these wild warriors on horseback from Central Asia suffered defeat at the hands of the samurai. Skilled with bow and sword, the samurai were a match for the Mongols, and typhoons struck the invading fleet, crushing Mongol hopes of conquest. The Japanese called these winds Kamikaze, or “winds of the gods.”

However, the battles with the Mongols weakened the government to such a great extent that a revolt led by a new military leader of the Ashikaga overthrew the Kamakuras.

The Kamakura Shogunate was a period when painting and sculpture flourished. Japanese armaments reached their peak. For strength and sharpness, Japanese swords of this period have never been equalled in any country.

Ashikaga Shogunate and Civil War in Japan

During the following two and a half centuries (1338–1567), feudalism was steadily extended in Japan. Since the Ashikaga shoguns were unable to control the powerful military lords, warfare was almost continuous. The fighting reached its climax in the 16th century when three great military leaders, Nabunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu brought unity and peace to Japan.

Nabunaga is remembered for ending the Ashikaga Shogunate. Hideyoshi established a united Japan, and a single ruler dominated the entire country. However, it was Ieyasu, of the house of Tokugawa, who founded the third and last military Shogunate in Japan.

Nabunaga was only 15 when his father died and left him as daimyo of a small but important estate in central Japan. Even at this young age, Nabunaga proved to be a brilliant general. He defeated neighboring daimyos and brought unity and order to central Honshu.

In the middle of the 16th century, Nabunaga was given the job of bringing order and unity to Japan. He chose Hideyoshi and Ieyasu as his lieutenants.

Nabunaga gave his blessings to the Portuguese traders who came to Japan beginning in 1543. He allowed the Portuguese to spread their religion, Christianity, in Japan. Nabunaga saw this as a way to decrease the power of the Buddhists who resisted the idea of a united Japan. He also wanted the guns and technology of the Europeans for his army. While trying to defeat the armies of his remaining enemies, Nabunaga was assassinated by one of his generals.

Hideyoshi

Born the son of a poor woodsman, Hideyoshi was first a stable boy. He joined Nabunaga’s army and rose from the position of common soldier to a commanding general. His soldiers called him “cotton” because he was a soldier whose talents could be put to many uses. His advisors called him Taiko (The Supreme Official). At least one of his biographers has called him the “Napoleon of Japan,” because of his great ability as a general and conqueror.

When Nabunaga was assassinated in 1582, Hideyoshi took over and completed the unification of Japan by spreading his control over all of the island nation. He made the town of Yedo, near Tokyo, his capital. Hideyoshi never became shogun because of his lowly birth. He persuaded a noble family to adopt him and was therefore able to take the title of Kamsaku, or Dictator.

Hideyoshi dreamed of conquering China. The Ming rulers of China were having many problems because of the civil wars throughout the country. For the Japanese, the road to China ran through Korea. However, the Koreans refused to allow the Japanese peaceful movement through Korea. Consequently, Hideyoshi was forced to fight his way up the
Korean peninsula. The battles weakened his army and he used up most of his supplies. He therefore had to give up his dream of conquering China.

Hideyoshi died peacefully in 1598. He wanted to leave his son in control of Japan, but the lieutenant of Nabunaga, Ieyasu, did not wish to turn leadership of the country over to a boy. Instead, Ieyasu had himself appointed shogun of Japan by the emperor in 1603.

**Tokugawa Shogunate**

To establish himself as shogun, Ieyasu was forced to fight rival daimyo and at the battle of Sekigahara, near Kyoto, he won a great victory. This battle marked the end of the feudal warfare that had been part of Japanese life for several hundred years. Two hundred and fifty years of peace were to follow (1603–1868). The daimyo were controlled by the shogun, and a new system of centralized feudalism was set up.

To protect Japan from outside influences, the Tokugawa introduced a policy of national isolation. In 1639, the Tokugawa closed Japan to all foreigners except the Dutch and the Chinese, who were permitted to trade at Nagasaki. This trade was closely watched by the government. About the same time, laws were issued that prohibited any Japanese from going to a foreign country for any reason. The penalty for violating this order was death. Japanese who were not in the country were not permitted to return to Japan. New ideas were considered a threat to the established order.

