

Eagle Meets Elephant

Eagle Meets Elephant:
U.S./Thai Diplomacy in the 19th, 20th, and 21st Centuries
A Dramatization for Middle and High School Students

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Thailand/Vietnam 2011

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Grade Level: 6 – 12

- Essential Questions:**
- 1) What is the origin of the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Thailand?
 - 2) How does the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Thailand mutually benefit both countries?
 - 3) How does the current relationship between the United States and Thailand affect ASEAN and the region of southeast Asia?

Background Notes: Diplomacy between the United States and Thailand dates back to the 1833 Treaty of Amity and Commerce. A visible symbol of the historic relationship is the gift given by Andrew Jackson to King Rama III of Siam – a sword with an eagle representing the United States and an elephant representing Siam carved into the handle.

Today, the U.S. and Thailand still enjoy a cordial relationship evidenced by participation in multinational ventures such as the Fulbright educational exchanges, the Peace Corps, trade agreements, and ASEAN.

The attached mini-drama provides educators with an easy-to-present lesson on the history of this significant relationship, synthesizing almost 200 years of history into a compact module.

Sunshine State Standards:

[SS.912.A.7.11: Analyze the foreign policy of the United States as it relates to Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Middle East.](#)

[SS.912.A.7.14: Review the role of the United States as a participant in the global economy \(trade agreements, international competition, impact on American labor, environmental concerns\).](#)

[SS.912.C.4.2: Evaluate the influence of American foreign policy on other nations and the influences of other nations on American policies and society.](#)

[SS.912.H.3.3: Identify contributions made by various world cultures through trade and communication, and form a hypothesis on future contributions and changes.](#)

[SS.912.W.9.6: Analyze the rise of regional trade blocs such as the European Union and NAFTA, and predict the impact of increased globalization in the 20th and 21st centuries.](#)

Benchmarks: Students will demonstrate an understanding of contemporary issues in world affairs, and evaluate the role and impact of United States foreign policy.

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Students will understand the rise and continuing international influence of the United States as a world leader and the impact of contemporary social and political movements on American life.

Students will understand how transportation, trade, communication, science, and technology influence the progression and regression of cultures.

Students will identify major economic, political, social, and technological trends beginning in the 20th century.

Objective: Students will explain the historic and contemporary significance of the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Thailand after participating in the mini-drama *Eagle Meets Elephant*.

Materials:

- Copies of *Eagle Meets Elephant* for each student (attached).
- Optional: Props from Thailand (silk, other items from Thailand to represent diplomatic gifts, etc.), projected images of Thai Grand Palace, the White House, etc., to serve as backdrops.
- Discussion questions (see below)

Procedure: Give students brief backgrounds on the United States and Thailand, activating prior knowledge and answering any questions students might have. Pose question: When do you think the United States and Thailand made their first treaty? Discuss. Hand out copies of *Eagle Meets Elephant* and assign roles. Teachers may choose to have students perform script immediately or give the students time to memorize and rehearse the scripts. Give students props and background images and perform the play. Follow up with class discussion and extension activities using the questions below.

Follow-up and

Evaluative Activities: Discussion questions:

1. Besides just the value of the gift, what was the significance of the sword given by Andrew Jackson to King Rama III?
2. How does the historic relationship between the U.S. and Thailand benefit the United States? Thailand?
3. In the 19th and early 20th centuries delegates were sent from the U.S. and Thailand (Siam) to conduct diplomatic business, but more recently presidents and kings themselves have undertaken these visits. Why is this? What is the significance of having a head of state visit?

Research: Write a brief report on the history of SEATO and how Thai relationships affected U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Investigate: Make a list of products traded from the U.S. to Thailand and from Thailand to the U.S.

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Extension activity: What do you predict will be the future of U.S./Thai diplomacy? Write a 6th Act to the play taking place in the year 2020.

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**EAGLE MEETS ELEPHANT
U.S./THAI DIPLOMACY IN THE 19TH, 20TH, AND 21ST
CENTURIES**

by Sarah Altier



CAST OF CHARACTERS
(* indicates fictional character)

ANDREW JACKSON – *President of the United States*
***DIPLOMATIC AIDE** – *to President Jackson and Roberts*
EDMUND ROBERTS – *U.S. envoy to Siam*
RAMA III - *King Jessadabodindra of Siam*
***ROYAL ATTENDANT**
RAMA V - *King Chulalongkorn of Siam*
ULYSSES S. GRANT - *Former U.S. President and General*
JULIA DENT GRANT – *President Grant’s wife*
RAMA VII – *King Prajadhipok of Siam*
HERBERT HOOVER - *President of the United States*
QUEEN RAMBHAI – *Queen of Siam*
***BEN COGGINS** – *Reporter for the Washington Post*
***ADISORN SUWANPONG** - *Reporter for the Bangkok Post*
***REPORTER** – *covering the ASEAN regional forum*
HILLARY CLINTON – *Secretary of State of the United States*

ACT I
SCENE I
The White House, late 1832

JACKSON: We need to establish a relationship with Siam. The trade opportunities there are very promising.

