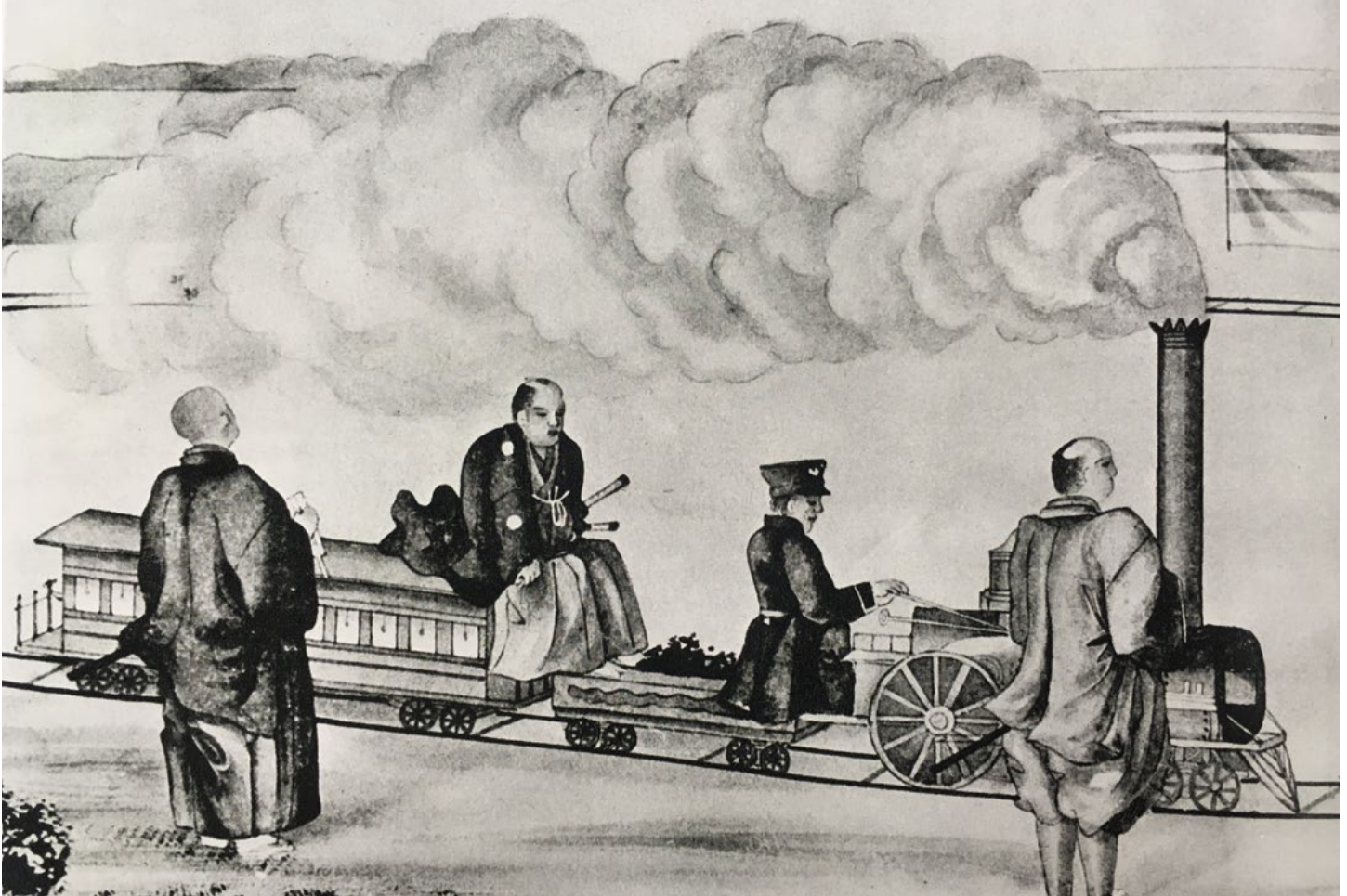




Gift-Giving and the “Opening of Japan,” 1852–54: Student Packet



Reproduction of a scroll by a Japanese artist, anonymous, undated, but the original scroll likely originated in the middle to late 1850s.

Source: Matthew Perry ZB File, Navy Department Library, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC.

Essential Questions

- ✿ How did U.S. officials justify their policy toward Japan?
- ✿ Why and how was the U.S. Navy instrumental in the execution of U.S. policy in Japan in the mid-19th century?