The cost of this policy of isolation to Japan was great. First, the break with the West came at a time when the Europeans were about to make great advances in commerce, technology, and science. Lack of contact with the West at this time cost the Japanese 200 years of knowledge which would have aided Japanese development, and kept Japan technologically backward. A second great loss was the Japanese trade in East and Southeast Asia, which had proven to be very profitable to the Japanese economy.

Japanese society was frozen into four classes: samurai, peasant, artisan, and merchant. The responsibilities of members of each class were fixed by law. Despite the Tokugawa policy of preventing change, some change did take place. As a result of the long period of peace, trade within Japan grew. Towns became important and many cities arose. The city merchants grew rich from trading, and from lending money to the feudal samurai. As the years passed, the position of the samurai was weakened. Without wars to fight, there was no booty to win.

To rule a land at peace, the Tokugawa needed educated administrators rather than soldiers. As a result, the writing brush began to replace the sword as the main weapon of the samurai. They changed from a highly trained fighting force into a city-dwelling class of well-educated bureaucrats and government workers.

Warfare became a matter of theory with little or no practice. Schools were set up to teach the military arts. However, gunnery and the use of firearms were usually ignored in favor of the feudal military disciplines of swordsmanship and archery. (It is interesting to note that Ieyasu was victorious because of his use of cannons and other European supplied firearms.) The use of the sword and the bow were favored for their character building qualities as much as their military value. From this grew the emphasis on other character building martial arts, such as judo and its modern offspring karate.

Despite strong class differences, the Tokugawa system provided peace, law, and order. This stability provided the foundation for people to develop their abilities. The only limitation was that the class people were born into determined their trade or occupation.
The samurai contributed to the development of an efficient government and legal system as well as to the advancement of various areas of scholarship. Farmers, merchants, and artisans had more opportunities to improve their lives. During the 17th and 18th centuries, rice production more than doubled and the raising of commercially (crops for sale) valuable crops began to spread from village to village. Small industries grew and many cities prospered. By the middle of the 18th century, the economic power of the merchants and industrialists overtook that of the samurai class. (Why do you think this happened?)

Various art forms were introduced for the first time. The Kabuki theater and Ukiyo-e woodblock prints became the joy of the common people who now had the leisure time and wealth to enjoy the new art. For the first time, education became available for the common people, and literacy and the knowledge of arithmetic spread.

Opening Up to the West

In the centuries following the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate, European influence in Asia and the Pacific increased a great deal. Late in the 18th century, the Russians crossed the vast open spaces of Siberia and reached the Pacific Ocean. Russian efforts to open trade with Japan failed, but the Russians did set up colonies in the Kuriles and in the Sakhalin Islands. These settlements proved a threat to the Tokugawas.

At the end of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe in 1815, Great Britain and other European nations showed new interest in Asian trade. At the same time American merchants also became more interested in trade with Asian nations.

By the mid-1800s, India and much of Southeast Asia had come under the control of European nations. Even China was compelled to great concessions (favors) to the “foreign devils.” In fact, before 1850, Western efforts to trade with Asia were aimed mainly at China.

After California joined the United States as a state in 1850, American interest in the Pacific region increased. However, American sailors, if shipwrecked in the area, were often jailed and beaten in Japan. Repeated efforts to end this practice through negotiation were unsuccessful. Both these factors lead to a desire to “open up” Japan.

In 1852, the U.S. government sent a naval expedition to Japan under the command of Commodore Matthew C. Perry. Perry’s mission was motivated by:

1. the U.S. view that expansion westward in trade and influence was part of its Manifest Destiny;
2. the fact that many Americans believed that Western culture and progress should be brought to the less-developed areas of the world, including Japan;
3. the desire by Americans to have shipwrecked sailors and all Americans treated fairly and well;
4. the United States wish to expand trade for economic gain and increased political power;
5. the desire by the United States to set up a coaling station for its ships.

The arrival of American ships in Yedo (Tokyo) Bay in July 1853 frightened the Japanese, who had never seen steamships before. The Japanese panicked, and many moved from Tokyo to the countryside.