AIDE: We already have several American missionaries in Siam, sir. The report is that the Siamese government is very hospitable and the Americans there have developed a good relationship with the king and with the Siamese people.

JACKSON: I am expecting Edmund Roberts, is he here yet?

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AIDE: Yes, sir, he's waiting outside to speak to you.

[Roberts enters]

JACKSON: Roberts, I am sending you on an extremely important diplomatic mission. You are to establish trade and amicable relations with the government of Siam.

ROBERTS: Yes, sir. The British have recently concluded a treaty with the Siamese and I believe they would be open to discuss a similar treaty with the United States.

JACKSON: I am trusting you to deliver these gifts to King Rama III.

ROBERTS: A silver basket, a gold watch and some silk. I'm sure King Rama will appreciate these gifts, sir.

JACKSON: Those are just trifling gifts. I have something very special to give his majesty. Come here, I'll show you.....

SCENE II
Siam Royal Palace, March 18, 1833

ROBERTS: Your majesty, thank you so much for granting me an audience.

KING RAMA III: I trust that Chao Phraya Phra Klang and my other officials have made you welcome while in Siam?

ROBERTS: Yes, we are very comfortable staying in the official guesthouse and Chao Phraya Phra Klang and I have already begun negotiating a treaty between our two countries. In the meantime, I would like to send you greetings from the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, and these tokens of his esteem for you and for your country.

[Roberts presents the king with the bowl, watch and silk and signals the aide to bring forth the last gift]

ROBERTS: President Jackson particularly desired me to present you with this ceremonial sword, your majesty. As you can see, there is an elephant and an eagle carved into the handle.

KING RAMA III: An excellent symbol of the cooperation and amity between our countries. Please convey my thanks to President Jackson. I also have gifts for your President. Please carry these local products of Siam to him.

[The king's attendant presents ivory, tin, wood, incense, pepper and sapan wood to Roberts]

ROBERTS: Thank you, your majesty. The United States government looks forward to years of good relations with your country. There shall be perpetual peace between the United States of America and the Magnificent King of S

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SCENE III
Siam, April 6, 1833

[Roberts and his Aide are preparing to leave Siam]

ROBERTS: All in all, a very satisfactory trip. I am very impressed with Siam.

AIDE: Are the terms of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce agreeable?

ROBERTS: Yes, and they should benefit both countries. Siam is giving us free trade except in rice, firearms, and opium and we are granted “most favored nation” status.

AIDE: President Jackson will be pleased our first treaty with an Asian country is in place.

ACT II
SCENE I
Siam, April 14, 1879

ROYAL ATTENDANT *[announces the arrival of the Grants to the King]*: Former President Grant and Mrs. Grant, Your Majesty.

RAMA V: Welcome to Siam, President Grant. I am happy that you and Mrs. Grant included Siam on your world tour.

GRANT: Of course, your majesty. The relationship between our two countries is a long and prosperous one and Mrs. Grant and I are happy to be here.

RAMA V: Yes, our countries have enjoyed a good relationship and the American missionaries in Siam have been helpful to us in many ways. Over the past four decades my predecessors, Rama III and Rama IV, have corresponded with many American presidents.

MRS. GRANT: I understand that King Mongkut, Rama IV, even offered to send elephants as a gift to America. It’s too bad our climate is not favorable for elephants.

GRANT: Speaking of gifts, I would like to present your majesty with some presents from my country. *[gives gifts]* Please accept these with the best wishes of the American people and government. I would also like to invite your majesty to visit the United States.

MRS. GRANT: And I’m sure that young people from your country would like to come to America to continue their studies. I understand that some Siamese students have already gone to Europe for their education.

RAMA V: Your hospitality is very much appreciated. In the meantime, I have some questions about American plans in Asia.

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GRANT: I can assure your majesty that there is no desire on the part of the American government to seek influence in the East.

RAMA V: That is good to hear. In order to further strengthen the relationship between our countries I plan to send an envoy to Washington D.C. in the near future.

GRANT: We look forward to our many more years of good relations with Siam.

**ACT III
SCENE I
Washington, D.C., Spring of 1931**

HOOVER: Welcome, your majesties. The United States is proud to give a banquet in your honor. How have you enjoyed your time in our country?

RAMA VII: We have enjoyed it very much, thank you.

