Lesson Plan

Japanese History

Steve Murray

RATIONALE

The following lesson plan will take place within the context of a World Humanities course for sophomores at Columbus Alternative High School. The Humanities courses are team-taught blocks of 85 minutes; the courses are two credits, with students receiving both a Language Arts and Social Studies credit. As such, the lesson will focus on Japanese imperialism and modernization but within the context of a unit on imperialism that includes lessons on the rise of Western nationalism, militarism, industrialization, and imperialism in Africa, China, and the Asian subcontinent. However, it is possible that certain aspects of this lesson plan also could be implemented in a U.S. History class.

The justification for the focus of the lesson in either a World History or American History class is rooted in both the Ohio Dept of Education Social Studies and Language Arts Academic Content Standards.

The relevant strands for Social Studies are:

Benchmark C: Analyze the reasons that countries gained control of territory through imperialism and the impact on people living in the territory that was controlled.

Grade Nine Imperialism 4. Describe the political, economic and social roots of imperialism.
6. Explain the global impact of imperialism including:
   a. Modernization of Japan

Grade 10 Imperialism
5. Trace the development of the United States as a world power with emphasis on b. U.S. imperialism in the Far East, South Pacific, Caribbean and Central America

For Language Arts, a relevant strand is:

Benchmark C Organize information from various resources and select appropriate sources to support central ideas, concepts, and themes.

Writing Applications
4. Write information essays or reports, including research that
   a. pose relevant and tightly drawn questions that engage the reader.
   b. provide a clear and accurate perspective on the subject.
   c. create an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context.
   d. support the main ideas with facts, details, and examples, and explanations from sources; and
   e. document sources and include bibliographies.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will understand the historical context of Japanese imperialism
2. Students will explain the similarities among, and the differences between, the motivations and goals of Japanese imperialism and the motivations and goals of imperialism of Western powers
3. Students will comprehend the extent of Japanese imperialism
4. Students will explain multiple perspectives on Japanese imperialism both domestically and internationally
5. Students will describe Japan's modernization, including the political, social, and economic changes that took place in Japan during the age of Japanese imperialism
METHODOLOGY
Examination of documents including: maps, primary and secondary documents, graphs and charts, photographs, and period political cartoons
Class discussion
Individual written responses/ formation of thesis statements

SCHEDULE
DAY 1
Review with students the goals and objectives of Western imperialism. (10 min.)
Prompt students for prior knowledge about Japan’s involvement in World War II and Japanese history leading up to World War II. (15 min)

Distribute time line of Japanese history. Direct students to note the centuries of isolation Japan experiences preceding the period of Japanese imperialism. Have students note concurrent events that demonstrate the expansion of Western imperialism in Asia. Append. 1-6 (20 min.)

Direct students to 1804 on time line and initial unsuccessful attempts by Russian envoys to convince Japan to open to the West. Next, trace with students the events that lead to the arrival of American Commodore Matthew Perry. (15 min.)

Direct students to the map that shows the extent of Western imperialism in Asia. Discuss the possible effects this had on the Japanese people. Append. 7 (15 min.)
Read aloud with students the brief poem and discuss with students the concern of some Japanese people in the midst of Western imperialism. Append. 8 (15 min.)

DAY 2
Review of previous day’s discussion. (10 min.)

Read aloud with students the excerpts of primary documents that reveal the Japanese curiosity about Westerners and admiration for some Western ideas. Append. 9 (25 min.)

Have students examine the prints of drawings that illustrate a Japanese perspective of Westerners in Japan. Discuss with students how this might have appeared to Japanese. Append. 10-11 (20 min.)

Present students information about the agreements the Japanese made with the West about opening up, including document excerpts that reveal the Japanese desire for expansion. Present further information about the decisions made by the Meiji government to expand. Append. 12-13 (25 min.)

DAY 3
Read and discuss the documents concerning Japanese expansionist successes that reveal the motivation for further Japanese expansion. Append. 14-15 (15 min.)

Present students information about the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. Explain the sources of conflict, ie. rivalry over desired territories. Discuss outcomes: Japan emerging as a world power. (15 min.)
Have students examine various bar graphs that demonstrate large material gains, a rising standard of living, and developing industrial economy in Japan. Students create a summary of these graphs.

Append. 16-17 (45 min.)

DAY 4
Read and discuss excerpts of primary documents of Western perceptions of Japanese modernization.

Append. 18 (15 min.)

Examine and discuss the photographs of university women suffrage and the image of a Japanese woman in traditional kimono. Discuss the changing role of women during modernization. Read and discuss the primary document "On Wives and Concubines" that shows influence of Western ideas on Japanese social customs.

Append. 19-21 (20 min.)

Read and discuss textbook excerpt "Exploitation or co-prosperity?" Return to Day 1 discussion about the perception of Japan in the 20th century. Summary remarks about Japanese expansion in the midst of Western imperialism; summary remarks about the changes in Japan during the imperialist period. Summary remarks about Japan's motivations/actions in comparison to Western imperialists.

Append. 22-29 (45 min.)