The Tokugawa were faced with a serious situation. The Emperor and the Tokugawas wished to maintain a policy of isolation. However, they realized that Japan was helpless against the modern military strength of the United States and that it was not possible to
The Fate of the Samurai

End of Isolation

maintain Japan’s isolation. Consequently, in March 1854, the Tokugawas granted the United States the rights of trade at two ports, the rights of coaling and supplying its ships and the privilege of sending a consul to Japan to represent the United States.

City growth hurt the samurai class. By 1850, many samurai had forgotten the military arts since they had not fought a war for over 200 years. Although the samurai still wore swords, they worked mainly as government officials. Their pay was low and, as a result, their standard of living declined. Unable by law to farm or become merchants, some samurai became skilled craftspeople and sold the objects they made. However, their incomes made the samurai more and more unable to live up to their high social status.

By 1850, Japan’s economy had changed, but its political and social institutions had remained the same. As a result, the merchants had wealth but no rank; the samurai had rank but little money.

In the nineteenth century, the Tokugawa Shogunate began to crack. The unhappy samurai began to plot against the shogun. The shogun was criticized and blamed for the nation’s problems. At the same time, foreign pressure to change the policy of isolation intensified.

Once the door to the West opened a crack, there was no closing it. Within two years, Japan was forced to sign treaties with Britain, Russia, and Holland similar to the one with the United States. Isolation ended and the weaknesses of the Tokugawas became obvious.

Enemies of the shogunate united under the slogans “Sonno joi” (“Revere the Emperor; expel the Barbarians”) and “Isshin” (“Restore the past”). By 1866, the samurai and daimyo of the Choshu, Satsuma, Tosa, and Hizen clans, supported by rich merchants, formed an alliance to get rid of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Japan Enters the Modern World

Meiji Restoration

By the mid-19th century, great economic problems faced the Tokugawas. The amount of taxes collected had seriously fallen from a century before and the government was forced to cut back as much as 50 percent of the money paid to samurai. Lower ranking samurai were unhappy because higher ranking samurai, regardless of their abilities, were automatically given upper-level positions and higher payments. Many lower ranking samurai were forced to leave the ranks of the samurai in order to survive.

As education became more widespread, many Japanese became unhappy with the rigid class system. Especially unhappy were the merchants, artisans, and manufacturers who, despite their wealth, were still considered socially inferior to the daimyo and samurai.

As criticism of the shogunate grew, many Japanese began to question the idea of the rule of the shogun. Japanese historians became aware that the imperial family, living in Edo (Tokyo), had once led Japan. The idea of an imperial restoration (bringing the emperor back into power) grew. In November 1867, following the death of the shogun, the young Emperor Mutsuhito Meiji (Meiji means enlightened rule) was given full authority to rule Japan. In January 1868, the Emperor abolished the shogunate.

The new Meiji regime was led by a small group of samurai and merchant-bankers. The old power group of shogun and supporters was replaced with a new group of influential
men with military and financial power, who chose to use the Emperor as a symbol of their authority. For the average Japanese it really did not make any immediate difference that the Emperor had replaced the shogun. The real difference was in how the new leaders chose to direct the nation. The direction they picked had a deep and far reaching influence on Japan’s future.

The Program of the Meiji

The new leaders wished to set up a modern, centralized nation. To guide their policies, they looked to the great powers of the West. First, opposition to the new government within Japan was ended. A rebellion led by the Satsuma clan was ruthlessly put down. Rebellions would no longer trouble the Japanese. Next, the government set up a commission to draw up a constitution, which was issued as a gift in 1889. The new constitution borrowed a great deal from the Prussian (German) Constitution. The state was greatly strengthened. Great power was given to the emperor, whose position was justified under the Shinto religion and legends. A bicameral (two house) legislature, called the Diet, was set up with limited power. A prime minister and his cabinet were to be picked by the Emperor and, in theory, were responsible only to the Emperor. Actual power was concentrated in the hands of the Emperor’s advisors. The constitution proclaimed the rights of the people, but with a major restriction: the interests of the state came first. The ministers of the army and navy were very powerful. The army and navy could destroy a cabinet they opposed by resigning from it or by refusing to serve in it. This power had tragic consequences for the Japanese people. It encouraged the growth of militarism, which plunged Japan into the fateful war with the United States.