QUEEN RAMBHAI: My husband is having medical treatment in your country, but before his eye surgery he will be presented with an honorary law degree from George Washington University.

HOOVER: So I understand! I believe you will also be visiting the U.S. Military Academy while you're here?

RAMA VII: Yes. I am interested in all your country has to offer. In Siam there exists a high admiration for the achievements of this great country and a marked feeling of friendship towards both the American people and its government. This is largely due to the fact Americans have made valuable contributions to the modern development of my kingdom, and that the government of the United States has shown sympathetic understanding, both of the aspiration and the achievements of my kingdom.

HOOVER: And the United States appreciates Siam's Allied participation in the Great War and recognizes your country's status as one of the founding members of the League of Nations.

RAMA VII: With so many American companies now operating in Siam, I'm sure the friendship and commerce between our countries will continue to grow.

HOOVER: Our countries are also benefiting from educational exchanges.

RAMA VII: Agreed. As you know, my youngest nephew, Bhumibol Adulyadej, was born in Massachusetts when his father was studying at Harvard, which is another tie between Siam and the United States. Well, thank you again for your hospitality, President Hoover.

HOOVER: May you have a safe trip back to Siam.

ACT IV
SCENE I
Washington, D.C., June, 1967

BEN: Adisorn, I haven't seen you since college when you were here in the U.S. to study on a Fulbright exchange! What brings you to Washington?

ADDISORN: I'm a journalist with the *Bangkok Post* and I'm here to cover their majesties King Bhumipol and Queen Sirikit on their trip to America.

BEN: Great! I'm also covering the story for the *Washington Post*. Were you here when the royal family visited America in 1960?

ADDISORN: No. Did you cover that story?

BEN: Yes, I was with the New York Times then. New York City gave the King and Queen a ticker tape parade, the King played the clarinet in a jam session with Benny Goodman, and he even got to visit the hospital where he was born in Massachusetts. The American people were very excited about the royal visit then, as they are now.

ADDISORN: Well, I was part of the press corps when President Johnson and his wife paid an official visit to Thailand. You know, it was the first time a sitting American president visited my country, so the Thai people were eager to welcome them. Soon after that visit the U.S. and Thailand signed the Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations.

BEN: It's good our countries are continuing their good friendship. Since the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was formed in 1954, we share military and education interests as well as economic ones.

ADDISORN: Speaking of friendships, you should come and visit me in Bangkok one day. I'd love to show you my country.

BEN: Well, now that you mention it, since Bangkok is the headquarters of SEATO I'd like to visit sometime during one of the meetings. You know President Johnson said in his speech today that Thailand and the United States share the problems and opportunities of a great, common pacific frontier. Besides, my sister is serving in the Peace Corps in near Chiang Rai. I could visit you and her and cover a SEATO conference.

ADDISORN: You're welcome to come anytime. Now we need to hurry to get to the White House in time to cover the meeting between the King and President Johnson.

**ACT V
SCENE I**

Phuket, Thailand, July, 2009

Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

REPORTER: Secretary Clinton, is this your first trip to Thailand?

CLINTON: No, when my husband was president in 1996 we visited Thailand. On that trip I gave a speech at Chiang Mai University and was able to visit some Thai centers that address social, health and educational issues. The United States and Thailand have a history of collaborating to solve many issues such as human trafficking, drug use, and family planning.

REPORTER: And will the United States and Thailand continue to cooperate on the Cobra Gold military training exercises?

CLINTON: Of course! This has been a joint effort between our two countries since the 1980s. We feel that it is an important symbol of my country's commitment to maintaining peace and security in Asia. The Cobra Gold is the largest multilateral joint military exercise in the world which gives American and Thai troops the opportunity to operate in real conditions.

REPORTER: Doesn't Cobra Gold involve more than just battle simulations?

CLINTON: Indeed it does. We're practicing medical and disaster responses as well. We're even using Cobra Gold as an opportunity to explore new green technologies like experimental solar-power sources and an experimental water purification pump – and we've invited other Asian nations to participate.

REPORTER: I understand you will be signing the Association of Southeast Asian Nation Treaty of Amity and Cooperation today. Is this true?

CLINTON: Yes, that's true. The United States is back in Southeast Asia! President Obama and I believe this region is vital to global progress, peace and prosperity and we are fully engaged with our ASEAN partners on the wide range of challenges confronting us.

REPORTER: I'm sure the ASEAN countries of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam – as well as my country of Thailand – will welcome the news that the United States is committed to our region.

CLINTON: Well, ASEAN is one of the top trading partners of the United States. Our cooperation with southeast Asia dates back to an 1833 treaty signed by Andrew Jackson and King Rama III of Thailand, and we look forward to continuing our tradition of warm diplomacy and friendship.

The End

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