FINAL ESSAY: In consultation with the teacher, students will develop and address a thesis statement about Japanese imperialism and produce an essay that addresses the thesis statement. This assignment will address the benchmark noted above. It also enables students to complete one specified writing portfolio assignment required by Columbus Public Schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>Slavery established in French colonies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Slavery abolished in French colonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>Shogunate gains administrative control over the southern part of Ezo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Louisiana Purchase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>Russian envoy Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov reaches Nagasaki, and unsuccessfully seeks the establishment of trade relations with Japan</td>
<td>Napoleon crowns himself Emperor of France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>Phaeton Incident: British warship Phaeton enters Nagasaki Harbor and exacerbates fears of Western encroachment</td>
<td>Official end of the Holy Roman Empire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Shogunate issues the Order for the Repelling of Foreign Ships</td>
<td>United States Monroe Doctrine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Tempo Famine</td>
<td>Slavery abolished in the British Empire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Rebellion of Oshio Heihachiro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Morrison Incident: U.S. merchant ship carrying Japanese castaways is fired upon as it attempts to enter Uraga Bay near Edo (now Tokyo) and Kagoshima Bay in Kyushu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Opium War (1839-1842)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Tempo Reforms</td>
<td>Great Britain claims sovereignty over Hong Kong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Dutch warship arrives in Nagasaki with a letter from the king of the Netherlands advising the shogunate to open the country to Western trade</td>
<td>U.S. and China sign Treaty of Peace, Amity, and Commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>Shogunate and domains give greater attention to coastal defenses as foreign ships and whaling vessels enter Japanese territorial waters</td>
<td>Mexican War begins (to 1848)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gold discovered in California</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taiping Rebellion breaks out in China (1850–64)</td>
<td>California joins the Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>Four warships of the US East India Squadron, commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry, enter Uraga Bay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>Treaty of Peace and Amity between the United States and the Empire of Japan (Kanagawa Treaty) signed; similar treaties concluded with Great Britain (1854), Russia (1855), and the Netherlands (1856)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Ansei earthquake kills more than 5000 people in Edo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>US Consul General Townsend Harris arrives at Shimoda to initiate trade negotiations with the shogunate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yoshida Shoin teaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Shogunal army engages forces of Choshu domain in the second of the Choshu Expeditions; the Shogunate's failure to bring the campaign to a successful conclusion severely damages its prestige</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prussia defeats Austria in the Six Weeks War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Satsuma and Choshu form a secret alliance against the shogunate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>The last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu returns political authority to Mutsuhito (Emperor Meiji) who changes the name of the era to Meiji (or enlightened rule)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Russia sells Alaska to the U.S. for $7.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Restoration of Imperial rule (Osei Fukko) declared</td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. President Andrew Johnson is impeached for violating the the Tenure-of-Office Act, and is acquitted by the Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Fragmented Tokugawa forces and dissident domains lodge the Boshin War</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Emperor Meiji moves from Kyoto to Edo, now named Tokyo, or Eastern Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Daimyo return domain lands and population registers to the Emperor. Domains are designated public land with uniform procedures for tax collection. Daimyo are appointed as local governors and receive government stipends</td>
<td></td>
<td>United States trans-continental railroad completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Samurai divided into two ranks: a) shizoku; b) sotsu,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Ryukyu Islands incorporated into Japan and becomes Okinawa prefecture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Jiyuto (Liberal Party) formed by Ii gagaki Taijuna.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-85</td>
<td>Matsuoka Deflation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Kaishinto (Progressive Party) formed by Okuma Shigenobu</td>
<td>Korea and the U.S. establish formal diplomatic relations</td>
<td>Great Britain occupies Cairo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883-85</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sino-French War; China recognizes Vietnam as a protectorate of France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Cabinet system adopted with Ito Hirobumi as the first Prime Minister; the new cabinet supersedes the Daizokan (Grand Council of State) as the central organ of the Japanese state</td>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian Pacific Railway completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tianjin (Tientsin) Convention: agreement reached between China and Japan concerning their interests in Korea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td></td>
<td>Great Britain annexes Burma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Privy Council established</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eastman produces Kodak camera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Meiji Constitution promulgated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gustave Eiffel completes Tower in Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Election law of 1889 limits voting to the House of Representatives to men over 25 who paid ¥15 or more in national tax (about 1% of the population)</td>
<td></td>
<td>First American skyscraper built in Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>1894</td>
<td>1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Imperial Rescript on Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tonghak Rebellion, a peasant uprising, breaks out in Korea. (China and Japan intervene in 1894, commencing the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Artist Kuroda Seiki returns from study in Paris and introduces impressionism to Japan</td>
<td></td>
<td>France annexes Laos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Anglo-Japanese Commercial Treaty abolishes extraterritoriality and restores partial tariff autonomy to Japan</td>
<td>Sino-Japanese War (1894-95)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Treaty of Shimoneski concludes Sino-Japanese War: China recognizes the independence of Korea; Japan gains Formosa (Taiwan), and Pescadores Islands; Liaodong Peninsula now controlled by Japan (Japan gives this up a few months later, only to have Russia gain the leasehold in 1898); China pays ¥364 million indemnity, and Japan gains same extra-territorial rights as Western countries</td>
<td>Queen Min of Korea is assassinated by Japanese troops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Jiyuto and Kaishinto become Kensito (Constitutional Party); later becomes Minseito in 1927</td>
<td>Hundred Days of Reform of Kang Yuwei</td>
<td>Spanish-American War: Spain cedes Puerto Rico, Philippines, Guam to the United States; United States annexes Hawaii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Extra-territoriality privileges (in place since 1858) removed by foreign governments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Rikken Seiyukai (Friends of Constitutional Government)</td>
<td>Boxer Rebellion in China</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Future Emperor Hirohito born (first emperor since 1758 not born of an imperial concubine)</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Australia established</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>Russo-Japanese War. Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905 concludes hostilities. Russia recognizes Japan’s interests in Korea; Japan gains southern part of Sakhalin Islands; Russian lease on Liaodong Peninsula; and South Manchurian Railway line between Port Arthur and Mukden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Hibiya Incident</td>
<td>Korea becomes a Japanese protectorate. In 1910, Japan’s role is expanded and Korea is annexed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Japan Socialist Party formed</td>
<td>South Manchurian Railway incorporated</td>
<td>Major earthquake hits San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td></td>
<td>King Kojong of Korea is forced to resigned, and Japan gains control of Korea’s internal affairs</td>
<td>U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt bans Japanese from immigrating to the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Japan gains U.S. recognition of its special status in Manchuria</td>
<td></td>
<td>First Model T Ford is made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Ito Hirobumi assassinated on his arrival in Manchuria by a Korean nationalist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Washington D.C. receives 2,000 flowering cherry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Japanese View of the Inventiveness of the West