The new government viewed education as a major priority. Educated people were needed for the new factories and government offices. As a result, a national school system was created by the government. This national school system was also used to promote loyalty to the government.

Payments to the samurai were ended in 1876. At the same time, the government ended all samurai privileges including the right to wear swords and to hold government posts. Compulsory military training was introduced for all Japanese men.

Industrialization

Industrialization was viewed by the Meiji leaders as the key to modernization. With state support, tremendous energy and will, many economic innovations were introduced. Textile production became the chief industry. The government needed capital, but refused to borrow from foreign nations because Japan did not want to give any foreign power the slightest reason for getting involved in Japanese affairs. The land and tax system was changed to meet the needs of industry. The peasants were given legal possession of the land. Taxes were placed on the land based upon its value. Often unable to pay their taxes, farmers were forced to borrow money at high interest rates, or to sell their land. Once they lost the land, they became tenant farmers, renting the land they farmed. Rents were high and conditions were difficult, but tenant farming continued. By using cheap labor, and instilling national pride in the workers, the Japanese made slow but steady progress and, within a generation, Japan had succeeded in laying down the basis for a completely modern industrial system.

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Nationalism and Imperialism Grow

Japan’s desire to modernize was matched by a desire to keep its independence. A cautious policy was followed toward foreign nations, to further Japan’s security. The Japanese were successful in removing the “unequal treaties” with Western nations that gave those nations special privileges in Japan. Nationalism was stirred, and the greatness and “divine mission” of the Japanese was proclaimed.

The Japanese began to look outward. Korea, the peninsula that pointed like a knife at Japan’s heart, was Japan’s chief concern. In 1894, with the idea of gaining control of Korea, Japan attacked China. Within three months the Japanese had completely defeated the Chinese in the Sino-Japanese War. This quick defeat disturbed Russia, France, and Germany, who also wanted parts of China. The Europeans forced a peace on the two Asian nations. Japan was forced to give up its dream of controlling Korea. Russia now moved troops into the area; thus, Japan had a score to settle with Russia. In 1902, Japan signed a military alliance with Great Britain. This treaty assured Japan that France would not join Russia if the latter went to war with Japan.

The war between Japan and Russia came in 1904, and was a strain on both countries. The Japanese attacked the Russian fleet by surprise in Port Arthur, and badly damaged it. A second fleet was destroyed by the Japanese at the Tushima Straits. On land, the Russians were driven out of Korea, and the Japanese captured Port Arthur and Mukden in Manchuria. Theodore Roosevelt, the President of the United States, brought the two sides together. In the Treaty of Portsmouth, Russia’s lease on Port Arthur and its concessions in Manchuria were given to Japan. In 1910, Japan solved its Korean problem by annexing Korea to Japan.

Japan Becomes a Great Power

Japan’s rise to a place among the great powers was speeded up during World War I (1914–1918). The Japanese declared war on Germany, and took over Germany’s interests in China and the Pacific. The war also gave Japan the chance to build up its industry and trade. As a result of the war, Japan became the foremost power in Asia, and one of the five great powers in the world.

During the 1920s, Japan went through a period of political, social, and economic unrest. Government reforms were introduced. In 1925, all men were given the right to vote. New political parties, often of a radical nature, were founded, and factory workers and peasants were allowed to organize into unions. The conservatives, nevertheless, managed to remain in power.

In international affairs Japan tried to adjust to its new position and to the changing world. Siberia became a target for Japanese ambitions. Worried about Japan’s rising naval strength, the Western powers called together all the naval powers to meet in Washington. The purpose of the Washington Conference was to limit the number of warships. This and other issues led to tense relations between Japan and the West.

War with China

In the early 1930s, angry military leaders and nationalist super-patriots decided to act. They blamed the government for the country’s economic and social problems. They pro-
posed that territorial expansion at China’s expense would solve Japan’s problems. Manchuria, a rich and sparsely settled area, interested them greatly. With fertile lands and rich deposits of coal and iron, the area would be of great value to the overpopulated and impoverished Japan. Control of Manchuria would give Japan a source of badly needed raw materials. These officers provoked an incident at Mukden, and war began with China. Manchuria was quickly overrun and taken into the Japanese Empire. Within Japan, the opponents of expansionism and militarism were terrorized and assassinated.

