

Summary: Establishing Modern Japan

History

From the mid-1600s to the 1800s, Japan had little contact with the outside world. It traded with China but was not influenced by the rest of the world. Japan's location made it a good place for U.S. ships to pick up supplies. American ships landed in Japan in 1853. This opened Japan to contact with the West.

In 1867, a group of samurai warriors overthrew the shogun, the emperor's chief general. Then they returned the emperor to power. The era that followed was the Meiji Restoration. During this time, Japan built new industries and the economy grew. After a number of wars, Japan controlled Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria.

During World War I, Japan sided with the United States and other allies. Then the Great Kanto Earthquake and the Great Depression hurt Japan's economy. In the 1930s, the military took control of the government.

Japan strengthened relations with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The United States stopped selling oil to Japan because of this. In 1941, Japan bombed the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor. As a result, the United States entered World War II. In 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Emperor Hirohito surrendered, and the war was over.

Modern Japan

When World War II ended, the Japanese economy and government were in ruins. A new government was set up. Japan's constitution gave people rights and responsibilities like those people in the United States had. The hard work of the Japanese people and aid from the United States helped Japan's economy. Today, Japan has one of the world's strongest economies.

Japan's population is homogeneous. Most people descended from the Mongols, others from the Ainu. Scholars think the Ainu were early settlers from Europe.

The Japanese culture puts importance on the relationship between children and their parents. Children always treat their parents with respect. They put their parents' needs first. Children also seek advice from their elders.



After You Read

Find and underline the vocabulary word.

homogeneous *adjective*, a population that is largely the same



After You Read

REVIEW What factors contributed to the instability in Japan in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s?

Underline three key events.

REVIEW What importance does Japanese culture put on family relationships? Draw a box around the sentences that tell how Japanese children treat their parents and elders.