Serious Japanese thinkers reacted to their own country’s weakness with proposals to adopt Western science and industry. But the "Civilization and Enlightenment Movement" of the 1820s had its lighter side as well. In 1871 the novelist Kajikiro Kusakabe wrote a satire about a man with an umbrella, a watch, and a de-colleonne on his hat, who was eating and drinking in a new beef restaurant. Before the Restoration, Buddhism had banned beef eating as a defilement. The comic hero, however, wonders, "Why we in Japan haven’t even such a clever thing before." He then goes on to rhapsodize about Western inventions.

What do pickled onions have to do with the marvels of Western technology?

In the West they’re free of superstitions. There’s the custom to do everything scientifically, and that’s why they’ve invented amazing things like the steamship and the steam engine. Did you know that they engrave the plates for printing newspapers with telescopic needles? And that they bring down wind from the sky with balloons? Aren’t they wonderful inventions? Of course, there are good reasons behind these inventions. If you look at a map of the world you’ll see some countries marked "tropical," which means that the sun shines closest. The people in those countries are all burnt black by the sun. The king of that part of the world tried all kinds of schemes before he hit on what is called a balloon. It’s a big round bag they fill with air high up in the sky. They bring the bag down and open it, causing the cooling air inside the bag to spread out all over the country. That’s a great invention. On the other hand, in Russia, which is a cold country where the snow falls even in summer and the ice is so thick that people can’t move, they invented the steam engine. You’ve got to admire them for it. I understand that they modeled the steam engine after the flaming chariot of hell, but anyway, what they do is to lead a crowd of people on a wagon and light a fire in a pipe underneath. They keep feeding the fire inside the pipe with coal, so that the people riding on top can travel a great distance completely oblivious to the cold. Those people in the West can think up inventions like that, one after the other . . . . You say you must be going? Well, good-bye. Waitress! Another small bottle of sake. And some pickled onions to go with it!

Japanese Imperialism

"The head of the tortoise is nursing the young prince in Japan, and can control the tail which being blind devours the innocent people in Korea." - *Tokyo Puck*, 1908

---

Concerns About Modernization


You know, our uneasiness comes from this thing called scientific progress. Science does not know where to stop, and does not permit to stop either: from walking to rickshaws (oddly enough, a foreign introduction), from rickshaws to horse-drawn cars, from cars to trains, from trains to automobiles...to airplanes—what will we ever be allowed to stop and rest? Where will it all end? It is really frightening.

1. Commodore Perry meets the Imperial Commissioners at Yokohama, 8th March 1854.
Photo: Peter Newark's Pictures.

The first modern Japanese embassy abroad, sent by the Tokugawa to Washington and shown here in the navy yard there in 1860 with their American hosts. Notice that the Japanese are all dressed in *samurai* outfits, complete with swords. [Bettmann/CORBIS]
The Meiji Constitution

The hurriedly drawn up constitution of 1889 was designed to make the Charter Oath more specific, which Article 1 of the Constitution merely restates. Most of the other articles echo Western models, at least in part to make a favorable impression on the imperialist powers and to hasten the time when they might give up their "Unequal Treaties." The following is a selection.

Article 2. All power and authority in the empire shall be vested in a Council of state, and thus the privileges of divided government shall be done away with. The power and authority of the Council of State shall be three-fold: legislative, executive, and judicial. Thus the imbalance of authority among the different branches of government shall be avoided.

Article 4. Appointment to offices of the first rank shall be limited to princes of the blood, court nobles, and territorial lords and shall be by virtue of (the emperor’s) intimate trust in the great ministers of state.

Article 5. Each great city, clan, and imperial prefecture shall furnish qualified men to be members of the Assembly. A deliberative body shall be instituted so that the views of the people may be discussed openly.

Article 9. All officials shall be changed after four years’ service. They shall be selected by means of public balloting. However, at the first expiration of terms hereafter, half of the officials shall retain office for two additional years ... so that the government may be ceased to continue without interruption.


On Education

The Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 was much cited, and was regularly read aloud in the schools. Many Meiji officials contributed to its content and wording.

Know Ye, Our subjects: Our imperial ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue ... This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire ... Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, attentive to your brothers and sisters, as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends trust bear yourselves in modesty and moderation ... Purvive learning and cultivate the arts and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws. Should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State, and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

Supernationalism in Japan

Tokugawa Japan saw a new growth of nationalist feelings. Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) asserted the superiority of Shinto over all other religions, and the superiority of Japan and the Japanese.

