

History Level 10

Chapter 5 — Investigation: Asia (1750–present)

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An Asian society, 1750–1900: politics, economy, daily life and culture

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The big picture

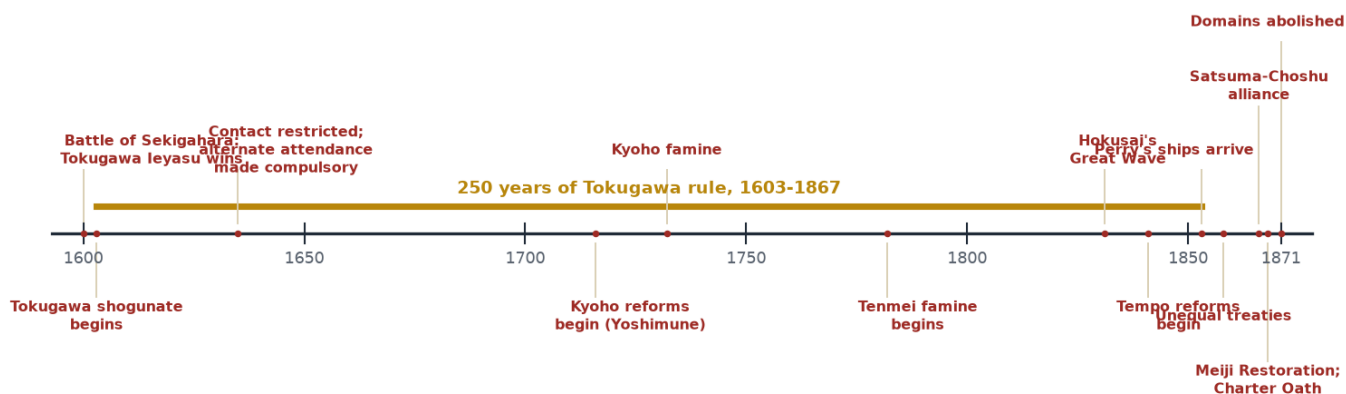
In 1750, Japan was ruled from a castle city called Edo by a single family, the Tokugawa, whose head held the title of **shogun** — the military ruler of Japan. The Tokugawa had come to power a century and a half earlier, after generations of civil war: in 1600, the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu won the battle of Sekigahara, and in 1603 the emperor appointed him shogun. From Edo, his family kept a firm peace over Japan for two and a half centuries. While Britain was industrialising and European empires were spreading across the world, Japan grew its own way: a stable farm economy, a strict order of social ranks, a busy city culture, and carefully limited contact with other countries.

Then, between 1853 and 1868, the system broke open. American warships arrived and demanded trade. Other Western powers followed with **unequal treaties** — agreements that forced Japan’s ports open on terms favouring the foreigners. The shogunate proved unable to manage the crisis, and in January 1868 a coalition of southern domains seized power in the name of the young Emperor Meiji. This change is called the **Meiji Restoration**. Within a few years the domains, the samurai class and the old social order were swept away, and Japan began its rush to become a modern industrial state.

This section builds the four sets of features the content description names — **political, social, economic and cultural** — for Tokugawa Japan across the 18th and 19th centuries, and ends with the causes of the Meiji Restoration.

Japan, 1600-1871: the long Tokugawa peace and its ending

Dots mark events; labels rise in tiers where the century gets crowded



The pattern: two and a half centuries of firm, restricted rule, then fifteen years of crisis that ended it.

A timeline of Japan from 1600 to 1871, marking the battle of Sekigahara, the founding of the Tokugawa shogunate, the maritime restriction edicts, the three reform programs, the arrival of Perry, the unequal treaties, and the Meiji Restoration

Figure 1. Japan from 1600 to 1871: the long Tokugawa peace, and the rapid collapse at the end.

The words we are using

Before we go further, let us fix the key terms. In this section:

- The **shogun** was the military ruler of Japan, appointed by the emperor but holding the real power. The **shogunate** is the shogun's government. The Tokugawa family held the title of shogun from 1603 to 1867.
- The shogun's government is often called the **bakufu** (literally “tent government”, an old term for a military headquarters).
- Japan was divided into about 260 **domains** (in Japanese, *han*), each ruled by a lord called a **daimyo**. The combination of bakufu and domains is why historians call this the *bakuh* system.
- The **samurai** were the warrior class. By our period most were paid officials rather than fighting men, receiving a **stipend** — a fixed salary, paid in rice.
- A **koku** was the unit used to measure rice and income: one koku was about 150 kilograms of rice, reckoned to be enough to feed one adult for a year. A domain counted as a daimyo's only if it produced at least 10,000 koku.
- **Alternate attendance** (in Japanese, *sankin kotai*) was the rule that required daimyo to spend every second year in Edo.
- A **primary source** is something made or written at the time being studied, by someone who was there — an edict, a treaty, a print, a diary. A **secondary source** is made later, from primary sources — a historian's book, a documentary, this workbook.

A contested term: was Japan a “closed country”?

You will often read that Tokugawa Japan was *sakoku* — a “closed country”. Treat that word with care, because it is a contested term:

Sakoku. The word *sakoku* (“closed country”) was invented in 1801 by the Japanese scholar Shizuki Tadao, translating a 1727 book by the German traveller Engelbert Kaempfer. Many historians today prefer the term *kaikin* (“maritime restrictions”), because Japan was never completely cut off from the world. In this section, *the maritime restriction policy* means the edicts of 1633–1639 that strictly limited which foreigners could come, and which Japanese could leave; *sakoku* is used only when quoting older sources.

Notice what this teaches us: the very label historians use for a society shapes what we expect to find. A “closed” Japan and a “restricted” Japan are different claims, tested by different evidence — and the evidence, as we will see in Part 1, supports “restricted”.

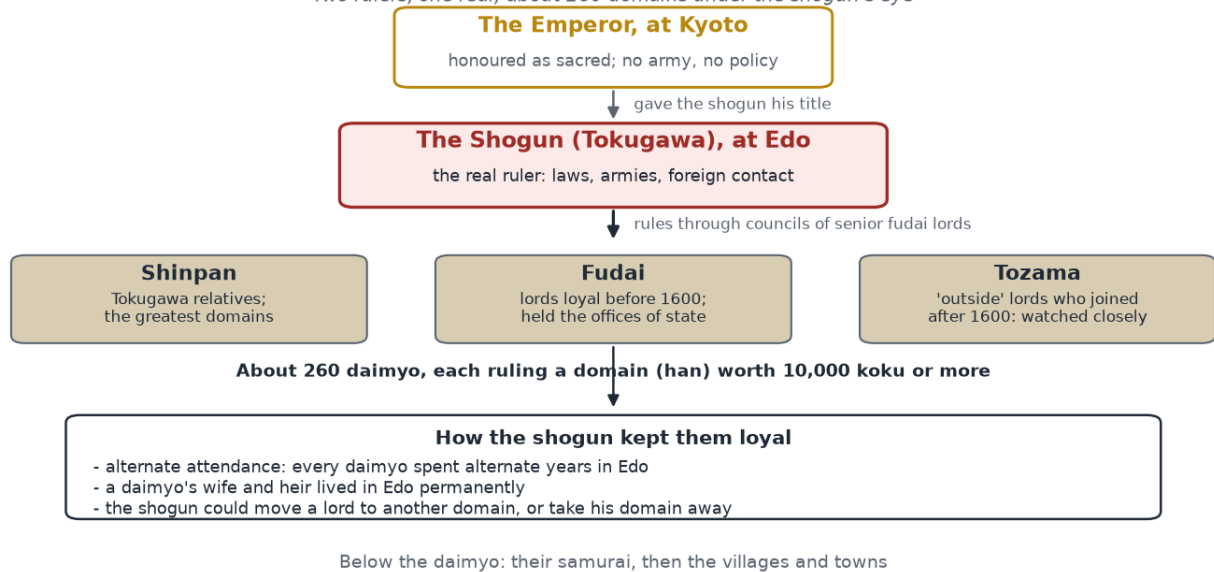
Part 1 — Political features: how the Tokugawa held power for 250 years

Two rulers, one real

Japan's political system had two heads. The **emperor** lived at his court in Kyoto. He was honoured as the descendant of the sun goddess and the source of all authority — but he had no army and made no policy. The **shogun**, ruling from Edo, held the real power: he commanded the armies, made the laws, and controlled foreign contact. The arrangement suited both sides. The shogun borrowed the emperor's ancient prestige to make his rule seem rightful; the emperor kept his court, his rituals and his dignity. No Tokugawa shogun ever tried to replace the imperial family — and in 1868, when the shogunate fell, the emperor's prestige was still intact enough to be the banner under which a new Japan was built.

Who ruled Japan: the bakuhan system

Two rulers, one real; about 260 domains under the shogun's eye



The emperor's prestige stayed untouched for 250 years - and in 1868 it became the banner of the new Japan.

A labelled diagram of the Tokugawa political system, showing the emperor at Kyoto above the shogun at Edo, the shogun above the three groups of daimyo, and the daimyo above the samurai and the village

Figure 2. The bakuhan system: two rulers, one real; about 260 domains under the shogun's eye.

The domains and their lords

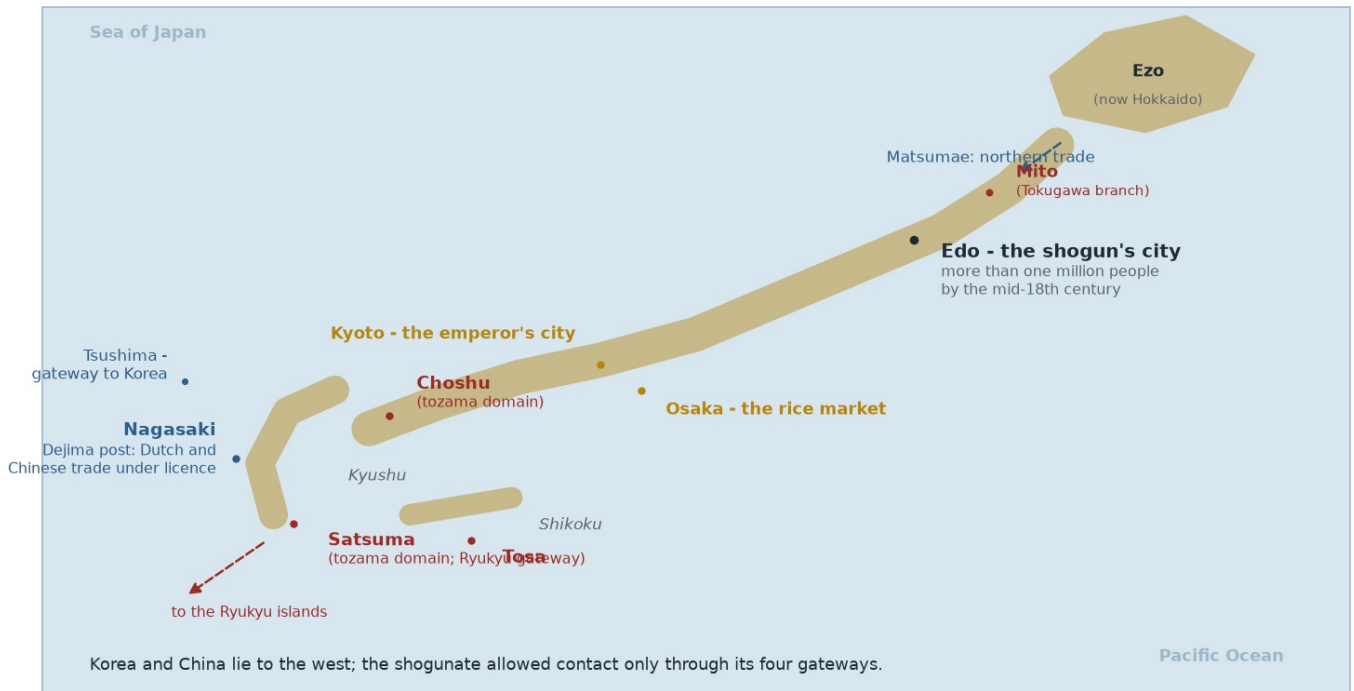
Below the shogun, about 260 domains covered the islands. Each was ruled by a daimyo, whose standing was measured in koku of rice. The Tokugawa sorted the daimyo into three ranks, by how loyal their families had been back in 1600:

- **Shinpan** — lords of Tokugawa blood, the shogun's own relatives, holding some of the greatest domains.
- **Fudai** — lords whose families had served the Tokugawa before the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. They were trusted with the shogunate's senior offices.
- **Tozama** — "outside" lords who had submitted only after Sekigahara. Some were very powerful — Satsuma in the south and Choshu in the west among them — but they were shut out of office and watched carefully. It was two of these outside domains, Satsuma and Choshu, that led the overthrow of the shogunate in 1868. Keep their names; they return in Part 6.

The shogun held his own lands outright — including Edo, Kyoto and Osaka and the biggest mines — so that no single lord could outmatch him. He could also move a daimyo to a different domain, or confiscate a domain altogether, if its lord offended him.

Tokugawa Japan: the places that mattered

Simple map - coastlines are simplified and positions approximate



A simple map of Japan under the shogunate, marking Edo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagasaki and the domains of Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa and Mito, with the trade gateways of the maritime restriction period

Figure 3. The places that mattered. Simple map — coastlines are simplified and positions approximate.

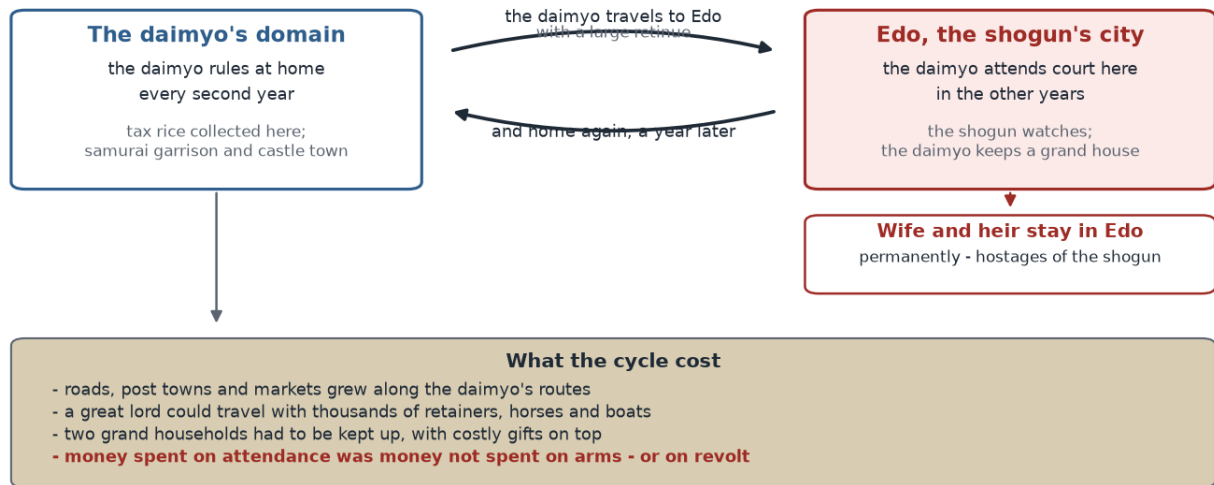
Alternate attendance: loyalty made expensive

The shogunate's cleverest device was **alternate attendance**, made compulsory for all daimyo in 1635 by the third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu. Every daimyo had to spend alternate years at the shogun's court in Edo — and when he went home to his domain, his wife and heir stayed behind in Edo permanently, in effect as hostages of the shogun.

The system worked on two levels at once. Politically, it kept every great lord half a hostage and wholly supervised. Economically, it soaked up the daimyo's wealth: the journeys between Edo and the domains were grand affairs — a great lord might travel with thousands of retainers, horses and boats — and maintaining a grand house in Edo cost a fortune. A daimyo busy paying for processions had neither the money nor the time to plot rebellion. We will test this device as a historical argument in Worked inquiry 1.

Alternate attendance (sankin kotai), compulsory from 1635

The cycle that turned daimyo wealth into daimyo obedience



A labelled diagram of the alternate attendance cycle, showing a daimyo moving between his domain and Edo every second year, his family staying in Edo, and the costs of the journeys and the Edo residence

Figure 4. Alternate attendance: a cycle that converted daimyo wealth into daimyo obedience.

Restricted contact with the outside world

In the 1630s, the shogunate issued a series of edicts — the maritime restriction edicts of 1633–1639 — that tightly controlled all contact with the outside world. No Japanese ship could leave; no Japanese abroad could return, on pain of death. Christianity, which missionaries had been preaching since the 1500s, was banned, with rewards paid for the discovery of priests. After the Shimabara Rebellion of 1637–1638 — an uprising in the south-west of about 40,000 people, many of them Christian — the rules tightened further. The Portuguese were expelled. European trade was confined to the Dutch, who were allowed to keep a small trading post on the island of Dejima in Nagasaki harbour, under strict watch.

Yet “closed” Japan never was. The shogunate ran foreign contact through four official gateways, and it wanted the trade and the news that came through them.

Four gateways: how 'restricted' Japan kept in touch with the world

Foreign contact ran only through these licensed channels

Nagasaki run by the shogunate itself	Partner: Chinese merchants, and the Dutch post at Dejima	What moved: silk, medicines, books, maps; silver and copper out
Tsushima the So clan domain	Partner: Korea	What moved: diplomacy and trade between the two kingdoms
Satsuma the Shimazu clan domain	Partner: the Ryukyu islands	What moved: goods from South-East Asia, via the Ryukyu kingdom
Matsumae the Matsumae clan domain	Partner: peoples of Ezo (now Hokkaido)	What moved: furs, fish and hawks from the north

The word *sakoku* ('closed country') was coined only in 1801, translating a European book. Many historians now speak of *kaikin* - maritime restrictions.

A table of the four gateways of foreign contact in the maritime restriction period: Nagasaki for Chinese and Dutch trade, Tsushima for contact with Korea, Satsuma for the Ryukyu islands, and Matsumae for trade in the north

Figure 5. Four gateways, not a closed door: how the shogunate managed the outside world.

Through these gateways came Chinese silk and medicines, Korean diplomacy, goods and news from South-East Asia via the Ryukyu islands, and furs and fish from the north. The Dutch at Dejima also supplied books, maps and instruments — the flow of European knowledge that the Japanese called **rangaku**, “Dutch learning”. And Europeans wrote about Japan in return: Engelbert Kaempfer, a German physician who lived at Dejima in 1690–1692, published a history of Japan in 1727; the Swedish naturalist Carl Peter Thunberg served there in 1775–1776 and published his own account; Philipp Franz von Siebold resided there from 1823 to 1829, collecting plants and teaching medicine. The shogunate’s problem in the 1850s was not that it had never met the outside world. It was that the outside world had grown stronger — and had stopped asking.

Part 2 — Social features: a society arranged in ranks

The four ranks

Tokugawa society was officially arranged into four ranks, in a scheme the Japanese called *shi-no-ko-sho*: warriors, farmers, artisans and merchants. Rank was fixed by birth and reinforced by law — what you wore, where you lived, even how you greeted someone depended on it.

The official ranks of Tokugawa society (shi-no-ko-sho)

Rank was fixed by birth - but wealth did not follow rank

Official order, top to bottom:

The emperor, the court and the clergy

above the ranks, honoured, largely without power

Samurai - the warrior class

about 5 in every 100 people; paid in rice; turned to office-holding

Peasants - the farmers

about 80 in every 100; grew the rice; paid heavy rice taxes

Artisans

made goods: swords, cloth, tools, pottery, prints

Merchants

lowest in rank: 'living off other people's work', the official view said

Outcast groups

below the scheme; did work others refused; status inherited

But in reality ...

- samurai incomes shrank as money replaced rice
- many samurai fell into debt
- merchants grew rich: they ran the rice exchange and made loans to lords and samurai
- rich towners bought culture, rank bought less and less

By 1850 the official order and the real order had drifted far apart - one reason the old system fell so quickly.

The ranks described how society ought to be - not how it was.

A pyramid diagram of the official social ranks of Tokugawa Japan, from the emperor and court at the top, through samurai, peasants, artisans and merchants, to the outcast groups at the bottom, with notes on each group's share of the population and its real position

Figure 6. The official order of ranks — and the ways reality did not follow it.

- **Samurai** stood at the top of the ordinary ranks — about five per cent of the population. After 1600 there were no more wars to fight, so the samurai slowly turned from warriors into educated administrators: clerks, teachers, accountants and officials in the service of their lords, paid in rice stipends.
- **Peasants** — about four in five people — came second in rank because they produced the rice on which everything ran. They paid heavy taxes in rice and owed labour to their lords, but their work was honoured in theory.
- **Artisans** made the goods of daily life — swords, cloth, tools, pottery, luxury goods for the cities.
- **Merchants** sat at the bottom of the official order, because they were seen as living off other people's work. In practice, as we will see, the merchants were the group getting rich.

Above the ranks stood the imperial court and the Buddhist and Shinto clergy; below them, and largely outside the scheme, were outcast groups who did work others refused, such as handling dead animals and leather. Their low status was inherited, and contact with them was restricted. The official order, in short, was a claim about how society *ought* to be arranged — not a description of where wealth and power actually sat.

Cities and education

Tokugawa Japan became one of the most urban societies on earth. Edo grew to more than one million people by the mid-18th century — likely the biggest city in the world at the time. Osaka, the great rice market, and Kyoto, the imperial capital, each held several hundred thousand. Every domain kept a castle town where its samurai lived, so towns spread across the islands, tied together by well-kept roads.

Education kept pace. Domain schools taught the sons of samurai; **terakoya** — local schools often run in temples — taught the children of townspeople and better-off farmers to read, write and reckon. By the end of the period, historians estimate that roughly half of men and a fifth of women could read and write, though estimates vary. That spread of literacy helps explain how Japan could modernise so quickly after 1868 — and it explains the boom in printed books, pictures and plays that fills Part 4.

Part 3 — Economic features: a rice economy turning into a money economy

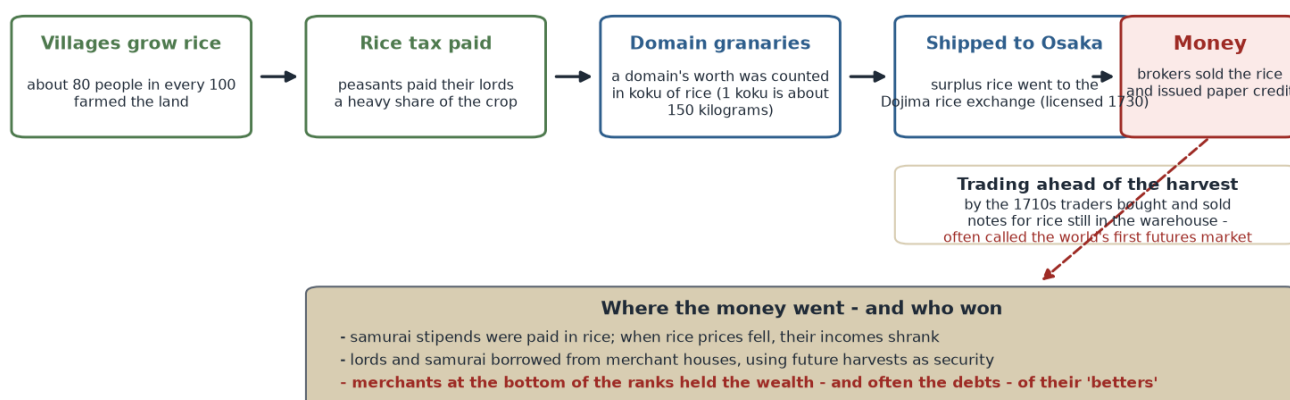
Everything ran on rice

The Tokugawa economy was founded on rice. Domains were measured in koku; taxes were collected in rice; samurai stipends were paid in rice. A population of around 30 million — already reached by the early 18th century, and growing very little after that — worked the land, about four in five of them rice farmers. For the peasant household, the rice tax was the fact around which life turned: a bad harvest could mean hunger even after the tax was paid.

But rice is awkward wealth. You cannot easily spend a granary. So every domain had to turn its tax rice into money — and that need built the merchants' power.

From rice to money: how the Tokugawa economy worked

Everything ran on rice - until money outran the rice



A system built to move rice ended by moving money - and the money flowed to the lowest-ranked group of all.

A flow diagram of the Tokugawa rice economy, from peasant villages paying rice tax to the domain, the domain shipping surplus rice to Osaka's rice exchange, brokers converting it into money, and money flowing back as samurai stipends and merchant wealth

Figure 7. How rice became money — and how money quietly outranked the official order.

The rise of the merchants

Domains shipped their surplus rice to Osaka, the commercial heart of Japan. There, in the Dōjima rice exchange — founded in 1697, licensed by the shogunate in 1730 and formally organised under it in 1773 — brokers sold the rice and issued certificates against rice still in the warehouse. Traders began buying and selling those certificates for future delivery, so that by the early 18th century Dōjima was running what is often called the world's first futures market. Its merchants also ran deposits, loans and transfers of money for domains all over Japan.

The consequences ran deep. Samurai, paid in rice, saw their living shrink whenever rice prices fell or money prices rose, and many fell into debt to the very merchants who ranked below them. Daimyo borrowed from merchant houses, using future harvests as security. By the 19th century, real economic power often sat with men in plain clothes in Osaka, while the sword-bearing elite scraped by. It was a society whose official order and its real order had drifted apart — a strain the shogunate tried to fix by force.

Famines and reforms

The system also had to absorb shocks. Three great famines struck in our period: the Kyoho famine of 1732; the Tenmei famine of 1782–1788, worsened by the eruption of Mount Asama in 1783, in which some 20,000 people died of hunger — some reports say far more; and the Tempō famine of 1833–1837. When officials did nothing, desperation

could turn to revolt: in 1837, Oshio Heihachiro, once a police officer, led an armed rising in Osaka against officials and hoarding merchants. The rising was quickly crushed, but it shocked the country.

Three times the shogunate answered the strain with reform programs, each trying to restore discipline and repair finances:

Three attempts to hold back change

Each reform tried to restore the old order - and each gave way

Reform and dates	Leader	What it tried	What came of it
Kyoho reforms from 1716 into the 1730s	Shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune (ruled 1716-1745)	thrift at court; watch over rice prices; new taxes to fill the shogunate's coffers	the shogunate's finances steadied for a time
Kansei reforms 1787-1793	Matsudaira Sadanobu, chief councillor	thrift; relief for debts; back to the official Confucian teaching, and away from others	brief relief; the elder councillor soon left office
Tempo reforms 1841-1843	Mizuno Tadakuni, chief councillor	price controls; break up merchant groups; force thrift on rich townspeople	failed within three years; its author was dismissed

The shared weakness: all three tried to govern a money economy with rules made for a rice economy.

A table of the three great reform programs of the Tokugawa period — the Kyoho reforms under Yoshimune, the Kansei reforms under Matsudaira Sadanobu, and the Tempo reforms under Mizuno Tadakuni — with their dates, measures and results

Figure 8. Three attempts to hold back change — and why none of them held for long.

The reforms shared one weakness: they tried to govern a money economy with rules made for a rice economy, telling merchants and samurai to be frugal instead of fixing the system beneath them. Each brought brief relief; none stopped the drift of power toward money.

Part 4 — Cultural features: a flowering in the cities

The long peace, the roads, the literacy and the merchants' money fed a cultural flowering, above all in the cities.

Culture in the long peace

Peace, roads, cities, literacy and merchant money fed a flowering

Neo-Confucian learning	the shogunate's official teaching: loyalty, duty and a fixed social order it supplied the ideas beneath the four ranks
National Learning	Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) turned to Japan's oldest literature and myths revived pride in the emperor and Japan's own past
Haiku poetry	short poems of 17 syllables (5-7-5), practised at every level of society masters: Yosa Buson (1716-1784) and Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828)
Theatre	kabuki drama and the puppet theatre (bunraku) drew huge town audiences the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725) filled both stages
Woodblock prints (ukiyo-e)	'pictures of the floating world', printed cheaply in their thousands Hokusai's <i>Great Wave</i> (1831); Hiroshige's <i>Tokaido road series</i> (1833-1834)
Dutch learning (rangaku)	European books, maps, medicine and astronomy came through the post at Dejima Japanese scholars studied the world despite the restrictions

Art and learning were features of this society that grew directly out of its politics and economics.

A table of cultural forms in Tokugawa Japan — Neo-Confucian learning, National Learning, haiku poetry, the kabuki and puppet theatres, woodblock prints, and Dutch learning — with key people and dates for each

Figure 9. A society with money, peace and literacy spends them on culture.

- **Learning.** Neo-Confucian thought, with its stress on loyalty, duty and a fixed social order, was the shogunate's official teaching — it supplied the ideas beneath the four ranks. But other currents ran too. The scholar Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) led **National Learning**, a movement that turned away from Chinese models to study Japan's oldest literature and myths, reviving pride in the emperor and Japan's own past. Both currents mattered later: one upheld the shogunate's order, the other helped to end it.
- **Poetry.** The short poem called **haiku** (17 syllables in a 5–7–5 pattern) was practised at every level of society. Its great 18th-century masters included Yosa Buson (1716–1784), a painter as well as a poet, and Kobayashi Issa (1763–1828), whose verses turned to ordinary life, insects and the poor.
- **Theatre.** **Kabuki**, the bold song-and-dance drama, and the puppet theatre (now called **bunraku**) drew huge town audiences. The playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725) wrote tragedies of love and duty that filled both stages.
- **Pictures.** Woodblock prints — **ukiyo-e**, “pictures of the floating world” — could be printed cheaply in their thousands. Katsushika Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* series, including the famous *Great Wave*, dates from 1831; Utagawa Hiroshige's *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* road series appeared in 1833–1834. Both artists made ordinary travel, work and landscape fit subjects for art.
- **Knowledge of the world.** Through the Dutch at Dejima came **rangaku** — anatomy, astronomy, maps and European languages — studied by Japanese scholars despite the restrictions. Japan watched the world more closely than the “closed country” label allows.

All of this was made possible by the features we have already met: peace, roads, cities, literacy, and merchants with money to spend. Culture is a feature of this society that cannot be separated from its politics and economics.

Part 5 — Shogunate Japan and “feudal” Europe

The curriculum asks you to compare the social order of shogunate Japan with the feudal institutions of Europe. First, a contested term:

Feudal. Historians of Europe use *feudal* — in the sense given by the French historian Marc Bloch in *Feudal Society* (1939–1940) — for a system in which lords grant land and protection to vassals in return for military service and loyalty, while peasants work the land under the warriors’ rule. Other definitions exist and are not interchangeable with this one. Whether the word fits Japan at all is itself debated — as you will see below.

Set side by side against medieval Europe, shogunate Japan shows striking likenesses — and one deep difference.

Shogunate Japan and 'feudal' Europe: the likeness and the difference

Working definition of 'feudal' after Marc Bloch, Feudal Society (1939-1940)

Feature	Medieval Europe	Shogunate Japan
Ruler	kings struggled for centuries to control their own lords	the shogun could move or take away a daimyo's domain by decree
Warriors	knights held landed estates and local courts of their own	samurai drew rice stipends and lived in castle towns under their lord
Land	granted to vassals for service, protected by law and custom	held at the shogun's pleasure; domains measured in koku of rice
Peasants	worked the land and owed duties to the lord	paid a heavy rice tax and owed labour to the lord
Rank	fixed by birth, hard to leave	fixed by birth, hard to leave
Alike: a warrior class on top, hereditary rank, land as the base of wealth, peasants feeding the whole. Different: power at the centre. Tokugawa Japan ran registers, roads, schools and a national market - the working parts of an early modern state. Whether 'feudal' fits Japan depends on which definition you start from - state yours before you argue.		

A table comparing the social order of shogunate Japan with the feudal institutions of medieval Europe, across rulers, warriors, land, peasants, social mobility and central control

Figure 10. Likenesses you can see from space — and the difference that mattered in 1868.

The likeness is real: a warrior class at the top, hereditary rank, land as the basis of wealth, and peasants whose labour fed the whole system. That is why people have called shogunate Japan “feudal” for more than a century, including Japanese reformers in the 19th century who wanted to show their country matched Europe’s history stage for stage.

But steelman the other side too. Many historians argue that Tokugawa Japan was *not* feudal in the medieval European sense, because the comparison’s biggest difference is the power at the centre. European kings spent centuries struggling to control their own lords; a shogun could transfer or confiscate a daimyo’s domain by decree. Samurai were paid salaries in rice and lived in castle towns under their lord’s eye, rather than holding landed estates of their own the way European knights did. And the shogunate ran registers, roads, schools and a national market — the working parts of an early modern state, not a medieval patchwork. On this reading, the Tokugawa state was centralised and bureaucratic where medieval Europe was fragmented.

Which view is right depends on which definition of *feudal* you start from — and that is the lesson. In your own answers, state which features you are weighing, and let the dated evidence decide.

Part 6 — Crisis and the Meiji Restoration

The ships arrive

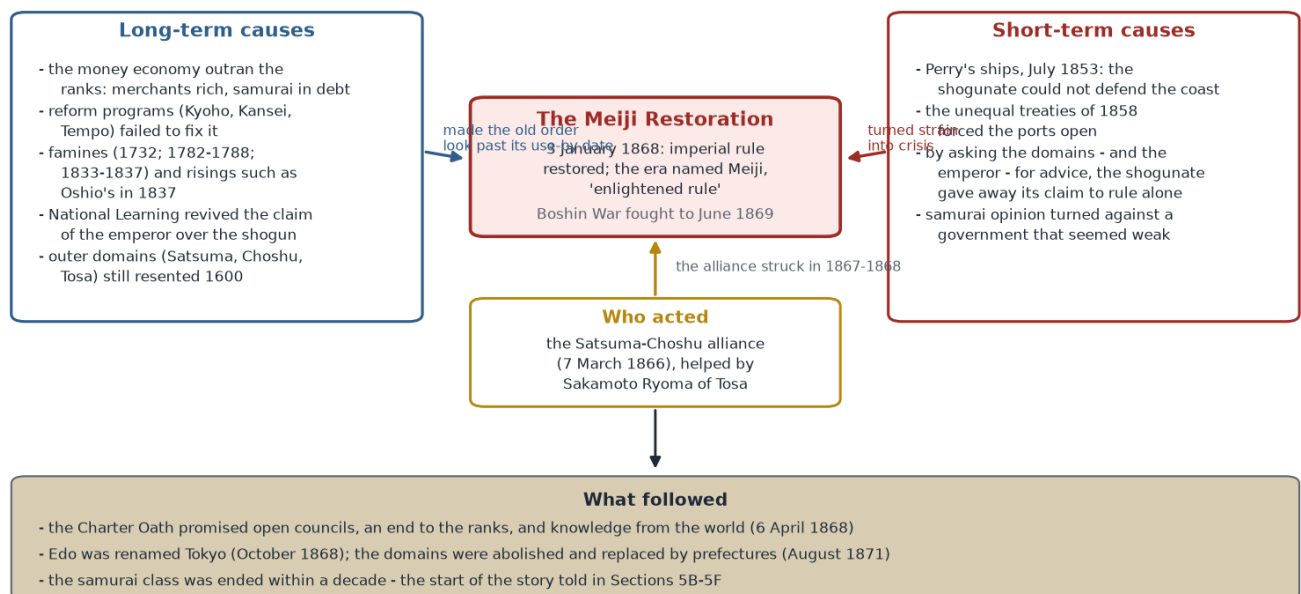
In July 1853, an American naval force under Commodore Matthew Perry appeared off Edo Bay with a letter demanding that Japan open its ports to trade and to ships needing coal and supplies. The shogunate, knowing its coastal defences were no match for steam warships, stalled, then agreed. The Convention of Kanagawa (31 March 1854) opened the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to American ships and admitted an American consul. In 1858 came the **unequal treaties**: commercial agreements with the United States and four European powers that fixed low import duties and let foreign residents in the treaty ports live under their own consuls' laws rather than Japan's. Japan had not been conquered, but it had been forced onto terms it did not choose — an injury that would shape its ambitions for the next century (and returns in Sections 5B and 5C).

Why the shogunate fell

The Restoration had long-term causes and short-term causes — the distinction matters, and both kinds are in the picture.

Why the Meiji Restoration happened

Long-term strains met short-term shocks - and a coalition acted



A cause web for the Meiji Restoration, separating long-term causes such as the money economy outrunning the ranks, samurai debt and the growth of National Learning, from short-term causes such as Perry's arrival, the unequal treaties and the Satsuma-Choshu alliance

Figure 11. Causes of the Meiji Restoration: the old strains, the new shocks, and the coalition that acted on both.

- **Long-term causes.** The economy had outrun the social order: merchants rich, samurai indebted, domains borrowing against future harvests. The reform programs had failed to fix it. National Learning had revived the idea that the emperor, not the shogun, was Japan's true sovereign. And the outer lords — Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa — still remembered that the Tokugawa had shut them out of power in 1600.
- **Short-term causes.** Perry's arrival in 1853 exposed the shogunate's weakness. The unequal treaties of 1858 humiliated it further. When the shogunate consulted the domains and even the emperor about what to do, it broke its own claim to be the unquestioned ruler — and its hesitations turned samurai opinion against it.