Student Packet:

Gift-Giving and the “Opening of Japan,” 1852–54

Context

Japan and the United States

In the mid-19th century, Japan was largely a closed society, resistant to diplomatic and commercial contact with foreigners. Attempts by the United States and other nations to establish formal relations with Japan were repeatedly rebuffed. Unwilling to accept the Japanese wish to be left alone, President Millard Fillmore ordered Commodore Matthew C. Perry to command the U.S. Navy’s East India Squadron and to establish diplomatic relations with Japan. Perry initially delivered President Fillmore’s request for a treaty to a representative of the Japanese emperor in July 1853.

Perry returned with a larger force in 1854, arriving in Edo (Tokyo) Bay on March 8. He obtained the signature of Japanese authorities to the Treaty of Kanagawa on March 31. This treaty led to significant trade between the United States and Japan, contributed to the opening of Japan to other Western nations, and ultimately resulted in the partial Westernization of Japanese society and the Japanese state.

Commodore Matthew C. Perry

Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794–1858) was a U.S. Navy officer from Rhode Island and one of the earliest captains of a steam-powered naval vessel. Before arriving in Japan, he had served in the waters off Africa, Mexico, and South Asia.

Throughout the 19th century, the President, Congress, and the U.S. Department of State relied on naval officers like Commodore Perry to act as diplomats since it was not yet feasible to station American diplomats all over the world. As a result, the U.S. Navy conducted diplomacy in faraway regions, such as Japan, the Asian mainland, Africa, and the Middle East.¹

1. Source: “Commodore Matthew C. Perry and the Opening of Japan,” Naval History and Heritage Command, accessed December 11, 2018, <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/library/exhibits/commodore-matthew-c-perry-and-the-opening-of-japan.html>.

Glossary

array of power

guns, cannon, bombs, and steam-powered ships of war

Christendom

Europe and North America, where most of the world's Christians resided

commercial adventure

activities involving long-distance trade

enlightened

educated, modern

exhibition

presentation to Japanese onlookers

expedition

Commodore Perry's first trip to Japan, in 1852

hospitality

openness and generosity to strangers, foreigners

inducement

motivation

mastery

superiority

opening of Japan

forcing the Japanese to trade with the United States and other European and North American countries

succor

humanitarian aid

whale-ship

ships engaged in hunting whales, whose blubber, bones, and meat were necessary for the production of many goods in the mid-19th century

Relevant Dates

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1852 | Perry is selected by President Fillmore to undertake the diplomatic mission of negotiating a treaty with Japan. |
| 1853 | Perry lands at Yokohama, Japan, on March 8 with 500 men amid pomp and ceremony. He brings gifts for the Japanese emperor and other Japanese elites. He also delivers a letter addressed to the ruler of Japan. The letter declares the nature of Perry's mission. To allow time for reflection and discussion, Perry departs Japan after informing the representatives of the Japanese emperor that he will return the following year. |
| 1854 | Perry returns to Japan, arriving on March 31. The emperor has agreed to sign a treaty granting the United States trading rights at two Japanese ports. |

Source: "Matthew Calbraith Perry," Naval History and Heritage Command, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/research-guides/z-files/zb-files/zb-files-p/perry-matthew-c.html>.

Source 1. Report from the Secretary of the Navy, 1852

About This Source

<i>Who wrote this?</i>	U.S. Secretary of the Navy John P. Kennedy, who was appointed to oversee the Navy by President Fillmore in July 1852.
<i>What is it?</i>	An annual report to the President on naval activities of the preceding year
<i>Where was it written?</i>	Washington, DC
<i>When was it written?</i>	Summer or fall 1852
<i>Why was it written?</i>	The intended audience is the President, Congress, the voting public, and foreigners interested in the activities of the U.S. Navy.

The day has come when Europe and America have found an urgent inducement to demand of Asia and Africa the rights of hospitality, of aid and comfort, shelter and succor, to the men who pursue the great highroads of trade and exploration over the globe. Christendom is constrained by the pressure of an increasing necessity to declare its rights to the heathen; and in making its power felt, will bring innumerable blessings to every race which shall acknowledge its mastery.

The government of the United States has happily placed itself in the front of this movement; the expedition which has just left our shores takes with it the earnest good wishes, not only of our own country, but of the most enlightened communities of Europe. The opening of Japan has become a necessity, which is recognized in the commercial adventure of all Christian nations, and is deeply felt by every owner of an American whale-ship, and every voyager between California and China.