People all over the world refer to Japan as the Land of the Gods, and call us the descendants of the gods. Indeed it is exactly as they say: our country, as a special mark of favor from the heavenly gods, was forgotten by them, and there is that so immense a difference between Japan and all the other countries of the world as to defy comparison. Ours is a splendid and blessed country, the Land of the Gods beyond any doubt, and we, down to the most humble man and woman, are the descendants of the gods. Japanese differ completely from and are superior to the people of China, India, Russia, Holland, Spain, Cambodia, and all other countries, and for us to have called our country the land of the Gods was not mere vainglory. It was the gods who formed all the lands of the world at the creation, and these gods were without exception born in Japan. This is a matter of universal belief, and is quite beyond dispute.


Need for Lebensraum

The Japanese used the same argument as the Nazis in asserting their need for expansion room to accommodate their population.

“We have already said that there are only three ways left to Japan to escape from the pressure of surplus population. We are like a great crowd of people pushed into a small and narrow room, and there are only three doors through which we might escape, namely, immigration, advance into world markets, and expansion of territory. The first door, emigration, has been barred to us by the anti-Japanese immigration policies of other countries. The second door, advance into world markets, is being pushed shut by tariff barriers and the absorption of commercial treaties. What should Japan do when two of the three doors have been closed against us? It is quite natural that Japan should rush upon the last remaining door.”

The Cultural Revolution of Meiji Japan: Westerners’ Views

While the political parties prepared for constitutional government and the government built cities to contain the parties, Japan’s society and culture were being transformed.

ON JAPANESE STUDENTS IN 1868
What a sight for a schoolmaster! . . . They are all dressed in the native costume of loose coats, with long and bag-like sleeves; kilts, like petticoats, open at the upper side; with shaved midscalps, and topknots like gun-hammers. Men and boys carry slates and copy books in their hands, and common cheap glass ink bottles slung by pieces of twine to their girdles. Hands and faces are smeared with the black fluid; but, strangest of all, each has two of the murderous-looking swords, one long and the other short, stuck in his belt. Symbols of the soldier rather than the scholar are these; but the samurai are both.

ON JAPAN DURING THE 1870s
To understand the situation you have to realize that less than ten years ago the Japanese were living under conditions like those of our chivalric age and the feudal system of the Middle Ages, with its monasteries, guilds, Church universal, and so on; but that between night and morning, one might almost say, and with one great leap, Japan is trying to traverse the stages of five centuries of European development, and to assimilate in the twinkling of an eye all the latest achievements of western civilisation. The country is thus undergoing an immense cultural revolution—for the term “evolution” is inapplicable to a change so rapid and so fundamental. I feel myself lucky to be an eyewitness of so interesting an experiment.

LOOKING BACK FROM THE 1890s
If one considers the comparative precocity of the Japanese youth, as well as the wild and lawless traditions which students of twenty years ago had inherited from their predecessors, and adds thereto the further consideration that twenty years ago parental authority was at its lowest in Japan, for the reason that the go-ahead sons were conscious of knowing a great deal more than their old-fashioned, old world parents, . . . it will not be wondered at that in those early days strikes sometimes took place which bore a striking testimony to the power of organization which is innate in the Japanese. . . . But I am talking of events which took place many years ago. Things are very much changed now. . . . The go-ahead student of twenty years ago is the go-ahead parent of today, and has succeeded in re-establishing over his children that parental authority which for the time slipped from the grasp of his old world father.

On Wives and Concubines

During the 1870s and 1880s leading Japanese thinkers introduced a wide range of Western ideas into their country. Among them were freedom and equality as rights inherent in human nature. Debating the questions of equality in marriage and the rights of wives, intellectuals voiced a radical criticism of concubinage and prostitution. As a consequence of these debates, laws were passed during the eighties and nineties that strengthened the legal status of wives. Mori Arinori (1847-1889), a leading thinker who had studied in the United States and England, wrote the following passage in 1874. He later became a diplomat and, between 1885 and 1889, the minister of education.

Can you think of a comparable instance in American or European history when new ideas led to dramatic social change? How long did the changes last and how deeply rooted did they become?

The relation between man and wife is the fundamental of human morals. The moral path will be achieved by establishing this fundamental, and the country will only be firmly based if the moral path is realized. When people marry, rights and obligations emerge between them so that neither can take advantage of the other.

There have hitherto been a variety of marriage practices in our country. . . . Sometimes there may be one or even several concubines in addition to the wife, and sometimes a concubine may become the wife. Sometimes the wife and the concubines live in the same establishment. Sometimes they are separated, and the concubine is the favored one while the wife is neglected.

Taking a concubine is by arbitrary decision of the man and with acquiescence of the concubine's family. The arrangement, known as sedated, is made by paying money to the family of the concubine. This means, in other words, that concubines are bought with money. Since concubines are generally geisha and prostitutes patronized by rich men and nobles, many descendants in the rich and noble houses are the children of bought women. Even though the wife is superior to the concubine in households where they live together, there is commonly jealousy and hatred between them because the husband generally favors the concubine. Therefore, there are numerous instances when, the wife and the concubines being scattered in separate establishments, the husband repairs to the abode of the one with whom he is infatuated and willfully resorts to scandalous conduct.

Thus, I have here explained that our country has not yet established the fundamental of human morality, and I hope later to discuss how this situation injures our customs and obstructs enlightenment.