In 1866, Sakamoto Ryoma, a samurai from Tosa, helped broker an alliance between Satsuma and Choshu (7 March 1866) — the two great outside domains joining forces. In November 1867 the last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, resigned, hoping to keep a place in whatever came next. On 3 January 1868, forces of the alliance seized the palace in Kyoto and declared imperial rule restored. The young emperor's era was named **Meiji** — “enlightened rule”. Fighting

continued into 1869 — the Boshin War, from January 1868 to June 1869 — until pro-shogunate resistance was broken.

What the new rulers promised

The new government announced its program on 6 April 1868, in a five-article statement called the **Charter Oath**, read aloud at the imperial palace. It is one of the great primary sources of modern Japanese history.

The Charter Oath: five promises that broke with the past

PRIMARY SOURCE

Charter Oath of the new Meiji government

1. Open councils shall be set up widely, and all matters shall be decided by open discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in carrying out the affairs of the state.
3. Everyone, from officials down to common people, shall be free to follow their own calling, so that no one grows discontented.
4. The bad customs of the past shall be broken off, and everything shall rest on the fair laws of nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world, to make the foundations of imperial rule strong.

Read aloud at the imperial palace in Kyoto on 6 April 1868.
English rendering by this book, from the five articles of the oath.

A styled reproduction of the five articles of the Charter Oath of 6 April 1868, presented as a primary source document

Figure 12. The Charter Oath (6 April 1868): five promises that marked the break with the past.

Read the articles against everything this section has taught. “Deliberative assemblies” answered decades of one-family rule; “all classes, high and low” announced the end of the four ranks; “knowledge shall be sought throughout the world” repealed the spirit of the maritime restriction edicts. The Restoration was not only the fall of a government. It was the decision to remake a society — the starting point for everything that follows in Sections 5B to 5F.

Worked inquiries

These two worked inquiries show you how to build a historical answer from real evidence. Follow each step, and notice how every claim is tied to a dated fact or a named source.

Worked inquiry 1 — scaffolded: How did alternate attendance help the Tokugawa hold power?

Question. Explain how the system of alternate attendance strengthened Tokugawa rule, politically and economically.

Step	What we do	Why it matters
1. Restate the question	We are explaining how one political device — alternate attendance, made compulsory in 1635 — kept about 260 lords loyal for two centuries.	Keeps the answer an argument, not a description.

Step	What we do	Why it matters
2. State the political mechanism	Every daimyo spent alternate years in Edo, and his wife and heir stayed there permanently.	The family as permanent residents made each lord partly a hostage; absence from his domain made plotting harder.
3. State the economic mechanism	The journeys and the Edo residence were enormously costly; a great lord travelled with thousands of retainers.	Spending daimyo wealth on display and travel left less for arms and rebellion.
4. Give the dated anchor	Iemitsu made the system compulsory in 1635, after the Tokugawa had already beaten their rivals in 1600.	The date shows the system was a device of victory, designed to lock in a conquest.
5. Add a consequence	The constant travel also built the roads, post towns and markets that bound the country together.	A good answer notes effects the rulers may not have planned — cause and consequence working together.
6. Add a limit	The system weakened over time: by the 19th century daimyo often borrowed from merchants, and the loyalty it bought decayed with their fortunes.	Limits stop an answer claiming too much — the device did not, in the end, outlast the century's pressures.

Model answer. Alternate attendance strengthened Tokugawa rule in two ways at once. Made compulsory in 1635, it required every daimyo to spend alternate years in Edo, while his wife and heir stayed there permanently — so each great lord was always partly a hostage, and his family's presence kept him under the shogun's eye. Economically, the system drained the domains: processions of thousands of retainers and grand houses in Edo cost fortunes, so that daimyo had less wealth to turn against the shogunate. The device also had unintended consequences: the constant traffic built the roads and post towns that tied Japan into one economy. Its limit is equally important — by the 19th century many lords were deep in debt to merchants, and loyalty bought by spending decayed as fortunes fell. Alternate attendance explains much of the long Tokugawa peace, but not its ending.

Worked inquiry 2 — scaffolded: What does the Charter Oath tell us about the Meiji Restoration?

Question. Using the Charter Oath (6 April 1868) as a primary source, explain what the new government promised — and what those promises reveal about the causes of the Restoration.

Step	What we do	Why it matters
1. Identify the source type	It is a proclamation of the new government, read aloud on 6 April 1868, three months after imperial rule was restored.	A new government's first promises are evidence of what it means to change.
2. State what it says	Five articles: open councils; all classes united in public affairs; everyone free to pursue a calling; old customs broken off; knowledge sought throughout the world.	These are the facts of the source — what it actually commits to.
3. Read each promise against the old order	“Open councils” answers one-family rule; “all classes” answers the four ranks; “knowledge throughout the world” answers the maritime restrictions.	Every promise names, in reverse, a feature of Tokugawa society the new rulers rejected.
4. Infer the causes	The Restoration happened because the old political order, the old ranks and the old limits on foreign contact	The source does not just announce the future; it accuses the past.

Step	What we do	Why it matters
	had lost the confidence of the men with power.	
5. Corroborate	The Satsuma–Choshu alliance of March 1866 and the shogun’s resignation of November 1867 show the same loss of confidence among the armed domains.	Other dated events confirm the inference drawn from the document.
6. Add a limit	The Charter Oath states ideals, not methods — and its promises were made by an elite to secure support; how far they were kept is a separate question for later sections.	A proclamation is evidence of intention, not of outcome.

Model answer. The Charter Oath is a primary source — the new Meiji government’s program, proclaimed on 6 April 1868 — and it reveals the causes of the Restoration by naming, in reverse, everything the Restoration overturned. Its promise of “deliberative assemblies” rejects the rule of one family; its call for “all classes, high and low” to carry out public affairs rejects the four ranks; its pledge to seek “knowledge throughout the world” rejects the spirit of the maritime restriction edicts. Each promise is therefore evidence that the old order had lost the confidence of the men who overthrew it — the same loss of confidence shown in events: the Satsuma–Choshu alliance of March 1866, the shogun’s resignation in November 1867, and the seizure of the palace in January 1868. The limit to note is that the Oath records intentions, not results: it tells us what the new rulers said they would do, and the later sections of this chapter test how far they did it.

Practice — scaffolded

Task 1. The political system. (a) Name the two heads of Japan’s government and say which held the real power. (b) What were the three ranks of daimyo, and what decided which rank a family belonged to? (c) Give two ways the shogun kept the daimyo under control.

Task 2. Alternate attendance. (a) In what year was alternate attendance made compulsory, and by whom? (b) Describe the two ways the system bound a daimyo to the shogun. (c) Give one unintended consequence of the system for Japan’s economy.

Task 3. Contact and restriction. (a) What did the maritime restriction edicts of 1633–1639 forbid? Give two examples. (b) Name the four gateways through which foreign contact continued. (c) Explain why “restricted” is a better description of Japan than “closed”.

Task 4. The ranks and the reality. (a) List the four official ranks in order. (b) Give one way the real position of merchants differed from their official rank. (c) Give one way the real position of samurai differed from theirs.

Task 5. The rice economy. (a) What is a koku, and what were the three main uses of rice in this economy? (b) What happened to tax rice at the Dōjima exchange in Osaka? (c) Explain why samurai grew poorer while merchants grew richer.

Task 6. The road to 1868. (a) What did Commodore Perry demand in 1853, and what agreement followed in March 1854? (b) What made the treaties of 1858 “unequal”? Give one specific term. (c) Name the two domains whose alliance of March 1866 led the overthrow of the shogunate.

Practice — unscaffolded

Task 7. “The Tokugawa held power for 250 years because they turned loyalty into a habit and rebellion into a luxury.” Using dated evidence from Parts 1 and 3, assess this claim. Give reasons and limits.

Task 8. Explain how the maritime restriction policy was both a political feature and an economic feature of Tokugawa Japan. Use the four gateways and the case of the Dutch in your answer.

Task 9. Choose one cultural form from Part 4 (haiku, kabuki, ukiyo-e or rangaku) and explain how the social and economic features of Tokugawa Japan made it possible.

Task 10. “The Meiji Restoration was caused more by Japan’s internal weaknesses than by the foreign ships.” Using evidence from Part 6, write a paragraph arguing for this claim and a paragraph arguing against it. Then state which argument you find stronger, and why.

Source-based inquiry

Task 11. Read the primary source below, then question it as a historian would. The source is a translation of key provisions of one of the maritime restriction edicts, issued in 1635 by the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu and addressed to his commissioners at Nagasaki. (The wording is this book’s own translation from the edict’s provisions; the original is a decree of the shogunate.)

Primary source — Maritime restriction edict, 1635 (key provisions, translated). No Japanese ship shall be sent abroad, and no Japanese shall go overseas. Any Japanese who returns from abroad shall be put to death. The Christian faith is strictly forbidden: those found practising it shall be investigated, and rewards shall be paid to anyone who reports a Christian priest. Relations with the Portuguese are cut off. Chinese ships and the ships of the Dutch East India Company are restricted to the port of Nagasaki, and only licensed vessels and licensed merchants may trade.

The maritime restriction edict of 1635

Issued by the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu to his commissioners at Nagasaki

PRIMARY SOURCE

Maritime restriction edict, 1635 (key provisions)

1. No Japanese ship shall be sent abroad, and no Japanese shall go overseas.
2. Any Japanese who returns from abroad shall be put to death.
3. The Christian faith is strictly forbidden. Rewards shall be paid to anyone who reports a Christian priest.
4. All relations with the Portuguese are cut off.
5. Chinese ships and the ships of the Dutch East India Company are restricted to the port of Nagasaki.
6. Only licensed vessels and licensed merchants may trade.

English rendering by this book, from the provisions of the edict.

Read this source as a historian would: what does it forbid, what does it manage, and whose voices are absent?

A styled reproduction of the key provisions of the 1635 maritime restriction edict, presented as a primary source document

Figure 13. The 1635 edict, summarised in six provisions.

Answer these questions in full sentences:

- (a) What kind of source is this, and who made it? When was it made, and for whom was it written?
- (b) Identify two things the edict forbids and two things it allows or manages.
- (c) What does the edict tell you about what the shogunate feared — and what does it suggest the shogunate still wanted from the outside world?

- (d) Who is absent from this source? Whose experience of these rules — think of Japanese sailors abroad, or Christian villagers — does the edict not record?
 - (e) Using Part 1, give one piece of evidence that shows these rules were applied (for example, what happened to European trade after they were issued).
 - (f) A historian writing in 1900 called this edict proof that Japan was a “closed country”. Using what you have learned about the four gateways, state one reason this source supports that label and one reason it challenges it.
-

Answers

Key points for the scaffolded and unscaffolded tasks. Use these to check your work, not to copy it.

Task 1. (a) The emperor at Kyoto and the shogun at Edo; real power sat with the shogun. (b) Shinpan (Tokugawa relatives), fudai (lords who had served the Tokugawa before Sekigahara in 1600) and tozama (lords who submitted after it); rank was decided by the family's loyalty at that moment. (c) Any two of: alternate attendance with the family kept in Edo; the power to move or confiscate domains; the shogun's own lands, mines and great cities held outright; the fudai's grip on senior office.

Task 2. (a) 1635, under the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. (b) Politically, the daimyo spent alternate years in Edo and his wife and heir stayed permanently, keeping him supervised and his family as hostages; economically, the journeys and the Edo residence were so costly that less wealth was left for rebellion. (c) The constant travel built up roads, post towns and markets, binding Japan into one economy.

Task 3. (a) Any two of: no Japanese ship could go abroad; no Japanese abroad could return (on pain of death); Christianity was banned, with rewards for reporting priests; the Portuguese were expelled and trade confined to licensed ships at Nagasaki. (b) Nagasaki (Chinese and Dutch trade), Tsushima (contact with Korea), Satsuma (the Ryukyu islands) and Matsumae (trade in the north). (c) Because the four gateways kept trade, diplomacy and knowledge flowing — including Dutch books and maps — so Japan limited its contact rather than ending it; the word *sakoku* itself was only coined in 1801, translating a European's book.

Task 4. (a) Warriors (samurai), farmers, artisans, merchants. (b) Merchants ranked last but grew rich as the economy turned to money — running the rice exchange, lending to domains and samurai, and living better than the ranked order allowed. (c) Samurai ranked first of the common ranks but many grew poor, living on fixed rice stipends that shrank in a money economy, and some fell into debt to the merchants below them.

Task 5. (a) A koku was about 150 kilograms of rice, reckoned enough to feed one adult for a year. Rice measured domains (10,000 koku minimum), paid taxes and paid samurai stipends. (b) Surplus tax rice was shipped there, stored, sold by brokers, and turned into money and credit; traders also bought and sold certificates for rice to be delivered in the future. (c) Samurai were paid in fixed amounts of rice while wealth was shifting to money, so their income lost value; merchants converted rice into money, earned fees and interest, and made loans to the very elite who ranked above them.

Task 6. (a) Perry demanded that Japan open its ports to American trade and to ships needing supplies and coal; the Convention of Kanagawa (31 March 1854) opened Shimoda and Hakodate and admitted an American consul. (b) They were imposed on a weaker Japan by stronger powers and gave the foreigners privileged terms — for example, low fixed import duties, or foreign residents answering to their own consuls instead of Japanese law. (c) Satsuma and Choshu, allied in March 1866 with Sakamoto Ryoma's help.

Task 7. A strong answer argues both sides. For the claim: alternate attendance (compulsory from 1635) kept every daimyo partly a hostage and soaked up his wealth in processions and Edo houses, making rebellion expensive; the ranks and the ranking of domains froze each family's place; the fudai held the offices of state. Against/limits: by the 19th century the money economy was corroding the system — samurai in debt, domains borrowing against harvests, famines (1732, 1782–1788, 1833–1837) and risings such as Oshio's in 1837 — and once Perry arrived in 1853, the habit of loyalty broke within fifteen years. Marks go to dated evidence on both sides plus a genuine limit.

Task 8. Political: the restriction edicts (1633–1639) let the shogunate control all foreign contact, which was itself a source of power — no rival lord could build foreign alliances or import weapons, and banning Christianity removed a rival loyalty. Economic: the gateways kept trade flowing on the shogunate's terms — Chinese silk and medicines at Nagasaki, contact with Korea through Tsushima, goods via Satsuma and the Ryukyu islands, northern trade through Matsumae — and the Dutch at Dejima supplied books, maps and instruments (*rangaku*). So the policy was not a wall: it was a set of valves, and the shogunate owned the valves.

Task 9. Models will vary; a strong answer links the chosen form to named features. For *ukiyo-e*: the cities (Edo over one million people by the mid-18th century) supplied buyers; literacy and printing supplied a mass market; merchants' money supplied patronage; peace and the roads supplied subjects such as travel, seen in Hiroshige's *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* (1833–1834). For *rangaku*: the gateway of Dejima supplied the books; domain and temple schools supplied readers.

Task 10. For internal weaknesses: the money economy had outranked the ranks (merchants rich, samurai in debt); the reforms (Kyoho, Kansei, Tempo) had all failed to fix it; famines and risings such as Oshio's in 1837 showed the strain; National Learning had revived the emperor's claim over the shogun's; the outer lords' grievance ran back to 1600. For the foreign cause: before Perry's arrival in 1853 the system had survived two centuries of internal strain, and it was the steam warships, the unequal treaties of 1858 and the shogunate's humiliation that turned strain into collapse within fifteen years. A strong conclusion weighs the two: the ships were the trigger, but they only worked because the timber was already dry.

Task 11. (a) A primary source — a decree of the shogunate — issued in 1635 by the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu and addressed to his two commissioners at Nagasaki, the officials who enforced it. (b) Forbids: any Japanese ship going abroad; Japanese returning from abroad; the Christian faith; Portuguese contact. Allows/manages: Chinese and Dutch ships trading at Nagasaki under licence; rewards paid for information about priests. (c) It feared rival loyalties and outside alliances — Christianity, Japanese armed with foreign connections, Portuguese influence — but it still wanted trade and what came with it, since it carefully licensed Chinese and Dutch commerce instead of ending it. (d) Absent: the people governed — Japanese sailors and traders overseas cut off from home, Christian villagers facing investigation, the Dutch and Chinese merchants themselves. The edict records the ruler's perspective, not the ruled's experience. (e) European trade was confined to the Dutch post at Dejima in Nagasaki harbour; the four gateway system of Part 1 shows the rules being run in practice. (f) Supports “closed”: it bans Japanese from leaving or returning and expels the Portuguese — a dramatic shutting of doors. Challenges “closed”: it keeps two trading partners operating under licence at Nagasaki, showing restriction and management rather than total closure; and trade with Korea, the Ryukyu islands and the north continued through the other gateways.

Model responses

These are fully worked answers. Read them to see how a strong response is built: a clear point, dated evidence, a link back to the question, and an honest limit.

Model for Task 11 (source-based inquiry) — extended response

The 1635 edict is a primary source: a decree of the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu, issued to his commissioners at Nagasaki, the point where the outside world touched Japan. Read first for what it forbids, it looks like a door slamming shut: no Japanese ship may go abroad, no Japanese abroad may return on pain of death, the Portuguese are expelled, and the Christian faith is banned with rewards paid for the discovery of priests. The shogunate plainly feared rival loyalties — a faith outside its control, and Japanese subjects armed with foreign connections. Yet the same edict also manages what it does not forbid: Chinese ships and the Dutch East India Company may still trade at Nagasaki under licence. That is the key to reading it. Japan was not closing down foreign contact; it was taking ownership of it. The four-gateway system of Part 1 confirms this — trade with Korea through Tsushima, with the Ryukyu islands through Satsuma, and with the north through Matsumae all continued — and the Dutch at Dejima went on supplying goods and, through rangaku, books and knowledge. So the source both supports and challenges the old “closed country” label: it supports it in its savage ban on Japanese leaving and returning, and it challenges it in the very care with which it keeps trade running. The word *sakoku* itself was only coined in 1801 by Shizuki Tadao, translating a European book — a reminder that the “closed country” was partly a later invention, built on real edicts but simplifying them.

Model for Task 10 (unscaffolded) — extended response

The claim that the Meiji Restoration was caused more by Japan's internal weaknesses than by the foreign ships can be argued strongly. The money economy had been outrunning the social order for a century: the merchants who ranked last grew rich running the Dōjima rice exchange and lending to domains, while the samurai who ranked first lived on shrinking stipends and fell into debt. Three reform programs — Kyoho, Kansei and Tempo — tried to restore the old order and none of them held. Famines struck in 1732, 1782–1788 and 1833–1837, and in 1837 Oshio Heihachiro's rising in Osaka showed that even the shogunate's own officers could turn against it. National Learning had meanwhile revived the claim of the emperor, and the great outer domains had nursed their exclusion since 1600. Yet the case for the foreign cause is just as real. The system had absorbed two centuries of internal strain without breaking; it broke only after Perry's ships of July 1853, the unequal treaties of 1858, and the shogunate's humiliating consultations — and it was Satsuma and Choshu's alliance of March 1866, made in direct response to the foreign crisis, that delivered

the blow of January 1868. On balance, the stronger reading is that the internal weaknesses were the fuel and the foreign ships the spark: without the fuel, no spark would have mattered; but without the spark of 1853–1858, the fuel might have smouldered for decades more.

Looking back. You can now set out the four sets of features of an Asian society across the 18th and 19th centuries — the shogunate and its domains, the ranks and their drift from reality, the rice economy turning to money, and the city culture they paid for — and explain the causes of the Meiji Restoration that ended them. The story continues in the sections that follow: what contact and colonisation did to Japan, and how Japan itself became an imperial power, is Section 5B; the ideas that drove the changes is Section 5C; the experiences of the people who lived through them is Section 5D; and historians’ debates about what the Meiji period meant is Section 5F. Within this book, notice the links backward: Japanese pearlers in northern Australia appear in Section 2C, and the Japan that Australia faced in the world wars (Chapters 3 and 4) is the modern state whose foundations were laid in 1868.

Sources for this section

All figures in this section are original, drawn for this book; coastlines are simplified and positions approximate. Primary sources are decrees and proclamations of the Japanese state; the English renderings are this book’s own.

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- “Sakoku Edict of 1635”, Wikipedia, for the edict’s provisions (no Japanese to go abroad or return; death for returning Japanese; Christianity forbidden with rewards for informants; relations with Portugal cut off; Chinese and Dutch restricted to Nagasaki; licensed ships and merchants only), issued by Iemitsu to the commissioners of Nagasaki; retrieved 2026-08-25.
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- “Meiji Restoration”, Wikipedia, for the restoration of imperial rule on 3 January 1868, the Satsuma–Choshu alliance of 7 March 1866, and the unequal treaties as causes; retrieved 2026-08-25.
- Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* (1939–1940), for the working definition of *feudal* used in Part 5.

Contact, colonisation and liberation: causes and consequences for an Asian society

For the teacher

This section is one teaching sequence (parts 1–10) with two worked inquiries built from real, dated, checkable sources, six scaffolded practice tasks, four unscaffolded tasks and one source-based inquiry task, per the §3 volume calibration. Register is direct-address prose at or below the Yr10 ceiling (D2). Subject terms are defined at first use (D2 exemption 2); the contested term “liberation” carries the `CONTESTED_TERMS` Rule 1 fallback definition before use, and the competing readings of the Allied occupation of Japan are steelmanned (Rules 4–5). Japan is the one society chosen for Chapter 5 and held across 5A–5F (`build_notes_ch5.md`, recorded before drafting per the chapter authoring rule in TOC §3); this section teaches only the Japan elaboration group `.E18–.E23`, and coverage is judged against the generic CD text (D7). There is no First Nations content in this chapter (§2A).

Curriculum alignment (VCAA export `VC2_AS-CD-E1ab_29-07-2026.csv`) — codes only:

VC2HH10K25 — Historical Knowledge and Understanding · Investigation: Asia (1750–present)

Draws on (linkage only, D7): `VC2HH10K25.E01–.E29` — VCAA’s five option groups (China `.E01–.E06`, India `.E07–.E12`, Indonesia `.E13–.E17`, Japan `.E18–.E23`, Vietnam `.E24–.E29`). The full range stays as the join key for MCQ and coverage linkage; any option satisfies the generic CD. Per `build_notes_ch5.md` only the **Japan group** is taught here; the Japan-group elaborations are cited by code: `.E18–.E23`.

Teaching choices (chapter block spec, §3): Japan’s arc through the CD’s three key words — *contact* (Perry’s mission and the unequal treaties, `.E19`), *colonisation* (Japan was never colonised but became a colonising power, `.E19–.E20`) and *liberation* (regaining sovereignty in 1952; Japan’s wartime claim to “liberate” Asia, tested against the record, `.E21–.E23`) — is taught as a cause-and-consequence chain. Cross-links: the Meiji modernisation and Japan’s 18th–19th-century features are 5A and 5C; the Pacific war is taught in Chapters 3–4 (fall of Singapore 3E, the atomic bomb 3F, Australia’s post-war relationships with Asian countries 4D); decolonisation worldwide is 1C; the tools of cause-and-consequence analysis are 8B. The source inquiry reads President Fillmore’s 1852 letter carried by Perry.

Subject words — define at first use (D2 exemption 2):

Word	Gloss used in this section
shogunate	the military government that ruled Japan in the shogun’s name while the emperor remained a figurehead
colony	a territory ruled by another country
annex	to take a territory and declare it part of your own country
protectorate	a state that keeps its own rulers but whose foreign policy is controlled by a stronger power
unequal treaty	a treaty forced on a weaker state that gives one side advantages the other does not get
extraterritoriality	a rule letting foreign citizens be judged by their own consuls’ courts instead of the host country’s law
tariff	a tax on goods entering or leaving a country
war payment (indemnity)	a payment a defeated side is forced to make to the victor
gunboat diplomacy	negotiating while warships wait in view
sovereignty	the right of a people to rule themselves, free of outside control
mandate	a territory taken from a defeated power after World War I and run by a victor under League of Nations supervision
demilitarisation	the breaking up of a country’s armed forces and war industry

Word	Gloss used in this section
war crimes tribunal	a court set up to charge leaders with breaking the laws of war
primary source	a record made at the time being studied
secondary source	an account made later by someone using primary sources
reparations	payments made after a war to repair some of the damage caused
normalisation	the formal start of diplomatic relations between two countries that had none

Sources (SOURCE_USE — real referents carry a source line; retrieved 2026-08-25 where a collection was consulted, otherwise the original document is cited):

Referent	Source line
Tokugawa restriction edicts, 1633–1639 (limits on trade and travel)	Edicts recorded in the Tokugawa house records; standard text in the National Diet Library’s historical collections
Millard Fillmore, letter to the Emperor of Japan, Washington, 13 November 1852, carried by Commodore Matthew C. Perry	Printed in <i>Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan</i> , vol. 1 (Washington, 1856); paraphrased below “in modern words”
Perry’s squadron arrives off Uruga, Edo Bay, 8 July 1853; letter delivered 14 July 1853; return visit February 1854	Perry expedition journals; US National Archives, Treaty of Kanagawa milestone entry (archives.gov), retrieved 2026-08-25
Treaty of Kanagawa (Treaty of Peace and Amity), signed at Kanagawa 31 March 1854	Original treaty, US National Archives; full text at the Avalon Project, Yale Law School, retrieved 2026-08-25
Townsend Harris, first US consul to Japan, resident at Shimoda from 1856	US State Department records of the Japan mission
Treaty of Amity and Commerce (Harris Treaty), US–Japan, 29 July 1858; Ansei treaties with the Netherlands, Russia, Britain and France within weeks	Original treaties; National Archives of Japan and US National Archives
Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, signed 16 July 1894, in force 17 July 1899 (ending foreign consular courts in Japan); tariff control restored to Japan 1911	Treaty series of Japan’s Foreign Ministry
Meiji Restoration, 1868	Court and shogunate records, January 1868
First Sino-Japanese War, declared 1 August 1894; Treaty of Shimonoseki signed 17 April 1895 (Taiwan and the Penghu islands ceded to Japan); Triple Intervention by Russia, Germany and France, 23 April 1895	Treaty of Shimonoseki, original text; diplomatic notes of the three powers
Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 30 January 1902	Treaty text, British and Japanese treaty series
Russo-Japanese War, February 1904 – September 1905; Treaty of Portsmouth, 5 September 1905	Treaty of Portsmouth, original text, US National Archives
Kaiser Wilhelm II’s “yellow peril” image <i>Peoples of Europe, Guard Your Most Sacred Possessions</i> , designed by the Kaiser, painted by Hermann Knackfuss, 1895	Print held in the German Historical Museum, Berlin
Jawaharlal Nehru on the effect of Japan’s 1905 victory	Nehru, <i>An Autobiography</i> (London, 1936), chapter on his boyhood
Phan Boi Chau and the Vietnamese “Go East”	Phan Boi Chau, <i>Memoirs</i> (1929); standard scholarly

Referent	Source line
movement sending students to Japan, 1905–1909	account
Korea: protectorate treaty 17 November 1905; annexation 29 August 1910	Japan–Korea treaties of 1905 and 1910, original texts
Japan declares war on Germany, 23 August 1914; captures Qingdao (November 1914) and Germany's Pacific islands (October 1914)	Japanese declaration of war, 23 August 1914; war records
Japan's racial equality proposal: presented 13 February 1919; League of Nations Commission vote 11 April 1919 — 11 of 17 delegates present in favour, no negative votes, six votes not registered (including the British Empire and the United States); chair Woodrow Wilson required unanimity	Minutes of the Commission on the League of Nations, Paris Peace Conference records
Shandong question at Versailles; China's May Fourth movement, 4 May 1919; Shandong returned to China at the Washington Conference, 1922	Treaty of Versailles text; Washington Conference records
Japan's South Seas Mandate (German Pacific islands) granted by the League of Nations, 1920	League of Nations mandate records
Mukden Incident, 18 September 1931; Manchukuo declared 1 March 1932; Lytton Commission report, October 1932; League of Nations vote 24 February 1933 (42 to 1); Japan withdraws, 27 March 1933	League of Nations records; Lytton Report
Surrender of Japan announced 15 August 1945; signed aboard USS <i>Missouri</i> , Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945	Instrument of Surrender, original, US National Archives
Occupation of Japan under SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers), General Douglas MacArthur, 1945–1952	SCAP records, US National Archives
International Military Tribunal for the Far East, Tokyo, 3 May 1946 – 12 November 1948: 28 class-A leaders charged; 7 executed 23 December 1948	Tribunal judgment, 1948
Constitution of Japan: promulgated 3 November 1946, in force 3 May 1947; Article 9 quoted below	Official SCAP translation of the Constitution of Japan
Women's suffrage law, December 1945; first election in which women voted, 10 April 1946, 39 women elected	Japanese electoral records, 1946
Land reform, 1946–1950: land rented from landlords fell from about 46% to about 10% of farmland	SCAP and Japanese government agricultural statistics
San Francisco Peace Treaty: signed 8 September 1951 by 48 countries, in force 28 April 1952; Security Treaty between the US and Japan signed the same day	Treaty texts, US National Archives; Article 1(b) quoted below
Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia refused to sign; neither Korea nor China was represented	Final act of the San Francisco Conference, 1951
Okinawa returned to Japanese administration, 15 May 1972; Security Treaty revised 1960	Treaty records of the US and Japan
Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, 22 June 1965 (US\$300 million grant, US\$200 million in loans)	Treaty text, Japanese and Korean treaty series
Japan–China Joint Communiqué, 29 September 1972	Communiqué text, Japanese Foreign Ministry
Reparations agreements: Burma 1955, Philippines 1956, Indonesia 1958, South Vietnam 1959	Bilateral agreements, Japanese treaty series
Murayama Statement, 15 August 1995: Prime Minister	Official statement, Prime Minister's Office, Japan

1. The big question

In 1853, the rulers of Japan had kept most foreigners out of the country for over two hundred years. In 1952, Japan sat among the nations as a modern democracy that had lost an empire, survived a seven-year foreign occupation and won back its right to rule itself. Between those two dates sits the story of this section: **what contact with stronger countries did to Japan, what Japan then did to its neighbours, and what came out of both.**

Japan is unusual in this chapter. Most societies in Asia met European power as *colonised* peoples. Japan met it as a threatened state — then answered by building an empire of its own. That means the three words in this section's title each need care:

- **Contact** — countries meeting, trading, negotiating or threatening one another.
- **Colonisation** — one country taking control of another's land and people. Japan was never colonised. It escaped that fate by becoming a colonising power itself.
- **Liberation** — being set free from control by others.

Because *liberation* is a contested word — people use it to mean different things, and the word itself can hide as much as it shows — this section states up front how it will use the term.

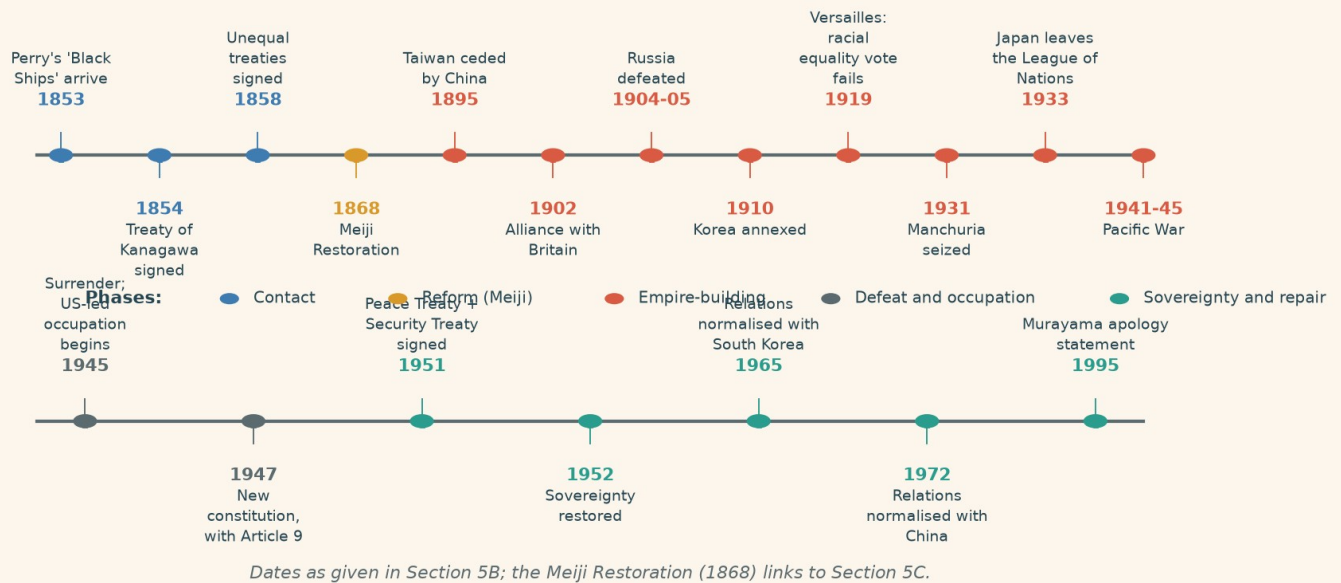
The Victorian Curriculum uses the term *liberation* but does not define it. This section therefore treats it in three kept-separate senses: **(1)** Japan's own recovery of self-rule when the Allied occupation ended in 1952; **(2)** the claim made by Japan's wartime leaders that their empire freed Asian peoples from Western colonial rule; and **(3)** the view of peoples under Japanese occupation that their freedom came only when Japan was defeated. Every question in this section is answerable on these three senses alone. Other definitions of the term exist and are not interchangeable with these.

Keep this frame in view, because different people at different times used the same word for all three senses at once — and historians who disagree about Japan's twentieth century are often using the word *liberation* in different senses without saying so.

The skills you will use are the ones this book's concepts chapters teach in full: **causes and consequences** (short-term and long-term, intended and unintended — Section 8B), **continuity and change** (Section 8A) and **perspectives** — whose eyes you are seeing events through (Section 7E). Figure 1 lays out the whole journey before we start.

Japan's path: contact, empire, defeat and sovereignty

The events of this section, 1853-1995, in four phases



Timeline of Japan's path from 1853 to 1995 in four coloured phases: contact, empire, defeat and occupation, and sovereignty and repair, with the key dated events of each phase

Figure 1. The arc of this section: from the arrival of the American "Black Ships" in 1853 to Japan's apology statement of 1995.

2. Contact: the Black Ships, 1853–1854

From the 1630s, Japan's rulers — the **Tokugawa shogunate**, the military government that ruled in the shogun's name while the emperor remained a figurehead — had limited foreign contact by law. Trade with the Dutch and the Chinese was allowed only at the port of Nagasaki. Japanese people were forbidden to travel abroad, and foreign ships were turned away. (The features of this society — its social order, its cities, its culture — are the subject of Section 5A.)

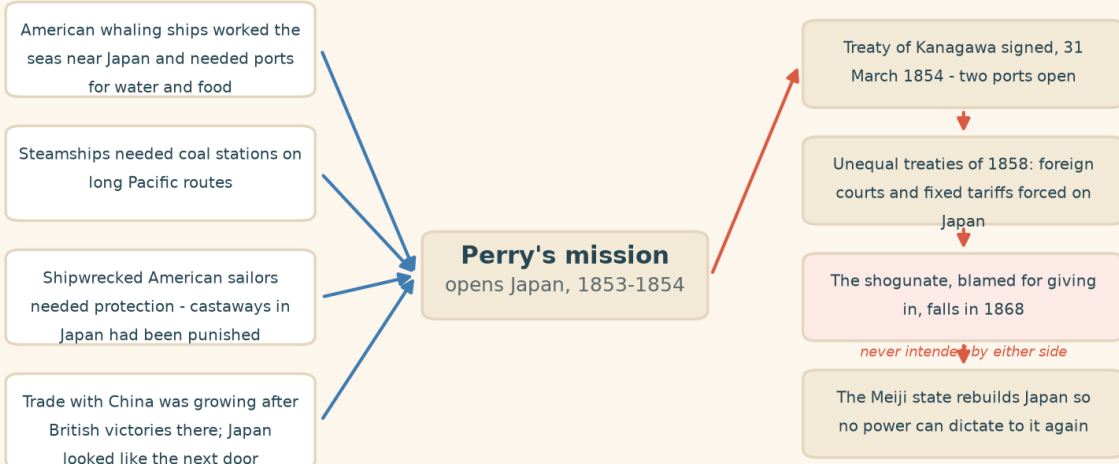
So why did the United States send a fleet to force this door open — and how did Japan respond? That question is . E19. Figure 2 sets out the causes on the left and the consequences on the right.

Why did the United States force Japan open - and what followed?

CAUSES (US motives)

Causes on the left, consequences on the right

CONSEQUENCES (the chain)



An unintended consequence: the mission meant to open trade ended by toppling the government it dealt with.

Cause-and-consequence web for Perry's mission: four US causes on the left, including whaling ships, coal for steamships, shipwrecked sailors and trade with China, and the chain of consequences on the right from the Treaty of Kanagawa to the fall of the shogunate

Figure 2. Why contact came, and what it caused. Notice that one consequence — the fall of the shogunate itself — was never intended by either side.