It is probable that the exhibition of the whole force, which will be under the command of Commodore Perry, will produce such an impression upon a government and people, the Japanese, who are accustomed to measure their respect by the array of power which accompanies us.²

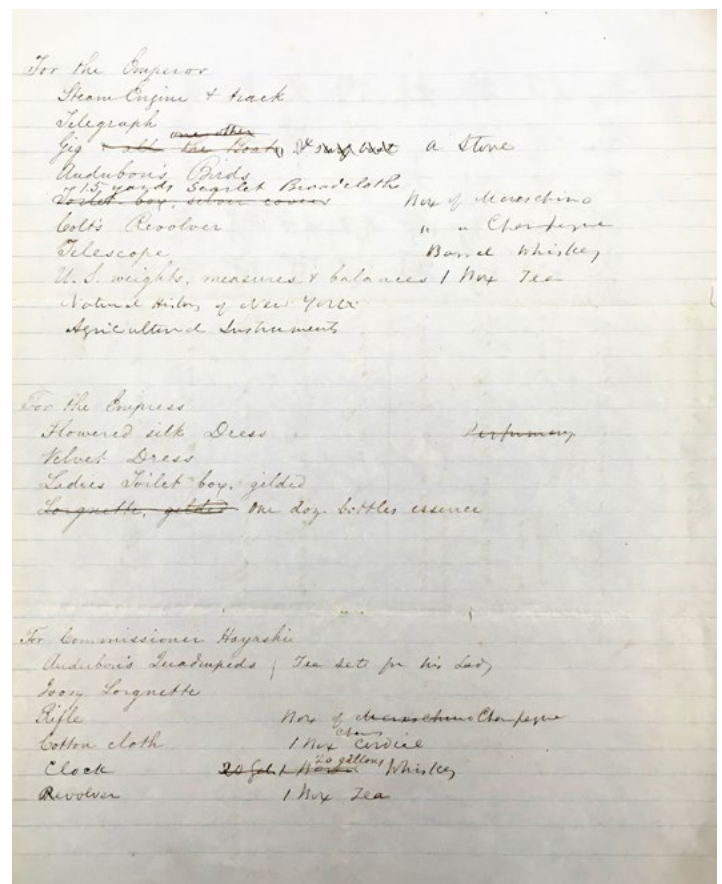
2. Source: "Commodore Matthew C. Perry's Expedition to Japan and Related Activities Described in the Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy, 1852-1854," Naval History and Heritage Command, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/research-guides/z-files/zb-files/zb-files-p/perry-matthew-c/perry-mc-secnav.html#1852>.

Source 2. List of Gifts³

About this Source

Who wrote this?	An unnamed member of Commodore Perry's expedition
What is it?	A list of items given by Perry, on behalf of the United States, to members of the Japanese imperial (royal) family and to members of their court (entourage)
Where was it written?	Yokohama, a port city near present-day Tokyo
When was it written?	March 1854
Why was it written?	The intended audience is military and civilian officials of the United States and Japan.

For the Emperor	[Explanations, Not in Original Source]
Steam Engine and track	in miniature, about waist-high
Telegraph	machine for long-distance communication
Audubon's Birds	illustrated reference book about birds
1.5 yards scarlet Broadcloth	cotton fabric, machine-woven
Colt's Revolver	handgun, quick firing, multiple shots
Telescope	
U.S. weights, measures & balances	showing, for example, how heavy a pound is
Natural History of New York	illustrated reference book
Agricultural Instruments	modern farming equipment
a stove	iron, factory-made
Box of Marichino	a cherry liqueur, expensive, alcoholic
Box of Champagne	a sparkling French wine, expensive, alcoholic
Barrel Whiskey	hard liquor made from corn, very alcoholic
1 Box Tea	



List of gifts for the Emperor. The full document is four pages long and includes gifts for the Empress, six Commissioners, and four Councillors.

3. Source: "List of Gifts," Naval History and Heritage Command, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/manuscripts/p-r/list-of-gifts-perry-expedition-opening-of-japan.html>.

Name _____ Date _____

Worksheet (Formative Assessment)

Directions: Write your answers in complete sentences.

A. With attention to **Source 1**, describe Perry's mission in your own words.

B. How did the author of **Source 1** view Japanese people? Give specific examples from the text to support your response.

C. In **Source 1**, how does the author justify Perry's mission?

Name _____ Date _____

Worksheet (continued)

D. In Source 2, pick 7 gifts to the emperor. Use what you know from source 1 to answer this question for each of the 7 gifts you picked: What message was Perry trying to send to the Japanese emperor with this particular gift?