Women textile workers at a turn-of-the-century silk-weaving mill in Japan. Their product, made from mechanically reeled silk thread, was superior. A company officer, at center, is visiting the shop floor; behind him is a supervisor, wearing a Meiji-style mustache. Women constituted more than half of Japan's industrial labor force well into the 20th century. They worked a span of years after leaving primary school and before marrying. Their hours were long, their dormitories crowded, and they often contracted tuberculosis. (Kyodo News Agency)

International relations and imperial expansion

However, it is easy to let one's outrage run away with one's judgement. It is tempting to generalize too broadly about Japan's international relations and imperial expansion, suggesting, for example, that there was no change in policy between the beginning and end of the period, and that there was no difference in the ways that different parts of the empire were acquired and administered. It is a temptation that needs to be resisted. There is no reason to attribute a spurious homogeneity to Japan's international relations and imperial expansion to be able to mount a telling attack on her record in dealing with the rest of the world. There is no need either to use the supposed homogeneity of Japan's international relations and imperial expansion to support the view that it derived from something deep and unchanging in Japanese society and culture.66

The heterogeneity of Japan's international relations and imperial expansion can be seen in several ways. It will be recalled from earlier in the chapter that when Japan embarked upon her policy of territorial aggrandizement, her troops were viewed as a model of restraint rather than barbarity and her colonial administration in Taiwan (and even Korea) was regarded—at least in the West—as a model of enlightenment rather than exploitation. It should be recognized too that during the Taishō Democracy of the 1920s, there were some attempts to further a more liberal policy—if that is the proper way to describe the new emphasis that was placed upon the 'assimilation' of the colonial population. In Taiwan, in particular, efforts were made to encourage equal employment opportunities, to stimulate the diffusion of the Japanese language and to bring about intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans.67

It should not be forgotten either that, later in the century, the Japanese claimed that it was Western troops, rather than their own, who were notorious for their barbarity; and that it was Western imperialism, not Co-Prosperity, which should be identified with degradation and exploitation. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, papers like the Nippon Times and Japan Times Weekly carried numerous reports contrasting the barbarity of the Americans with the civilness of the Japanese. 'The inborn cruelty of the American people,' it was argued, 'is clearly manifest in the character of crimes perpetrated by them against coloured people.' The Japanese built hospitals for their prisoners of war, it was explained. Unlike the brutal massacre of helpless Japanese soldiers and the wanton attacks on hospital ships by the enemy, kind consideration treatment is accorded to the war prisoners interned in Japan.68

This, of course, was selective reporting with a vengeance. But neither were Western troops or Western imperialism by any means as fastidious

Predictably perhaps, the army reported that the military had 'countermeasures' in hand, and that the high command did not believe that the war was lost. They were overruled, however, and finally on 15 August, Emperor Hirohito made his celebrated, and unprecedented, broadcast to the Japanese people.

I cannot bear any longer to see my innocent subjects tormented under the cruelties of war. There are certainly conditions that can hardly be accepted: dismemberment of the Imperial forces by foreign hands for one. But we have to bear it now. I think of the spirit of those who have died for the nation's cause and I reflect on my incapacity to respond to their loyalty. My heart aches as I think of those who have faithfully fulfilled their duties and who now have to bear the disgrace. But this is the time when we must bear the unbearable to restore peace to the nation and to the world.69

Exploitation or co-prosperity?

Is it possible to regard Japan's international relations and imperial expansion between 1868 and 1945 with anything other than scorn and contempt? Is it possible to find anything positive to say about the war in which the Japanese treated the countries and individuals with which they came into contact as they became a world power and swept across the Asian continent?

It is obvious, of course, how Japan acquired her evil reputation. The political leaders of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Japan led her into a series of aggressive wars: against China, Russia, China again, the United States of America, the allied powers and finally much of south-east Asia. They established a chain of oppressive colonial regimes in Korea, Manchuria, other parts of China and much of south-east Asia. They declared to ratify the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war. They condoned the excesses of the armed forces, it seems, whenever and wherever they occurred: the Manchurian Incident, the Nanjing Massacre and innumerable, less well known events throughout the Pacific War. The armed forces themselves behaved with a mixture of cunning, barbarity and apparent fanaticism. They provoked the Manchurian Incident, and possibly the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. They forced thousands upon thousands of Korean and Chinese women into sexual slavery; they abused, exploited and murdered prisoners of war; they conducted experiments on live subjects, they launched themselves to certain death in kamikaze raids, and they refused, some of them, even to surrender when the war was over. Japanese imperialism became—and has remained—a byword throughout the world for cruelty, inhumanity and exploitation.70
as those in the West have been led to believe. In fact, it has been seen already in this chapter that even the victims of Japanese imperialism sometimes regarded it as an example of what the East might achieve.

Japan's military expansion after 1941 toppled colonial regimes in the Dutch East Indies, Malaya, the Philippines, and eventually French Indochina. The Japanese occupying forces had difficulty in finding collaborators who saw the Japanese, initially at least, as liberators, and Japan's encouragement of anticolonialist nationalism in Southeast Asia paved the way for the wave of anticolonialist revolutions, civil wars, and liberation movements, successful and unsuccessful, that swept the region after 1945.  

It is important to stress, once again, how difficult it is to avoid the 'presentism' and ethnocentrism which colour so many Western judgments about late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Japanese history. There is no denying, of course, that Japan's international relations and imperial expansion inflicted misery both upon her own people and upon untold millions in Asia and the rest of the world. There is no denying either that many of the policies adopted by Japan were similar to those which had been pursued by other imperial powers. The comparison may help to explain, but it does nothing to excuse, the course which was adopted by Japan's political and military leaders. It is a record with which many in Japan still have to come to terms.