On 8 July 1853, four American warships under Commodore **Matthew C. Perry** appeared off Uraga, at the mouth of Edo Bay, within sight of the shogun's capital. The Japanese called them the "Black Ships" — steam warships, black-hulled and belching smoke, unlike any sailing vessel they had seen. Perry carried a letter from President **Millard Fillmore**, dated 13 November 1852, addressed to the Emperor of Japan. In modern words, the letter said that many American ships now sailed the seas near Japan — whaling ships above all — and asked for friendship, for ports where American ships could take on water, food and coal, and for kind treatment of any American sailors shipwrecked on Japanese shores. It said that as the world changed and new nations grew, it was wise to try new ways, and that it was no honour to a great nation to refuse friendship with another. Perry handed over the letter, refused to discuss terms, and sailed away — promising to return for an answer.

The shogunate spent months asking its own lords what to do — an unusual act, since the decision should have been the shogun's alone — and found no way to refuse. Perry returned in February 1854 with more ships. On **31 March 1854**, Japanese commissioners signed the **Treaty of Kanagawa**. Figure 3 sets out what it said.

The Treaty of Kanagawa, 31 March 1854

Japan's first treaty with the United States - what it said, and what it meant

Article	What it said	What it meant for Japan
Article I	Lasting peace and friendship between the United States and Japan	The door that had been shut for over 200 years was officially open
Article II	The port of Shimoda opens at once; Hakodate opens one year later; American ships may take on water, food, wood and coal there	Two Japanese ports become supply points for American ships
Articles III-IV	Japan rescues ships in distress and treats shipwrecked American sailors humanely and as free people	Castaway sailors will no longer be imprisoned or punished
Article IX	If Japan later grants any favour to another country, the United States gets it too (most-favoured-nation treatment)	Japan cannot make a better deal with anyone else
Article XI	American consuls or agents may reside at Shimoda after 18 months	A permanent American representative lives in Japan

Summarised from the original treaty, signed at Kanagawa on 31 March 1854 (US National Archives). The treaty did not yet set up full trade - that came with the unequal treaties of 1858.

Table of the main articles of the Treaty of Kanagawa of 1854 and what each meant for Japan: peace and friendship, the opening of Shimoda and Hakodate, help for shipwrecked sailors, most-favoured-nation treatment, and a US consul at Shimoda

Figure 3. The Treaty of Kanagawa, signed 31 March 1854 — Japan's first treaty with the United States. Wording summarised from the original treaty text.

Look closely at the last two rows of Figure 3. The **most-favoured-nation** clause meant that anything Japan gave one country, the United States would also get. And the consul's job was to stay. Perry's mission was not a visit; it was the beginning of a relationship Japan had not chosen. This was **gunboat diplomacy** — negotiating while warships wait in view. The treaty's words were polite. The ships were the argument.

3. The unequal treaties and Japan's response, 1858–1911

The Treaty of Kanagawa opened ports but did not yet set up trade. In 1856 the first American consul, **Townsend Harris**, arrived at Shimoda and pressed for a full trade treaty. On **29 July 1858** the shogunate signed the **Treaty of Amity and Commerce** with the United States; over the following months it signed the same kind of treaty with the Netherlands, Russia, Britain and France. Historians call these the **unequal treaties**: treaties forced on a weaker state that give one side advantages the other does not get. Figure 4 lists what made them unequal — and how long it took Japan to end each condition.

The unequal treaties of 1858 - and their undoing, 1894-1911

Treaties signed under pressure give one side advantages the other never gets

Signed 1858 with the United States (29 July), then the Netherlands, Russia, Britain and France

What made them unequal

Extraterritoriality

Foreign citizens in Japan were judged by their own consuls' courts, not by Japanese law - a foreigner

Fixed tariffs

Japan could not set its own taxes on imported goods, so it could not shield its new industries from cheap

One-sided most-favoured-nation terms

Whatever Japan gave any foreign country, the treaty powers got too - but they gave Japan nothing in return

How Japan won the rights back

1868

The shogunate falls; the Meiji government modernises Japan on purpose - army, railways,

telegraphs, law, a constitution (1889)

Britain signs a new, equal treaty of commerce and navigation with Japan

17 July 1899

The 1894 treaty takes effect: the foreign consuls' courts in Japan end - extraterritoriality is over

1911

Japan wins back control of its own tariffs

43 years from the Harris Treaty (1858) to full legal equality (1911) - the length of the shadow that contact cast over Japan.

Sources: treaty texts of 1858; Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation 1894 (in force 1899); tariff revision of 1911.

Table of the unequal treaties Japan signed in 1858 with five countries, what made each unequal — courts run by foreign consuls, fixed tariffs and one-sided most-favoured-nation terms — and when Japan regained each right: 1899 for the courts and 1911 for the tariffs

Figure 4. The unequal treaties of 1858 and their undoing, 1894–1911.

Two terms in Figure 4 matter. **Extraterritoriality** let foreign citizens be judged by their own consuls' courts instead of by Japanese law — so a foreigner who broke Japanese law in Japan could not be tried by a Japanese court. **Fixed tariffs** meant Japan could not set its own taxes on imported goods, so it could not protect its own new industries from cheap foreign goods. (A **tariff** is a tax on goods entering or leaving a country.)

The consequences ran in two directions at once — outward, against Japan's economy, and inward, against its politics:

- **Intended consequences (for the United States):** American ships got ports, trade and legal protection for their citizens.
- **Unintended consequences:** the political crisis destroyed the government that signed. The shogunate had agreed to the treaties without the emperor's approval, and its enemies said this proved it was too weak to defend Japan. In **1868** the shogunate fell and power was restored to the emperor in the **Meiji Restoration**. The new government made itself strong on purpose: a conscript army, railways, telegraph lines, modern law and a constitution in 1889. (The Restoration and what it changed are taught in depth in Section 5C.)
- **Long-term:** the unequal treaties became the yardstick of Japan's modernisation. Japan's leaders knew the treaties would only end when Western powers judged Japan "civilised" by their own standards. Britain signed a new, equal treaty in 1894, which took effect on **17 July 1899** — the courts run by foreign consuls in Japan ended. Japan won back control of its own tariffs in **1911**. Forty-three years from the Harris Treaty to full legal equality: that is the length of the shadow contact cast over Japan.

4. From empire's target to empire builder, 1894–1910

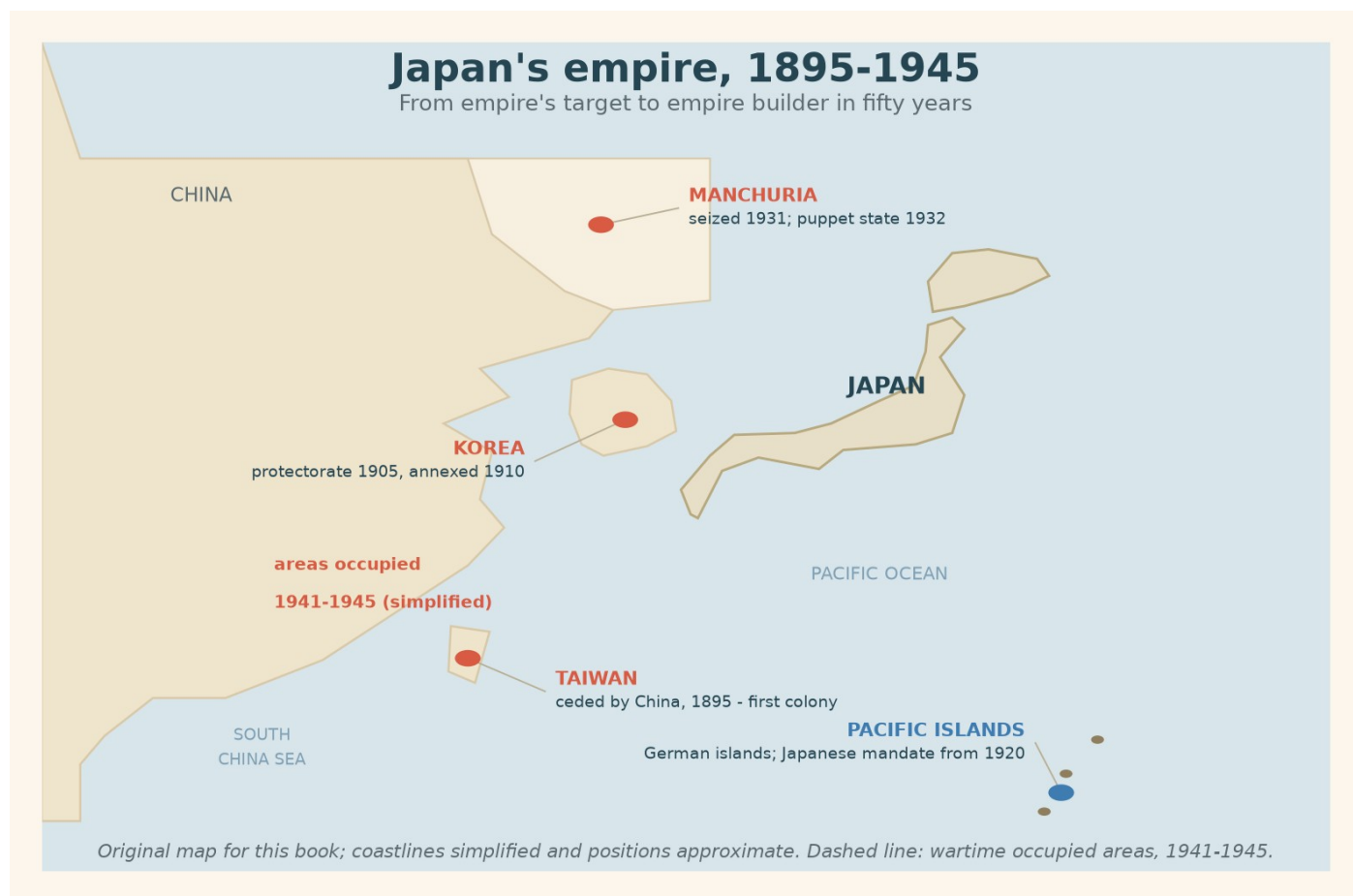
A second consequence of contact: Japan did not just escape colonisation — it copied the colonisers. Japan's leaders studied the lesson of China, which had lost the Opium War to Britain in 1842 and been forced open by European powers. Their reading was harsh and practical: a country either controlled its neighbours' approaches, or its neighbours were controlled by someone else. Empire became Japan's answer to the threat that had opened it.

China, 1894–1895. Japan and China clashed over who would control Korea. War began in August 1894 and ended in a stunning Japanese victory. By the **Treaty of Shimonoseki (17 April 1895)**, China recognised Korean independence (which in practice meant Korea passed into Japan's orbit), paid Japan a huge **war payment** — money a defeated side is forced to hand to the victor — and ceded (handed over) the island of **Taiwan** and the Penghu islands to Japan. Taiwan became Japan's first **colony** — a territory ruled by another country. Days later, Russia, Germany and France together forced Japan to give back the Liaodong peninsula it had also won. Japan obeyed — and remembered.

Russia, 1904–1905. The Liaodong insult, and rivalry over Korea and Manchuria, led to a **war between Japan and Russia** (February 1904 – September 1905), ended by the Treaty of Portsmouth on 5 September 1905. The result shocked the world: for the first time in the modern era, an Asian state had defeated a European empire in open war.

Korea, 1905–1910. Korea became a Japanese **protectorate** in 1905 — a state that keeps its own rulers but whose dealings with other countries are controlled by a stronger power — and was **annexed** outright on 29 August 1910: taken in and declared part of Japan. From this point, two peoples — Koreans and Taiwanese — lived as colonial subjects of the Japanese empire.

Figure 5 maps the result.



Simple map of Japan's empire from 1895 to 1945 showing Japan itself, Taiwan from 1895, Korea from 1910, Manchuria seized in 1931, the Pacific islands mandated after World War I, and the areas occupied during World War II

Figure 5. Japan's empire, 1895–1945. Coastlines simplified; positions approximate.

Perspectives matter here (Section 7E). Through the eyes of Japan's leaders in 1910, each step looked like defence: buffer lands between Japan and the great powers, and proof that Japan stood equal beside them. Through the eyes of Koreans and Taiwanese, the same steps were conquest — their land, laws and schooling reshaped by a foreign power. Both readings are recorded by historians; the difference is not about the facts but about whose experience the facts are told from.

5. The world responds to 1905

The elaboration .E20 asks how European countries responded to Japan's victory over Russia. Those responses were loud — and mixed (Figure 6).



Five response cards to Japan's 1905 victory over Russia: Britain celebrates its ally, Germany's "yellow peril" anxiety, Russia's humiliation feeding its 1905 revolution, France's nervous watching, and the hope the victory gave colonised peoples from India to Vietnam

Figure 6. Responses to Japan's 1905 victory over Russia. The last card is not European — it is there because the loudest cheers came from outside Europe.

- **Britain** was Japan's ally — the **Anglo-Japanese Alliance** of 30 January 1902 was the first alliance Britain had made with a non-Western power on equal terms. In 1905, London celebrated the victory as its ally's — and as a check on Russia.
- **Germany's** Kaiser Wilhelm II had been warning Europe of a "yellow peril" since 1895, when he designed a famous picture (*Peoples of Europe, Guard Your Most Sacred Possessions*, painted by Hermann Knackfuss) showing Europe menaced from the east. After 1905, that anxiety lost all doubt: Germany pushed harder for its own naval power.
- **Russia's** defeat fed the revolution that shook the tsar's government at home in 1905. A lost war abroad had become a crisis at home — a long-term consequence of contact with Japan.
- **France**, Russia's ally, watched nervously and drew closer to Britain in the years after.

And beyond Europe — the responses the European powers least wanted to hear. In India, the boy who became **Jawaharlal Nehru** later wrote in his autobiography (1936) that Japan's victory stirred his enthusiasm and filled him with dreams of freedom for Asia. In Vietnam, the nationalist **Phan Boi Chau** launched the "Go East" movement, which sent hundreds of Vietnamese students to Japan between 1905 and 1909 to learn how a modern state was built. Nationalists from Egypt to the Ottoman Empire read the same lesson: modern knowledge and weapons could beat an empire. Japan's victory was, in the eyes of colonised peoples, proof that the age of empires did not have to last forever.

6. Versailles, 1919: Japan's response

Japan entered World War I on the Allied side on 23 August 1914, and within months had taken Germany's leased territory at Qingdao in China and Germany's island territories in the Pacific. It therefore came to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 as one of the five great victor powers, asking for two things. What Japan made of the treaty that followed is the question of .E21.

First, a racial equality clause in the new League of Nations covenant. Japan proposed that the League agree to equal treatment of all its member nations' citizens regardless of race. On **11 April 1919** the League of Nations Commission voted. Figure 7 records the result.

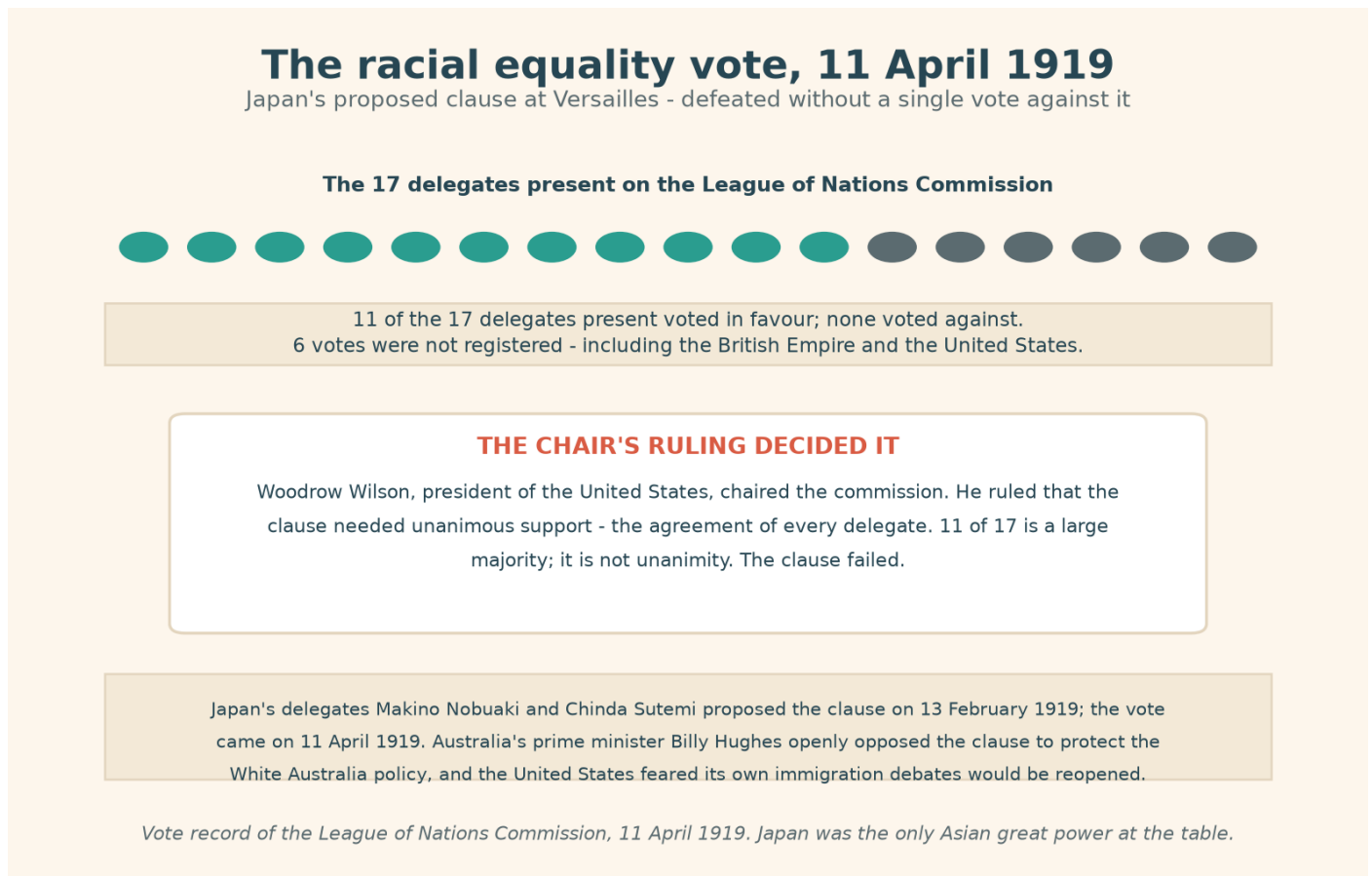


Chart of the 11 April 1919 vote on Japan's racial equality proposal: 11 of the 17 delegates present voted in favour, none against, six votes not registered including the British Empire and the United States, and the chair Woodrow Wilson ruling that unanimity was required

Figure 7. The racial equality vote, 11 April 1919. A majority was not enough: the chair, US President Woodrow Wilson, ruled that the clause needed unanimous support, so it failed.

Second, territory: confirmation that Japan would keep Germany's Pacific islands and take over Germany's rights in Shandong, China. Both were granted: the Pacific islands became a Japanese **mandate** — a territory taken from a defeated power and run by a victor under League of Nations supervision — and Shandong passed from German to Japanese hands. In China, the decision exploded into the **May Fourth movement** (4 May 1919), a wave of student protest against both foreign privilege and China's own weak government.

Japan's response to Versailles is where analysis begins, because it ran in two directions:

- **Short-term, Japan gained.** It was the only Asian great power at the table; it kept its mandate and its Shandong rights; its diplomats had performed as equals — and better, since Britain, France and the United States argued publicly while Japan spoke with one voice.
- **Long-term, something broke.** The racial equality vote told Japanese leaders that no matter how modern, how victorious or how allied Japan became, the Western powers would still treat it as apart. Nationalist newspapers said so at the time. That bitterness did not cause what followed by itself, but it fed it: when Japan seized Manchuria in September 1931 (the Mukden Incident, 18 September 1931; the puppet state of Manchukuo

declared 1 March 1932) and the League of Nations condemned it — the vote on 24 February 1933 was 42 to 1 — Japan walked out of the League on 27 March 1933. The power that had joined the world order in 1919 left it in

1933. Section 3A picks up the road from there to the Pacific war.

A fair reading must also weigh the other side's reasons: Australia's prime minister Billy Hughes openly opposed the clause to protect the White Australia policy (Section 1F), the United States feared its own immigration debates would be reopened, and some historians note that Japan's proposal also served its own aim of protecting Japanese migrants abroad. None of that excuses the outcome; it explains why unanimity was never possible.

7. Worked inquiry 1 — causes and consequences of contact

Watch how an answer to a cause-and-consequence question is built. The question:

What were the causes of American contact with Japan in 1853, and what were its consequences?

Build in four moves: make a **claim**, give **evidence**, add your **explanation**, then follow the **consequences** — and label each consequence short-term or long-term, intended or unintended. Figure 8 shows a finished paragraph, colour-coded by move.

A model answer, move by move

Question: What were the causes of American contact with Japan in 1853, and what were its consequences?

CLAIM	The American arrival of 1853 was caused by the United States' needs at sea - and its consequences reached far beyond what either side intended.
EVIDENCE	President Fillmore's letter (13 November 1852) asked for ports where American ships - whalers above all - could take on water, food and coal, and for kind treatment of shipwrecked sailors. Perry's four warships arrived on 8 July 1853, and Japan signed the Treaty of Kanagawa on 31 March 1854, opening Shimoda and Hakodate.
EXPLANATION	The shogunate could not refuse: the ships were the argument (gunboat diplomacy). The most-favoured-nation clause meant that any favour Japan gave one country spread to the rest, so one treaty became many.
CONSEQUENCES	Short-term, intended (for the United States): American ships got their ports and supplies, and full trade followed from 1858. Long-term, unintended (for Japan): the unequal treaties helped bring down the shogunate in 1868 and set off the Meiji rebuild - after which Japan built an empire of its own.
SIGNIFICANCE	Contact in 1853 did not just open two ports: it began the chain of events that remade Japan, and with it the region.

Four moves plus a significance sentence. Every evidence sentence carries a date; the consequences are sorted, not just listed.

Colour-coded model paragraph on the causes and consequences of American contact with Japan in 1853, labelled by move: claim, evidence, explanation, consequences

Figure 8. A model answer. Steal its moves, not its question — the tasks below use the same structure on different events.

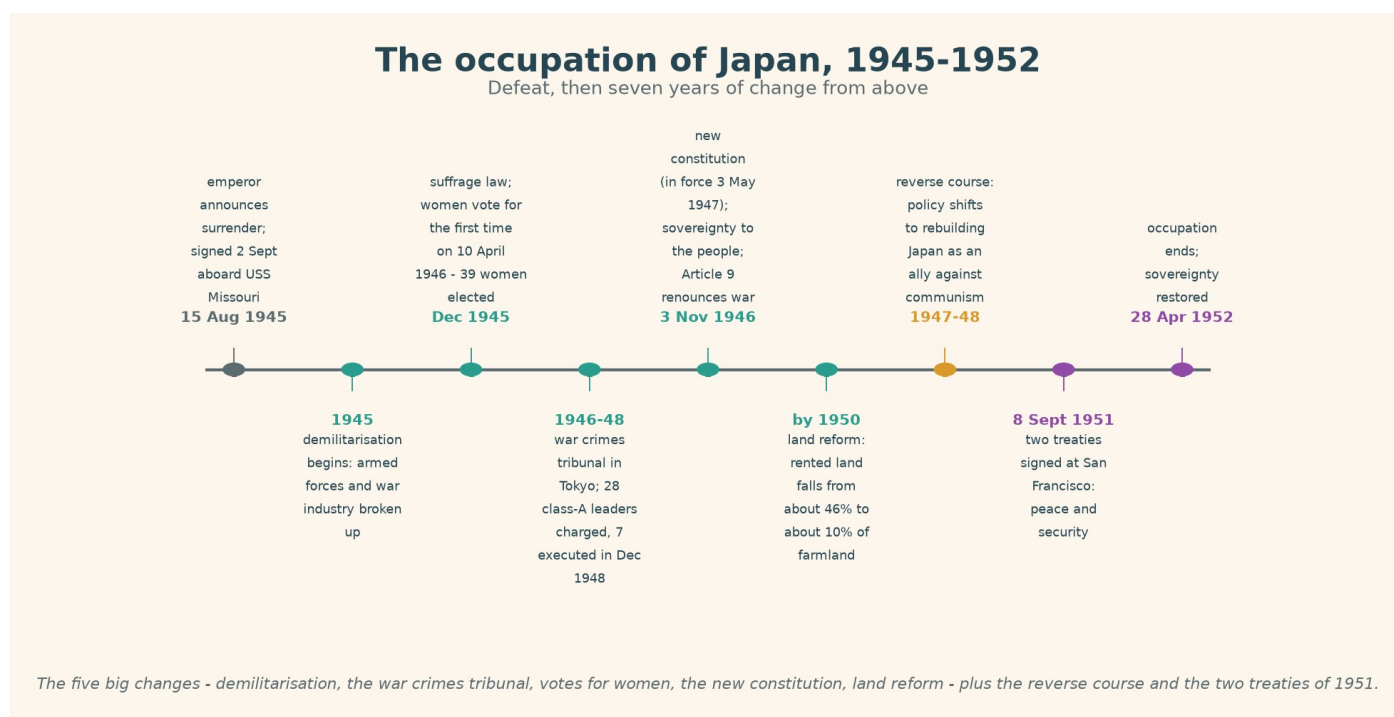
Read it twice: once for sense, once move by move. Notice three things. Every evidence sentence carries a date. The consequences are sorted, not just listed — the short-term intended consequence for the United States (ports and trade) is separated from the long-term unintended consequence for Japan (the fall of the shogunate and the Meiji rebuild). And the last sentence states the significance rather than repeating the claim. That sorting is exactly the Section 8B skill of short-term and long-term, intended and unintended consequences, applied.

8. Defeat and occupation, 1945–1952

Japan's empire reached its greatest extent in 1942, when Japanese forces controlled a sweep of Asia and the Pacific — from Manchuria to Southeast Asia (Chapters 3 and 4 tell the war's story, including the fall of Singapore in Section 3E and Australia's campaigns in Sections 3C and 3D). Japan's wartime leaders announced that their empire would free Asia from Western colonial rule under what they called the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. That is sense (2) of *liberation* from part 1. Test it against the record as you read Chapters 3–4: peoples under Japanese occupation — in China, Korea, Southeast Asia and the Pacific — experienced military rule, forced labour and severe hardship. For them, freedom came not from Japan's arrival but from Japan's defeat: sense (3).

In August 1945, after atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima (6 August) and Nagasaki (9 August) — their causes and consequences are taught in Section 3F — Japan's emperor announced surrender on **15 August 1945**. The surrender was signed on 2 September 1945 aboard the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. Japan's empire, fifty years old, was gone in weeks.

Then came the **occupation**. From 1945 to 1952, Japan was governed from above by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), US General **Douglas MacArthur**, working through Japan's own government. The occupation is the first half of .E22. Figure 9 sequences its main changes.



Timeline of the Allied occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952: surrender, demilitarisation, the war crimes trial, women's suffrage, the new constitution, land reform, the reverse course, and the two treaties of 1951

Figure 9. The occupation's changes, 1945–1952.

The big five:

1. **Demilitarisation** — the breaking up of Japan's armed forces and war industry.
2. **A war crimes tribunal** — the International Military Tribunal for the Far East sat in Tokyo from May 1946 to November 1948. Twenty-eight class-A wartime leaders were charged; seven, including wartime prime minister Tojo Hideki, were executed in December 1948.
3. **A new constitution** — issued on 3 November 1946, in force 3 May 1947. It moved sovereignty — the right to rule — from the emperor to the people. Its **Article 9**, drafted in SCAP's office, renounced war:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.”

— Constitution of Japan, Article 9 (1947), official translation. Whether Article 9 binds Japan forever or can be reinterpreted is a live debate; Section 5F returns to it.

4. **Votes for women** — the suffrage law of December 1945; in the election of 10 April 1946 women voted for the first time, and 39 women were elected to the national parliament.
5. **Land reform** — tenant farmers who had rented land from landlords were helped to buy it; rented land fell from about 46% to about 10% of all farmland by 1950.

From 1947–1948, as the Cold War took shape (Section 1C), American policy shifted from punishing and reforming Japan to rebuilding it as a strong anti-communist ally — a change historians call the **reverse course**.

Steelman both readings. Historians genuinely divide over what the occupation was, and both sides argue from real evidence — Figure 10 states each in its strongest form.

Two readings of the occupation, each at its strongest

Historians genuinely divide over what the occupation was - both sides argue from the record

READING 1: THE OCCUPATION AS REFORM

- Democracy given from above: the new constitution (in force 3 May 1947) moved sovereignty from the emperor to the people, and Article 9 renounced war.
- Votes for women: the suffrage law of December 1945; 39 women elected in April 1946.
- Land for farmers: tenant farmers were helped to buy the land they worked; rented land fell from about 46% to about 10% by 1950.
- The occupation ended itself: sovereignty was restored on 28 April 1952.

READING 2: THE OCCUPATION AS IMPOSITION

- Rule by a foreign general: MacArthur (SCAP) answered to Washington, not to Japanese voters.
- Victors' justice: the Tokyo tribunal tried Japan's leaders, but the atomic bombs were never put on trial.
- The reverse course: from 1947-48 American policy put Cold War interests ahead of reform.
- Okinawa stayed under American rule until 15 May 1972.

Steelmaning means stating the view you argue against at its strongest before you weigh the two. Both readings above rest on real evidence - your task is to weigh them, not to pick a team.

One event, two readings: reform from above, or imposition by the victor. Section 8B's skill of weighing evidence applies.

Two steelmanned readings of the Allied occupation of Japan: as reform, giving democracy, votes and land from above; and as imposition, ruled by a foreign general, victors' justice, and the reverse course that put American interests first

Figure 10. Two steelmanned readings of the occupation. Your job is to weigh them, not pick a team.

9. Sovereignty and its price: the two treaties of 8 September 1951

On one day — **8 September 1951** — Japan signed two treaties in San Francisco. Together they define sense (1) of *liberation* in this section: Japan's recovery of self-rule (Figure 11).

One day, two treaties: 8 September 1951

Peace above, security below - signed hours apart in San Francisco

THE SAN FRANCISCO PEACE TREATY - sovereignty restored

Signed by Japan and 48 Allied countries; in force 28 April 1952 - the occupation ends and Japan rules itself again.

Article 1(b): "The Allied Powers recognize the full sovereignty of the Japanese people over Japan and its territorial waters."

Left unsettled: the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia refused to sign; neither Korea nor China was represented at all.



signed the same day

THE SECURITY TREATY - sovereignty with a condition

American forces remain in and around Japan; Okinawa stays under American rule until 15 May 1972.

Revised in 1960 into the alliance that still stands today.

The price: Japan was free to rule itself, but not free of the alliance - its security depended on its previous occupier.

Together they define sense (1) of liberation in this section: Japan's recovery of self-rule in 1952.

Paired cards for the two treaties Japan signed on 8 September 1951: the San Francisco Peace Treaty, in force 28 April 1952, restoring sovereignty; and the Security Treaty with the United States, keeping American forces in and around Japan

Figure 11. The two treaties of one day — peace above, security below.

The **San Francisco Peace Treaty** ended the occupation. Forty-eight countries signed it. It came into force on **28 April 1952**, and from that day Japan ruled itself again. Article 1(b) states the point in one sentence:

"The Allied Powers recognize the full sovereignty of the Japanese people over Japan and its territorial waters."

— Treaty of Peace with Japan (San Francisco Peace Treaty), Article 1(b), 1951.

The **Security Treaty**, signed the same day, let American forces remain in and around Japan. Okinawa, in the south, stayed under American administration until 15 May 1972. The treaty was revised in 1960 into the alliance that still stands today.

The significance of the pair — this is the .E22 question — is that sovereignty came with a condition attached. Japan was free to rule itself but not free of the alliance; its security depended on its previous occupier. At the peace conference the division was already visible: the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia refused to sign, and neither Korea nor China — the peoples who had suffered most under Japanese rule — was represented at all. The peace that restored Japan's sovereignty in 1951 left several of its deepest relationships unsettled. That is where the section's last question begins.

10. Worked inquiry 2 — after empire: Japan and the lands it had occupied

The question:

How far have Japan's relationships with the countries it occupied recovered since 1945?

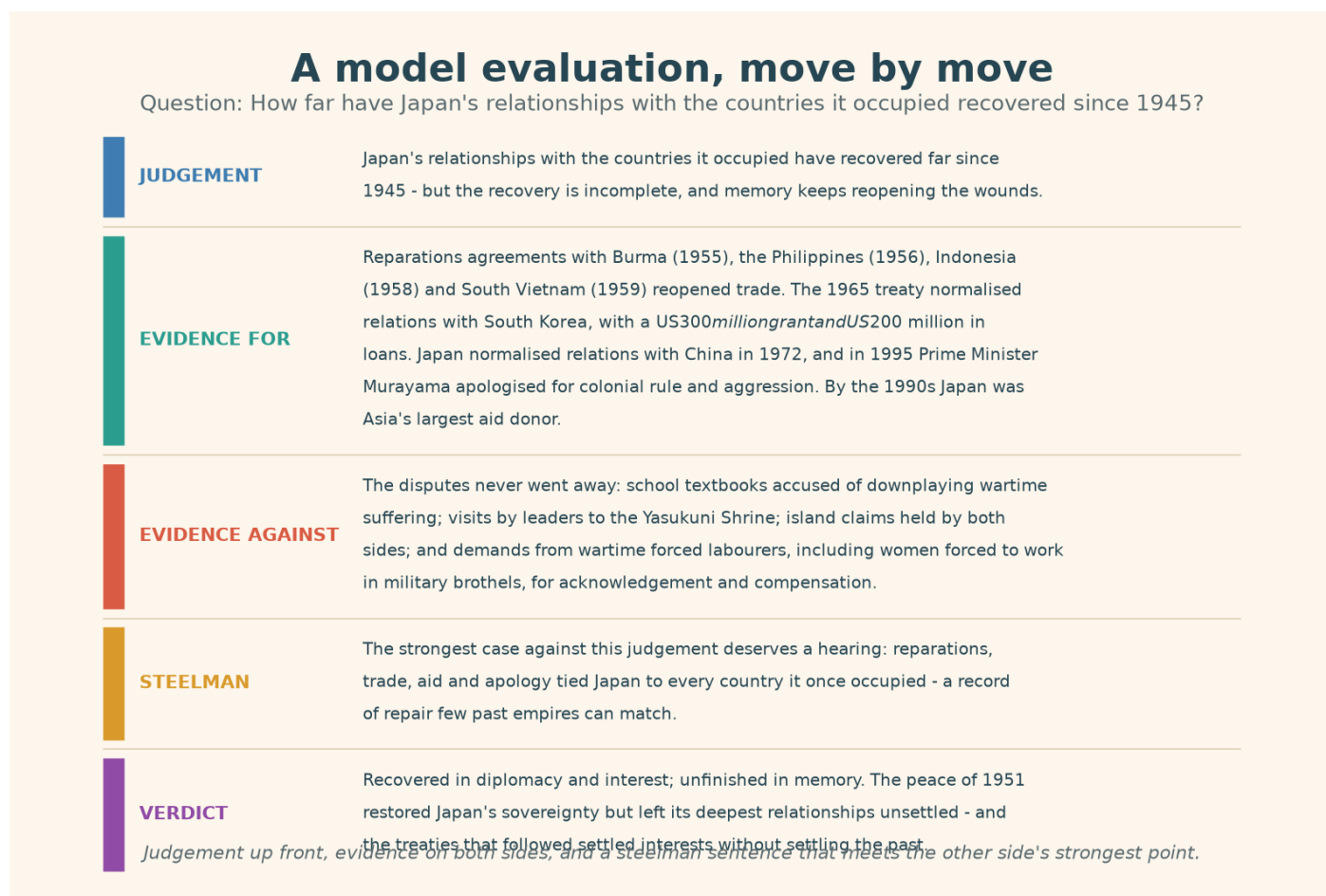
This is an evaluation question (.E23): it needs a judgement, evidence on both sides, and a steelman of the view you argue against. Here is the evidence base.

The repair. Japan rebuilt relations country by country, often paying **reparations** — payments made after a war to repair some of the damage caused — in Japanese goods and services:

- **Burma, 1955; the Philippines, 1956; Indonesia, 1958; South Vietnam, 1959** — reparations agreements opened the door to trade.
- **South Korea** — the Treaty on Basic Relations of 22 June 1965 normalised relations with a US\$300 million grant and US\$200 million in loans.
- **China** — the Japan–China Joint Communiqué of 29 September 1972 normalised relations; in it, Japan said it was “keenly aware of the responsibility for the serious damage” its war had caused the Chinese people.
- **Words of apology** — on 15 August 1995, fifty years after the surrender, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama issued the clearest official apology yet, expressing “deep remorse and [a] heartfelt apology” for Japan’s colonial rule and aggression. The **Murayama Statement** is a primary source historians return to whenever later governments are accused of softening those words.
- **Trade and aid** — reparations built trade networks, and by the 1990s Japan was Asia’s largest aid donor.