In 1937, Japan went to war with China in an effort to assert its dominance in Asia. Inside Japan, the government moved toward stricter controls of all aspects of life. The war in China and expansion into Indo-China led to trouble with the United States. The United States also wished to have an available supply of raw materials. In addition, the United States opposed the military expansion of Japan as a violation of the legitimate rights of a free China. The key to Japanese dreams was the rich area of Southeast Asia. The area had an abundant supply of raw materials, especially oil and rubber, and its conquest promised to solve many of Japan’s economic and military problems. No great resistance was expected, since France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands were deeply involved in war in Europe. Only the United States had the power to block Japan’s plans.

**War with the United States**

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese launched a surprise attack on U.S. bases in the Pacific. The Japanese had taken the supreme gamble. They were to lose.

The Japanese battle plan had been to strike lightning blows at the Europeans in the Pacific, that is, to overrun Malaya, the Philippines, Burma, and the Netherlands East Indies, and then offer peace. They were victorious at first, but soon found themselves in trouble. The United States rapidly recovered from early defeats and losses. What the Japanese feared most was a long war, and this was what they got. The Japanese navy suffered its first defeat at Midway. The Americans went on the offensive, and slowly moved closer to Japan itself. Its armed forces defeated in the Pacific and its home islands blockaded and under attack, Japan prepared for an all-out defense of its homeland.

During the summer of 1945, despite great losses in men and equipment, Japan continued to fight savagely. The leaders of the United States and the other Allies became convinced that only a direct invasion of the Japanese islands would lead to victory. The United States estimated that this invasion would cause over 1 million casualties for the U.S. forces alone.

In July 1945, soon after the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the new president, Harry S Truman, issued the Potsdam Declaration, calling on the Japanese to surrender or face destruction. The Declaration demanded that:

1. all militarists and nationalists be removed from positions of authority;
2. the Japanese ability to make war be destroyed;
3. Japanese leaders who had committed war crimes be punished;
4. Japanese control would be limited to the four main islands and nearby small islands;
5. all Japanese troops would be allowed to return home;
6. all civil liberties would be reestablished.

Ten days were given for a reply. There was no response from the Japanese government.

A difficult decision faced the United States. “In all,” President Truman said, “it had been estimated that it would be until late in 1946 to conquer the Japanese home islands. We all
realized that the fighting would be fierce and the losses heavy.” These thoughts convinced President Truman that the use of a terrible weapon was necessary and justified.

On August 6 and August 9, 1945 the first atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Japanese government was now faced with a horrible fate and, on August 15, 1945 the Emperor announced over the radio that he had decided to surrender.

Japan, for the first time in its history, had been completely defeated, and faced occupation by a foreign army.

**Japan After World War II**

**Occupation by the United States**

After Japan’s defeat in World War II, the American army occupied Japan from 1945 to 1952. The Japanese government was put under the control of General Douglas MacArthur and the American army. As punishment for starting the war and invading various areas, Japan lost its empire and was forbidden to have an army or navy. The occupation government encouraged changes in all phases of Japanese life.

**Reform in Government**

The core of U.S. reforms in postwar Japan was a new Constitution to replace the old "gift" of 1889. The new Constitution went into force in May 1947. It is one of the most democratic constitutions in the world today.

For the first time, full political power was placed in the hands of the Japanese people. Emperor Hirohito had little power. He announced to the people on January 1, 1946, that he was a mortal human being like themselves, and not godlike. All citizens over 20, both men and women, may vote, and women may serve in the government. The top political body is the two-chamber National Diet. The House of Councilors serves for six years, and the lower, more powerful House of Representatives is elected for four years. The Prime Minister is usually the leader of the strongest party in the Diet. He appoints a cabinet to help him govern. If he is defeated on a bill, or if the Diet votes "no confidence" in the government’s policy, the House of Representatives may be dissolves and a new election called.

The Prime Minister and all the cabinet members must be civilians. Military officers may not hold cabinet posts. The Constitution prohibits Japan from waging aggressive war again. The Constitution also guarantees a long list of basic rights. Many of these are like the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution.