Notes
4. To re-examine, it appears as though Japanese international relations were directed exclusively towards imperialist aggression. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the period reveals that various foreign policy strategies were debated and pursued, often in tandem. The most important of these included the pursuit of an alliance with the predominant Western nations of a given era, and benevolent co-operation with Asia (Pan-Asianism). For an analysis of foreign policy throughout the period, see M. Mayo (ed.), The Emergence of Imperial Japan: Self-Defense vs. Calculated Aggression, Hawaii, 1970; L.F. Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy, 1868-1945, University of Hawaii Press, 1987. For the distinction between formal and informal imperialism, see R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, 'The Importance of Free Trade', Economic History Review, vi, 1954, esp. pp. 1-13.
order, a hedging in favor of the state which was to remain the basis of growing arbitrary power.

The emperor was also declared "sacred and inviolable," and was given supreme command of the army and navy, and the power to dissolve the Diet whenever he (really the government leaders) considered it desirable. The provision that the ministers of war and the navy must be serving generals and admirals was announced in an imperial decree shortly after the promulgation of the constitution, a move in which one can detect the strong hand of Yamagata, father of the new army, who had earlier insisted that the chiefs of staff were wholly independent of the civil government and acted only under the command of the emperor. This was foreshadowed the increasingly disastrous domination of government by the military, which put Japan on the path to Nagasaki, Pearl Harbor, and Hiroshima. The Meiji oligarchs were pragmatists, and perhaps judged correctly that Japan was not yet ready for and would not support a more legitimate form of democracy than the token form represented in the constitution.

This may have been so, but the leaders were clearly strongly authoritarian in persuasion; some, like Yamagata, more so than others, but as a group determined to safeguard government against popular opposition, and the military against even government efforts to control it. The legacy of this Meiji establishment of government formed a foundation on which to build. The Meiji establishment of government forms, and the overtones clearly hinted at, was to be the rule of Japan. Unfortunately but understandably, Japan's string of military successes beginning in 1894–95 against China attracted strong popular support and tended to dampen down opposition. This was part of the goal the whole country had worked so hard for, and the fruits of victory in national pride were sweet.

### Japanese Imperialism

Westerners are not, however, in a good position to criticize Japan for picking up from them the disease of imperialism (see Chapter 14) or for following their model in imposing their rule on other countries. Japanese had long had what one may call troubled relations with Korea, and as Japanese strength increased it was perhaps understandable that they should look there with newly ambitious eyes. Yamagata and some of his colleagues had clearly felt that it was part of the new Japan's destiny to express its strength in East Asia, and it will be remembered that as early as 1872 there were plans to invade Korea, and an actual expedition to Taiwan in 1874, followed by an expedition to Korea in 1876 to open Korean ports to Japanese trade. Korea was still a Chinese tributary, and China felt that it was responsible for whatever happened there. In 1882 an anti-Qing mob attacked the newly established Japanese legation in Seoul, and both the Meiji leaders and by all accounts the Japanese working together had paid off. Japanese dreams of their rightful dominance in East Asia were given new stimulus. Power always tempts those who have it to use it, and often provides its own justification. Westerners justified their own use of power in the cause of "right" and the spreading of "civilization" as well as the glorification of aggression and the survival of the fittest. All of these delusions now hardened themselves on the Japanese mind, and at the same time encouraged them to see China, not inaccurately, as in decline from its former greatness, no longer either a model of superiority or a legitimate contender for the leadership of East Asia which it had aspired to in the past. China was increasingly now seen...
as “backward,” “stirry,” disorganized, and ineffective. Most Japanese felt that it was time for the Chinese to take a backseat and leave the leadership and the most behavior to Japan. Japan was in fact a far more appropriate model for Korea, which had tried to close itself off from all foreign contact while Japan had forced itself through the use of Western ideas. Korea became from 1885 a
Japanese sphere through nominally independent (i.e., from China), and was taken over as part of the Japanese empire in 1910. The Treaty of Shiminokawa, divided by Japan, also gave it sovereignty over Taiwan and the nearby Pescadores Islands as part of the spoils of victory; this provided further scope for the application of the Japanese model of successful development, and fed new Japanese national/imperial pride.

Already the Japanese had their eye on Manchuria, next door to Korea, and the treaty granted them sovereignty also in the Liaodong peninsula of southern Manchuria, which they wanted for both commercial and strategic reasons. Port Arthur, built up by the Chinese near the tip of the peninsula (often referred to in Japan as Kwantung) was a valuable naval base within easy range of the China coast and occupying one edge of the Gulf of Bohai with Manchuria, the port of Beijing, on its other (western) shore. A fleet based at Port Arthur could send off access to north China and blockade much of the entire coast, while, adjacent Dalian, already a treaty port, was a valuable commercial base. But the Western powers, including Russia, were alarmed at Japan's astonishing success and its sudden grab of territory, especially of Manchuria. Russia, having filled in Manchuria into its sphere of expansion ever since the Treaty of Tianjin in 1858. The Russians persuaded the Germans and the French, soon after the Treaty of Shiminokawa was signed to “advise” Japan to give up Liaodong. Faced with such pressure, Japan was obliged to do so, but accepted a considerable increase in the indemnity, paid of course by China, which was still supposedly sovereign in Manchuria but was not involved in the Russian-German-French move known as the Triple Intervention. There was massive popular indignation in Japan over this “humiliation.” The Emperor told his people that they must “endure the unendurable,” a phrase which was repeated by his grandson Emperor Hirohito when he announced Japan's surrender to the Allies in 1945.

