

## 16.8 Japan Faces the Outside World (1853)

**Instructions:** Read the background to the voyage of the Black Ships. Answer questions 1-3.

**Source:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_Ships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Ships)

**Background:** Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States arrived in Edo (Tokoyo) in 1853 with four steam-powered battle ships. The Japanese called these western vessels Black ships or Kurofuno. Perry returned to Japan again with eight ships the next year. This convinced Japanese officials to negotiate a treaty allowing American trade with Japan. Japanese reactions to these ships is recorded in a well-known “kyōka” or five-line humorous poem. The poem is complicated with more than one meaning. *Taihei* means both "tranquil" and Pacific Ocean. *Jōkisen* is the name of a brand of green tea but also can mean steam-power ship; and *shihai* means either four cups or four ships

### Do Now Questions

1. When did Commodore Perry first arrive in Japan?
2. What was the impact of Perry’s voyages on the Japanese?
3. How are the traditional translation and the hidden meaning of this poem different?

**Activity Instructions:** Working in teams, examine the poem and woodcut and answer questions 1-3..

1. What is the main idea in the poem?
2. How does the woodcut depict (show) the Black ship?
3. In the opinion of your team, why did the arrival of Perry’s Black ships have such a profound impact on Japan?

### A. Black Ships / Kurofuno:

Japanese version	Traditional Translation	Hidden meaning
Taihei no Nemuri o samasu Jōkisen Tatta shihai de Yoru mo nemurezu	Awoken from sleep of a peaceful quiet world by Jōkisen tea; with only four cups of it one can't sleep even at night.	The steam-powered ships break the halcyon [peaceful] slumber of the Pacific; a mere four boats are enough to make us lose sleep at night.

### B. Japanese woodcut depicts the Perry Expedition