The unresolved. At the same time, disputes have never fully gone away: school history textbooks accused of downplaying wartime suffering; visits by leaders to the Yasukuni Shrine, which honours Japan’s war dead including leaders convicted of war crimes; claims over islands held by both sides; and demands from wartime forced labourers, including women forced to work in military brothels, for acknowledgement and compensation.

Figure 12 shows a model evaluation built from this evidence.



Annotated model paragraph evaluating how far Japan’s relationships with the countries it occupied have recovered since 1945, showing the four moves and a steelman sentence

Figure 12. A model evaluation. Note the judgement up front, evidence on both sides, and the steelman sentence that meets the other side’s strongest point.

11. Practice tasks

Scaffolded tasks — work with the supports provided.

1. **Complete the contact table.** Copy the table and complete it using part 2 and Figure 2. One row is done for you.

Element of contact	Detail from this section
Who arrived	Commodore Matthew C. Perry, US Navy, 8 July 1853
Why they came	
What document did Perry carry	
What treaty resulted, and when	
Two ports it opened	

2. **Order the journey.** Using Figure 1 only, put these eight events in order from earliest to latest: the Treaty of Kanagawa; Korea annexed; Japan leaves the League of Nations; the Meiji Restoration; the Treaty of Shimonoseki; the surrender of Japan; the San Francisco Peace Treaty in force; the racial equality vote at Versailles. Which two events are exactly fifty-six years apart?
3. **Read the treaties table.** From Figure 4: (a) name the five countries that signed unequal treaties with Japan in 1858; (b) which unequal condition ended in 1899, and which ended in 1911? (c) In one sentence, state what made these treaties “unequal”.
4. **Read the vote.** From Figure 7: (a) how many of the 17 delegates present voted in favour of Japan’s racial equality clause? (b) how many voted against? (c) why did the clause fail anyway? (d) name one country whose votes were not registered.
5. **Map the empire.** From Figure 5, list five territories in or under Japan’s control by 1942, each with the year it came under Japanese control. Then answer: which of them came under Japan’s control before 1920?
6. **Occupation table.** Copy and complete this table from part 8 and Figure 9.

Change	Date	One-sentence effect
Demilitarisation	from 1945	
War crimes tribunal	1946–1948	
New constitution	in force 3 May 1947	
Women’s suffrage	law 1945, vote 1946	
Land reform	1946–1950	

Unscaffolded tasks — no supports; build your answer from scratch.

7. **Causes, intended and unintended.** Explain two causes of Perry’s mission of 1853. Then identify one *intended* consequence of contact for the United States and one *unintended* consequence for Japan. Label each as short-term or long-term, and say why.
8. **Responses to 1905.** “The world’s response to Japan’s victory over Russia in 1905 was a mixture of admiration and fear.” Describe the responses of two European countries and one colonised people, and use your evidence to support, modify or reject the claim.
9. **Versailles analysed.** Analyse how Japan responded to the Treaty of Versailles. In your answer: state one thing Japan gained, one thing it was denied, and one long-term consequence of the denial, each with a date.
10. **Evaluate the settlement.** “The San Francisco settlement of 1951 gave Japan sovereignty but not full independence.” Using the Peace Treaty, the Security Treaty and one later relationship from part 10, argue for or against this claim, and steelman the other side in one or two sentences.

12. Source-based inquiry — a friendly letter, carried by warships

Read this primary source, then answer the questions below it.

Extract, in modern words, from the letter of President Millard Fillmore of the United States to the Emperor of Japan, Washington, 13 November 1852. The letter said, in effect: many American ships now sail the seas near Japan, and those waters are the chief fishing grounds of American whaling ships; the United States wishes friendship between the two countries; it asks that American ships may enter Japanese ports for water, food, coal and shelter, and that shipwrecked American sailors be treated with kindness; and since the world changes and new nations grow, it seems wise to try new ways rather than cling to old laws against foreign trade. The letter was carried by Commodore Perry and delivered at Kurihama on 14 July 1853. (*Original letter, printed in Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, vol. 1, Washington, 1856.*)

Figure 13 gives you the question frame to work with.

Asking questions of a source: the Fillmore letter

Five lenses for the letter President Fillmore sent to the Emperor of Japan - and for any source

The source: President Millard Fillmore's letter to the Emperor of Japan, dated 13 November 1852, carried by Commodore Perry and delivered at Kurihama on 14 July 1853. Part 12 prints it in modern words.

ORIGIN	AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE	CONTENT	SILENCES	CORROBORATION
Who wrote this, when, and what kind of source is it? An official letter from one head of state to another - a primary source, written at the time.	Who is the letter addressed to - and who else is meant to read it? What does Fillmore want the emperor to do? Look for: friendship, ports, supplies, rescue.	What does the letter ask for, and what reasons does it give? Look for: whaling ships, coal for steamships, shipwrecked sailors, trade with China.	What is missing? Whose voices do not appear? No Japanese voice. Nothing about what opening the ports would cost Japan - or what 1858 would bring.	What do other sources say? Does anything confirm or contradict it? Check it against the Treaty of Kanagawa (Figure 3) and Japanese records of the shogunate's debate.

Use the same five lenses on every source in this section - including the figures, which are original artifacts made for this book.

Question frame for reading Fillmore's 1852 letter to the Emperor of Japan: origin, audience and purpose, content, silences, and corroboration, each with guiding questions

Figure 13. The questions to ask of the Fillmore letter — and of any source in this section.

1. **Formulate:** write two historical questions this source could help you answer.
2. **Infer:** what does the letter tell you about what American ships needed from Japan — and about what Japan was assumed to have plenty of?
3. **Context:** the letter speaks of friendship. Use part 2 to explain what stood behind the letter — that is, what Japan's rulers knew would happen if they refused.
4. **Perspective and silence:** whose voice is this, and whose voice is completely absent from the document? Explain how the absence of Japanese voices limits what a historian can learn from it.
5. **Evaluate:** is this source more useful for studying *American motives for contact* or *Japanese experiences of contact*? Explain your answer.

What to look for

Score student work against the band achievement standard (Level 9–10): students analyse the features, content and context of sources; identify the perspectives that individuals and groups held; connect short- and long-term causes with intended and unintended consequences; and judge historical significance by criteria. Expected responses below are a guide, not a script. All three senses of “liberation” (part 1 box) should remain kept-separate in student answers; if a student merges Japan’s wartime claim with the occupied peoples’ experience, return them to the box before marking.

- **Contact (part 2, .E19):** student can state at least two of the four causes in Figure 2 (whaling and provisions; coal for steamships; shipwrecked sailors; growing China trade), give the arrival date 8 July 1853, the treaty date 31 March 1854, and name Shimoda and Hakodate. The gunboat-diplomacy point — polite words, warships behind them — is the understanding to reward.
- **Unequal treaties (part 3, .E19):** extraterritoriality and fixed tariffs are explained in the student’s own words; the fall of the shogunate is identified as an unintended consequence; the dates 1899 and 1911 are the recovery points.
- **Empire (part 4):** Taiwan 1895, Korea 1910 and Manchuria 1931 are in order; the perspectives point (defence through Japanese eyes, conquest through Korean and Taiwanese eyes) is the analytic step — reward it when stated either way, provided the evidence is consistent with the student’s framing.
- **Responses to 1905 (part 5, .E20):** at least two European responses (Britain’s allied celebration; Germany’s “yellow peril” anxiety; Russia’s humiliation feeding the 1905 revolution; France’s nervousness) plus at least one response from a colonised people (Nehru’s recollection; Vietnam’s Go East movement) — the point is that the victory was read as proof that empires could be beaten.
- **Versailles (part 6, .E21):** the vote is read correctly from Figure 7 (11 of 17 in favour; none against; six votes not registered including the British Empire and the United States; Wilson’s unanimity ruling); the short-term gain / long-term break structure is the expected shape of the analysis, with Manchuria 1931 and League withdrawal 27 March 1933 as the long-term consequence.
- **Occupation (part 8, .E22):** the five changes are sequenced from Figure 9; Article 9 is read as a source (renunciation of war); the steelman of part 8 is understood as two real positions, both evidenced — marking rewards the weighing, not the side chosen.
- **Treaties of 1951 (part 9, .E22):** sovereignty restored 28 April 1952; the Security Treaty’s condition — US forces remaining, Okinawa until 1972 — is named as the price; the absent signatories (Soviet refusal; Korea and China unrepresented) are the link into part 10.
- **Relations since 1945 (part 10, .E23):** evaluations carry a judgement plus dated evidence on both sides — repair (reparations 1955–59; Korea 1965; China 1972; Murayama 1995) and unresolved disputes (textbooks, Yasukuni, forced-labour claims, islands) — with a steelman sentence meeting the opposing view.
- **Source inquiry (part 12):** questions are genuinely historical; the inference notes the letter’s economic wants (provisions, coal, shelter); the context answer names the warships behind the polite words; the perspective answer identifies the absent Japanese voice and its effect on what the source can show; the evaluation distinguishes usefulness for American motives from usefulness for Japanese experience.

Cross-links to other sections: Japan’s 18th–19th-century features (5A); the Meiji Restoration and the events and ideas that drove change in Japan (5C); experiences and perspectives under Japanese rule (5D); ways of life and cultural expression (5E); interpretations and debates, including Article 9 (5F); the Pacific war and Australia’s place in it (3C–3F); post-war Australia–Asia relationships (4D); decolonisation worldwide (1C); White Australia Policy context for Hughes at Versailles (1F); cause-and-consequence method (8B); source method (7C–7D); significance criteria (8C); sustained interpretation (8D).

Events and ideas: continuity and change in an Asian society

For the teacher

*This section is one teaching sequence (parts 1–11) with two worked inquiries built from real, dated, checkable sources (the Charter Oath of 1868 and the two constitutions of 1889 and 1947), six scaffolded practice tasks, four unscaffolded tasks and one source-based inquiry task (the 1945 surrender rescript, set in modern words), per the §3 volume calibration. The society chosen and held for chapter 5 is **Japan** (build_notes_ch5.md, binding for 5A–5F). Register is direct-address prose at or below the Yr10 ceiling (D2). Subject terms are defined at first use (D2 exemption 2). Contested terms are defined before use with attribution and steelmanned before evaluation (CONTESTED_TERMS Rules 4–5): the role of Emperor Meiji (part 4), the degree of change after 1945 (part 10), and the death toll at Nanjing (part 9, attributed range). All First Nations content is excluded per Rule 1 and §2A; none is authored in, including as context or a caption.*

Curriculum alignment (VCAA export VC2_AS-CD-E1ab_29-07-2026.csv) — codes only:

VC2HH10K26 — Historical Knowledge and Understanding · Investigation: Asia (1750–present)

Draws on (linkage only, D7; Japan option, build_notes_ch5.md): VC2HH10K26.E19 · VC2HH10K26.E20 · VC2HH10K26.E21 · VC2HH10K26.E22 · VC2HH10K26.E23 · VC2HH10K26.E24.

Teaching choices (chapter block spec, §3): coverage is judged on the generic CD text; the Japan option is taught in full. The sequence runs 1853 → today in five teaching eras (labels only — the timeline figure says so). E20 is taught through the three role cards (part 4); E21 through the four idea cards plus a significance evaluation (part 7); E22 through the Pacific War timeline with cross-links to the Australian story in 3C/3E (part 9); E23 through the reform columns plus a steelmanned degree-of-change debate (part 10); E24 through the three-speeds growth chart with a World Bank source line (part 11). Skills cross-links: sequencing and timeline construction (7B), source purpose and context (7C), perspectives from sources (7E), continuity and change (8A), causes and consequences (8B), significance criteria (8C), sustained interpretation (8D).

Contested-terms note (binding): three terms carry attributed definitions and steelmanned positions in the student text — (1) *Emperor Meiji's role*: position A (an active ruler who drove reform) and position B (a symbol and figurehead around whom reformers built the new state) are both stated strongly before students weigh them; (2) *degree of change after 1945*: transformed vs continuity, both steelmanned (part 10 figure); (3) *Nanjing*: the event is documented by witnesses; the death toll is given as an attributed range (Chinese official figure 300,000; scholarly estimates roughly 40,000 to over 300,000). “Nationalism”, “militarism”, “expansionism” and “economic modernisation” are defined before first use (part 7).

Subject words — define at first use (D2 exemption 2):

Word	Gloss used in this section
shogun	the military ruler of Japan who held the real power under the old order
samurai	the warrior class of old Japan
domain	a region of old Japan ruled by its own lord under the shogun
conscription	the system by which men must serve in the armed forces
sovereignty	the rightful power to rule a country
annex / annexation	taking over another land so that it becomes part of your own country
unequal treaties	treaties in which one side gains far more than the other
constitution	the set of rules for how a country is governed
Diet	Japan's parliament
puppet state	a state that looks independent but is controlled by a foreign power

Word	Gloss used in this section
occupation	the control of a defeated country by a foreign power
rescript	an official statement issued by a ruler
figurehead	a leader who holds the title but little of the real power
nationalism	pride in and loyalty to one's own nation
militarism	giving military strength and military leaders great weight in a state's affairs
expansionism	extending a state's rule over other lands and peoples
economic modernisation	building industry, transport and trade in place of a farm-based economy
primary source	a record made at the time being studied
secondary source	an account made later by someone using primary sources
significance	how important something was, judged by its effects

Sources (SOURCE_USE — real referents carry a source line; original documents are cited; the one data series carries a retrieval date):

Referent	Source line
Letter of US President Millard Fillmore, carried by Commodore Perry and delivered to the Japanese in 1853	Original document, US National Archives
Treaty of Kanagawa, signed 31 March 1854 (ports of Shimoda and Hakodate)	Original treaty text
Harris treaty (Treaty of Amity and Commerce), 1858	Original treaty text
Charter Oath, sworn at Kyoto, 6 April 1868; set in modern words in part 4	Original proclamation, Meiji government
Meiji constitution, proclaimed 11 February 1889; first Diet opened 1890	Original statute, National Archives of Japan
Constitution of Japan, promulgated 3 November 1946, in force 3 May 1947	Original statute, National Archives of Japan
Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War (surrender rescript), 14 August 1945; extract set in modern words in part 13	Original broadcast text, National Archives of Japan
Nanjing, December 1937 – January 1938: witness records of John Rabe and Minnie Vautrin	Original diaries and letters, 1937–38
Treaty of San Francisco, signed 8 September 1951, in force 28 April 1952	Original treaty text
Japan real GDP growth, period averages 1955–73, 1974–90, 1991–2019	World Bank, World Development Indicators; retrieved 25 August 2026

1. The big question

From 1603, Japan was ruled by **shoguns** — military rulers of the Tokugawa family — while emperors reigned in the old capital, Kyoto, with little power. Under the shoguns, society was ranked in orders, with the **samurai** (the warrior class) at the top, and Japan's trade with the world was kept small and tightly controlled for more than two centuries.

Then, in the space of a few decades, Japan was turned around: opened to the world by foreign warships, rebuilt under a new government in the emperor's name, raised into an empire and a world power, driven into war and defeat, occupied and rebuilt again — and then lifted into one of the richest economies on earth, before that success stalled.

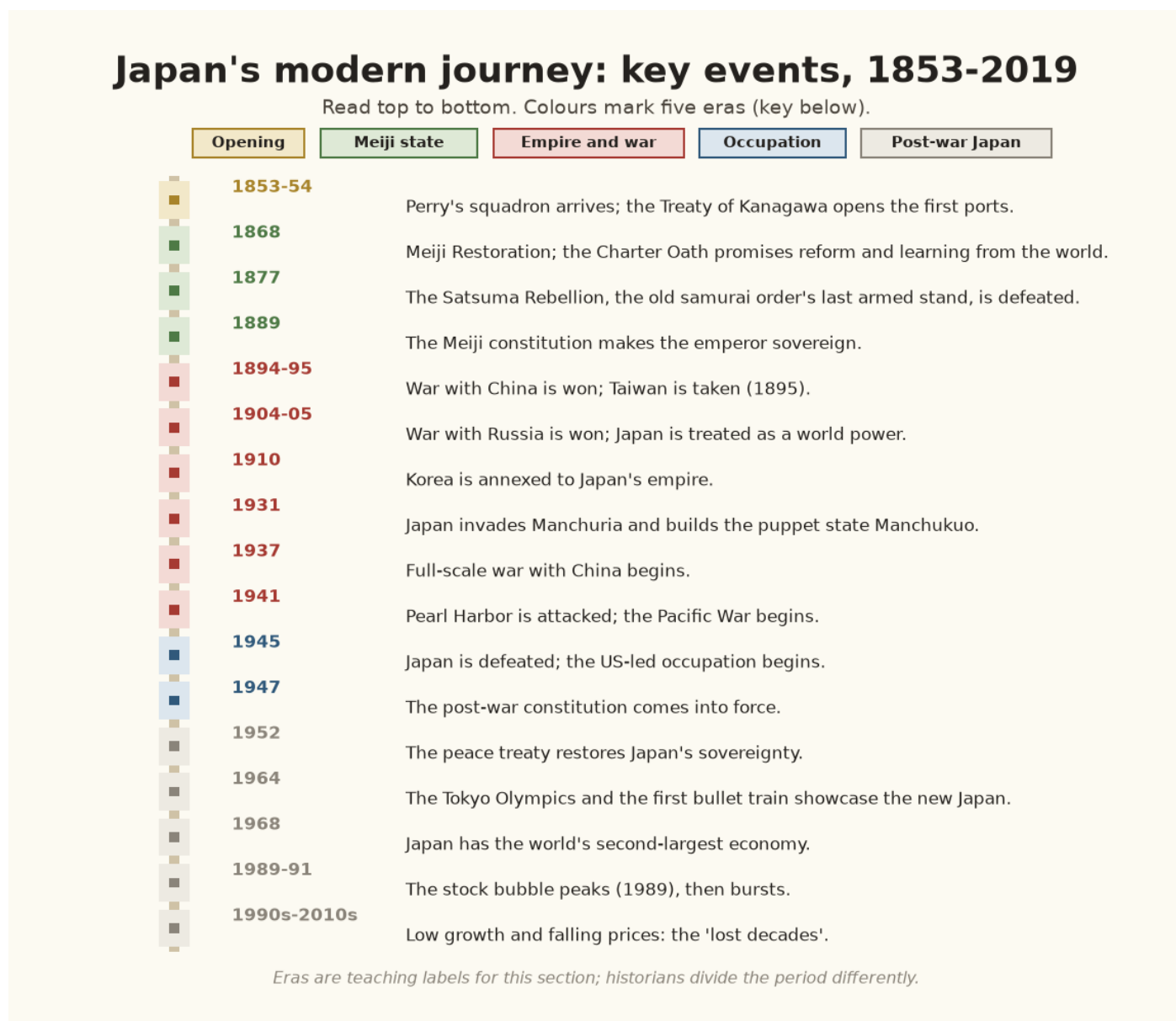
This section asks the chapter's big question: **what significant events and influencing ideas drove continuity and change in Japan from 1853 to today?** You will use three ideas from your historical skills:

- **Continuity and change** — what stayed the same and what changed.
- **Causes and consequences** — why things happened, and what followed from them.
- **Significance** — how important something was, judged by its effects.

The timeline in part 2 divides the story into five eras. Those eras are teaching labels for this section; historians divide the period differently.

2. The journey in one timeline

Study the timeline below. It holds the whole journey of this section in one place.



A vertical timeline of seventeen key events in Japan's modern history from 1853 to the 2010s, colour-coded into five teaching eras: opening, Meiji state, empire and war, occupation, and post-war Japan. Events run from Perry's arrival and the Treaty of Kanagawa (1853-54) through the Meiji Restoration (1868), the Satsuma Rebellion (1877), the Meiji constitution (1889), the wars with China and Russia, the annexation of Korea (1910), the invasion of Manchuria (1931), the Pacific War and defeat (1941-45), the post-war constitution (1947), the peace treaty (1952), the Tokyo Olympics (1964), the second-largest economy (1968), the stock bubble (1989-91) and the lost decades of the 1990s-2010s.

Read it twice: once top to bottom for the story, once looking only at the colours for the five eras. Notice where one era ends and the next begins — and ask yourself which single event did the most to turn the story in a new direction.

Task A (scaffolded). Copy the timeline into your book. For any three events, add one phrase of your own saying whether that event brought **change** or left something **continuing** (for example: “1868 — change: a new government in the emperor’s name”).

3. The opening of Japan, 1853–1858

In July 1853, four warships of the US Navy, two of them steam-powered, anchored in Edo Bay under Commodore Matthew C. Perry. Perry carried a letter from the US President demanding that Japan open its ports. He left, saying he would return for an answer. In March 1854 he did return, and the shogun’s government signed the **Treaty of Kanagawa** (31 March 1854): the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate opened to US ships, shipwrecked sailors were to be cared for, and a US consul was admitted. Japan’s long policy of restricted trade was over. In 1858 the **Harris treaty** went further: more ports opened, import taxes were fixed low, and US citizens in Japan were tried in US courts, not Japanese ones. Japanese writers called these **unequal treaties** — treaties in which one side gains far more than the other. They were not rewritten on equal terms until the 1890s.

The opening of Japan, 1853-1858

Three steps from 'closed' country to unequal treaties

July 1853 - Perry arrives

Four warships of the US Navy, two of them steam-powered, anchor in Edo Bay. Commodore Matthew C. Perry delivers a letter from the US President demanding that Japan open its ports.

March 1854 - Treaty of Kanagawa

The shogun's government agrees: the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate open to US ships; shipwrecked sailors are cared for; a US consul is admitted. Japan's long policy of restricted trade is over.

1858 - the Harris treaty

More ports open to trade. Import taxes are fixed low and cannot be raised without US consent. US citizens in Japan are tried in US courts, not Japanese ones. Japanese call these 'unequal treaties'.

Consequence: the treaties exposed the shogun's weakness. Domains began to arm; the crisis helped bring down the shogunate and led to the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

The 'unequal treaties' were not rewritten on equal terms until the 1890s.

Three cards showing the opening of Japan: July 1853, Perry arrives with four warships and a letter from the US President; March 1854, the Treaty of Kanagawa opens Shimoda and Hakodate; 1858, the Harris treaty fixes import taxes low and gives US citizens trial in US courts. A consequence strip below says the treaties exposed the shogun’s weakness and helped bring down the shogunate.

The consequences ran deep. The treaties exposed the shogun’s weakness: he could not keep foreign power out. **Domains** — the regions of old Japan, each ruled by its own lord under the shogun — began to arm and to argue. Some samurai gathered behind the slogan “honour the emperor, drive out the foreigners”. An idea was doing political work: that true loyalty ran to the emperor in Kyoto, not to the shogun in Edo.

4. The Meiji Restoration and the Charter Oath

In January 1868, samurai from the domains of Satsuma and Chōshū, acting in the emperor's name, seized the government. The young emperor took the era name **Meiji**, and the change of 1868 is called the **Meiji Restoration**. Edo was renamed Tokyo, and soon the capital moved there. The new government stated its aims in the **Charter Oath** of 6 April 1868 — a **primary source** for this section, set in modern words below.

THE CHARTER OATH

Five articles, promised at the start of the Meiji era (Kyoto, 6 April 1868)

1. Assemblies shall be widely established, and all matters decided by public discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the affairs of state.
3. Common people, no less than officials, shall each be free to follow their own calling, so that there may be no discontent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off, and all things founded on the just laws of nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world, so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.

'Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world' - article 5 gave the reformers their licence to study foreign governments, armies and machines.

Charter Oath, 1868 (extract, set in modern words). A primary source: made at the time being studied.

A framed reproduction, set in modern words, of the five articles of the Charter Oath promised at Kyoto on 6 April 1868: wide assemblies and public discussion; all classes uniting in the affairs of state; common people free to follow their own calling; evil customs of the past broken off; knowledge sought throughout the world. A gloss strip explains that article 5 gave the reformers their licence to study foreign governments, armies and machines.

Worked inquiry 1 — reading the Charter Oath. Read the five articles again, then follow the three questions.

Question 1 — What does it say? Find the article that promises to learn from the world. *Modelled answer:* article 5, “Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world”. It gave the reformers their licence to study foreign governments, armies and machines — and they did, quickly.

Question 2 — What does it reveal? Article 1 says “assemblies” and “public discussion”. What does this tell you about what the new government wanted to appear to be? *Modelled answer:* consultative — ruling with at least the appearance of wide advice, and drawing “all classes, high and low” (article 2) into the work of the state.

Question 3 — What are its limits? The Oath promises much in a page. Who is *not* named in it, and what does that tell you about a source like this? *Modelled answer:* no women are named, no farmers or merchants speak in it; it is a statement of aims by rulers, not a record of what happened. A source tells us what its makers promised — we must check the promises against the events.

The roles the curriculum names (. E20). Three figures stand at this turning point. The figure below gives each a role card.

Three roles in Japan's turning point

The curriculum names these three: what did each contribute to continuity and change?

Emperor Meiji (1852-1912)	Commodore Matthew C. Perry	Saigo Takamori and Satsuma
Head of state from 1867 to 1912. The new era took his name. Role: the figurehead around whom the new state was built; the capital moved from Kyoto to Tokyo in his name. Historians debate how much he decided himself (part 4).	US Navy officer (1794-1858). Arrived in 1853 with steam warships; returned in 1854 for the Treaty of Kanagawa. Role: forced the opening of Japan, ending two centuries of restricted trade - and setting off the crisis to come.	Saigo (1828-1877) helped lead the Restoration, then rebelled against the changes in 1877. Role: his defeat at Shiroyama showed that the new state's army of conscripts was stronger than the old samurai order. After 1877, no armed revolt.

Continuity: the imperial line stayed on the throne throughout. Change: everything around it was rebuilt.

Three role cards: Emperor Meiji (1852-1912), head of state from 1867, the figurehead around whom the new state was built, with historians debating how much he decided himself; Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858), whose steam warships forced the opening of Japan in 1853-54; and Saigō Takamori of Satsuma (1828-1877), who helped lead the Restoration and then rebelled against its changes in 1877.

A contested question, both sides stated strongly. How much did Emperor Meiji himself rule?

Position A — an active ruler

He sat in on council meetings, received the ministers daily, and gave his name and will to the great changes: the Oath was made in his presence, the constitution was given as his gift.

Position B — a symbol and figurehead

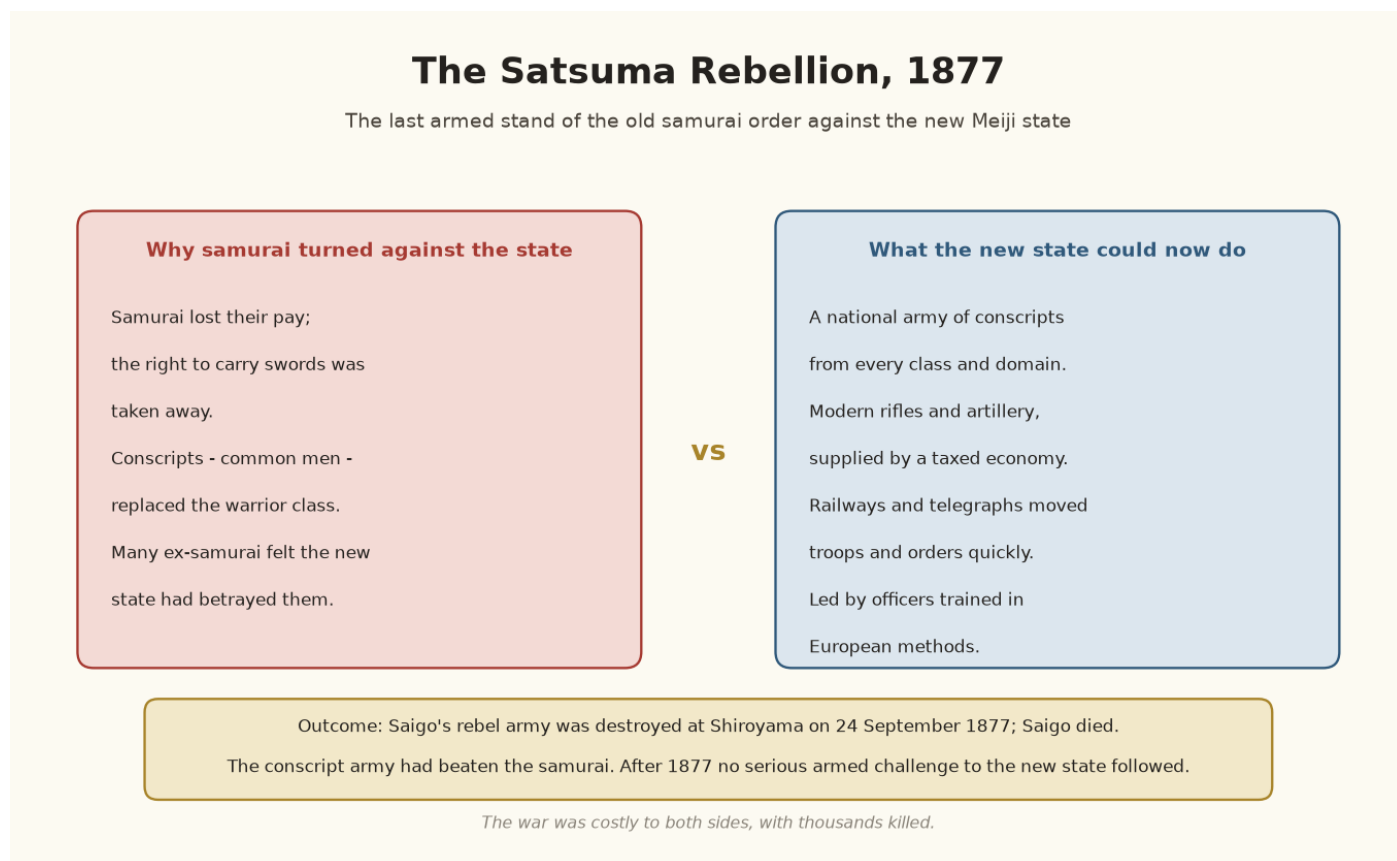
He was fifteen in 1868; the decisions were made by the elders of Satsuma and Chōshū. His role was to *legitimise*: the capital moved to Tokyo in his name, laws were issued as his will, and loyalty to him replaced loyalty to the shogun.

Both positions can be argued from the sources; most historians hold something between them. State which position the evidence of part 4 supports better, and say why in one or two sentences.

Rebuilding the state. The old order was taken down piece by piece: the domains were abolished in 1871 and replaced with prefectures; **conscription** — the system by which men must serve in the armed forces — was introduced in 1873; the first railway, Tokyo to Yokohama, opened in 1872. Samurai lost their special place. Some would not accept it.

5. The Satsuma Rebellion, 1877

Saigō Takamori, the Satsuma leader who had helped make the Restoration, turned against the new state. In 1877 Satsuma samurai rose in rebellion — the last armed stand of the old warrior order.



Two cards comparing the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877: why samurai turned against the state (pay lost, the right to carry swords taken away, conscripts replacing the warrior class) against what the new state could now do (a national army of conscripts, modern rifles and artillery, railways and telegraphs, officers trained in European methods), with an outcome strip: the rebel army destroyed at Shiroshima on 24 September 1877, Saigō dead, and no serious armed challenge to the new state after.

Read the rebellion as a cause-and-consequence test. The conscript army beat the samurai: that was the consequence of conscription (1873), and the cause of what followed — after 1877 no armed revolt challenged the new state, and the old order was over for good. Note the continuity too: the imperial line stayed on the throne throughout; everything around it was rebuilt.

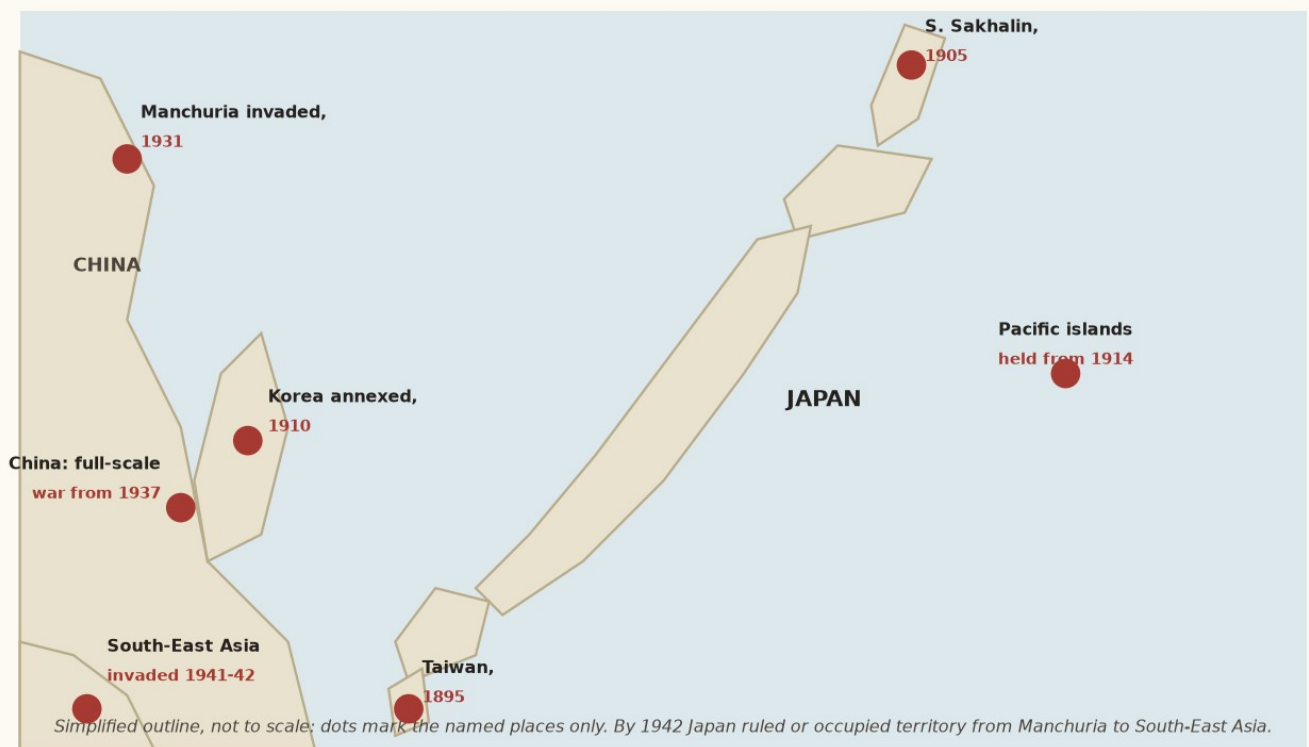
6. The Meiji constitution and the rise of an empire

On 11 February 1889 the Meiji constitution was proclaimed. It made the emperor **sovereign** — holder of the rightful power to rule — sacred and above the law, and it gave him command of the army and navy. A **Diet** (parliament) met from 1890, but at first only about one man in a hundred, paying enough tax, could vote. Rights were given to subjects “within the limits of law”. Study how the same questions were answered differently in 1947 — you will do exactly that in worked inquiry 2.

The new state also looked outward. In 1894–95 Japan beat China in war; the peace treaty gave Japan Taiwan, and only the threat of force from Russia, Germany and France made Japan hand back the Liaodong peninsula it had also won. In 1904–05 Japan beat Russia — the first time in modern history that an Asian power defeated a European one — and took the southern half of Sakhalin. In 1910 Japan **annexed** Korea: taking it over so that it became part of Japan’s empire. For Koreans, 1910 was not a treaty event but the loss of their country; Korean language and names were later suppressed. In the First World War Japan joined the side fighting Germany, taking the German-held port of Qingdao and Germany’s Pacific islands.

Japan's expansion, 1895-1942

Each dot marks a place Japan took, occupied or invaded



A simplified map of East Asia, not to scale, marking each place Japan took, occupied or invaded between 1895 and 1942: Taiwan (1895), southern Sakhalin (1905), Korea (1910), Manchuria (1931), full-scale war with China (1937), Pacific islands held from 1914, and South-East Asia invaded in 1941-42.

By 1931 the army was acting on its own: it invaded Manchuria in north-east China and built the **puppet state** of Manchukuo — a state that looked independent but was controlled by Japan. When the League of Nations protested, Japan left the League in 1933. In 1937, after a clash at the Marco Polo Bridge near Beijing, full-scale war with China began. The story now bends towards the Second World War.

7. Ideas that drove change

Events are pushed by ideas. Four ideas do the most work in this story, and the curriculum asks you to evaluate their **significance**. Each is defined before use, exactly as the cards below define it.

- **Nationalism** — pride in and loyalty to one's own nation.
- **Militarism** — giving military strength and military leaders great weight in a state's affairs.

- **Expansionism** — extending a state's rule over other lands and peoples.
- **Economic modernisation** — building industry, transport and trade in place of a farm-based economy.

Ideas that drove change - and their effects

Each card: meaning, dated evidence from Japan, then effect (continuity and change)

Nationalism

Meaning: pride in and loyalty to one's own nation.

Evidence: schools taught loyalty to the emperor (education rescript, 1890); the 1905 win over Russia fed national pride.

Effect: united the country - but crowded out criticism.

Militarism

Meaning: giving military strength and military leaders great weight in a state's affairs.

Evidence: in the 1930s army and navy leaders shaped policy; PM Inukai was killed by naval officers in 1932.

Effect: policy drifted to war.