The British were not part of the Triple Intervention, and were later in 1902 to sign their own pact of friendship and alliance with Japan. But there was acute resentment against Russia, German, and France, among Japan's institutions and culture had been factiously copied by the Japanese and their countries respected. Now they were designed as counterparts of inferiority. Within three years Russia took over Liaodong and Port Arthur, the Germans seized Qingdao in Shandong, the French Guangzhou Bay south of Guangzhou, the British Wei-hai-wei in Shandong (which had originally been part of the Japanese claims), and the United States the Philippines and Hawaii. Japan had always feared Russia as a powerful and expansionist neighbor, and its plans for Manchuria conflicted with Japanese plans.

Having denied it to Japan, Russia's new control of Liaodong was followed by expansion of its de facto control in the rest of Manchuria with mining and railway rights. Much of this new imperial grabbing was part of the fever pitch of the disease, at a time when China seemed largely defenseless. The Japanese defeat of China revealed Beijing's weakness, and stimulated a new round of demands for additional concessions to the Western powers, as above. Western aggression was accelerated by the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 when Chinese mobs with tacit imperial support besieged the foreign legations in Beijing and were finally driven off only by an allied expedition, which included Japanese troops as about half of the total allied force. China was forced to pay yet another indemnity and Beijing was occupied by for- eign troops, the largest contingent of them Japanese.

It was understandable for the Japanese to conclude from all this experience that force was a very effective instrument of foreign policy, and as any one army and the navy were now riding high. The British had noticed with grudging approval the military performance of the Japanese in 1894 and 1900, including their brilliant use of the ships bought from Britain, and they shared with Japan a deep concern about Russian expansion in Manchuria and their evident designs on Korea as well as the British leading economic and diplomatic position in China. In 1902 the two countries signed an Anglo-Japanese Alliance of mutual support; Japan accepted the existing treaty system in China, and Britain acknowledged that again for a special interest in Korea. This was Japan's first agreement with a Western power on equal terms, and it gave a great boost to morale, while reassuring the Japanese that if they attacked Russia the Western powers would remain "benevolently neutral."

Conflict with Russia

The Russians had already advised the Japanese against building any fortifications on the Korean south coast, which could threaten Russian communications between Vladivostok, their Pacific naval base, and Port Arthur. The Japanese were incensed, and it increased their conviction that they would have to drive the Russians out of Manchuria and Korea. It seemed to have been prepared to accept a Russian sphere in Manchuria, which they were already rapidly developing, in exchange for a Japanese sphere in Korea, but Yaragata and the cabinet which he then dominated were adamantly opposed and already planning to strike against the Russians. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance fed Japanese national pride and helped to make up for the "humiliation" of the Tripartite
In fact, the costs of the war had left Japan bankrupt and scraping the bottom of the manpower barrel, although the public was told none of this. The Russians were willing to settle also because they were having to confront at home in 1904-1905 the stirrings of revolution which would eventually topple the Czarist regime. The war was generally unpopular and very expensive. Neverthe less, the Russians had completed the last short link of the Trans-Siberian railway by 1905 and had earlier finished the rail link through Manchuria known as the Chinese Eastern Railway direct to Vladivostok with its southern branch to Mukden and Port Arthur. In time their far greater resources would have crushed the Japanese, who were lucky to escape as well as they did. But the early Japanese victories against the Russians astounded the world, and won them full acceptance as a great power.

CHAPTER 15 Japan's Response to New Challenges

Korean annexation was disbanded, but there was massive and repeated rioting, which the Japanese brutally suppressed. Yamashita pressed for outright annexation of Korea, but his argument that Japan could and should try to win the Koreans over to the Japanese model of development. Nevertheless, Korea was already in effect a Japanese colony, and they were of course bitterly resented. Faced with opposition at home to his policy of tact, Itō resigned in 1909, and later in the same year was assassinated by a Korean patriot. This gave Tokyo the pretext for complete annexation; they had been looking for, and in 1910 Korea was declared to be an integral part of the new Japanese empire.

The hearty atmosphere created in Japan by the victories over China and Russia further strengthened the prestige and domination of the military in all aspects of Japanese life. General Nogi and Admiral Togo, the chief army and navy commanders against the Russians, became widely popular as national heroes, revered in the schools and by the general public. A number of ultranationalist societies were formed in this period, most well known among them the Black Dragon Society (a translation of the Chinese characters for the Amur River), as pressure groups pushing for a more aggressive policy of expansion abroad and with close army connections. Japanese politics had long been marred by the assassination of political leaders whose policies displeased such groups, somewhat in the same way as late Togugawa hot-headed among the samurai had felt that the only acceptable response to foreigners on the sacred soil of Japan was to kill them. Assassination now became an all-too-common way for the new societies of superpatriots to eliminate politicians who did not conform to their ideas, and of course to use such acts as a threat to others. When the Meiji emperor died in 1912, General Nogi, accompanied by his wife, committed ritual harakiri; his will made it clear that this was to remind Japanese of the old honor code and to confirm what he felt was happening in Japanese society as people were pursuing their own pleasure instead of sacrificing themselves to their national duty. The new emperor took the reign title of Taisho, but proved to be mentally deficient and most of his functions were in time performed instead by his son as a formal regent.

