. We also decided to utilise this soundtrack as it gave the solemn mood we needed to contrast the descriptions of Sakamoto’s
accomplishments before so that one could take a moment to reflect upon and give respect to Sakamoto’s death.


This music is very lively, and has a encouraging feel to it. We use this piece when the Audio Guide in the museum is describing Sakamoto’s efforts in creating the Kameyama Shachu and brokering the Satsuma-Choshu Alliance. We chose to use this soundtrack in the idea that it’s lively vibe would fit with the information given and allow one to more so follow the idea that these actions that Sakamoto took were important to the development of Japan.


This soundtrack is used at the end of the performance, where volunteer describes many of the nuances of Sakamoto’s beliefs, his stand, and their effects.