Expansionism

Meaning: extending a state's rule over other lands and peoples.

Evidence: Korea (1910), Manchuria (1931), South-East Asia (1941).

Effect: empire brought resources to Japan, suffering to its neighbours, then ruin to Japan.

Economic modernisation

Meaning: building industry, transport and trade in place of a farm-based economy.

Evidence: first railway, Tokyo to Yokohama, 1872; silk and cotton exports; big firm groups grew.

Effect: wealth paid for armed forces and world-power status.

These four ideas grew together: modern wealth paid for arms; arms fed expansion; victories fed pride.

Four cards, one per idea: nationalism, militarism, expansionism and economic modernisation. Each card gives the meaning, dated evidence from Japan (the education rescript of 1890 and the 1905 win over Russia; the killing of Prime Minister Inukai by naval officers in 1932; Korea 1910, Manchuria 1931, South-East Asia 1941; the first railway 1872, silk and cotton exports, big firm groups), and the effect on continuity and change.

Evaluating significance — both sides. Were these *ideas* more significant than the *events* of the timeline?

The ideas were the drivers

Without nationalism, the Restoration had no slogan; without militarism, no army rule in the 1930s; without expansionism, no empire; without modernisation, no wealth to pay for any of it. Ideas explain why the same Japan that built railways also built an empire.

The events were the drivers

Ideas are only visible in events. It was Perry's ships, the unequal treaties, the wins of 1895 and 1905, the depression of the 1930s and the bombs of 1945 that actually turned the story. Ideas named the turns; they did not cause them.

A strong answer uses both columns: ideas set the direction, events set the timing. Pick *one* idea and, in two or three sentences, judge its significance using dated evidence from the cards.

8. Worked inquiry 2 — two constitutions, one country

How far did the rules change? Compare the founding texts of 1889 and 1947 on the same five questions.

Two constitutions, one country: how far did the rules change?

The Meiji constitution (1889) against the post-war constitution (in force 1947)

Question	Meiji constitution, 1889	Post-war constitution, 1947
Who holds sovereignty	The emperor: 'sacred and inviolable'	The people: 'We, the Japanese people'
Head of state	The emperor, who rules with ministers	The emperor as 'symbol of the State', without powers
Rights	Given to subjects by the emperor, within limits set by law	Belong to people as human rights, listed in a bill of rights
Armed forces	Army and navy commanded by the emperor	War given up; no war potential kept (Article 9)
Who could vote	Men paying enough tax: about 1 in 100 at first	All adults from age 20; women voted in April 1946

One measure of change: compare what the two founding texts say about the same questions.

A comparison table of the Meiji constitution of 1889 and the post-war constitution in force from 1947, on five questions: who holds sovereignty (the emperor in 1889 against the people in 1947); head of state (the emperor ruling with ministers against the emperor as a symbol without powers); rights (given to subjects by the emperor within limits of law against human rights in a bill of rights); armed forces (commanded by the emperor against war given up and no war potential kept, Article 9); and who could vote (men paying enough tax, about one in a hundred at first, against all adults from age 20, women voting from April 1946).

Read the table once across (question by question) and once down (constitution by constitution). The 1889 text gives power from the top down; the 1947 text claims it from the bottom up. That reversal — sovereignty moving from the emperor to the people — is the single biggest change of rules in Japan's modern history.

Now read a model paragraph that answers the question using the four moves: **claim**, **evidence**, **explanation**, **significance**.

A model paragraph: the four moves

Say it, prove it, explain it, then say why it mattered

Question: How far did the 1947 constitution change Japan?

CLAIM

The 1947 constitution brought deep change - in who held power, and in who held rights.

EVIDENCE

Sovereignty moved from the emperor to the people. War was given up in Article 9. Women voted for the first time in April 1946.

EXPLANATION

Under the 1889 constitution the emperor held sovereignty and commanded the army and navy. The new text reversed both: rights now belonged to people as human rights, not as gifts from the crown.

SIGNIFICANCE

Japan's post-war democracy and its long peace grew from these rules - yet the emperor stayed and government departments carried on, so the change was deep but not total.

Notice: the evidence is real, named and dated, and the significance states an effect rather than repeating the claim.

A colour-coded model paragraph answering 'How far did the 1947 constitution change Japan?' in four moves: claim (it brought deep change, in who held power and who held rights); evidence (sovereignty moved to the people, war given up in Article 9, women voted from April 1946); explanation (the 1889 text gave the emperor sovereignty and command of the armed forces, the new text reversed both); significance (post-war democracy and the long peace grew from these rules, yet the emperor stayed, so the change was deep but not total).

Read the paragraph once for sense, then once more move by move. Notice that the evidence is real, named and dated, and the significance states an effect rather than repeating the claim. Notice too that it holds a change *and* a continuity in the same sentence — that is what a “how far” answer looks like at this band.

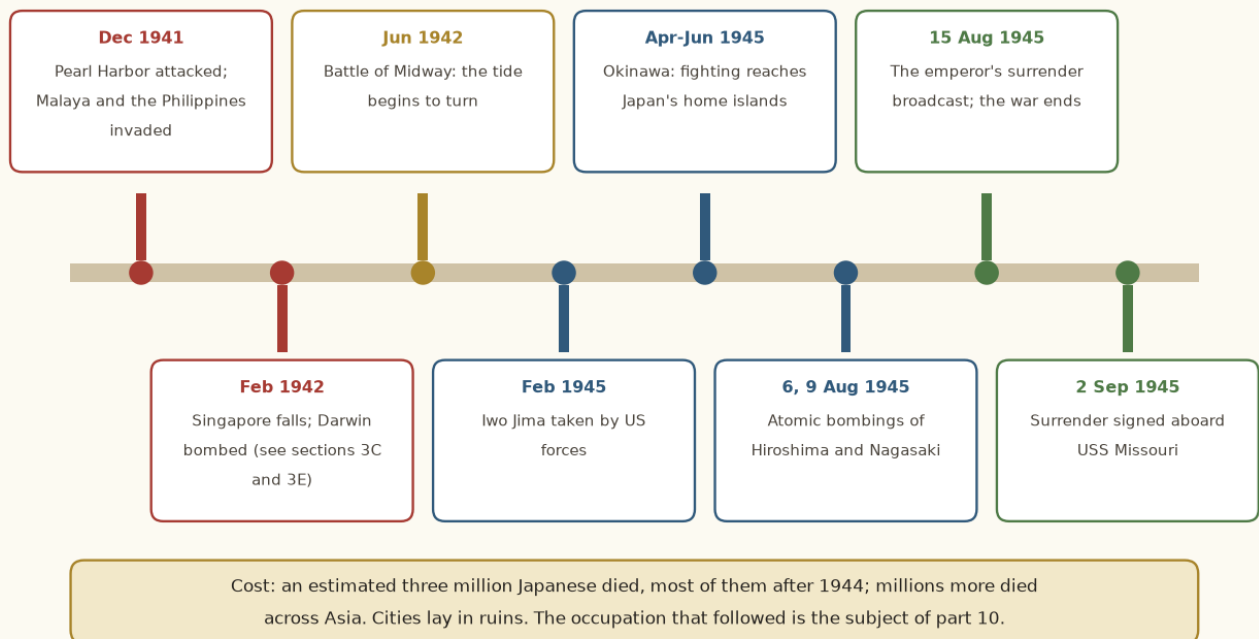
9. War in Asia and defeat, 1937–1945

The war in China did not end. In December 1937 Japanese forces took Nanjing. What followed is documented by witnesses who were there, including the German businessman John Rabe and the American teacher Minnie Vautrin: mass killing, rape and looting over several weeks. The death toll is contested — the Chinese official figure is 300,000; scholarly estimates run roughly from 40,000 to over 300,000 — and historians argue about the number, not about the event. The Japanese military also forced women, many of them Korean, into sexual slavery in military brothels; they are known as the “comfort women”, and their suffering remains a live wound between Japan and its neighbours. Allied prisoners of war and Asian labourers were put to hard labour under harsh rule; many died. These are difficult histories; they are part of the story and are treated here plainly, without graphic detail.

On 7 December 1941 Japan attacked the US fleet at Pearl Harbor and invaded Malaya and the Philippines. The Pacific War had begun — for the Australian half of that story, see sections 3C and 3E.

Japan's Pacific War, 1941-1945

From attack to surrender (links to sections 3C and 3E for the Australian story)



A timeline of Japan's Pacific War: Pearl Harbor attacked and Malaya and the Philippines invaded (December 1941); Singapore falls and Darwin bombed (February 1942); the Battle of Midway (June 1942); Iwo Jima (February 1945); Okinawa (April-June 1945); atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (6 and 9 August 1945); the emperor's surrender broadcast (15 August 1945); surrender signed aboard USS Missouri (2 September 1945). A strip notes the cost: an estimated three million Japanese died, most after 1944, millions more died across Asia, and cities lay in ruins.

The tide turned at Midway (June 1942). From 1944 the war reached Japan itself: cities were burned from the air, and on 6 and 9 August 1945 the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviet Union declared war on 8 August. On 15 August the emperor's voice was heard on radio for the first time, telling the Japanese people that the war was over. The surrender was signed aboard the USS *Missouri* on 2 September 1945. An estimated three million Japanese had died, most of them after 1944; millions more had died across Asia.

10. The occupation: how far did Japan change?

From 1945 to 1952 Japan was under **occupation** — the control of a defeated country by a foreign power — led by the United States, with General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. The reforms came from outside, but most were carried out by Japanese officials.

Reform from above: the US occupation of Japan, 1945-1952

General Douglas MacArthur led the occupation as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers

Political	Economic	Social	Military
New constitution, 1947 Sovereignty to the people Bill of rights added Women gain the vote; first use: April 1946	Land sold to the farmers who had rented it Big firm groups broken up Trade unions allowed and they grew fast	Schools reformed Free speech and a free press restored Censors lifted Purged officials barred	Armed forces disbanded Leaders tried for war crimes; seven hanged Article 9 gives up war From 1950: limited re-arming begins
What did NOT change: the emperor kept his throne (as a symbol); government departments carried on; and many wartime officials later returned to public life.			

The occupation's reforms came from outside, but most were carried out by Japanese officials.

Four columns of occupation reforms: political (new constitution 1947, sovereignty to the people, a bill of rights, women gaining the vote with first use in April 1946); economic (land sold to the farmers who had rented it, big firm groups broken up, trade unions allowed and growing fast); social (schools reformed, free speech and a free press restored, censors lifted, purged officials barred); military (armed forces disbanded, leaders tried for war crimes with seven hanged, Article 9 giving up war, limited re-arming from 1950). A strip lists what did NOT change: the emperor kept his throne as a symbol, government departments carried on, and many wartime officials later returned to public life.

Wartime leaders were tried at the Tokyo war-crimes tribunal (1946–48); seven were hanged, including the wartime prime minister Tōjō. Women voted in a national election for the first time in April 1946. The new constitution was made law in November 1946 and came into force on 3 May 1947. The peace treaty signed at San Francisco in 1951 restored Japan's sovereignty from April 1952.

The degree-of-change debate, both sides stated strongly. E23 asks you to examine *the degree of change*. Two positions, each stated as strongly as its supporters would put it:

Debate: how far did Japan change after 1945?

Two positions, each stated as strongly as its supporters would put it

Position A: Japan was transformed

Sovereignty moved from the emperor to the people.
War was given up; the army and navy were disbanded.
Women voted for the first time in April 1946.
Rented land was sold to the farmers who worked it.

Position B: the old Japan continued

The emperor kept his throne, as 'symbol', until 1989.
Government departments and many officials carried on.
Wartime leaders returned: a wartime minister became prime minister in 1957.
Big firms were rebuilt.

Your task: weigh the evidence on each side, then judge. Many historians hold both views at once: deep change in rules and rights, real continuity in people and institutions. On what evidence would you test each position?

Positions are presented in their strongest form before evaluation - see the section's contested-terms note.

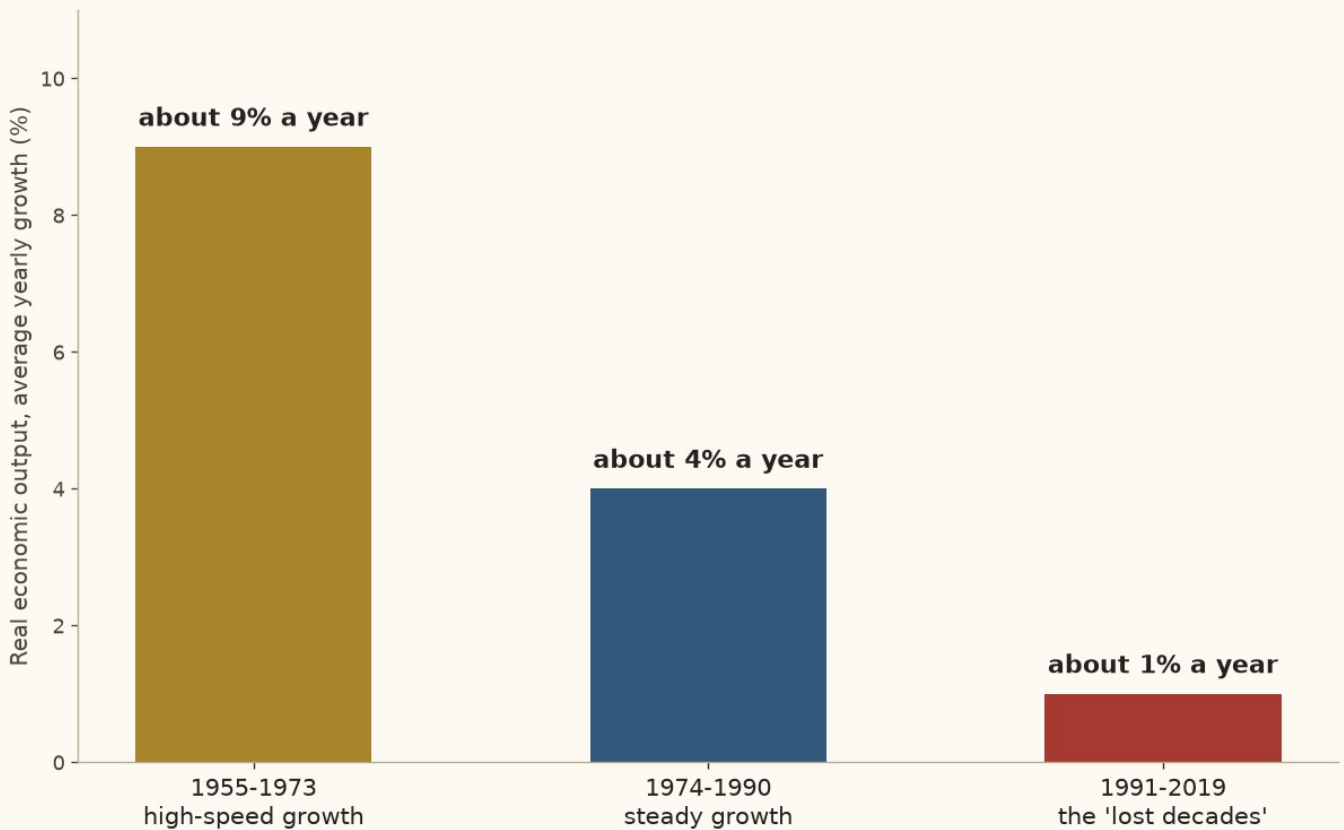
Two panels stating the two strongest positions on how far Japan changed after 1945. Position A, Japan was transformed: sovereignty moved from the emperor to the people; war was given up and the army and navy disbanded; women voted for the first time in April 1946; rented land was sold to the farmers who worked it. Position B, the old Japan continued: the emperor kept his throne as symbol until 1989; government departments and many officials carried on; a wartime minister became prime minister in 1957; big firms were rebuilt.

Weigh the two panels, then judge in your own words: many historians hold both views at once — deep change in rules and rights, real continuity in people and institutions. On what evidence would you test each position? Name one piece per side.

11. Japan's capitalism: boom, bubble and bust since the 1980s

After the occupation, Japan built its own interpretation of capitalism: the government guided industry through ministries and plans; banks and big firm groups worked closely together; workers were often hired for life; and the economy leaned on exports. The results were dramatic. From 1955 to 1973 the economy grew about nine per cent a year. The Tokyo Olympics and the first bullet train (1964) showcased the new Japan; by 1968 Japan had the world's second-largest economy.

Japan's economy: three speeds of growth



Period averages of real GDP growth. World Bank, World Development Indicators; retrieved 25 August 2026.

A bar chart of Japan's average yearly growth in real economic output in three periods: about 9 per cent a year in 1955-73 (high-speed growth), about 4 per cent a year in 1974-90 (steady growth), and about 1 per cent a year in 1991-2019 (the 'lost decades'). The source line reads: period averages of real GDP growth, World Bank, World Development Indicators, retrieved 25 August 2026.

Then came the failures. On 29 December 1989 the Tokyo stock index peaked at 38,915; through 1990 and 1991 the bubble in stock and land prices burst. What followed are called the “lost decades”: about one per cent growth a year, falling prices, and banks carrying bad debts. Society aged quickly — today about one Japanese person in three is 65 or over — and the workforce shrank.

Judge the balance with the chart in front of you: the same institutions that drove the high-speed success — close ties between government, banks and big firms — are the ones blamed for the bubble and the slow decades. Success and failure grew from the same interpretation of capitalism. That is a continuity-and-change finding, not just an economic one.

12. Practice tasks

Scaffolded tasks — work with the supports provided.

1. **Sort the eras.** Copy the five era labels from the part 2 timeline. Sort these events under them: the Treaty of Kanagawa, the annexation of Korea, the 1947 constitution, the Satsuma Rebellion, the stock bubble peaks, the invasion of Manchuria.
2. **Order the opening.** Without looking back, write these in order: Harris treaty; Perry's first arrival; Treaty of Kanagawa. Then add one phrase per step saying what changed.
3. **Complete the constitutions table.** Copy the five question-rows from worked inquiry 2 and fill in the 1889 column from memory. Check against the figure and correct your errors.

4. **Match idea to evidence.** Match each idea — nationalism, militarism, expansionism, economic modernisation — to two pieces of dated evidence from the part 7 cards. Write the matches as full sentences.
5. **Read the rebellion.** Using the part 5 figure: (a) give two reasons samurai turned against the state; (b) give two reasons the new state's army won; (c) state one consequence of the outcome for the new state.
6. **Read the chart.** Using the part 11 chart: (a) which period grew fastest, and which slowest?
(b) how many times faster was the fastest period than the slowest? (c) give one success and one failure from part 11 that belong to the chart's first and third periods.

Unscaffolded tasks — no supports; build your answer from scratch.

7. Explain two **significant events** that drove change in Japan between 1853 and 1912. For each, give one specific piece of dated evidence from this section.
8. Evaluate the significance of **one influencing idea** (nationalism, militarism, expansionism or economic modernisation) for continuity and change in Japan. Use the four moves from worked inquiry 2.
9. Examine **how far Japan's society changed** after 1945. Use both positions from part 10, and end with your own judgement and one piece of evidence per side.
10. Identify two things that **changed** and one thing that **continued** in Japan between 1853 and today. Explain each choice in one or two sentences.

13. Source-based inquiry

Read this primary source, then answer the questions below it.

Extract, in modern words, from the Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War (surrender rescript), 14 August 1945. The rescript stated, in effect: the war has lasted nearly four years, and the situation has not turned to Japan's advantage; the enemy has begun to use a new and most cruel bomb, whose power to destroy cannot be measured; to keep fighting would bring not only the end of the Japanese nation but the end of human civilisation; therefore Japan accepts the terms laid down by the United States, Britain, China and the Soviet Union; and the people are asked to endure the unendurable and bear the unbearable. (*Original broadcast text, National Archives of Japan.*)

1. **Formulate:** write two historical questions this source could help you answer.
2. **Infer:** what does the source reveal about the state of the war from Japan's side by August 1945? Point to the words that show it.
3. **Context:** why does the rescript name the United States, Britain, China and the Soviet Union together? Use part 9 to help you.
4. **Perspective:** the rescript asks the people to "endure the unendurable". Whose suffering does the source acknowledge, and whose suffering — among the people Japan had invaded and occupied — is not in view? Explain how that absence shapes what a historian can learn from the source.
5. **Evaluate:** is this source more useful for studying *why Japan surrendered* or *how the occupied peoples experienced the war*? Explain your answer.

What to look for

Score student work against the band achievement standard (Level 9–10): students analyse the features, content and context of sources; identify the perspectives that individuals and groups held; connect short- and long-term causes with intended and unintended consequences; and judge historical significance by criteria. Expected responses below are a guide, not a script.

- **Timeline (part 2, .E19):** student can place the opening (1853–58), the Restoration (1868), Satsuma (1877), the two wars (1894–95, 1904–05), Korea (1910), Manchuria (1931), defeat (1945) and the constitution (1947) in order, and can say for any named event whether it reads as change or continuity.
- **Opening (part 3, .E20):** Perry 1853 → Kanagawa 1854 → Harris 1858 in order; "unequal treaties" used with its definition; the consequence links the treaties to the shogun's loss of authority.

- **Restoration and Oath (part 4, .E20):** the three source moves are shown (says / reveals / limits); the Emperor-Meiji contested question is answered with a stated position and a reason, not a guess at the “right” side.
- **Satsuma (part 5, .E20):** the rebellion is read as the old order’s last armed stand; the outcome (Shiroyama, 24 September 1877) is linked to conscription (1873) as cause and to “no armed challenge after” as consequence.
- **Constitution and empire (part 6, .E21):** sovereignty attributed correctly to the emperor under 1889; the franchise limit (about 1 in 100) noted; annexation of Korea (1910) stated with the Korean perspective included, not as a neutral treaty fact alone.
- **Ideas (part 7, .E21):** all four ideas defined before use; the significance judgement uses dated evidence and holds both the “ideas drove” and “events drove” sides before deciding.
- **Worked inquiry 2 (part 8, .E23):** the sovereignty reversal (emperor → people) is named as the key change; the model paragraph’s four moves are identified; a “how far” answer holds a change and a continuity together.
- **War and defeat (part 9, .E22):** Nanjing is stated as a documented event with an attributed range for the toll; the Pacific War is sequenced (Pearl Harbor → Midway → 1945 → surrender); the Australian story is referred to 3C/3E, not re-taught here.
- **Occupation (part 10, .E23):** reforms sorted correctly across political / economic / social / military; the “did not change” strip is used in the degree-of-change judgement; women’s first vote (April 1946) and the 1947 constitution dated.
- **Capitalism (part 11, .E24):** the three growth periods read from the chart with the World Bank source line acknowledged; success and failure are both traced to the same interpretation of capitalism.
- **Practice and source inquiry (parts 12–13):** unscaffolded answers carry dated evidence; the source questions are genuinely historical; the perspective answer names the absent voices (occupied peoples) and the effect of their absence on the evidence.

Cross-links to skills sections: sequencing and timeline construction (7B), source purpose and context (7C), value of sources as evidence (7D), perspectives from sources (7E), continuity and change (8A), causes and consequences (8B), significance criteria (8C), sustained interpretation with citations (8D). Content cross-links: the Pacific War and Australia (3C, 3E).

People, groups and movements that shaped an Asian society

Curriculum trace. Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10, Historical Knowledge and Understanding — Investigation: Asia (1750–present). Content description VC2HH10K27 (cited by code). This book teaches Chapter 5 through ONE Asian society, chosen and recorded in the chapter build notes (`build_notes_ch5.md`) before drafting: **Japan**. This section teaches the content description through the Japan option group. Elaborations taught (cited by code):

Id	Elaboration
.E19	VC2HH10K27.E19
.E20	VC2HH10K27.E20
.E21	VC2HH10K27.E21
.E22	VC2HH10K27.E22

The `Draws on range` for VC2HH10K27 in TOC.md §3 stays full (.E01–.E27): every option satisfies the generic content description, and coverage is judged against the content description text, not against all five options (D7).

The big picture

In the mid-1800s Japan was ruled by the shogun, its borders were almost closed to the outside world, and the emperor lived quietly in the old capital of Kyoto. By 1945 Japan had become a modern industrial empire, fought a world war, and been defeated and occupied by Allied forces, mainly the United States. By the early 2000s it was one of the world's largest economies and a democracy. Few societies have changed so much in so short a time.

This section asks what those changes were like for the people inside them — and how those people shaped the changes in turn. We follow three threads named in the Japan option for this content description: **emperors** (individuals), the **military** (a group) and the **geisha** (a group). We also meet two popular **movements** in which ordinary people organised to demand change. For each thread we ask the two questions the content description asks: what were this person's or group's **experiences**, and from what **perspective** did they see the changes around them? And what **impact** did they have on Japanese society over time?

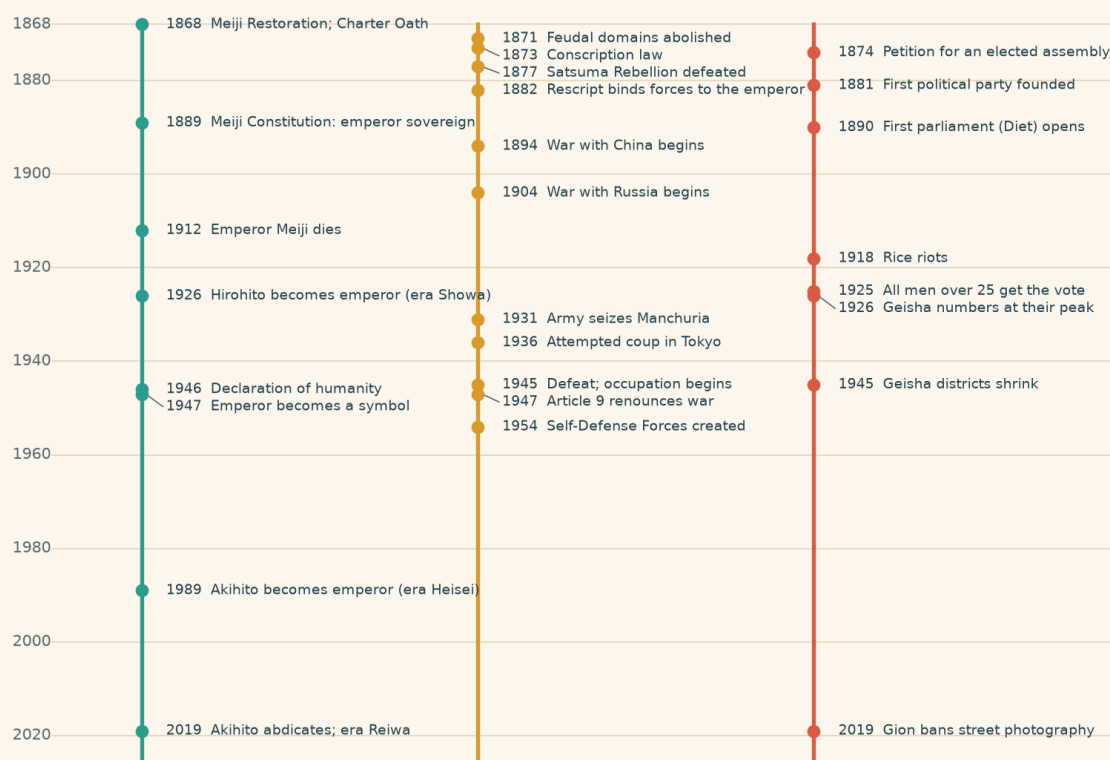
Japan, 1868 to the present

Three threads of change: emperors, the military, and geisha and popular movements

Emperors

The military

Geisha and movements



The geisha thread starts before this window: women working as entertainers called geisha appear in records by the 1750s, and registration offices kept records from 1779.

Built from the dated events in Section 5D. Original figure, drawn for this workbook.

A timeline of Japan from 1868 to the present, with events colour-coded to three threads: emperors, the military, and geisha and popular movements

The words we are using

Before we go further, let us fix the meaning of the key terms. In this section:

- An **experience** is what actually happened to a person or group, and how it affected them.
- A **perspective** is the way a person or group sees and explains events, shaped by who they are, what they want, and what they value. Two people can live through the same event and describe it in very different ways.
- The **emperor** is Japan's hereditary ruler. In the language of this section, four emperors matter most: Meiji (reigned 1868–1912), Taisho (1912–1926), Hirohito (1926–1989) and Akihito (1989–2019). Each reign is given an **era name** — Meiji, Taisho, Showa, Heisei — and Japan still counts years by era names as well as by the Western calendar.
- The **shogun** was the military ruler who governed Japan for most of the period 1603–1868, while the emperor reigned in Kyoto without much real power. The shoguns came from the Tokugawa family.
- The **samurai** were the warrior class at the top of Japan's social order before 1868.
- **Conscription** is a system in which the government forces people, usually young men, to serve in the armed forces.
- A **constitution** is the set of basic rules that says how a country is governed and what rights its people have.
- **Sovereignty** is supreme power over a country — the final say. A constitution always answers one question above all others: where does sovereignty sit?
- An **occupation** happens when a foreign power controls a defeated country after a war.
- A **geisha** is a professional entertainer trained in traditional Japanese arts such as dance, song, music and conversation. In this section the word *geisha* is used in that sense, the sense of the profession itself. Loose

uses of the word that appeared after 1945 — when some women who were not geisha borrowed the name to entertain occupation troops — are not treated as the same thing.

One note on names: Japanese names in this section follow the Japanese order, with the family name first — for example, in Yamagata Aritomo, *Yamagata* is the family name.

Japan in 1868: the scene is set

For more than 250 years the Tokugawa shoguns had ruled Japan from the city of Edo. Society was arranged in a rigid order with the samurai at the top, and most foreign contact was banned. In 1853 and 1854 a squadron of United States warships under Commodore Matthew Perry arrived and demanded that Japan open its ports. The shogun's government, unable to resist, signed unequal treaties with foreign powers. Many Japanese leaders saw this as a national humiliation, and in January 1868 they overthrew the shogun and proclaimed that direct rule was being “restored” to the young Emperor Meiji. This is the **Meiji Restoration**.

The new government moved fast. It abolished the old feudal domains in 1871, renamed Edo as Tokyo and made it the capital, and set out to learn from the world so that Japan could stand equal with the Western powers. In April 1868 it announced its program in a short document of five promises, the **Charter Oath**.

The Charter Oath

April 1868 - the new Meiji government's five promises

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established, and all matters decided by open discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall be active in carrying out the affairs of state.
3. All the common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue their own calling, so that there may be no discontent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off, and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world, so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.

Translation, summarised. The final purpose is stated in article 5: to strengthen imperial rule.

A styled reproduction of the Charter Oath of April 1868, its five articles, as a primary source document

Primary source — the Charter Oath, April 1868 (translation, summarised). 1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established, and all matters decided by open discussion. 2. All classes, high and low, shall be active in carrying out the affairs of state. 3. All the common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue their own calling, so that there may be no discontent. 4. Evil

customs of the past shall be broken off, and everything based upon the just laws of Nature. 5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world, so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.

Notice two things about this source. First, it looks forward — open discussion, all classes active, knowledge sought throughout the world. Second, its final purpose is stated clearly: to strengthen *imperial* rule. The Charter Oath gives us the perspective of the new Meiji government: change was the way to make the emperor's state strong.

Individuals: the emperors over time

The content description asks about individuals, and no individuals shaped modern Japan's public life more than its emperors. Yet the emperor's place changed completely, twice: in 1889 the Meiji Constitution made the emperor the sovereign ruler of Japan, and in 1947 the post-war constitution made him a symbol with no governing power at all.

Four emperors of modern Japan

Emperor (era name)	Reign	Key features of the reign
Meiji (era Meiji, "enlightened rule")	1868-1912	Placed at the centre of public life by the Meiji Restoration; the Charter Oath (1868) and the constitution of 1889 made him sovereign; his image was used to unify a modernising nation.
Taisho (era Taisho)	1912-1926	Often too unwell to appear in public; elected party politicians gained ground in the era of "Taisho democracy".
Hirohito (era Showa)	1926-1989	Japan's longest modern reign: the rise of the military, the wars in China and the Pacific, defeat in 1945, occupation, and recovery. Issued the declaration of humanity (1946); became a symbol under the 1947 rules.
Akihito (era Heisei)	1989-2019	First emperor to reign entirely under the 1947 rules; visited disaster sites and Pacific battlefields; abdicated in 2019, the first abdication in about 200 years.

Era names are still used in Japan to count years (Meiji 1 = 1868). Naruhito (era Reiwa) became emperor on 1 May 2019.

A table of four emperors — Meiji, Taisho, Hirohito and Akihito — listing their reign dates, era names, and the key features of each reign

Emperor Meiji (reigned 1868–1912). Meiji was 15 when the Restoration placed him at the centre of public life. He never governed personally: the senior leaders who had made the Restoration governed in his name. But his image was everywhere — in portraits kept in schools, in ceremonies, in the Rescript on Education of 1890, which taught loyalty to the emperor as a moral duty. The constitution issued on 11 February 1889 fixed his position in law.

The Constitution of the Empire of Japan

Issued 11 February 1889 - selected articles

Article 1. The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal.

Article 3. The Emperor is sacred, and his person may not be attacked.

Article 11. The Emperor has the supreme command of the Army and Navy.

Translation, selected articles. Under this constitution, sovereignty sat with the emperor, not the people.

A styled reproduction of three key articles of the Meiji Constitution of 1889, as a primary source document

Primary source — the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, 1889 (translation, selected articles).

Article 1. The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal. Article 3. The Emperor is sacred, and his person may not be attacked. Article 11. The Emperor has the supreme command of the Army and Navy.

Under this constitution, sovereignty sat with the emperor, not with the people. He stood above politics, sacred and unbroken, and he commanded the armed forces directly. When Emperor Meiji died in July 1912 the nation mourned as for a father of the country. One general, Nogi Maresuke, and his wife took their own lives to follow him — an extreme act, but one that shows how strongly loyalty to the emperor ran for some Japanese.

Emperor Taisho (reigned 1912–1926). Meiji’s son was often too unwell to appear in public, and much of the reign’s politics was run by elected party politicians. The 1910s and 1920s are often called the era of “Taisho democracy”: parliaments and parties gained ground, and ordinary people — including the rice rioters you will meet below — pressed harder for a voice.

Emperor Hirohito (reigned 1926–1989). Hirohito took the era name Showa. His 62-year reign spanned the rise of the military, the wars in China from 1937 and across the Pacific from 1941, total defeat in August 1945, occupation, and recovery. On 15 August 1945 his radio broadcast announcing Japan’s surrender was the first time most Japanese people had ever heard an emperor’s voice. On 1 January 1946 he issued a rescript, now called the **declaration of humanity**, in which he rejected the idea that the emperor was a living god.

The declaration of humanity

Imperial rescript, 1 January 1946 - key passage

The ties between Us and Our people have always stood upon mutual trust and affection. They do not depend upon mere legends or myths. They are not based on the false idea that the Emperor is divine, and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world.

Translation, key passage. Issued by Emperor Hirohito after defeat and during the occupation.

A styled reproduction of the key passage of the declaration of humanity, issued by Emperor Hirohito on 1 January 1946, as a primary source document

Primary source — the declaration of humanity, 1 January 1946 (translation, key passage). The ties between Us and Our people have always stood upon mutual trust and affection. They do not depend upon mere legends or myths. They are not based on the false idea that the Emperor is divine, and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world.

In 1947 the new constitution completed the change. Article 1 made the emperor “the symbol of the State and of the unity of the People”, with his position resting on “the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power”. Sovereignty had moved — from the emperor to the people.

A contested question: what was Hirohito’s wartime role? Historians still argue about how much responsibility Hirohito bears for the wars fought in his name. The question is genuinely contested, so let us set out both positions in their strongest form, as their own supporters would state them.

A contested question: what was Hirohito's wartime role?

Two positions, each set out in its strongest form, as its own supporters would state it

VS

Position 1

The emperor as figurehead

Under the Meiji Constitution the emperor reigned but did not govern: he accepted the decisions of his governments.

Hirohito said after the war that he was bound by cabinet decisions.

The occupation kept him in place, judging that removing him would make Japan impossible to govern peacefully.

Evidence it rests on: constitutional practice and statements made after the war

Position 2

The emperor as active participant

Historian Herbert Bix (2000) used court records, diaries and conference minutes.

He argues Hirohito questioned plans, pressed for decisions and approved operations from the early 1930s onward.

The figurehead story suited both the palace and the occupiers after 1945, so it was never properly tested.

Evidence it rests on: records made at the time the decisions were taken

Both sides accept that Hirohito stayed on the throne after 1945, and that the records are incomplete.

What would decide it: more released records of the wartime imperial conferences.
Until then, the question stays open.

Positions summarised from Section 5D; Position 2 after Herbert Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2000).

A steelman diagram setting out two historians' positions on Emperor Hirohito's wartime role, the evidence each side uses, and what would help settle the question

- **Position 1 — the emperor as figurehead.** Under the Meiji Constitution the emperor reigned but did not govern: he sanctioned the decisions of his governments and his military commanders, and constitutional practice bound him to accept their advice. Hirohito himself said after the war that he had been bound by cabinet decisions. The Allied occupation authorities, led by US General Douglas MacArthur, accepted this view and kept the emperor in place, judging that removing him would make Japan impossible to govern peacefully. On this view, Hirohito's experience was that of a man trapped by his own office.
- **Position 2 — the emperor as active participant.** The historian Herbert Bix, in *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2000), drew on court records, diaries and the minutes of imperial conferences to argue that Hirohito questioned plans, pressed for decisions and approved military operations from the early 1930s onward. Bix argues that the "powerless figurehead" story suited both the palace and the occupation authorities after 1945, so it was never properly tested.

