

East Asian Studies

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Japanese Modernization & Imperialism 1850 – 1907

This lesson will cover the end of Japan's isolationism, and will include its modernization and growth of imperialism. It will follow "China Responds to Western Pressure". This lesson will cover two days.

**Guiding Questions**

1. For what reasons did Japan end its isolation and begin modernizing?
2. Why did Japan go to war against China and Russia?
3. Why did Japan occupy and annex Korea?
4. Were the reasons for Japan's interest in modernizing and taking new areas different from Western countries' reasons?

**Procedures**

- A. 1. Students will label a map of Japan with the following key cities, islands, waterways, and countries. And, will answer the questions in complete sentences.

|               |          |        |
|---------------|----------|--------|
| Sapporo       | Hokkaido | Japan  |
| Tokyo         | Honshu   | Korea  |
| Osaka         | Shikoko  | Russia |
| Kukuoka       | Krushu   | China  |
| Pacific Ocean |          |        |
| Sea of Japan  |          |        |

2. Identifying key points:

|                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| A. Sea separating Japan and Asia | <i>Sea of Japan</i> |
| B. Northernmost island of Japan  | <i>Hokkaido</i>     |
| C. Asian peninsula               | <i>Korea</i>        |
| D. Largest island of Japan       | <i>Honshu</i>       |
| E. Port on the largest island    | <i>Osaka</i>        |
| F. Southernmost island of Japan  | <i>Kyushu</i>       |

3. How did geography help determine the Japanese economy? *Because Japan is an archipelago of rocky mountainous islands it has few natural resources and has very limited farmable land. Japan would not become a major producer of food for trade, but would develop non- edible items for trade.*
4. How did the sea have a strong impact on Japan's develop? Because Japan is surrounded by water the sea would become a major resource for Japan's food. The sea also encouraged the Japanese to become great ship builders and sailors.
5. How was the location of Japan both an obstacle to foreign influence and an invitation to that influence? *Japan remained isolated from the world until countries began perfecting navigation and shipbuilding. Because Japan is an island country she was able to stay isolated from foreign influence for a time. Also, the fact that Japan is an island country outsiders were able to impact Japanese culture*

*because the native people could not flee as easily and Japanese mainland allies would have a harder time coming to Japanese aid.*

B. 1. After completing the map students will read pages 720 – 723 in their texts. *The main idea in this section of reading is that " Japan followed the model of Western powers by industrializing and expanding its foreign influence". This is important today because "Japan's continued development of its own way of life has made it a leading world power".*

2. After reading the students will define the following:

a. **Treaty of Kanagawa:** *signed in 1854 this treaty opened two ports for American trade and allowed for the United States to set up an embassy in Japan.*

b. **Meiji era:** *time period when Mutshuhito ruled. The Tokugawa shogun stepped down because the people were made that he allowed foreigners in to trade. Mutshuhito ruled for 45 years from 1867 to 1912 and named his rule the Meiji which means "enlightened rule". He believed that for Japan to be free of foreign influence she must modernize and study western ways. He sent agents to America, Germany, and Great Britain.*

c. **Russo-Japanese War:** *fought from 1904 – 1905 between Japan and Russia over Russia's occupation of Manchuria and Korea. Japan wanted these areas for resources and additional landholdings on the Asian mainland. In the Treaty of Portsmouth Japan was granted these areas and Japan then attacked Korea with brutal force.*

d. **Annexation:** *when a stronger country imposes its rule over a weaker area: as in Japan annexing Korea.*

3. After reading the students will complete the following exercises:

a. Make a chart listing the steps taken in Japan's modernizing & practicing imperialism

**Modernization**

*Claimed feudal lands for government*

*Studied Western ways; industrialized*

**Imperialism**

*abolished extraterritorial rights*

*forced Korean ports to open  
Fought Sino-Japanese,  
Russo-Japanese wars, and  
Annexed Korea*

4. Students will make a chart indicating the ideas and practices Japan borrowed from the United States, Germany, and Great Britain:

*United States*

*Germany*

*Great Britain*

*universal public education*

*centralized government, and  
Their disciplined army*

*Building of a navy*

5 Do you think Japan could have become an imperialistic power if it had not modernized? Why or why not? *Divide class into two groups. One group makes a list of reasons supporting modernization to become an imperial power, and the other group makes a list supporting Japan becoming an imperial power without adopting modern ways. Allow ten minutes for students to gather their data from the reading and past studies of Japan. Conduct a brief debate.*

6 Students will be asked to form an opinion: Was Japan's aggressive imperialism justified? Was Japan's form of imperialism different from Great Britain's, the USA, France, etc.? *Students will formulate their opinion answers using information from past studies on the Scramble for Africa and Asia, and the US Spanish American War. Students will be encouraged think about reasons for imperialism, what countries gain by practicing imperialism, treatment of conquered peoples by imperial powers.*

7 Analyzing information: What influences do you think were most important in provoking Japan to build its empire? *Possible answer: Because Japan is a small island, it was vulnerable to invaders. Having huge empire builders as neighbors (China & Russia) forced Japan to expand in self-defense. The Japanese feared they might lose its identity to western powers it did not become its own empire builder. To become a modern industrial country Japan needed the resources in Manchuria and Korea.*

### **Reinforcement Activities**

#### **1. Modernization**

Students will be given a copy an excerpt from *The autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa* to read in groups of five. Each group must make a list of Yukichi Fukuzawa's impression of the United States, and compile a list of the top ten areas of interest in the United States that would best teach a foreigner about life in America, and American culture. Students will share their information with the class through an info-board or power point.

#### **2. Imperialism**

Students will study the political cartoon on page 723, which shows a Japanese Samurai squeezing a miniature Russian in one hand and holding a bloody dagger in the other. The Samurai is winged, looks wicked, and is riding a polar bear. The polar bear is holding a rifle in one hand, and a spear in the other. Both are squishing a bearded man. The cartoon is about the Russo-Japanese War. Questions asked: a. Which animal represents Russia? (*polar bear*) Which represents Japan? (*winged Sumurai*). Who is being crushed? (*Manchurian or Korean*). What evidence can be found in the cartoon that indicates that world technology is changing? *The Manchurian/Korean is holding a modern rifle in one hand and a spear in the other.*

Using the information in this section of the chapter students will work in pairs and will have a choice of making up their own political cartoon or write an editorial submission to the newspaper concerning developments in the modernization of Japan, or Japanese imperialism on the Asian continent.