Gift	Message

Name _____ Date _____

Homework (Summative Assessment)

Directions:

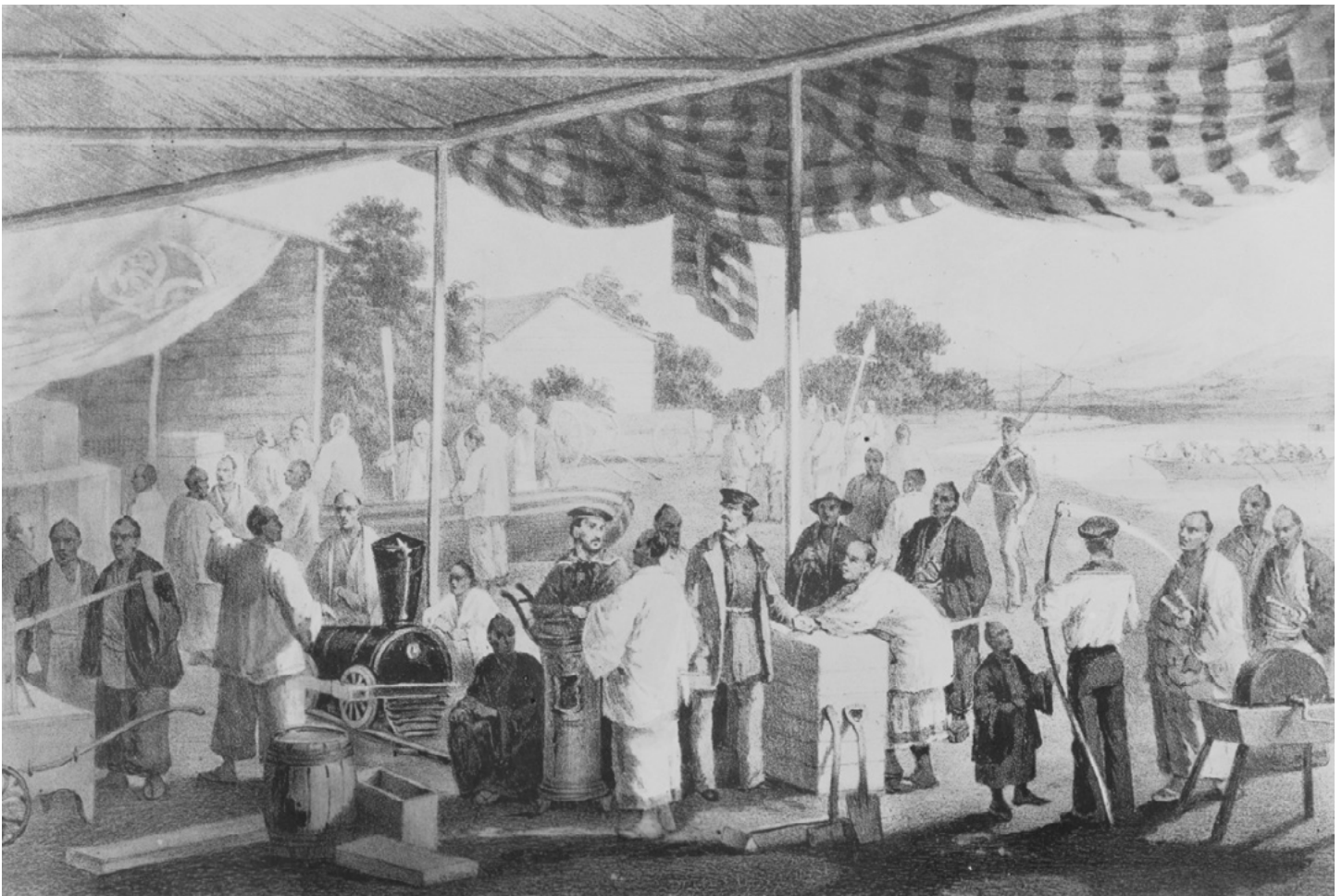
Answer the question: How did Perry succeed in opening Japan? You must answer in paragraph form, with a topic sentence that answers the question and, in the body of the paragraph, at least **two** supporting examples from each source. Make sure also to include a concluding sentence (or sentences) that ties the examples to each other and to the topic sentence.

Extension Exercise

Source 3. Lithograph, “Delivering of the American Presents at Yokohama”

About This Source

<i>Who created this?</i>	Unknown
<i>What is it?</i>	A lithograph (copy) of an artist’s rendering of Japanese elites accepting and examining Perry’s gifts
<i>Where was it created?</i>	Sarony & Co. Press, New York City
<i>When was it created?</i>	Circa 1856
<i>Why was it created?</i>	As a lithograph, it was created to go in books, on people’s walls, or in people’s lithograph collections. Its audience would have been Americans with middle-class incomes.



Lithograph depicting activities at Yokohama, Japan, March 1854.

Source: “Delivering the American Presents at Yokohama,” Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC.

Extension Exercise (continued)

What about Perry's mission does this lithograph communicate to the American public?

You must answer in essay form, and your essay must offer examples and information from **Source 1**, **Source 2**, and **Source 3**. You should also draw on information and examples from your textbook and/or other assigned readings so that your argument accounts for the historical context: mid- to late-19th-century politics, culture, society, and economy. Limit your response to 4 pages, 1-inch margins, double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12.