Both positions rest on real evidence, and the surviving records are incomplete. This is what contested history looks like: the same person, the same events, two defensible readings. Your task as a historian is not to pick the comfortable one but to weigh the evidence each side offers.

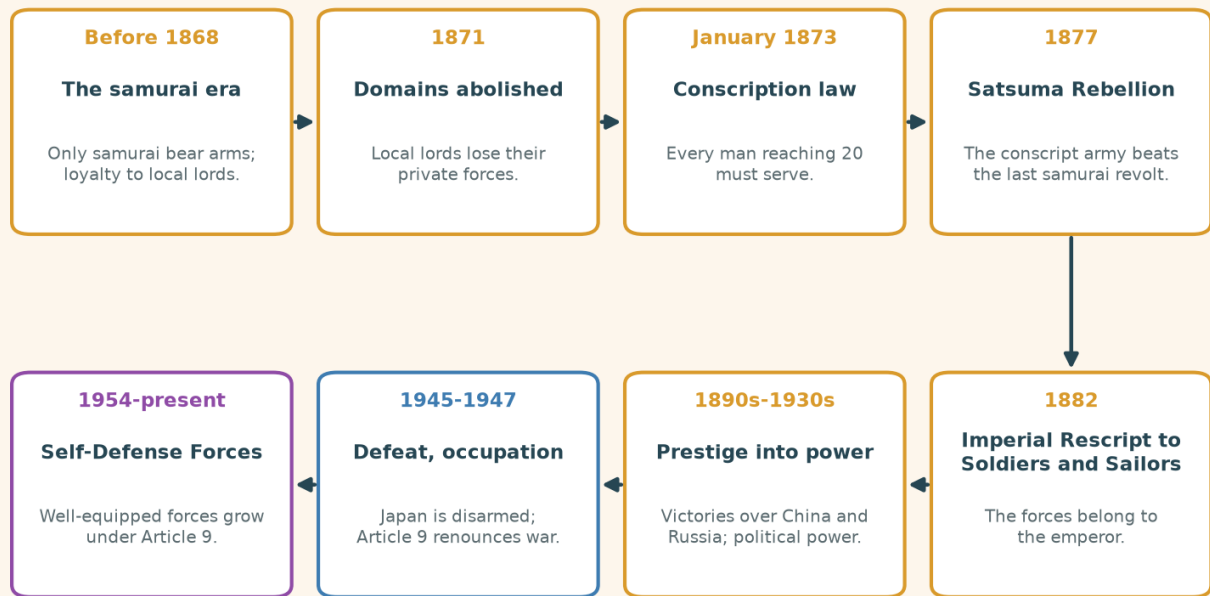
Emperor Akihito (reigned 1989–2019). Akihito was the first emperor to reign entirely under the 1947 constitution, and he shaped what a "symbol" emperor could be. He and Empress Michiko (the first commoner to marry into the imperial family, in 1959) visited disaster sites, knelt to speak with survivors, and travelled to Pacific battlefields to pray for the dead of all nations. In 2019, aged 85, Akihito became the first Japanese emperor in about 200 years to abdicate — to give up the throne while still alive — after parliament passed a special one-time law in 2017. His son Naruhito became emperor on 1 May 2019, opening the era Reiwa.

Groups: the military — Meiji Restoration to present day

If the emperors show how one office can change, the military shows how a whole group's place in society can change — and how that group can change society.

Changes to Japan's military, 1868 to the present

From samurai armies, to a conscript national military, to defeat, to Article 9 and the Self-Defense Forces



Dates and facts as given in Section 5D. Original figure, drawn for this workbook.

A flow diagram tracing how Japan's military changed, from the samurai, to conscription in 1873, to the political power of the 1930s, to defeat and occupation, to Article 9, the Self-Defense Forces and the present

From samurai to conscripts. Before 1868 only samurai bore arms, and loyalty ran to local lords. The Meiji leaders scrapped that system. In January 1873 the government introduced **conscription**: every young man reaching the age of 20 had to serve in the armed forces. Yamagata Aritomo, the leader most closely tied to the change, argued that a nation in arms was the only way to match the Western powers. In 1882 the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors taught that the armed forces belonged to the emperor and owed him loyalty above all. Not everyone accepted the change: in 1877 the ex-samurai leader Saigo Takamori raised a rebellion in Satsuma, in southern Japan. The new conscript army defeated it. The message was brutal and clear — the age of the samurai was over.

Conscription changed society far beyond the battlefield. For decades, families in every village and city ward sent sons away to serve. The military became a school of the nation, mixing young men from all regions and teaching them to see themselves as Japanese first.

Prestige and political power. Victories over China (1894–1895) and Russia (1904–1905) made the armed forces the most respected institution in the country — the first Asian power to beat a European empire in modern war. That prestige turned into political power. In September 1931 army officers in Manchuria seized Chinese territory without their own government's approval, and the government could not reverse it. In May 1932 Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi was assassinated by young naval officers. In February 1936, in the event known as the 26 February Incident, army officers attempted a coup in Tokyo and killed several senior officials. The coup failed, but after it no cabinet could take office without the army's agreement. By the late 1930s the military, not parliament, was steering the country — into war with China from 1937, and into the Pacific war from 1941 that you study in Chapter 3, including the fall of Singapore in 1942.

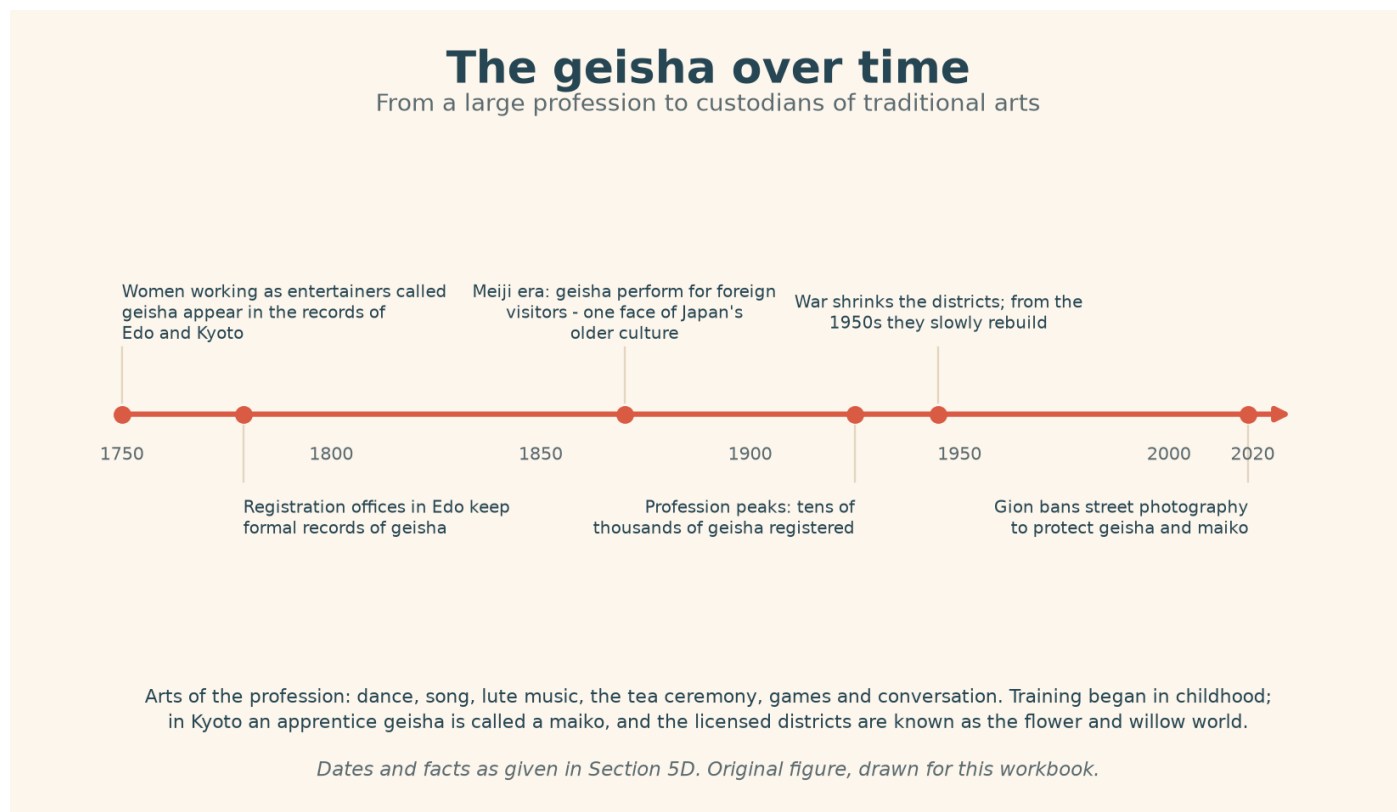
Defeat, occupation and Article 9. Defeat in August 1945 brought the American-led occupation (1945–1952). The occupiers disarmed Japan, put its wartime leaders on trial and wrote demilitarisation into the new constitution. **Article 9**, which you will read in Task 11, renounced war as a right of the nation. Yet the story does not end there. When the Cold War began, the occupiers themselves wanted Japan to carry some of its own defence. A small armed force appeared in 1950, and in 1954 it became the **Self-Defense Forces**. Today Japan spends heavily on defence and has

one of the most well-equipped armed forces in Asia — while Article 9 still formally renounces war. How those two facts sit together is one of Japan's great debates; Section 5F takes it up.

Impact on society. The military's rise and fall reshaped Japanese life three times over: conscription bound whole generations of men to the state; military power dragged the nation into wars that ended in firebombing and atomic attack; and after 1945 the choice to renounce war became a core part of how many Japanese saw their country's identity.

Groups: the geisha over time

The content description also asks about groups whose significance plays out across centuries. Few groups show the tension between change and tradition better than the geisha.



A timeline of the geisha from the mid-1700s to the present, showing the founding of the profession, its peak in the 1920s, wartime decline, post-war revival, and its present role as custodians of traditional arts

The profession and its arts. A geisha is a professional entertainer trained for years in dance, song, the three-stringed lute, the tea ceremony, games and conversation. Women working as entertainers under this name appear in the records of Edo and Kyoto by the 1750s, and by the 1770s the profession was well established; from 1779 registration offices in Edo kept formal records of geisha (Seigle, 1999). Training began in childhood, and in Kyoto an apprentice geisha is called a *maiko*. Geisha worked in licensed districts — in Japanese, the “flower and willow world” — such as Gion in Kyoto and Shimbashi in Tokyo.

Two misconceptions need correcting. First, geisha are artists and hosts, not sex workers; the confusion is an old one, and historians of the profession correct it. Second, geisha were not passive relics of an older Japan. They were working professionals who earned their living from their arts, ran their own business networks, and adapted as the world changed around them.

The 1800s. Geisha lived under strict codes of dress and conduct, and the best became celebrities of their day. Some married into the families of the new ruling class — Ito Hirobumi, who became Japan's first prime minister, married a woman named Kaoru who had worked as a geisha. In the Meiji era geisha performed for foreign visitors and dignitaries. While Japan's armies, railways and factories advertised the country's modernisation, the geisha became one of the faces the country showed the world of its older culture.

The twentieth century. The profession peaked in the 1920s, when tens of thousands of geisha were registered across Japan (Dalby, 1983). The war years shrank their world: customers went to the front, districts closed, and many geisha

lost their living or took factory work. After 1945 the occupation brought fresh confusion, as women who were not geisha borrowed the name, hardening false images of the profession overseas. From the 1950s the surviving districts slowly rebuilt.

The present. Today the profession is small. In Kyoto's five geisha districts a few hundred geisha and maiko continue the arts, with smaller numbers in Tokyo and a few other cities (Dalby, 2008). Their significance has changed as their numbers have fallen: geisha now act as custodians of traditional music, dance, dress and ceremony — arts that industrialisation might otherwise have swept away. Their place in modern Japan is still worked out. In 2019 the Gion district in Kyoto banned photography in its private lanes after tourists crowded and harassed geisha and maiko on their way to appointments — a sign of the tension between cultural heritage and tourism.

Impact on society. The geisha preserved artistic traditions through more than two centuries of upheaval, and they shaped how Japan was seen from outside. Their own perspective matters too: from inside the flower and willow world, modernisation was not only railways and constitutions; it was also the long effort to keep an art alive while the market for it rose, fell and changed.

Movements: people demanding change

Emperors and armies are powerful actors, but the content description also names **movements** — and ordinary Japanese people were not passive while their society was remade.

People demanding change: two popular movements

Ordinary Japanese were not passive while their society was remade

The Freedom and People's Rights Movement

1874 to about 1890

WHO: ex-samurai, farmers, journalists, local politicians

WHAT THEY WANTED: an elected national assembly; a constitution; a voice in government

HOW: petitions, newspapers, public meetings, political parties (the Liberal Party, founded 1881)

"Itagaki may die, but freedom never will!"

said Itagaki Taisuke when he was stabbed, 1882

RESULT: the promise of 1881; the constitution of 1889; the first parliament (Diet) in 1890

The rice riots

July to September 1918

WHO: women of a fishing town in Toyama first, then crowds in towns and cities across the country

WHY: the soaring price of rice, the staple food

WHAT HAPPENED: protests spread; crowds attacked rice merchants and clashed with police; the army was called out and thousands were arrested

Hundreds of thousands took part,

historians estimate (Gordon, 1991)

RESULT: Prime Minister Terauchi resigned; Hara Takashi, a commoner, took office; by 1925 all men over 25 could vote

Details as given in Section 5D. Original figure, drawn for this workbook.

Two cards describing popular movements in Japan — the Freedom and People's Rights Movement of the 1870s and 1880s, and the rice riots of 1918 — showing who took part, what they demanded, and what changed as a result

The Freedom and People's Rights Movement (1874–about 1890). Soon after the Restoration, ex-samurai, farmers, journalists and local politicians began demanding a share in the new order. In 1874 the ex-samurai leader Itagaki Taisuke led a petition calling for an elected national assembly. The movement ran newspapers and public meetings, and in 1881 Itagaki helped found Japan's first political party, the Liberal Party. When an attacker stabbed Itagaki at a meeting in 1882, he was said to have cried out: "Itagaki may die, but freedom never will!" The government answered the pressure in two ways — it promised in 1881 that a constitution would come, and it passed harsh laws against criticism. The Meiji Constitution of 1889 and the first Imperial Diet, which opened in 1890, were in part the

movement's achievement. Its campaigners did not get the fully democratic parliament they wanted, but they proved that ordinary people could force the state to answer them.

The rice riots of 1918. In July 1918, in a fishing town in Toyama prefecture, women whose husbands were at sea protested against the soaring price of rice, the staple food. Within weeks the protests had spread to towns and cities across the country, and historians estimate that hundreds of thousands of people took part (Gordon, 1991). Crowds attacked rice merchants and clashed with police. The government called out the army, and thousands were arrested. But the shock toppled the government: Prime Minister Terauchi resigned in September 1918, and he was replaced by Hara Takashi, the first commoner to lead Japan's government. The riots fed a wider push for the vote, and in 1925 the vote was extended to all men aged over 25. The same year, a new law also gave the government harsh powers to arrest political radicals — the state gave with one hand and took back with the other.

Impact on society. These movements widened who counted in Japanese public life. The Freedom and People's Rights Movement helped force a constitution and a parliament into being; the rice riots showed that governments fell when they ignored ordinary people's needs. Both movements are part of the experience and perspective of people who are easy to leave out of a story told only through emperors and armies.

Putting the threads together

Set the four threads side by side and the pattern of this section becomes clear. Each actor saw Japan's changes from a different position, and each left a mark that outlasted the era that made it.

Four threads compared: perspective, experience and impact

Actor	Perspective: how they saw the changes	Main experiences of change	Impact on Japanese society
The emperors (individuals)	Change was a way to strengthen imperial rule; after 1945, the throne endured by becoming a symbol.	Meiji raised to the centre of public life; Hirohito through war, defeat and the declaration of humanity; Akihito re-making the symbol role.	Gave the nation a unifying centre and an era-name calendar; the shift from sovereign to symbol marked Japan's political remaking.
The military (group)	A nation in arms was the only way to match the Western powers; loyalty to the emperor came above all.	From samurai armies to conscription; victory and prestige; political power in the 1930s; defeat, disarmament and Article 9.	Conscription schooled generations of men; military power carried the country into war; after 1945 the choice to renounce war shaped a new national identity.
The geisha (group)	The older arts were a living worth keeping; modernisation was a market to adapt to, not only a threat.	A profession by the 1750s; peak numbers in the 1920s; wartime decline; post-war revival as a small profession.	Preserved traditional music, dance, dress and ceremony through two centuries of upheaval; shaped how Japan was seen from outside.
Popular movements (movements)	Ordinary people deserved a voice in the new order, and governments should answer for their needs.	Petitions, parties and protests from the 1870s; the rice riots of 1918; wider votes by 1925.	Helped force a constitution and a parliament into being; showed that governments fall when they ignore ordinary people's needs.

A table comparing the emperor, the military, the geisha and popular movements, showing each one's perspective, its main experiences of change, and its impact on Japanese society

And notice that the story is never “everything changed”. Watch for what continued even as Japan was remade.

Change and continuity in modern Japan, 1868 to the present

The pattern is never everything changed or nothing changed - it is both at once

What CHANGED

Emperors

From sovereign rulers under the 1889 constitution to symbols resting on the will of the people under the 1947 rules.

The military

From samurai armies to a conscript national military, then to defeat, disarmament, Article 9 and the Self-Defense Forces.

The geisha

From tens of thousands of registered professionals in the 1920s to a small profession acting as custodians of traditional arts.

Popular movements

From subjects with no elected assembly to voters: a constitution (1889), a parliament (1890), votes for all men over 25 (1925).

What CONTINUED

The imperial line

The same family on the throne across the whole period - the 1889 constitution called it a line unbroken for ages.

Era names

Japan still counts years by the emperor's era name: Meiji, Taisho, Showa, Heisei, and Reiwa from 2019.

Loyalty to the emperor

Taught in schools after 1890 and still the basis of the throne's place after 1947 - changed in form, not removed.

The geisha arts

Dance, song, lute music and the tea ceremony passed from teacher to student in every era.

People pressing for change

Petitions, parties, meetings and protests continued across the whole period, from the 1870s to the present.

Entries drawn from the dated evidence in Section 5D. Original figure, drawn for this workbook.

A table sorting the developments of 1868 to the present into what changed and what continued, across the threads of emperors, the military, geisha and popular movements

Finally, remember that Japan's story never stayed inside Japan. Japanese divers worked the pearl beds of northern Australia from the 1870s, a story you met in Section 2C, and Japan's wars and occupation shaped Australia's own history, as Chapter 3 shows. The experiences and perspectives in this section — of emperors, soldiers, geisha and protesters — are one society's history of the modern world.

Worked inquiries

These two worked inquiries show you how to build a historical answer from real evidence. Follow each step, and notice how every claim is tied to a dated fact or a named source.

Worked inquiry 1 — scaffolded: What does the 1873 conscription law reveal about perspective and experience?

Question. What does the conscription law of January 1873 tell us about the perspective of the Meiji government and the experience of ordinary young men?

Primary source — the conscription law, January 1873 (translation, key clause). All males, on reaching the age of twenty years, shall undergo military service.

Step	What we do	Why it matters
1. Identify the source type	It is a law issued by the Meiji government in January 1873, five years after the Restoration.	A law is a primary source; knowing who made it tells us whose perspective it carries.
2. State what it did	It required every young man reaching 20 to serve in the armed forces, whatever his class or region.	These are the facts of the source — what it actually says.
3. Infer the government's	The leaders believed national	The law's reach — all males, no

Step	What we do	Why it matters
perspective	survival depended on a mass army: only a nation in arms could match the Western powers.	exceptions by class — reveals how the government saw Japan's danger and its remedy.
4. Infer the experience of young men	Farm and family lost a son's labour for years of service; for some men the army became a school that mixed regions and taught national pride.	This links the law to the lived experience of the people it bound — which was not one single experience.
5. Ask who lost by it	The samurai lost their exclusive right to bear arms; their resentment exploded in the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877.	A change that empowers the state usually strips someone else of a privilege; naming the loser sharpens the analysis.
6. Corroborate	The 1882 Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors and the victory over China in 1894–1895 confirm that conscription built the emperor-centred army the government intended.	Other evidence shows the law worked as intended — and that its consequences grew far beyond 1873.

Model answer. The conscription law of January 1873 is a primary source that reveals the Meiji government's perspective: Japan's survival, the leaders believed, required an army drawn from the whole male population, not just the samurai. By ordering all males reaching 20 into service, the law treated the nation itself as a military resource. For ordinary young men the experience was mixed: families lost years of a son's labour, yet for some men the army became a school that mixed regions and taught them to think of themselves as Japanese. The samurai were the clear losers, stripped of their exclusive role as warriors; their anger helped drive the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877. Later evidence — the loyalty taught by the 1882 Imperial Rescript and the victory over China in 1894–1895 — shows the law achieved what the government intended. So the source tells us both what the state wanted and what different groups had to give up.

Worked inquiry 2 — scaffolded: How do we weigh a contested interpretation — Hirohito's wartime role?

Question. Historians disagree about how much responsibility Emperor Hirohito bears for the wars fought in his name. Explain how you would weigh the two positions.

Step	What we do	Why it matters
1. Define the question	We are not asking whether the war happened, but how much agency the emperor had — how far he shaped decisions rather than accepted them.	Contested questions must be defined before they can be weighed.
2. State position 1 in its strongest form	The figurehead view: the Meiji Constitution made the emperor reign but not govern; Hirohito said after the war that he was bound by cabinet decisions; the occupation kept him because removing him would have made Japan ungovernable.	A position presented in its weakest form has not been engaged with.
3. State position 2 in its strongest form	The active-participant view: Herbert Bix (2000) used court records, diaries and conference minutes to argue that Hirohito questioned plans, pressed for decisions and approved operations from the early 1930s; and the figurehead story suited both the	The strongest form of the opposing view is what we must test, not a softened version.

Step	What we do	Why it matters
	palace and the occupiers, so it went untested.	
4. Compare the evidence	Position 1 rests on constitutional practice and the emperor's own later statements; position 2 rests on contemporary records of decisions.	Contemporary records are usually stronger evidence for what actually happened than statements made after defeat.
5. Note what both sides accept	Both accept that Hirohito stayed on the throne after 1945, and that the records are incomplete.	Shared ground shows where the real disagreement sits.
6. Decide what would settle it	More released court records, especially of imperial conferences before and during the Pacific war, would test which reading fits the decisions as they were made.	A good historian says what evidence would decide the question — and admits when it is not yet available.

Model answer. The debate over Hirohito's wartime role rests on one question: how much agency did the emperor have? The figurehead view, held by the palace and accepted by the occupation authorities, points to constitutional practice — the emperor reigned but did not govern — and to Hirohito's own post-war claim that he was bound by cabinet decisions. Its strongest evidence is the stability his presence gave the occupation. The active-participant view, argued most fully by Herbert Bix (2000), points to contemporary records — court documents, diaries and conference minutes — suggesting Hirohito questioned plans and approved operations from the early 1930s. Weighing them, the contemporary records are generally the stronger kind of evidence, because statements made after defeat had strong reasons behind them. But the surviving records are incomplete, and each side can point to evidence the other cannot fully explain. A careful historian therefore holds the question open: names the evidence on each side, says what new evidence would decide it, and refuses a verdict the records do not yet support.

Practice tasks

Scaffolded

These tasks give you the steps. Work through each prompt in order.

Task 1. The timeline and the key terms. (a) Define *era name* and name the four eras covered in this section, with their dates. (b) Using the timeline diagram, list one event for each of the three threads — emperors, the military, and geisha and movements — between 1868 and 1912. (c) Define *sovereignty*, and say where it sat under the 1889 constitution and where it sat under the 1947 constitution.

Task 2. The emperors. (a) Using the Meiji Constitution source, state what Articles 1, 3 and 11 said about the emperor. (b) What did the declaration of humanity of 1 January 1946 reject? (c) Give two ways Emperor Akihito shaped the role of a “symbol” emperor. (d) What is an abdication, and why was Akihito's in 2019 unusual?

Task 3. The military. (a) List three changes that turned Japan's armed forces from samurai armies into a national military between 1871 and 1889. (b) Give two signs that the military had become a political power by the 1930s. (c) What does Article 9 of the 1947 constitution renounce? (d) What armed force was created in 1954, and why is its existence in tension with Article 9?

Task 4. The geisha. (a) Name three arts a geisha trained in. (b) State two misconceptions about geisha that this section corrects. (c) How did the war years affect the geisha districts? (d) What is the significance of geisha in Japan today, and what does the 2019 photography ban in Gion show about their place in modern life?

Task 5. The movements. (a) Give three demands of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. (b) What was Itagaki Taisuke said to have cried when he was stabbed in 1882? (c) Where did the rice riots of 1918 begin, and why? (d) Give two political consequences of the rice riots.

Task 6. Cause and consequence. (a) Give one cause of the Meiji government’s decision to introduce conscription in 1873. (b) Give one intended consequence of conscription and one unintended consequence. (c) Explain how conscription connects to the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877.

Un scaffolded

These tasks give you the question only. Plan and structure your own answer.

Task 7. “The emperor was the most influential individual in modern Japan.” Assess this claim using evidence from the reigns of Meiji and Hirohito. Give reasons and limits.

Task 8. Explain how the role of Japan’s military changed between the Meiji Restoration and the present day, and analyse the impact of those changes on Japanese society. Use dated evidence.

Task 9. Explain the significance of geisha to Japanese society over time — both their role inside Japan and the way they shaped how Japan was seen from outside.

Task 10. Choose two threads from this section — the emperors, the military, the geisha, or popular movements — and compare their impact on Japanese society between 1868 and the present. In your comparison, note one experience or perspective the two threads shared, and one way their experiences differed.

Source-based inquiry

Task 11. Read the primary source below, then question it as a historian would. The source is Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, which took effect on 3 May 1947. It was drafted during the American-led occupation, with Japanese leaders working alongside the occupiers, and it remains in force today.

Primary source — Article 9, Constitution of Japan, 1947 (translation, summarised). Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation, and the threat or use of force as a means of settling disputes with other nations. In order to achieve this, land, sea and air forces, as well as all other war potential, will never be maintained, and the state’s right to wage war will not be recognised.

Article 9, Constitution of Japan

In force from 3 May 1947 - translation, summarised

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation, and the threat or use of force as a means of settling disputes with other nations.

In order to achieve this, land, sea and air forces, as well as all other war potential, will never be maintained, and the state's right to wage war will not be recognised.

Still in force today. The Self-Defense Forces, created in 1954, sit in tension with these words.

A styled reproduction of Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, 1947, as a primary source document

Answer these questions in full sentences:

- (a) What kind of source is this, and who was involved in making it? When did it take effect?
- (b) What does Article 9 renounce, and what does it say about armed forces?
- (c) Whose perspective does Article 9 carry — and why might the occupiers and Japanese reformers both have supported it in 1947?
- (d) What happened in 1950 and 1954 that complicates the promise that armed forces “will never be maintained”?
- (e) What other evidence from this section could you use to check what Article 9 did to Japan’s relationship with war and the military?
- (f) Would Article 9 be more useful for understanding the experience of defeat and occupation, or for understanding debates about Japan’s military today? Explain your choice.

Answers

Key points for the scaffolded and unscaffolded tasks. Use these to check your work, not to copy it.

Task 1. (a) An era name is the name given to an emperor's reign, used in Japan to count years; the four eras are Meiji (1868–1912), Taisho (1912–1926), Showa (1926–1989) and Heisei (1989–2019), followed by Reiwa from 2019. (b) Any one per thread: emperors — the Meiji Restoration (1868), the Charter Oath (1868), the Meiji Constitution (1889), the death of Emperor Meiji (1912); the military — abolition of the feudal domains (1871), the conscription law (1873), the Satsuma Rebellion (1877), the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors (1882); geisha and movements — the Freedom and People's Rights Movement petition (1874), the founding of the Liberal Party (1881), the opening of the first Imperial Diet (1890). (c) Sovereignty is supreme power over a country, the final say; under the 1889 constitution it sat with the emperor, and under the 1947 constitution it sits with the people.

Task 2. (a) Article 1: Japan is reigned over and governed by a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal. Article 3: the emperor is sacred and his person may not be attacked. Article 11: the emperor has the supreme command of the army and navy. (b) It rejected the idea that the emperor was divine, and the idea that the bond between emperor and people rested on legends or myths; it also rejected the claim that the Japanese people were superior to other races and fated to rule the world. (c) Any two of: visiting disaster sites and speaking with survivors; travelling to Pacific battlefields to pray for the dead of all nations; marrying a commoner, Michiko, in 1959; abdicating in 2019 to show the role could be passed on in his lifetime. (d) An abdication is giving up the throne while still alive; Akihito's was the first in about 200 years and needed a special one-time law passed in 2017.

Task 3. (a) Any three of: abolition of the feudal domains (1871), ending the local lords' private forces; the conscription law of January 1873; the defeat of the samurai rebellion in 1877; the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors of 1882 binding the forces to the emperor. (b) Any two of: the Manchurian seizure of September 1931 against the government's wishes; the assassination of Prime Minister Inukai in May 1932; the 26 February Incident of 1936; the rule after 1936 that no cabinet could form without the army's agreement. (c) It renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation, and the threat or use of force as a means of settling disputes. (d) The Self-Defense Forces, created in 1954 from a small force first raised in 1950; they sit in tension with Article 9 because Japan now maintains large, well-equipped armed forces while the article says armed forces will never be maintained.

Task 4. (a) Any three of: dance, song, lute music, the tea ceremony, games, conversation. (b) That geisha are sex workers — they are artists and hosts; and that they were passive relics of old Japan — they were working professionals who adapted to change. (c) Customers went to the front, districts closed, many geisha lost their living or took factory work; after 1945 women who were not geisha borrowed the name, hardening false images overseas. (d) They act as custodians of traditional music, dance, dress and ceremony; the 2019 ban on photography in Gion's private lanes, after tourists crowded and harassed geisha and maiko, shows the tension between cultural heritage and tourism.

Task 5. (a) Any three of: an elected national assembly; a constitution; a share in government for the people; lower taxes. (b) "Itagaki may die, but freedom never will!" (c) In a fishing town in Toyama prefecture in July 1918, when women protested the soaring price of rice, the staple food. (d) Any two of: Prime Minister Terauchi resigned in September 1918; Hara Takashi, the first commoner, became prime minister; pressure grew for a wider vote, leading in 1925 to votes for all men over 25.

Task 6. (a) The need for a mass army to match the Western powers after the unequal treaties and Perry's arrival; or the ending of samurai privilege, which left the state without a reliable fighting force. (b) Intended: a large national army loyal to the emperor, proven in the wars of 1894–1895 and 1904–1905. Unintended: the resentment of dispossessed samurai, which erupted in the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877; or, longer term, a military institution whose prestige later let it seize political power in the 1930s. (c) Conscription took the exclusive right to bear arms away from the samurai; Saigō Takamori's rebellion in 1877 was the samurai's last armed protest against that loss, and the conscript army's victory over it proved the new system had replaced the old.

Task 7. A strong answer argues both sides. For the claim: the Meiji Constitution made the emperor sacred and sovereign, the supreme commander of the army and navy, and the focus of education and loyalty (Rescript on Education, 1890); Meiji's image unified the country through industrialisation, and Hirohito's reign framed the era of war, defeat and recovery — his surrender broadcast of 15 August 1945 was the first time most Japanese heard an emperor's voice. Against/limits: emperors did not govern personally — Meiji's leaders ruled in his name, and

historians such as Bix (2000) and the figurehead school disagree about how much power Hirohito actually exercised; groups (the military, the movements) often drove events the emperor only sanctioned. Marks go to clear use of dated evidence plus a genuine limit, not to which conclusion is reached.

Task 8. A strong answer traces the arc with dates: samurai monopoly of arms ended with the feudal domains (1871) and conscription (January 1873); the Satsuma Rebellion (1877) proved the change; the 1882 rescript bound the forces to the emperor; victories in 1894–1895 and 1904–1905 gave the military national prestige; in the 1930s that prestige became political power (Manchuria 1931, Inukai assassinated 1932, the 26 February Incident 1936); the military took Japan into wars from 1937 and 1941; defeat in 1945 brought occupation, Article 9 (1947) and demilitarisation; the Self-Defense Forces (1954) and today’s well-equipped forces sit in tension with Article 9. Impacts to analyse: conscription as a national school for generations of men; war and defeat reshaping cities, families and national identity; pacifism as a post-war identity; the continuing debate over defence.

Task 9. A strong answer spans the centuries: origins by the 1750s and formal registration from 1779; arts of dance, music, tea and conversation; strict codes of dress and conduct; Meiji-era performances for foreign dignitaries, making geisha one face of Japan’s older culture while the country modernised; the 1920s peak; wartime decline; post-war confusion and revival; the present role as custodians of traditional arts, with the 2019 Gion photography ban showing the tension between heritage and tourism. Marks go to both halves of the question — significance inside Japan, and the shaping of Japan’s image abroad.

Task 10. Answers will vary by pairing. A strong answer gives a clear basis of comparison: for example, emperors and the military both gained authority through the Meiji Constitution (1889), which made the emperor sovereign and supreme commander — a shared experience of empowerment — but their fates diverged after 1945: the emperor was kept as a symbol and remained, while the military was disarmed and renounced by Article 9. Or geisha and movements both experienced modernisation as pressure from outside their own world, but the movements answered with protest while the geisha answered by adapting their profession. Marks go to a genuine comparison — one shared experience or perspective and one difference — supported by dated evidence.

Task 11. (a) It is a primary source — a clause of a constitution — drafted during the American-led occupation with Japanese leaders working alongside the occupiers; it took effect on 3 May 1947. (b) It renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force for settling disputes; it says land, sea and air forces and all other war potential will never be maintained, and that the state’s right to wage war will not be recognised. (c) It carries the perspective of the occupiers, who wanted Japan never to threaten peace again, and of Japanese reformers, some of whom saw the clause as a way to break with the militarism that had ended in defeat. (d) A small armed force was raised in 1950, and it became the Self-Defense Forces in 1954 — so Japan does maintain armed forces, which sits in tension with the article’s words. (e) The demilitarisation of the occupation, the disarming of Japan after 1945, and the rise of the Self-Defense Forces; also the 26 February Incident and the military’s political power in the 1930s, which show why the occupiers wanted such a clause. (f) Either can be argued: it is most directly useful for understanding defeat and occupation, because it is that moment’s settlement written into law; but because it is still in force and still argued over, it also opens the modern debates about defence. Marks go to a clear choice plus a reason tied to when the source was made and how long it has lasted.

Model responses

These are fully worked answers. Read them to see how a strong response is built: a clear point, dated evidence, a link back to the question, and an honest limit.

Model for Task 11 (source-based inquiry) — extended response

Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan is a primary source: a clause of the constitution that took effect on 3 May 1947, drafted during the American-led occupation with Japanese leaders working alongside the occupiers. It speaks in the voice of the people, and it renounces war itself — war as a sovereign right of the nation, and the threat or use of force as a way of settling disputes. It goes further still: land, sea and air forces, and all other war potential, “will never be maintained”, and the state’s right to wage war will not be recognised. The source carries two perspectives at once. It carries the occupiers’ determination that Japan, which had waged war across Asia and the Pacific, should never threaten peace again. And it carries the perspective of Japanese reformers who saw in defeat a chance to break with the militarism of the 1930s — the era when the military had seized Manchuria in 1931, when Prime Minister Inukai

was assassinated in 1932, and when no cabinet could form without the army's agreement after 1936. Read against the rest of this section, Article 9 is the answer the occupation gave to the military's rise traced in Section 5D: the group that had once steered the nation was written out of the nation's basic law. Yet the source also opens a tension that never closed. When the Cold War began, the occupiers themselves wanted Japan to carry some of its own defence, and a small force raised in 1950 became the Self-Defense Forces in 1954. Today Japan maintains one of the best-equipped armed forces in Asia under a constitution that says armed forces will never be maintained. That is why Article 9 is useful for two histories at once: it is the settlement of defeat and occupation, written into law in 1947, and it is still the centre of Japan's debate about war, peace and defence today.