The economic gains made by Japan since 1945 have been outstanding. The old industrial system of a few great industrialists has been changed as many new groups have been allowed to open businesses. Today Japan ranks among the three greatest manufacturing and trading nations in the world. Improved economic conditions have caused changes in traditional behavior. In general, the welfare of all the people has been greatly improved.

**Restoration of Independence**

The Korean War, which began in 1950, revived Japan’s economy. It also led to the end of the American military occupation. The United States bought large amounts of military
goods such as clothing, shoes, and processed food from Japanese manufacturers. At the same time, troops stationed in Japan were transferred to Korea.

In 1951, Japan signed a peace treaty with the United States and 47 other nations (excluding the Soviet Union). The treaty restored full independence to Japan in 1952.

Japan has remained a democracy since the end of occupation in 1952. Several major political parties have competed for leadership, but the conservatives usually have managed to keep power.

For many years Japan did not wish to play a leading role in world affairs. The government was satisfied to improve economic conditions. Japan had the United States to defend it, and followed the American lead in international affairs. However, since the late 1960s, the Japanese have decided to go their own way. Today the Japanese people are split on what course to follow, but Japan is again playing the role of an important power in the world.

**Japan’s Economy**

**The Road to Economic Modernization**

When Japan entered the modern world after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japanese leaders recognized that industrialization was the key to the future. However, the leaders of
Japan saw many existing problems. The lack of trained technicians was critical. Consequently, the government set up technical schools and began the teaching of modern science. Promising students were also sent to Europe and the United States for higher education and special training. The government used foreign engineers as teachers and advisors in the new schools and factories.

Another problem, at the beginning, was a lack of capital. Private capital was in short supply, and the little that existed was invested in banking and domestic trade. The government itself showed the way by building and operating small factories. These factories produced military supplies, iron, textiles, cement, and glass products. The government also set up the first railroad and telegraph, and built a merchant marine.

With this as a basis, and a continued favorable attitude on the part of the government toward industry, private businessmen began to invest and build. This was the beginning of the huge firms such as Mitsui and Mitsubishi, which still exist today.

Except for the war years (1914–1919), Japan had an unfavorable balance of trade (more imports than exports). Modernization could not be achieved without a great expansion of foreign trade. But Japan had little to export, except for silk, which was in great demand in the West, and ranked for years at the top of Japan’s export list. However, neither silk nor cotton textiles earned enough to pay for Japan’s growing list of imported goods. Japan’s resources were never sufficient to meet the needs of a great industrial power, and Japan was forced to depend on foreign sources for raw materials. Its chief minerals are coal, gold, copper, and sulfur. To keep its factories going, Japan must import oil, cotton, rubber, iron ore, and many other materials.

**Japanese Resources**

Japan’s location has influenced the development of its major resource—the sea and its wildlife. Japan is surrounded by water and it has a long irregular coastline that faces the Pacific Ocean. As a result, Japan has created the world’s largest fishing industry. Programs of aquaculture (farming the sea) and developing fish farms on land also supply Japan with fish, shellfish, seaweed, and pearls from oysters. Despite protests from all over the world, the Japanese still hunt and kill whales.

Japan’s mountainous topography is heavily forested. However, the forests are not used to a great extent. They serve to control soil erosion and they provide places for leisure activities as national parks. To make up for the limited use of timber from the forest, the Japanese import wood pulp to make paper and plywood.

The largest percentage of Japan’s imports are raw materials used for the growing Japanese industries (see page 576). Japan has some coal, but it imports 65 percent of its needs from Australia and the United States. Iron ore comes from Australia. Almost all of Japan’s petroleum must be imported, mainly from the Middle East. Repeated attempts at conservation have had a small effect on Japan’s dependence on imported oil.

Japan’s fast flowing rivers supply about 20 percent of its hydro-electric needs. Another 25 percent of its electrical needs comes from nuclear power plants. The remaining 55 percent of Japan’s energy needs are imported.

**The Economy at the End of World War II**

When Japan surrendered in 1945, its economic situation was desperate. Not only had Japan lost its Asian colonies and, therefore, its main sources of raw materials, but a quarter