Japan in Korea

The war had been fought in part over Korea, and before it was over the Japanese consolidated their hold there by forcing the Koreans to accept Japanese diplomatic and financial "advisers." In 1905 the Korean king was obliged to make over control of the country's foreign affairs to a Japanese Resident-General, a position filled by Ito Hirobumi. Understandable Korean reluctance to cooperate with this violation of their sovereignty led to new Japanese demands that they should approve all executive and legislative actions; the king abdicated and was succeeded by a crown prince who was more compliant. The
CHAPTER 15  Japan's Response to New Challenges  •  305

colonies, and in China, was pronouncedly racist, and the Japanese colonial record was decidedly bad in balance, developing its major countries to send the Japanese economy and repressing all protest. Later in Manchuria, Japanese policy was more constructive, investing large sums in the creation of a rail system, mines, factories, and a commercialized agriculture and thus creating the essential infrastructure for industrialization. Much of the fruits, including even the pig iron and steel produced in Manchuria, were drained off to Japan, but during their control Manchuria developed the largest heavy industrial complex in mainland East Asia, only then to be reabsorbed by Communist China before the heavy Japanese startup costs had been fully repaid.

Meiji Culture and Accomplishments

By late Meiji times, in the flood of Western influence, Japanese had begun to write realistic novels as well as translating large chunks of modern Western literature. The French realist writer Émile Zola was especially admired, as were Western romantic models. Probably the best-known and still-valued writer of this period was Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916). He had studied in England, and described himself as half Western and half Japanese. His poetry and even more his many novels, especially Kōrō, are still widely read. Many painters went even farther in imitating Western styles, especially those of the French impressionists and realists, including Kuroda Seiki (d. 1924), who shocked Tokyo by painting full frontal nude female figures in a style hard to distinguish from what was being painted in the West. By 1920 Japan had nearly 55 million people and nearly 100 percent were in school or had completed the primary grades. This provided a greatly expanded reading and viewing public, increasingly sophisticated in its tastes, concentrated in the booming cities but involving many in rural areas as well. As a reflection of Japan's success in Westernization, including its legal system, and also in response to its triumphs over China and Russia, the long hoped for relinquishment of extraterritoriality was accepted by Britain in 1899 and soon thereafter by the other Western powers; tariff autonomy was restored in 1911. In little more than a generation Japan had won its struggle for acceptance and equality with the West.

Credit for this achievement must be shared among the Meiji oligarchs but also with the Japanese people as a whole, for it was a truly national effort. Among the Meiji leaders, Ito Hirobumi stands out as a statesman, conservative like most Japanese of this period but open to new ideas. As a youth he wanted passionately to save his country from the foreign threat, and at age 21 tried to
burn the newly established British embassy in Tokyo. But when he visited Britain the next year, he realized that it was impossible to drive the Westerners out and returned to work for Japan's modernization. After the Restoration, he went with government missions to Europe and America to learn more from their example how to make his country strong. A later mission to Prussia convinced him that the Prussian constitutional monarchy was best suited to Japan, and Ito was the chief architect of the new constitution proclaimed by the emperor in 1889, which contained many Prussian ideas. He understood, however, that constitutional government, and the cooperation of the new parliament, could not be made to work without political organization and popular support. In 1898 he left office to form a political party for that purpose, which was dominant until 1941. In 1901 Ito gave the prime ministership to General Katsura, a fellow Choshu man and a follower of Yamagata.

Ito was an enthusiastic modernizer, especially after his visits to the West, but he also understood the need for compromise in politics and for adapting Western ways to Japanese traditions, circumstances, and values. In some ways, he remained at least as traditional as he was modern. His objective was the preservation and development of his country, not its Westernization. He saw the need for many foreign ideas, but never at the expense of strong Japanese identity. He believed deeply in the restoration of the emperor's personal rule, and aimed to accomplish his ends by working through the throne. But he also understood the rising interest in a less authoritarian form of government, the need for political parties, a constitution, and a parliament. He was both an enthusiast and a realist, a radical reformer and a traditional conservative, a proponent of change and a practical compromiser—in other words, a true statesman, who served his country well and who never let personal ambition or power crowd his judgment or his dedication to the public welfare.

With the goals of the national drive to modernize the country and obtain Western approval accomplished, and with the rise in living standards for most people (except for tenants, landless laborers, and most factory workers—altogether a substantial share of the population, but one with no real political power), attitudes and interests became more divided among divergent groups. The rise of the military in politics tended to form one such group, with their ultranationalist supporters. Those who hoped for a less authoritarian and externally aggressive alternative and pressed for a more genuine democracy formed another. The spread of universal public education and the rise of the universities produced a growing group of inte
CHAPTER 15 Japan's Response to New Challenges • 307

In 1922, marked the end of an era. The Meiji oligarchs had offered strong leadership to a unified country. Now that they were gone, there were no comparable figures to succeed them, and there was not the same kind of national consensus which had supported their efforts. This was one reason for the rise of the military as the dominant power in the government, where authority rested on force, and the consequent slide of Japan into even more authoritarian government and, in time, further foreign aggression at the instigation of the militarists.

Before Japan's descent into what the Japanese call "the dark valley," there was a brief bloom of diverse intellectual and artistic expression, and moves in the direction of a more democratic government and society, known as "Hidaka Democracy," from the imperial era which spanned E. This, and its destruction by the rising military, will be considered in Chapter 18.

Suggested Websites

Meiji Period Japan
http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e213o.html
Chronology: http://www.mcsa.cs.purdue.edu/HTML/
Learning/From/Meiji/Chronology.html

The Meiji Era and the Modernization of Japan
http://www.alliance101.com/article.cfm/oriental_history/178095

Suggestions for Further Reading