Model for Task 7 (unscaffolded) — extended response

The claim that the emperor was the most influential individual in modern Japan can be defended — but only with careful limits. The strongest case rests on the office itself. The Meiji Constitution of 1889 made the emperor sacred and sovereign, gave him the supreme command of the army and navy, and placed him at the centre of education and loyalty, reinforced by the Rescript on Education of 1890. Emperor Meiji's image unified a country being rebuilt: his portrait stood in schools, and his era name labelled the whole project of modernisation. When Hirohito spoke on the radio on 15 August 1945 to announce surrender, it was the first time most Japanese had heard an emperor's voice — and his declaration of humanity in January 1946 then remade the very idea of the throne, which the 1947 constitution recast as a symbol resting on the will of the people. No other single individual framed so many of Japan's changes. Yet the claim has limits. Emperors reigned; they rarely governed. Meiji's senior leaders ruled in his name, and under Hirohito the military seized decisions — Manchuria in 1931, the slide into war in the late 1930s — that the throne sanctioned rather than directed. Historians still contest how much agency Hirohito had: the figurehead view stresses constitutional practice and his post-war statements, while Herbert Bix (2000) argues from court records that he was an active participant from the early 1930s. Groups, too, shaped Japan in ways no emperor controlled — the military that carried the country into war, and the movements, from the Freedom and People's Rights campaigners to the rice rioters of 1918, that forced the state to answer ordinary people. A fair judgement is that the emperor was the most enduring and the most used individual in modern Japan — the figure through which change was made to look legitimate — while the actual power often lay in the leaders, soldiers and citizens who acted in his name, or without it.

Sources used in this section

- Charter Oath (five-article oath), issued April 1868, translation summarised.
- Constitution of the Empire of Japan, issued 11 February 1889, Articles 1, 3, 11 (translated excerpts).
- Conscription Ordinance and imperial edict, January 1873 (translated excerpt).
- Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors, 4 January 1882.
- Imperial Rescript on Education, 30 October 1890.
- Imperial rescript of 1 January 1946 (“declaration of humanity”), translated excerpt.
- Constitution of Japan, effective 3 May 1947, Articles 1 and 9 (translated excerpts).
- Bix, Herbert P. *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.
- Dalby, Liza. *Geisha*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983; updated edition 2008.
- Seigle, Cecilia Segawa. *Geisha: Beyond the Painting*. New York: Weatherhill, 1999.
- Gordon, Andrew. *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Wikipedia: “Charter Oath”, “Meiji Constitution”, “Emperor Meiji”, “Emperor Taisho”, “Hirohito”, “Hirohito surrender broadcast”, “Declaration of Humanity”, “Emperor Akihito”, “Conscription in Japan”, “Satsuma Rebellion”, “Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors”, “May 15 Incident”, “February 26 Incident”, “Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution”, “Japan Self-Defense Forces”, “Freedom and People's Rights Movement”, “Rice Riots”, “Geisha”, “Gion”. All retrieved 25 August

Change and continuity in an Asian society's daily life, institutions and culture

For the teacher

*This section is one teaching sequence (parts 1–12) with two worked inquiries built from real, dated, checkable primary sources, six scaffolded practice tasks, four unscaffolded tasks and one source-based inquiry task, per the §3 volume calibration. Register is direct-address prose at or below the Yr10 ceiling (D2). Subject terms are defined at first use (D2 exemption 2). The chapter's build notes bind this section to **Japan** (the one-society rule, §3); only Japan's elaboration group .E16–.E20 is taught, and coverage is judged against the generic CD text. The one interpretive debate in this section — what global popularity did to Japan's cultural forms — is presented as a maintained-and-changed ledger with both sides shown in their strong form (CONTESTED_TERMS Rules 4–5). VC2HH10K28 is not in the §2A register: the CD and all its elaborations carry no First Nations material, and none may be authored in later, including as context, background or a caption.*

Curriculum alignment (VCAA export VC2_AS-CD-E1ab_29-07-2026.csv) — codes only:

VC2HH10K28 — Historical Knowledge and Understanding · Investigation: Asia (1750–present)

Draws on (linkage only, D7 — the Japan option group, per the chapter build notes): VC2HH10K28.E16 · VC2HH10K28.E17 · VC2HH10K28.E18 · VC2HH10K28.E19 · VC2HH10K28.E20.

D3 note (binding): VC2HH10K28 and its elaborations are **not** listed in the §2A register — the CD carries no First Nations material. The exclusion still binds forward: no First Nations content may be authored into this section later, including as context, background or a caption. Japan's migration story is told only at its Japanese end: the Hawaii and Brazil departures are cited as dated facts, with no content about the receiving societies' first peoples.

Teaching choices (chapter block spec, §3): this section teaches the CD's three domains through **the Meiji turning point in ordinary lives — growing trade, modernisation, expansions and nationalism** (parts 2–4, .E17), **living conditions in Tokyo over time** (part 5, .E19), **political and legal institutions — the two constitutions of 1889 and 1947** (part 6, the CD's institutions domain), **the changing relevance of Shinto** (part 7, .E18), and **cultural expression — food, gaming and manga/anime, maintained and changed by global popularity since the 1980s** (parts 8–9, .E20). Worked inquiry 1 reads a primary-source extract from the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890); worked inquiry 2 models a continuity-and-change paragraph. Skills cross-links: source purpose and context (7C), value of sources as evidence (7D), perspectives from sources (7E), continuity and change (8A), causes and consequences (8B), significance (8C), sustained interpretation (8D).

Subject words — define at first use (D2 exemption 2):

Word	Gloss used in this section
continuity	what stayed the same across a period
change	what was different by the end of a period
shogun	the military ruler of Japan; the shogunate was the shogun's government
sakoku	the “closed country” policy of the shogunate: for over 200 years, Japanese people could not leave and foreign trade was cut down to a few ports
domain (han)	the regional lands ruled by a lord under the shogunate
Meiji	the era 1868–1912, named for the emperor's era title, “enlightened rule”
modernisation	bringing a country's institutions, industry and armed forces up to the newest methods of the time
nationalism	the belief that one's own nation comes first and should be strong and united
conscription	required military service for young men
Diet	Japan's parliament

Word	Gloss used in this section
constitution	the set of basic laws that says who holds power and what rights people have
sovereignty	the power to rule a country
rescript	an official written command issued in the emperor's name
Shinto	Japan's old tradition of worship, centred on kami
kami	the spirits honoured in Shinto — spirits of places, families and nature
shrine	a Shinto holy place; a matsuri is a shrine festival
state Shinto	the government-run system of shrine worship, 1868–1945
census	an official count of the people in a country or city
manga	Japanese comics; anime is Japanese animation
primary source	a record made at the time being studied
secondary source	an account made later by someone using primary sources

Sources (SOURCE_USE — real referents carry a source line; retrieved 2026-08-25 where a collection was consulted, otherwise the original document is cited):

Referent	Source line
Sakoku edicts 1633–1639; the American naval officer Matthew Perry in Edo Bay 1853–54 and the treaty of 1854; Edo renamed Tokyo 1868; Meiji era 1868–1912; Charter Oath 1868; domains (han) abolished 29 August 1871	Tokugawa and Meiji government records, National Archives of Japan; National Diet Library
Tokyo–Yokohama telegraph 1869; Shimbashi–Yokohama railway 1872; Gakusei education order 1872; conscription from 1873; land tax paid in cash from 1873; sword ban and end of samurai pay 1876; Tomioka Silk Mill 1872	Meiji government records, National Diet Library
Imperial Rescript on Education, 30 October 1890; read at school ceremonies for over fifty years; abolished 1948	Original held in the National Diet Library of Japan
The war with China, 1895; the war with Russia, 1905; Hibiya riots, September 1905	Treaty texts and home-affairs records, National Archives of Japan
Government-backed migration to Hawaii from February 1885; the Kasato Maru lands 781 passengers at Santos, Brazil, 18 June 1908	Japanese foreign-ministry migration records; Santos port records
Constitution of the Empire of Japan, 11 February 1889, Articles 1, 4 and 29	National Diet Library of Japan, constitutional documents
Great Kanto earthquake 1 September 1923 (over 100,000 dead); Tokyo air raids, night of 9–10 March 1945 (around 100,000 dead, about a million left homeless); census counts 1920–2020 (2020: 14,047,594)	Statistics Bureau of Japan, national censuses and disaster records
Bullet train Tokyo–Osaka, 1 October 1964; Olympic Games held in Tokyo, October 1964	Japanese National Railways records; Games organising-committee records
Shinto Directive, 15 December 1945; emperor's humanity declaration 1 January 1946; women vote in a national election, April 1946; Constitution of 1947,	Occupation-headquarters records (SCAPIN 448); Japanese statute books, National Diet Library

Referent	Source line
Articles 1, 9 and 20	
Chicken Ramen 25 August 1958 and Cup Noodle 18 September 1971 (Ando Momofuku, Nissin); over 100 billion serves of instant noodles eaten worldwide each year; washoku (traditional Japanese food culture) listed by UNESCO, December 2013	Nissin company records; world instant-noodle industry figures; UNESCO heritage list
Nintendo founded 23 September 1889 making hanafuda playing cards; Family Computer (Famicom) 15 July 1983; Pac-Man 1980; PlayStation 3 December 1994; Pokemon 27 February 1996	Company records: Nintendo, Namco, Sony, Game Freak
Astro Boy on TV 1963 (Tezuka Osamu); Studio Ghibli 1985; Akira 1988; Spirited Away 2001 (animation Oscar, 23 March 2003); Demon Slayer: Mugen Train 2020, top of the Japanese box office by 2021	Studio and box-office records
Shinto today: over 3 million New Year visitors at Meiji Shrine; about 80,000 shrines with the Association of Shinto Shrines; Yasukuni Shrine founded 1869	Shrine records; Association of Shinto Shrines

1. The big question

This section studies one Asian society — **Japan** — from the 1850s to today. The rest of Chapter 5 makes the same choice (the chapter’s one-society rule), so everything you meet here builds one long story: a closed country forced open, a revolution from above, two constitutions, a burned and rebuilt capital, and cultural forms that now travel the world.

The curriculum asks about three domains — **political and legal institutions, daily life and living conditions, and cultural expression** — and about two ideas you will keep using:

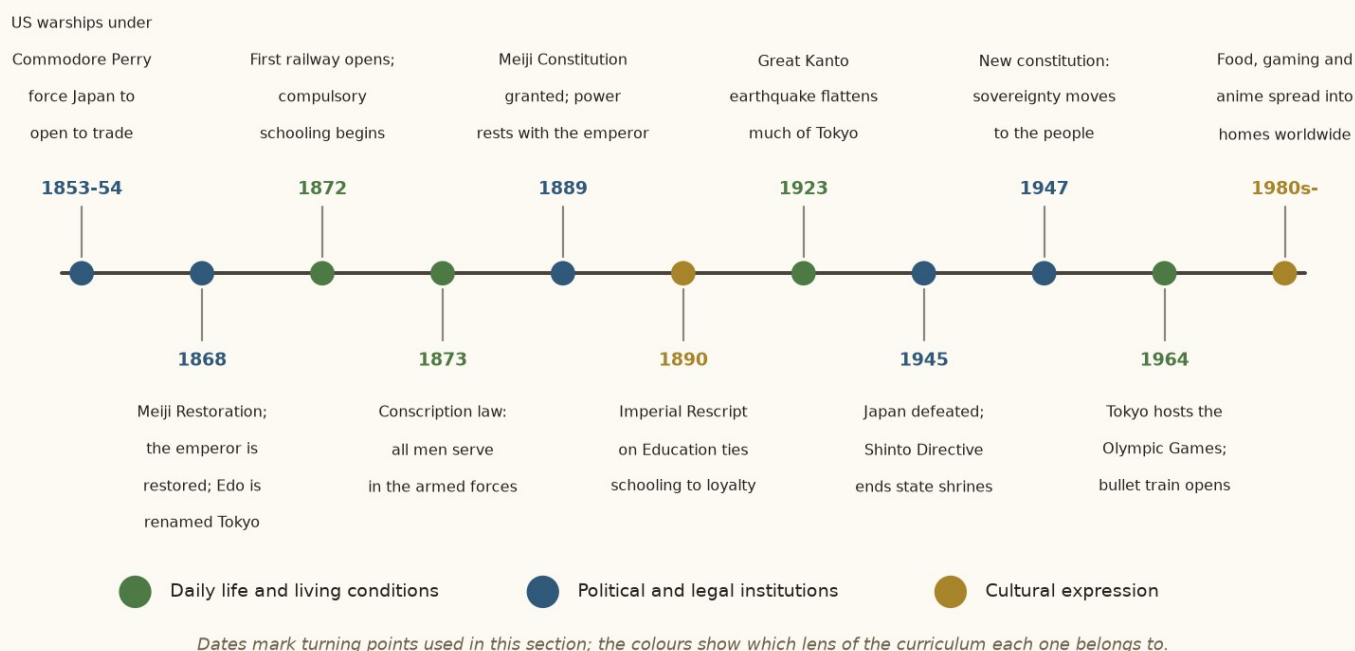
- **Continuity** — what stayed the same across a period.
- **Change** — what was different by the end of that period.

In Japan’s story, the hardest and most interesting question is not “what changed?” but “what changed *and* what carried on at the same time?” The emperor is one example you will meet twice: in 1889 the constitution said **sovereignty** — the power to rule the country — sat with him; in 1947 a new constitution moved it to the people, yet the emperor remained, as a symbol. Same institution, different meaning. That is continuity and change in one sentence.

The timeline below runs across the whole section. The markers are colour-coded by the three domains, so you can see at a glance which part of life each change touched.

Japan's long age of change, 1853-today

Three things kept changing over the same span: ways of life, institutions and cultural expression.



A timeline of Japan from 1853-54 to the present with dated markers colour-coded by the three domains of ways of life, institutions and cultural expression: Perry's arrival and the opening (1853-54), the Meiji era beginning (1868), the first railway (1872), the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), the Meiji Constitution (1889), the Great Kanto earthquake (1923), the 1945 air raids, the 1947 Constitution, the bullet train and Olympic Games (1964), and the global wave of food, gaming and anime from the 1980s on.

2. The closed country opens, 1853–1871

In the 1630s the shogunate — the military government of the **shogun** — had closed Japan to most of the world. This policy is called **sakoku**, the “closed country”: Japanese people could not leave, foreign trade was cut down to a few controlled ports, and for over 200 years most Japanese knew their own society only.

That ended with ships. In July 1853 the American naval officer Matthew Perry sailed into Edo Bay with a modern fleet and a demand: open your ports. He returned in 1854, and Japan signed its first treaty with a Western power. More treaties followed, and with them a crisis of confidence in the shogunate. In 1868 a coalition of young lords and samurai brought the shogunate down and restored direct rule in the emperor's name — the beginning of the **Meiji era** (1868–1912). The city of Edo was renamed **Tokyo**, and in the Charter Oath of 1868 the new government promised that “knowledge shall be sought throughout the world.”

The changes came fast. On 29 August 1871 the government abolished the **domains (han)** — the regional lands ruled by lords under the shogunate — and replaced them with prefectures run from Tokyo. In one stroke, the old map of power was gone.

Task A (scaffolded). Copy this chain into your book: closed country (1630s) → Perry (1853–54) → treaties → Meiji restoration (1868) → domains abolished (1871). Under each step write one sentence beginning “This changed ordinary life by ...”. If you cannot fill a step yet, leave a blank line and come back after part 3.

3. Four forces: trade, modernisation, expansions and nationalism

The curriculum names four forces that reshaped daily life in Meiji Japan. The figure below sets them out with dated examples; the notes under it add the stories.

Four forces in Meiji daily life (1868-1912)

Trade, modernisation, expansion and nationalism each reached into the home, the school and the workplace.

Trade	Modernisation	Expansion	Nationalism
Silk for sale raw silk and cloth became Japan's biggest exports by the 1890s Cash taxes farmers paid the land tax in money, not rice, from 1873 Machines in steam engines, looms and presses were imported	Railways first line, Shimbashi to Yokohama, opened in 1872 Telegraph a Tokyo-Yokohama line worked from 1869 New calendar the Western calendar replaced the old one in 1873 Gas light gas lamps lit city streets and some homes	Conscription all men served in the army or navy from 1873 Empire grows wins over China (1895) and Russia (1905) built an empire Workers leave people sailed to Hawaii (1885) and Brazil (1908) for work	Schooling for all compulsory schooling began in 1872 The Rescript the 1890 Rescript on Education tied schooling to loyalty State shrines Shinto shrines became national shrines

Each column is one force named by the curriculum; the rows show how it touched an ordinary day.

A four-column table of the forces that changed daily life in Meiji Japan: rising trade, modernisation, expansions and nationalism. Each column lists dated changes, such as the Tomioka Silk Mill (1872), the first railway (1872), compulsory schooling (1872) and conscription (1873), the wars of 1895 and 1905, and the emigration ships of 1885 and 1908.

Trade. The treaty ports tied Japan into world trade. Raw silk became the great export, and the government built model factories to teach the newest methods — the Tomioka Silk Mill opened in 1872, its machines turning for the world market. Farm families who had always spun silk at home now fed a global trade.

Modernisation. The government rebuilt the country's skeleton at speed: a telegraph line between Tokyo and Yokohama in 1869; the first railway, Shimbashi to Yokohama, in 1872; the Gakusei education order of 1872, which began **compulsory** schooling — schooling every child had to attend; **conscription** from 1873, which made young men serve in the new national army; and a land tax paid in cash from 1873, which pulled even remote villages into the money economy. In 1876 the old warrior class lost the right to wear swords, and its pay was ended. A samurai's status, inherited for centuries, was finished within one Meiji generation.

Expansions. A stronger Japan pushed outward. Victory over China in the war of 1895 and over Russia in the war of 1905 brought an empire and a place among the great powers. Expansion also moved ordinary people: from February 1885 the government backed workers migrating to Hawaii, and on 18 June 1908 the ship Kasato Maru landed 781 Japanese passengers at Santos in Brazil. At home, expansion had a price: when the 1905 peace treaty with Russia brought less than the crowds expected, riots broke out at Hibiya park in Tokyo in September 1905.

Nationalism. The fourth force held the other three together. Schools, the army and the newspapers taught loyalty to the emperor and to Japan as one nation. The document in the next part is the clearest voice of that teaching — read it as a **primary source**, a record made at the time being studied.

4. Worked inquiry 1 — reading the Imperial Rescript on Education

On 30 October 1890 the emperor's name issued a **rescript** — an official written command — on education. It was read aloud at school ceremonies for over fifty years; pupils bowed before a copy of it and a portrait of the emperor. It was only abolished in 1948.

Imperial Rescript on Education

issued in the emperor's name, 30 October 1890 - key commands, in modern words

Be filial to your parents, and true and loyal to your country.

Respect learning, and work hard at your studies.

Advance the public good and the common interest.

*Should an emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State,
and so guard and keep safe our Imperial Throne, as lasting as heaven and earth.*

The Rescript was read aloud at school ceremonies for over fifty years;
pupils bowed before a copy of it and a portrait of the emperor.

Source: Imperial Rescript on Education, 30 October 1890. Original held in the National Diet Library of Japan; commands set here in modern words.

A framed document titled Imperial Rescript on Education, issued in the emperor's name on 30 October 1890, with its key commands set out in modern words: be filial to your parents and loyal to your country; respect learning; advance the public good; in an emergency offer yourselves to the state and guard the Imperial Throne. A note below records that it was read aloud at school ceremonies for over fifty years.

Follow the three questions.

Question 1 — What does it say? Find the command that ties the family to the state. *Modelled answer:* loyalty begins at home (“be filial to your parents”) and runs straight up to the country and the throne — the family and the state are joined into one duty.

Question 2 — What does it reveal? The Rescript commands respect for learning and hard work at study. What does that tell you about the Meiji state's plan? *Modelled answer:* education was not a private matter; the state wanted a literate, hard-working, loyal population — the same people the conscription law and the factories needed.

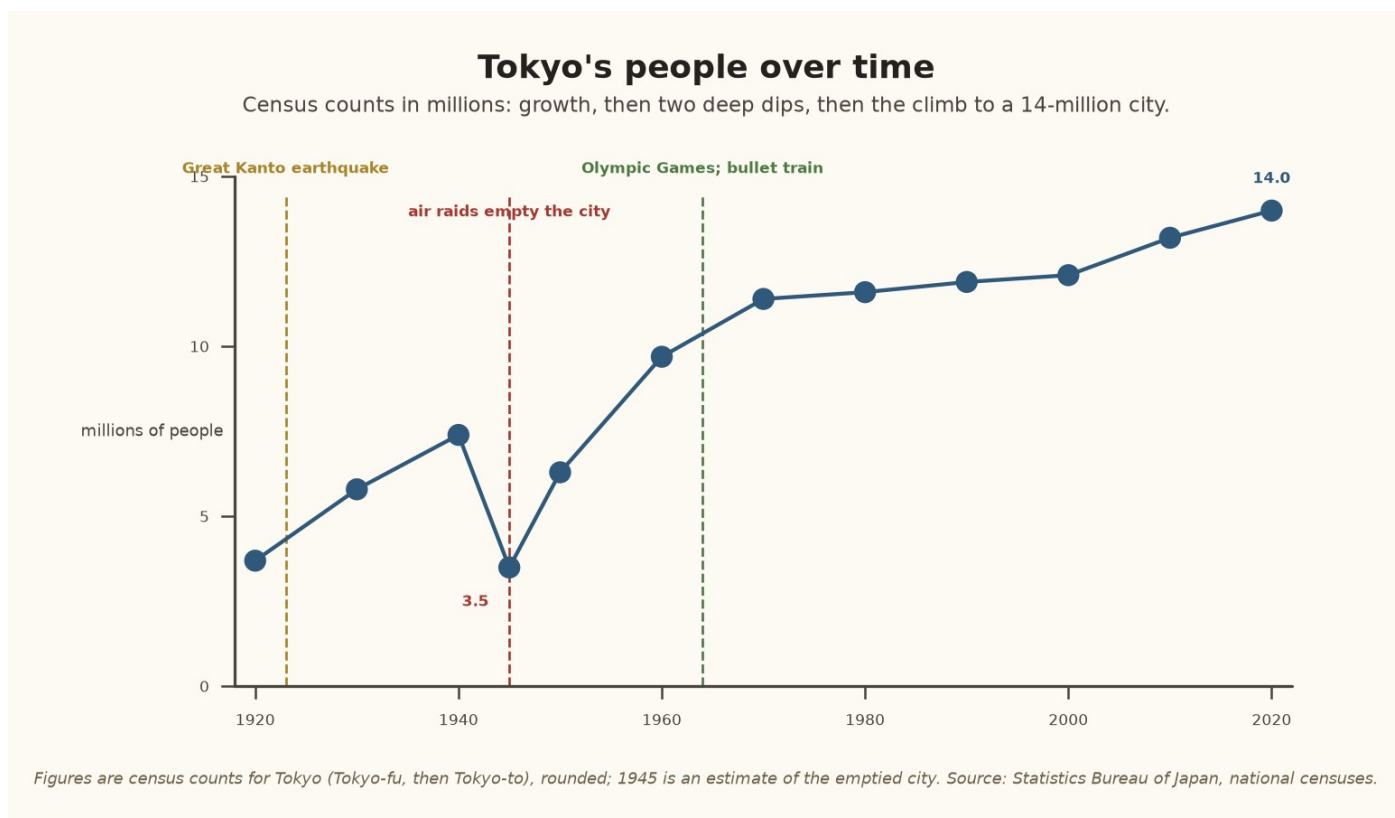
Question 3 — What are its limits? The Rescript is strong evidence of what the state *wanted* young Japanese to believe. It is not evidence of what every family actually believed at the kitchen table. *Modelled answer:* a source like this shows the message, not how far the message landed — for that a historian needs diaries, letters and later interviews.

This is source analysis: say what it says, then what it reveals, then what it leaves out.

5. Living conditions in Tokyo over time

Now the second domain of the CD — daily life and living conditions — seen through one city. In the 1850s, Edo was already one of the biggest cities on earth, and one of the most fragile: a timber city of narrow lanes, wells and oil lamps, where fire was a constant visitor.

The population chart below tracks the city through its shocks; the era table sets daily life side by side.



A line chart of Tokyo's population in millions at census years from 1920 to 2020: growth to 7.4 million by 1940, a steep dip to about 3.5 million in 1945, then a climb to 14 million by 2020, with dashed verticals marking the 1923 earthquake, the 1945 air raids, and the 1964 Olympic Games and bullet train.

Living conditions in Tokyo, era by era

Compare down the rows: the city kept changing, but the risk of quake and fire never left.

Edo, c.1850	Meiji Tokyo, c.1900	Rebuilding, c.1960	Today
Housing timber longhouses packed into narrow lanes	Housing brick streets in Ginza after 1872; timber still everywhere else	Housing concrete housing blocks replace the burnt timber city	Housing high-rise towers of small apartments
Water & light wells and an old water channel; oil lamps; waste carted out to farms	Water & light piped water and gas lamps spreading	Water & light electricity and tap water in nearly every home	Water & light full power, water and internet for 14 million people
Transport on foot, by boat, or in carried chairs	Transport rickshaws, horse trams, steam trains	Transport trains, subways and new expressways	Transport a rail city: millions ride trains each day
Biggest risk fire - the wooden city burned again and again	Biggest risk fire and disease still killed in the crowded wards	Biggest risk the 1923 quake and 1945 raids shaped strict building rules	Biggest risk still braced for the next great earthquake

Each column is one era; the rows compare the same parts of daily life, so change and continuity show up side by side.

A four-column comparison of living conditions in Tokyo era by era: Edo around 1850, Meiji Tokyo around 1900, the rebuilding city around 1960, and today; rows compare housing, water and light, transport and the biggest risk in each era.

The shocks. On 1 September 1923 the Great Kanto earthquake flattened much of Tokyo; fire, as always in the timber city, did most of the killing — more than 100,000 people died. On the night of 9–10 March 1945, American air raids burned the eastern wards; around 100,000 people died and about a million lost their homes. The census line shows what the raids did: a city of 7.4 million in 1940 stood at about 3.5 million in 1945.

The rebuild. Each disaster rebuilt the city in stronger materials. After 1923 came wider streets and stricter rules; after 1945 came concrete, and by around 1960 most homes had electricity and tap water. In October 1964 the city showed itself to the world twice in a few weeks: the first bullet train ran Tokyo to Osaka on 1 October, and the Olympic Games opened in Tokyo soon after.

The continuity. Read the bottom row of the era table: the biggest risk never left. Tokyo still stands over the same fault lines, and the city’s building rules today descend directly from the burns of 1923 and 1945. In 2020 the **census** — the official count — recorded 14,047,594 people living in Tokyo. Housing, water and transport had changed utterly; living with quake and fire risk had not.

Task B (scaffolded). Using the two figures, complete this three-part sentence with one dated fact in each blank: “In Tokyo, housing changed from ____ (date: ____) to ____ (date: ____); but the risk of ____ continued.” Then add one sentence saying which of your facts you trust most, and why (hint: counts and dates from a census are a different kind of evidence from a description).

6. Political and legal institutions: two constitutions

The third domain is institutions — the basic laws and bodies that hold power. Japan has lived under two constitutions, and comparing them is the cleanest way to see the CD’s question in political life.

Two constitutions, one country

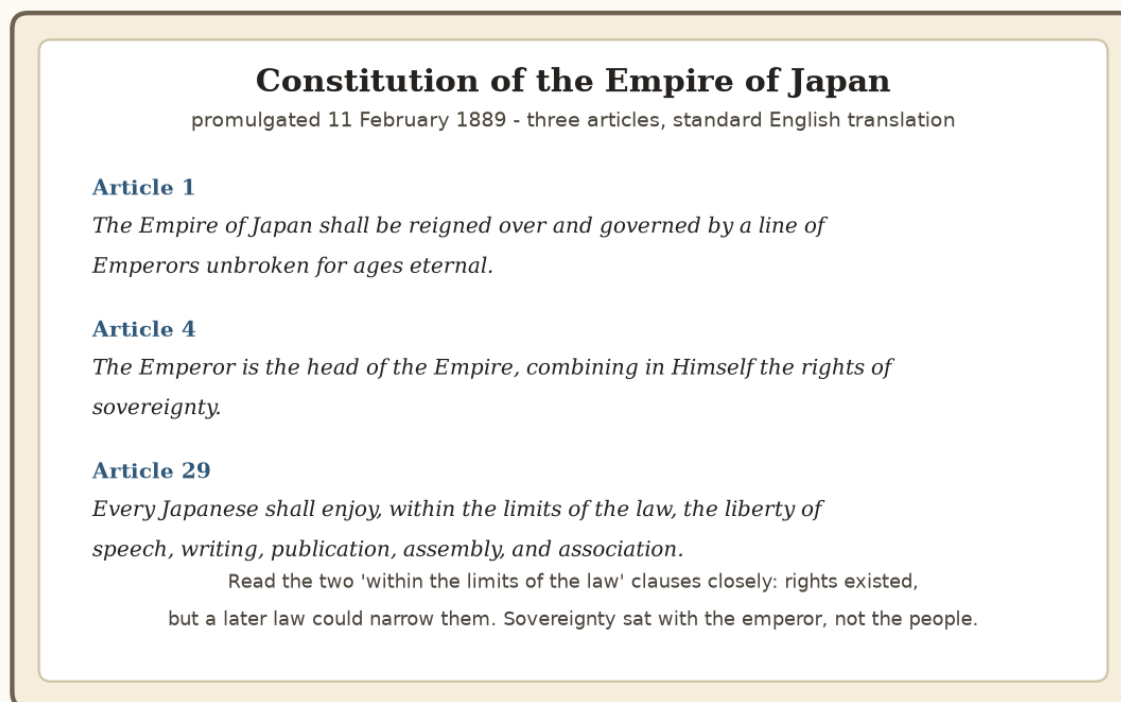
The same institutions, rebuilt: power moved from the emperor to the people between 1889 and 1947.

Meiji Constitution, 1889	Constitution, 1947
Who holds power with the emperor	with the people
Head of state the emperor rules the empire	the emperor is a symbol of the state
Parliament Imperial Diet; at first only around 1 in 100 people could vote	National Diet elected by all adults; women voted from 1946
Rights granted, but only 'within the limits of the law'	human rights guaranteed to everyone as a lasting right
Armed forces army and navy answer to the emperor	Article 9 renounces war; no army or navy of its own
Religion state shrines back emperor worship	Article 20 separates religion from the state

The 1947 Constitution kept the institutions - a diet, ministries, courts - but moved sovereignty, guaranteed rights, and cut the state's tie to religion.

A two-column comparison of the Meiji Constitution of 1889 and the Constitution of 1947 across six rows: who holds power, head of state, parliament, rights, armed forces, and religion. The 1889 column places sovereignty with the emperor and limits rights to ‘within the limits of the law’; the 1947 column places power with the people, guarantees rights, renounces war in Article 9 and separates religion from the state in Article 20.

Read three articles of the first constitution, then answer the two questions.



Source: Constitution of the Empire of Japan, 1889, Articles 1, 4 and 29. National Diet Library of Japan, constitutional documents.

A framed document titled Constitution of the Empire of Japan, issued 11 February 1889, showing Articles 1, 4 and 29 in a standard English translation: the empire is reigned over by a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal; the emperor is the head of the empire, combining in himself the rights of sovereignty; every Japanese shall enjoy, within the limits of the law, the liberty of speech, writing, publication, assembly and association.

Question 1 — Who holds power? Modelled answer: Articles 1 and 4 put **sovereignty** with the emperor, not the people. The **Diet** — Japan's parliament — existed, but at first only around 1 in 100 people could vote for it.

Question 2 — What do the small words do? Article 29 grants free speech “within the limits of the law.” Modelled answer: those words mean a later law could narrow the right — a granted right is not the same as a guaranteed one.

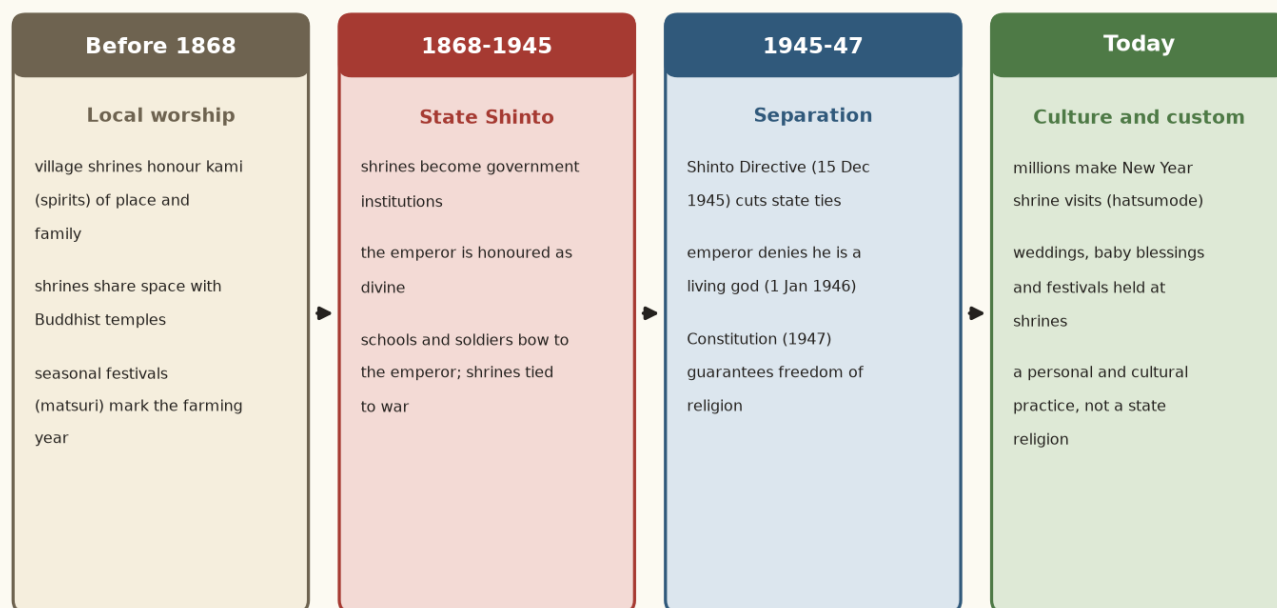
The second constitution came out of defeat. After the war, with the American-led occupation overseeing Japan, a new **constitution** took effect in 1947. Article 1 moved sovereignty to the people; the emperor remained as “the symbol of the State.” Article 9 gave up war and the keeping of an army or navy; Article 20 separated religion from the state. In April 1946, before the new constitution took effect, women voted in a national election for the first time. The institutions — a diet, ministries, courts — continued; who held power, and what rights meant, changed.

7. The changing relevance of Shinto

The 1947 separation of religion and state was the latest turn in a long story. **Shinto**, Japan's old tradition of worship, centres on **kami** — spirits of places, families and nature — honoured at **shrines**. Its *relevance* — what it meant, and to whom — changed four times.

Shinto's changing relevance

The same shrines, four different meanings: local worship, state institution, then private culture.



Shinto never disappeared; its relevance changed - from a local faith, to a state institution, to a personal and cultural practice.

A four-phase diagram of Shinto's changing relevance: before 1868, local worship at village shrines sharing space with Buddhist temples; 1868-1945, State Shinto, with shrines as government institutions, the emperor honoured as divine, and schools and soldiers bowing to the emperor; 1945-47, separation, as the Shinto Directive of 15 December 1945 cuts state ties, the emperor denies he is a living god on 1 January 1946, and the 1947 Constitution guarantees freedom of religion; and today, culture and custom, with millions making New Year shrine visits.

Before 1868, shrine worship was local: village **matsuri** marked the farming year, and shrines quietly shared space with Buddhist temples. After 1868 the Meiji state made Shinto a government institution — **state Shinto**: shrines were ranked and funded, the emperor was honoured as divine, and schools and soldiers bowed to him. The state also honoured its war dead at shrines such as Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, founded in 1869.

Then, in two months, the state tie was cut. The **Shinto Directive** of 15 December 1945 ordered the government to stop all support, money and control of state Shinto. On 1 January 1946 the emperor declared in plain language that he was not a living god. The 1947 Constitution guaranteed freedom of religion.

And yet the shrines did not empty. Today, over 3 million people visit Meiji Shrine in the first days of January alone; about 80,000 shrines belong to the Association of Shinto Shrines; weddings, baby blessings and festivals are held at shrines by people who would not call it “religion” at all. Shinto’s relevance changed from local faith, to state institution, to private culture — while the shrines, and the visits, continued. Notice the perspective question hiding here: the *same* shrine visit meant worship, citizenship or custom depending on the year — and depending on who you ask.

Task C (scaffolded). For each of the four columns in the figure, write one sentence beginning “In this period, Shinto mattered because ...”. Then underline the word in each sentence that shows *who* it mattered to (village, state, person, family).

8. Cultural expression goes global

Ways of life are not only work and law. The curriculum names three Japanese cultural expressions — **food, gaming and manga/anime** — and asks how their global popularity since the 1980s has maintained and changed them. First, the story in dates.

Three cultural forms go global

Food, gaming and manga/anime each began in Japan and spread from the 1980s onward.

Food	Gaming	Manga & anime
Origin sushi and ramen grew as Edo city foods; instant noodles invented by Momofuku Ando in 1958 Global wave sushi bars and ramen shops opened on every continent from the 1970s-80s; cup noodles followed Example over 100 billion serves of instant noodles are eaten worldwide each year	Origin Nintendo began in 1889 making playing cards; its Family Computer (Famicom) came in 1983 Global wave Pac-Man (1980) and Pokemon (1996) became world crazes; consoles sat in living rooms everywhere Example Japanese companies still lead the world games market today	Origin printed comics and animation grew fast after 1945; Astro Boy aired on TV in 1963 Global wave Akira (1988) won fans overseas; Spirited Away (2001) took the animation Oscar in 2003 Example anime now streams into homes in more than 100 countries

Each column is one form named by the curriculum; compare down the rows to see origin, spread and a dated example.

A three-column table of three cultural forms going global: food, gaming, and manga and anime. Each column gives the form's origin in Japan, its global wave, and one dated example: instant noodles invented in 1958 and now over 100 billion serves a year; Nintendo from an 1889 playing-card maker to the 1983 Famicom and world gaming lead; Astro Boy on TV in 1963, Akira (1988), Spirited Away (2001, animation Oscar 2003) and anime streaming into over 100 countries.

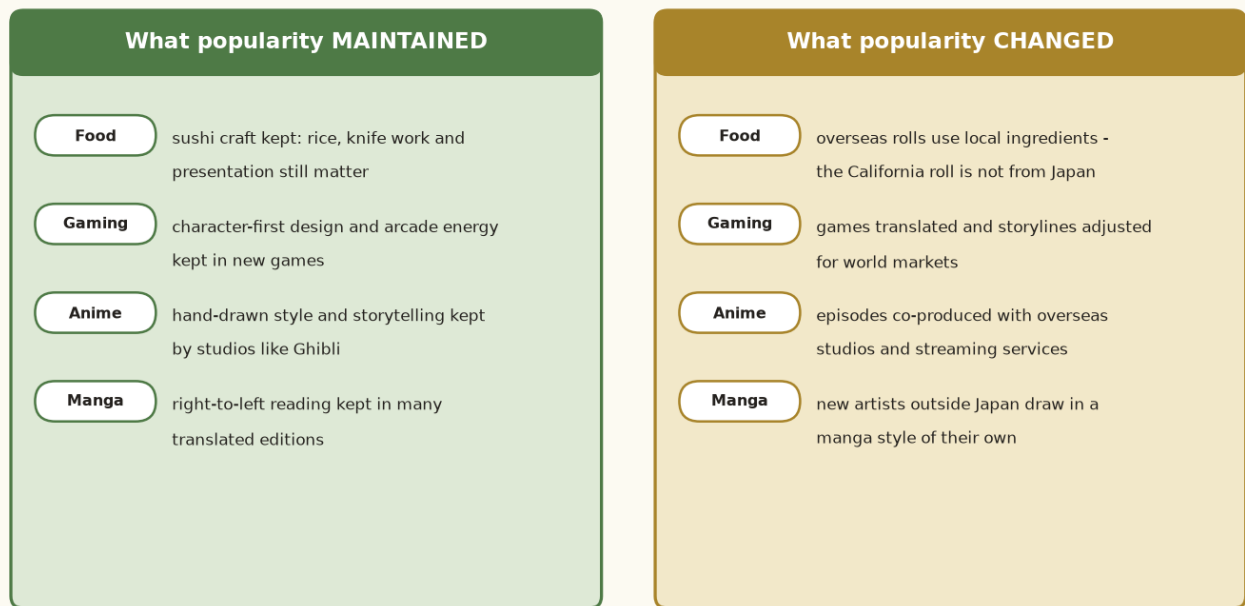
- **Food.** Sushi and ramen grew as city foods of Edo and Tokyo. In 1958 Ando Momofuku of Nissin put Chicken Ramen — the first instant noodles — on sale; Cup Noodle followed on 18 September 1971. Instant noodles became one of the most eaten foods on earth: over 100 billion serves a year worldwide. In December 2013, washoku — traditional Japanese food culture — was listed by UNESCO.
- **Gaming.** Nintendo began in 1889 making hanafuda playing cards in Kyoto; a century later its Family Computer (1983) put games in living rooms worldwide. Pac-Man (1980) filled arcades on every continent; Pokemon (1996) and the PlayStation (1994) carried the wave into the 2000s. Japanese companies still lead the world games market.
- **Manga and anime.** Printed comics and animation grew fast after 1945; Tezuka Osamu's Astro Boy reached TV in 1963. The global wave gathered from the 1980s: Akira (1988) won fans overseas, Studio Ghibli's Spirited Away (2001) took the animation Oscar in 2003, and Demon Slayer: Mugen Train (2020) topped the Japanese box office by 2021. Today anime streams into more than 100 countries.

9. Maintained and changed

Here is the curriculum's exact question: global popularity **maintained** these forms *and* **changed** them. Both claims are true; the skill is holding them at once. The figure below is the ledger.

Kept alive, and changed, by going global

Global popularity since the 1980s did two things at once: it kept old craft alive and pushed it to change.



Continuity and change in the same story: demand paid for old craft to survive, and pushed makers to adapt for new audiences.

A two-column diagram: on the left, what global popularity maintained (sushi craft of rice, knife work and presentation; character-first game design; hand-drawn animation style; right-to-left manga reading); on the right, what it changed (overseas rolls with local ingredients, translated and adjusted games, co-produced anime, and new manga artists outside Japan), each row tagged food, gaming, anime or manga.

Demand paid for old craft to survive: sushi's knife work still matters *because* the world pays for it. The same demand pushed change: the California roll is not a Japanese dish, games ship with adjusted storylines, and artists outside Japan now draw in a manga style of their own. Neither side of the ledger wins — that is what continuity and change look like in cultural history.

Task D (scaffolded). Pick one row of the figure. Write two full sentences about it: one beginning “Global popularity maintained ...” and one beginning “Global popularity changed ...”. Keep the subject of both sentences the same cultural form.

10. Worked inquiry 2 — a model paragraph on continuity and change

When you explain continuity and change, build your paragraph in four moves: make a **claim**, give **evidence**, add your **explanation**, then state the **significance**. The figure below shows a worked paragraph on Tokyo's housing, colour-coded by move.

A model continuity-and-change paragraph

Four moves: claim, evidence, explanation, significance - each on its own band.

Claim	Between the 1850s and today, housing in Tokyo changed hugely, yet the risk of disaster continued.
Evidence	In the 1850s most people lived in crowded timber homes that burned easily; by 2020 around 14 million lived in concrete apartments with power, water and rail transport - the census counted 14,047,594 people in Tokyo that year.
Explanation	The change came through repeated rebuilding - after the 1923 earthquake and the 1945 air raids - and through the strict building rules and railways that rebuilding brought.
Significance	So the shape of the city changed, but the need to live with quake and fire risk continued, and still shapes Tokyo's rules today.

Notice the evidence carries dates and a counted figure; the explanation joins change to continuity; the significance states a consequence, not a repeat.

A colour-coded model paragraph on continuity and change in Tokyo housing, labelled by move: claim (housing changed hugely, yet the risk of disaster continued), evidence (timber homes in the 1850s against concrete apartments for around 14 million by 2020, census figure given), explanation (rebuilding after the 1923 earthquake and 1945 air raids brought strict rules and railways), and significance (the shape of the city changed, the need to live with risk continued).

Read the paragraph once for sense, then again move by move. Notice that the evidence carries dates and a counted figure, that the explanation does the work of joining change to continuity, and that the significance states a consequence rather than repeating the claim.

11. Practice tasks

Scaffolded tasks — work with the supports provided.

- Order the openings.** Put these in order from earliest to latest: the first railway (Shimbashi–Yokohama); Perry's first arrival in Edo Bay; the domains abolished; the Charter Oath; the treaty of 1854. Check against the timeline in part 1.
- Four forces.** Copy the four column headings from the figure in part 3. Under each, add one dated fact from the part 3 text that is *not* already in the figure.
- The Rescript chain.** Fill in the blanks: the Rescript was issued on 30 October ____; it was read aloud at ____ ceremonies for over fifty years; pupils bowed before a copy of it and a portrait of the ____; it was abolished in ____.
- Tokyo then and now.** From the era table in part 5, list housing, water and light, and transport for Edo (c.1850) and for today. Then name the one risk the table says continued across every era.
- Which constitution?** Write 1889 or 1947 against each statement: sovereignty sits with the emperor; women vote; Article 9 gives up war; rights run “within the limits of the law”; the emperor is a symbol of the state; religion is separated from the state.
- Match the form.** Match each dated example to food, gaming, or manga/anime: Cup Noodle (1971); the Famicom (1983); Astro Boy on TV (1963); the animation Oscar for Spirited Away (2003); Chicken Ramen (1958); Pokemon (1996).

Unscaffolded tasks — no supports; build your answer from scratch.

7. Explain how **two** of the four Meiji forces (trade, modernisation, expansions, nationalism) changed daily life in Meiji Japan. Give one specific dated fact for each.
 8. Using part 5, identify two things that **changed** and one thing that **continued** in Tokyo's living conditions between the 1850s and today. Explain each in one or two sentences.
 9. "The same shrine, three different meanings." Using part 7, explain how the relevance of Shinto changed between 1868 and today, and what stayed the same through those changes.
 10. Choose one cultural form (food, gaming, or manga/anime). In a paragraph using the four moves from part 10, argue that global popularity since the 1980s both maintained *and* changed it.
-

12. Source-based inquiry

Read this primary source, then answer the questions below it.

Extract, in modern words, from the Shinto Directive, 15 December 1945. The order required the Japanese government to stop all sponsorship, support, spreading and control of state Shinto; to end state money and official duties tied to shrine worship; and to stop schools from teaching that the emperor was a living god, or that Japan's wars came from the will of the gods. (*Occupation-headquarters records, SCAPIN 448; National Diet Library of Japan.*)

1. **Formulate:** write two historical questions this source could help you answer.
2. **Infer:** what does the source tell you about what Japanese schools had been teaching before 1945?
3. **Context:** why did this order come in December 1945, and why from the occupation headquarters rather than from the Japanese government itself? Use parts 6 and 7 to help you.
4. **Perspective:** whose point of view does the source take for granted — the occupation officers, the shrine priests, the schoolchildren who had bowed before the emperor's portrait? Whose voices are missing from the text, and how does that limit what the source can tell a historian?
5. **Evaluate:** is this source more useful for studying *what the state had made of Shinto* or *what ordinary Japanese believed about it*? Explain your answer.

What to look for

Score student work against the band achievement standard (Level 9–10): students analyse the features, content and context of sources; identify the perspectives that individuals and groups held; connect short- and long-term causes with intended and unintended consequences; and judge historical significance by criteria. Expected responses below are a guide, not a script.

- **Timeline and openings (parts 1–2, .E16–.E17):** student can place sakoku, Perry (1853–54), the treaties, Meiji (1868) and the abolition of the domains (29 August 1871) in order, and say what each changed for ordinary people; the one-society choice (Japan) is named, not drifted.
- **Four forces (part 3, .E17):** all four forces — trade, modernisation, expansions, nationalism — appear with at least one dated fact each (Tomiooka 1872; telegraph 1869; railway 1872; Gakusei 1872; conscription 1873; cash land tax 1873; sword ban 1876; wars 1895 and 1905; Hawaii 1885; Kasato Maru 1908; Hibiya 1905).
- **Rescript inquiry (part 4, .E17):** the three source moves are present — says / reveals / limits — and the limits answer treats the Rescript as evidence of the state's message, not of every household's belief.
- **Tokyo living conditions (part 5, .E19):** student uses both figures; the shocks are dated (1 September 1923; 9–10 March 1945) with human costs; the 1945 dip (~3.5 million) and the 2020 census (14,047,594) are used as evidence; continuity of quake-and-fire risk is named, not just the change.
- **Constitutions (part 6, institutions domain):** student can say where sovereignty sat under each constitution, explain "within the limits of the law", and note the 1947 changes — women voting (April 1946), Article 9, Article 20 — while the institutions themselves continued.
- **Shinto (part 7, .E18):** the four phases appear in order with their dates (state Shinto 1868–1945; Shinto Directive 15 December 1945; humanity declaration 1 January 1946; 1947 Constitution), and the student can state the perspective point: the same visit meant worship, citizenship or custom by era.

- **Cultural expression (parts 8–9, .E20):** at least two of the three forms carry dated origins and post-1980s global facts; the maintained-and-changed ledger holds both columns — marking rewards the holding-together, not the side chosen.
- **Model paragraph (part 10):** student writing shows all four moves; evidence is dated and counted; significance states a consequence, not a restatement.
- **Source inquiry (part 12):** questions are genuinely historical; the inference reads the Directive backwards (state Shinto in the schools); the context answer places the order inside the occupation of 1945; the perspective answer names the absent voices (shrine priests, schoolchildren); no answer drifts into First Nations content (D3 note above).

Cross-links to skills sections: reading sources and their context (7C), value of sources as evidence (7D), perspectives from sources (7E), continuity and change (8A), causes and consequences (8B), significance criteria (8C), sustained interpretation with citations (8D).

Debating an Asian society's history

For the teacher

This section is one teaching sequence (parts 1–7) with two worked inquiries built from real, dated, checkable sources, six scaffolded practice tasks, four unscaffolded tasks and one source-based inquiry task, per the §3 volume calibration. Chapter 5 binds one society — Japan — recorded in `build_notes_ch5.md`; this section therefore teaches the Japan option group (.E11–.E13) and holds Japan consistent throughout. Register is direct-address prose at or below the Yr10 ceiling (D2). Subject terms are defined at first use (D2 exemption 2). Contested terms (feudal, significance, the reading of renounce) carry `CONTESTED_TERMS` treatment — defined before use, frames stated, attribution given — and every debate in the section steelmans both positions at equal depth (Rules 4–5): what the Meiji period meant, and Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution, plus the six wider-field debates of part 7. Marking is on quality of reasoning, not conclusion reached (Rule 5). Chapter 5 is “Not affected” in the §2A register: no First Nations content appears and none may be authored in later, including as context or a caption.

Curriculum alignment (VCAA export `VC2_AS-CD-E1ab_29-07-2026.csv`) — codes only:

VC2HH10K29 — Historical Knowledge and Understanding · Investigation: Asia (1750–present)

Draws on (linkage only, D7): VC2HH10K29.E11 · VC2HH10K29.E12 · VC2HH10K29.E13.

D3 note (binding): the §2A register lists Chapter 5 as “Not affected” — no First Nations content is specified and none is taught. No First Nations material may be authored into this section later, including as context, background or a caption.

Teaching choices (chapter block spec, §3): the section opens with the skill itself — what an interpretation is, what a debate is, and the steelman rule (part 1) — then fixes the shared record of Japan 1853–2015 (part 2). Debate 1 (parts 3–4) works the first referent of .E12: historians’ readings of what the Meiji period meant for Japan’s social and economic development, with worked inquiry 1 modelling a compared-and-evaluated answer built on a primary source (the 1889 Constitution). Debate 2 (parts 5–6) is .E13: interpretations over time of Article 9, with worked inquiry 2 modelling the evaluation. Part 7 surveys the remaining .E12 referents — the 1904–05 war with Russia, how Japan responded to the Treaty of Versailles, its invasion of Asia during World War II, the post-war emperor, the US occupation, and Japan’s economic recovery and prosperity — as six dated, named debates, and closes with the five reasons interpretations change. The section assumes no Level 9 sequence (D1): it re-establishes every idea it uses, and it points sideways to the chapter’s record sections (5A–5E) and forward to the skills sections (7C–7F, 8B–8D).

Subject words — define at first use (D2 exemption 2):

Word	Gloss used in this section
interpretation	a historian’s answer to a question about the past, built from evidence
debate	a serious disagreement between historians who all use real evidence — not a quarrel with one silly side
steelman	to state an opposing view in its strongest form before judging it
shogun, shogunate	the military ruler of Japan before 1868, and his government
Meiji Restoration	the 1868 turning point in which imperial rule was restored and the shogunate ended
modernisation	building the machinery of a modern state — industry, railways, schools, a national army, written law
feudal	a word some historians use for Tokugawa Japan, where lords, land and military service were tied together much as in medieval Europe; other historians reject the word for Japan (contested — frame stated at first use)
constitution	the basic law that says who holds power and what rights

Word	Gloss used in this section
sovereignty	people have the ultimate power to rule; the question of where that power sits
renounce	to give up a right publicly and formally
pacifism	the belief that war is not a proper tool of policy
self-defence	defending your own country if it is attacked
collective self-defence	defending an ally that is attacked, even when your own country is not
reinterpretation	a new reading of an old text, without changing its words
occupation	1945–52, the period in which US-led Allied forces governed and rebuilt defeated Japan
primary source	a record made at the time being studied, by someone inside the events
provenance	the who, where and when of a source
significance	how important something was, judged by its effects (criteria taught in section 8C)

1. One past, many readings

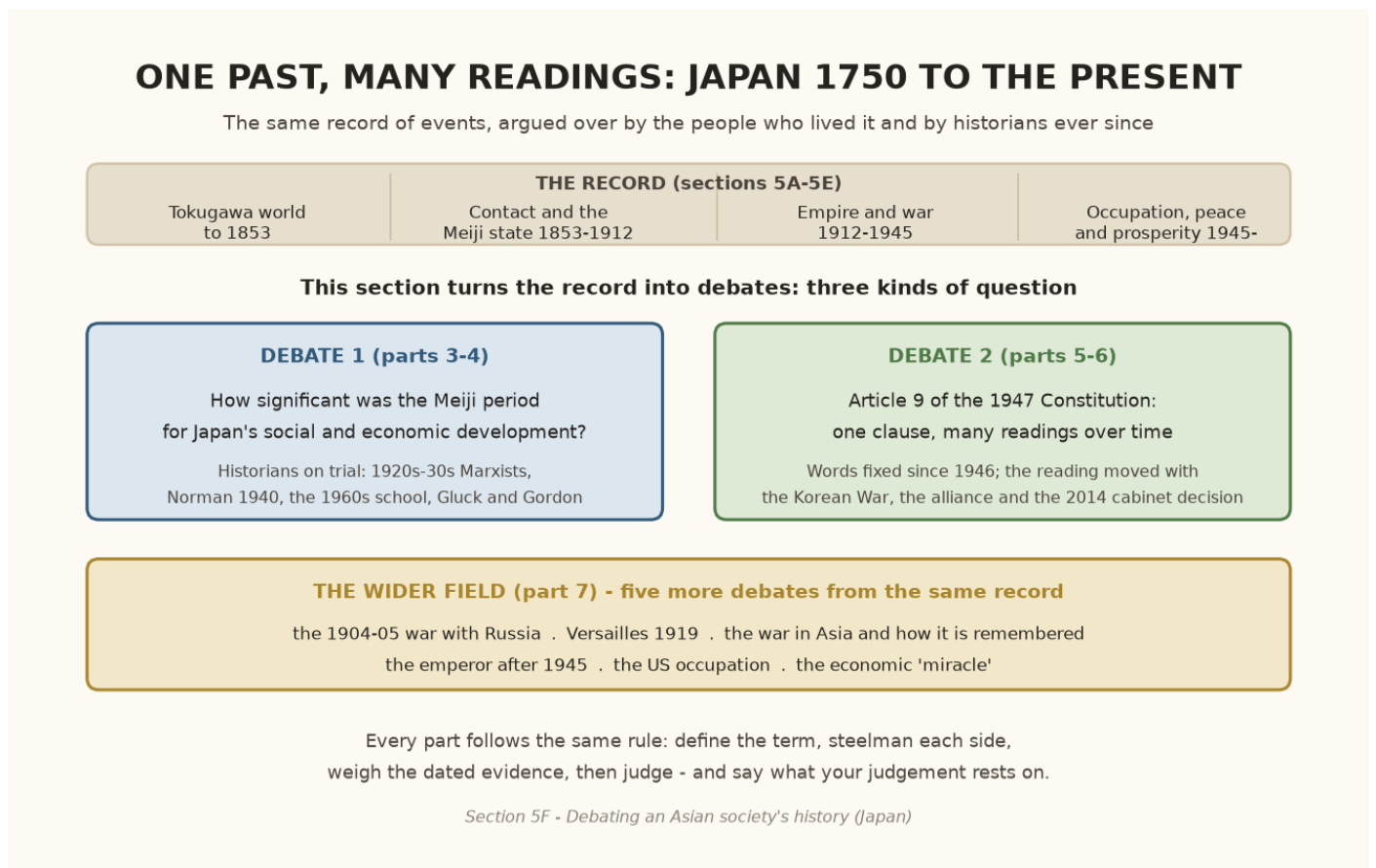
Japan between 1853 and today lived through more change than most societies ever record: forced open by American warships, it rebuilt itself as a modern state in one generation, won wars against China and Russia, built an empire, launched a wider war that ended in total defeat, was occupied and rebuilt again, and then grew into the world's second-largest economy. Every one of those steps is a settled fact. And almost every one of them is also an argument.

A historical **interpretation** is a historian's answer to a question about the past, built from evidence. Two careful historians can study the same evidence and reach different answers — because they ask different questions, weigh the facts differently, or write at different times. A **debate**, in this section, is a disagreement between serious historians: not a quarrel, and not a matter of one side being clever and the other being silly.

One more word is contested in its own right. Historians often call Japan before 1868 **feudal** — a country of lords and vassals, land held in return for military service, much like medieval Europe. The word is useful shorthand, but it is a frame, not a fact: some historians argue that Tokugawa Japan was different enough from Europe that “feudal” misleads more than it explains. This section uses the word in the first sense and flags the objection where it matters.

The rule for handling every debate in this section is the one used throughout this book: **steelman** — state the opposing view in the strongest form its own supporters would recognise, and only then judge it. You will see both sides at full strength in every part. Your tasks are marked on the quality of your reasoning — defined terms, real evidence, stated limits — not on which side you end up on.

Figure 1 maps the section: one record at the top, and the three kinds of question this section turns it into.



A diagram with a band across the top labelled “the record (sections 5A-5E)” showing four stages - the Tokugawa world to 1853, contact and the Meiji state 1853-1912, empire and war 1912-1945, and occupation, peace and prosperity from 1945 - and below it three boxes: Debate 1 on what the Meiji period meant, Debate 2 on Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution, and the wider field of five more debates

Figure 1 — One past, many readings: the shape of this section.

2. The record: Japan 1853–2015

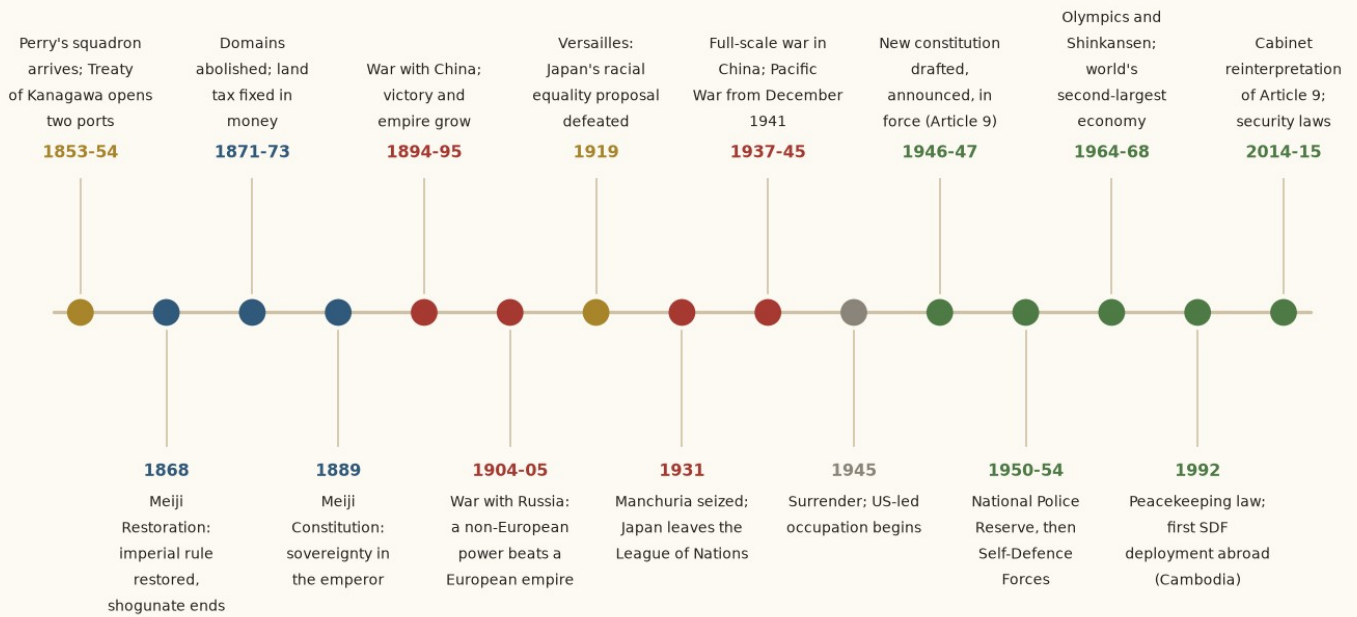
Before the arguments, the shared record. In 1853 the American Commodore Matthew Perry sailed a squadron of warships into Edo Bay; in 1854 the Treaty of Kanagawa opened two ports. Japan had been largely closed to the outside world for over two centuries under the **shogunate** — the military government of the **shogun**, while emperors reigned in Kyoto without ruling. The shock of Perry’s ships cracked that system open, and in 1868 a coalition of young samurai restored the emperor to the centre of government. That turning point is called the **Meiji Restoration** (“Meiji” being the era name of the emperor Mutsuhito; to restore means to bring back). What followed was **modernisation** from above: one government, one army, one school system, railways, factories and a written constitution, built inside a single lifetime.

Figure 2 sets out the record this section’s debates are about, coloured by kind of event. Learn it as a timeline first: every date in it will reappear inside an argument.

JAPAN 1853-2015: THE RECORD THE DEBATES ARE ABOUT

Coloured by kind of event. Dates are settled facts; what they meant is the argument.

● contact and diplomacy ● state-building ● war and empire ● defeat and occupation ● recovery, peace and debate



Section 5F - the facts above are shared by all sides; the readings of them are what historians argue about.

A horizontal timeline of Japan from 1853 to 2015 with fifteen dated events coloured by kind - Perry's squadron and the Treaty of Kanagawa 1853-54; the Meiji Restoration 1868; domains abolished and the land tax 1871-73; the Meiji Constitution 1889; war with China 1894-95; the war with Russia 1904-05; the racial equality proposal defeated at Versailles 1919; Manchuria seized 1931; full-scale war in China and the Pacific War 1937-45; surrender and occupation 1945; the new constitution and Article 9 1946-47; the police reserve and Self-Defence Forces 1950-54; the Olympics, Shinkansen and second-largest economy 1964-68; peacekeeping in Cambodia 1992; and the cabinet reinterpretation and security laws 2014-15

Figure 2 — Japan 1853–2015: the record the debates are about.

Notice the caption's point: the dates are settled facts; what they *meant* is the argument. The rest of this section is that argument, in three movements.

3. Debate 1 — the Meiji period: triumph, cost, or both?

The Meiji period runs from the Restoration of 1868 to the emperor's death in 1912. The curriculum's first question for Japan asks you to compare and evaluate historians' interpretations of its **significance** — how important it was, judged by its effects — for Japan's social and economic development. Figure 3 steelmans the two classic answers.

DEBATE 1 - THE MEIJI PERIOD: TRIUMPH, COST, OR BOTH?

Each column states the strongest case its side would recognise. Both columns use true, dated facts.

THE STRONGEST CASE FOR 'TRIUMPH'	THE STRONGEST CASE FOR 'COST AND CONTROL'
1868: the Restoration ended 250 years of shogun rule and reunified the country under one government. 1871: 261 domains swept away into prefectures run from Tokyo; a national army and one school system followed. By the early 1900s almost every Japanese child attended primary school - rare anywhere in the world at the time. Industry rose fast: the Tokyo-Yokohama railway (1872), the government silk mill at Tomioka (1872), shipyards and banks. The 'unequal treaties' were revised: treaty ports and foreign courts ended by 1899, tariff control regained by 1911. Japan beat China (1895) and Russia (1905) - the first non-European power to defeat a modern European empire.	The 1873 land tax took a fixed money charge from farmers; rural families carried the cost of the new state's spending. Factories ran on long hours and low pay, with young women dominating the silk and cotton mills. The 1889 Constitution placed sovereignty in the emperor, not the people; ministers answered to the throne, not the voters. Political opponents were watched, jailed and worse; parties won rights slowly and against resistance. In 1918 rice riots swept the country: prosperity had not reached the poor. Japan built its own empire - Taiwan from 1895, Korea from 1910 - applying to others the force it had feared from the West.

The two sides differ not over the facts but over which facts they weigh: state power, or people's lives.

Two columns setting out the strongest case on each side of the Meiji debate: the “triumph” column with the end of shogun rule in 1868, the abolition of the 261 domains in 1871, near-universal primary schooling by the early 1900s, the railway and the Tomioka silk mill of 1872, revised treaties, and victories over China and Russia; the “cost and control” column with the 1873 land tax, long hours and low pay in the mills, sovereignty in the emperor under the 1889 Constitution, the watching and jailing of political opponents, the 1918 rice riots, and Japan’s own empire in Taiwan and Korea

Figure 3 — Debate 1, steelmanned: triumph, cost, or both?

Both columns are true. That is exactly what makes it a debate: the two sides do not disagree about the facts; they disagree about which facts to weigh — the power of the state, or the lives of the people who paid for it. A good answer to “how significant?” says which measure it is using, and admits the other.

The historians, in order of time. Interpretations of the Meiji period have moved for a century, and the curriculum asks you to track that movement. Figure 4 gives four dated positions, each a real school or a real book.

HISTORIANS ON THE MEIJI PERIOD, IN ORDER OF TIME

Same events, different questions - notice when each view was written

1920s-30s

The Marxist debate in Japan

Two camps argued what the Restoration really was. The Rono-ha (Yamakawa Hitoshi and colleagues) said it was a middle-class revolution: capitalism had already taken root. The Koza-ha (Noro Eitaro and colleagues) said it was unfinished: landlord power and the emperor-centred state still stood in the way. Both camps were silenced by the wartime state; Noro was arrested in 1933 and died in custody the next year.

1940

E. Herbert Norman, Japan's Emergence as a Modern State

A Canadian historian and diplomat argued that Meiji change came 'from above' - a band of lower-ranking samurai and court nobles seized power and modernised Japan in the emperor's name. Farmers and workers paid the cost, he wrote, and the half-built democracy helped open the road to the militarism of the 1930s.

1960s

The modernisation school

American historians such as Marius Jansen, Robert E. Ward, Thomas C. Smith and Edwin O. Reischauer met at a Hakone conference in 1960. They read Meiji as a largely successful modernisation - energetic, widely shared, a lesson for developing nations. Critics answered that this was a Cold War story, written to make Japan look like the West's ally.

1985-91

New questions: myths from above, workers from below

Carol Gluck, Japan's Modern Myths (1985), showed how late-Meiji leaders built an official ideology of national unity to calm social tension. Andrew Gordon, Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan (1991), put workers back into the story: ordinary Japanese pressed for rights and shaped politics from below.

Each generation weighed the same record with the questions of its own time. That movement is the subject of this section.

A table of four dated positions on the Meiji period: the 1920s-30s Marxist debate in Japan between the Rono-ha of Yamakawa Hitoshi, who called the Restoration a middle-class revolution, and the Koza-ha of Noro Eitaro, who called it unfinished, with Noro arrested in 1933 and dying in custody the next year; E. Herbert Norman's 1940 book arguing change came from above with farmers and workers paying the cost; the 1960s modernisation school of Jansen, Ward, Smith and Reischauer, criticised as a Cold War story; and the new questions of Carol Gluck's 1985 Japan's Modern Myths and Andrew Gordon's 1991 Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan

Figure 4 — Historians on the Meiji period, in order of time.

Read down the table and notice what changes: not the events, but the questions. The 1920s–30s Marxists asked *what kind of revolution* the Restoration was; the Canadian historian E. Herbert Norman, writing in 1940 as Japan marched towards war with the West, asked *who paid*; the American modernisation school, writing in 1960 with Japan a US ally, asked *how successfully Japan modernised*; Gluck and Gordon, writing in the 1980s and 1990s, asked *whose story the official version left out*. When a historian wrote is part of what a historian saw. Section 7F teaches that movement as a skill; here you meet it as a record.

4. Worked inquiry 1 — reading the 1889 Constitution

Interpretations are tested against sources. The Meiji state wrote its own rulebook: the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, officially announced at Tokyo on 11 February 1889, drawn up in secret by a small group around Itō Hirobumi. Figure 5 reproduces three of its articles — a **primary source**, made at the time by people inside the events.

CONSTITUTION OF THE EMPIRE OF JAPAN

Officially announced at Tokyo on 11 February 1889 - the new state's rulebook, drawn up in secret

ARTICLE 1

The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal.

ARTICLE 3

The Emperor is sacred and inviolable.

ARTICLE 4

The Emperor is the head of the Empire, combining in Himself the rights of sovereignty, and exercises them, according to the provisions of the present Constitution.

The Meiji leaders gave Japan a parliament, a cabinet and modern courts - and kept the ultimate power in the throne. Historians still argue over whether this document answered popular demands of the 1880s or headed them off.

Primary source. Official translation published with Ito Hirobumi's Commentaries on the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (1889; English edition 1906). It was replaced by the 1947 Constitution after Japan's defeat in World War II.

A framed reproduction of three articles of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan: Article 1, that the Empire shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal; Article 3, that the Emperor is sacred and placed beyond challenge; and Article 4, that the Emperor is the head of the Empire combining in himself the rights of sovereignty - with a provenance line noting the official translation published with Ito Hirobumi's Commentaries, 1889, English edition 1906

Figure 5 — The Constitution of the Empire of Japan, 1889 (extract).

Read the source the way a historian would. The constitution gave Japan a parliament, a cabinet and modern courts — and kept **sovereignty**, the ultimate power to rule, in the emperor, whom the constitution called sacred and placed beyond challenge. The triumph column of Figure 3 can claim the parliament; the cost-and-control column claims the sovereignty. The document itself is the hinge both interpretations turn on.

A model answer, move by move. Figure 6 shows a model paragraph answering the debate question, colour-coded by move: claim, evidence, counter, judgement. Study the moves, not just the facts.

WORKED INQUIRY 1 - A MODEL ANSWER, MOVE BY MOVE

Question: How significant was the Meiji period for Japan's social and economic development?

CLAIM

The Meiji period (1868-1912) transformed Japanese society and economy, turning an isolated farming country under the shogun into a modern industrial state. Its significance is hard to overstate - but it was a revolution from above, and the price was heavy.

EVIDENCE

The new government abolished the 261 domains in 1871, built one national army and one school system, and by the early 1900s almost every child attended primary school. Industry rose fast: the Tokyo-Yokohama railway opened in 1872 and the state silk mill at Tomioka opened the same year. By 1912 Japan had beaten China (1895) and Russia (1905) at war and revised the unequal treaties.

COUNTER

Yet the costs fell on ordinary people. The fixed money land tax of 1873 pressed on farmers; the mills ran on long hours and low pay, worked mostly by young women; and the 1889 Constitution kept sovereignty in the emperor rather than the voters. In 1918 rice riots showed how far prosperity had failed to reach the poor.

JUDGEMENT

So how significant? On the measure of state power, the Meiji period remade Japan within one lifetime - a rare speed of change. On the measure of ordinary lives, the same period imposed taxes, labour and obedience. Both readings rest on the same dated record; a good judgement states which measure it uses, and admits the other.

Steal the moves, not the facts: claim, evidence (dated), counter, judgement - and state your measure.

A colour-coded model paragraph on what the Meiji period meant, labelled by move: claim - the period transformed Japan but from above and at heavy price; evidence - the abolition of the domains, the national army and school system, the railway and silk mill of 1872, victories over China and Russia; counter - the 1873 land tax, the mills' long hours, sovereignty kept in the emperor, the 1918 rice riots; judgement - significance depends on the measure, state power or ordinary lives

Figure 6 — Worked inquiry 1: a model answer, move by move.

Check you can use the model before you borrow its shape:

1. Which measure does the claim announce, and which measure does the judgement say it is using?
2. List the dated facts the evidence move uses. Which column of Figure 3 does each fact come from?
3. What job does the counter move do — and what would the paragraph lose if you deleted it?

5. Debate 2 — Article 9: what do the words mean?

The second debate is the curriculum's .E13 question, and it is one of the great ongoing arguments in modern history. Defeated in 1945, Japan was **occupied** — governed and rebuilt by US-led Allied forces under General Douglas MacArthur until 1952 — and the occupation drafted a new constitution. It was officially announced on 3 November 1946 and took force on 3 May 1947. Its Article 9 is the **peace clause**, and Japan's **pacifism** — the belief that war is not a proper tool of policy — has been its signature ever since. Figure 7 reproduces the clause in full.

ARTICLE 9

The Constitution of Japan - the peace clause at the centre of Debate 2

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognised.

Fixed on paper since 1946 - and argued over ever since. Did the words forbid all armed force, or only war as policy? Who was allowed to say: the voters, the courts, or a cabinet?

Primary source. Official English translation. Officially announced 3 November 1946; in force 3 May 1947.

A framed reproduction of both paragraphs of Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan: the first renouncing war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes, the second providing that land, sea and air forces and other war potential will never be maintained and that the state will not hold the legal rights of a country at war - with a provenance line giving the official English translation, officially announced 3 November 1946 and in force 3 May 1947

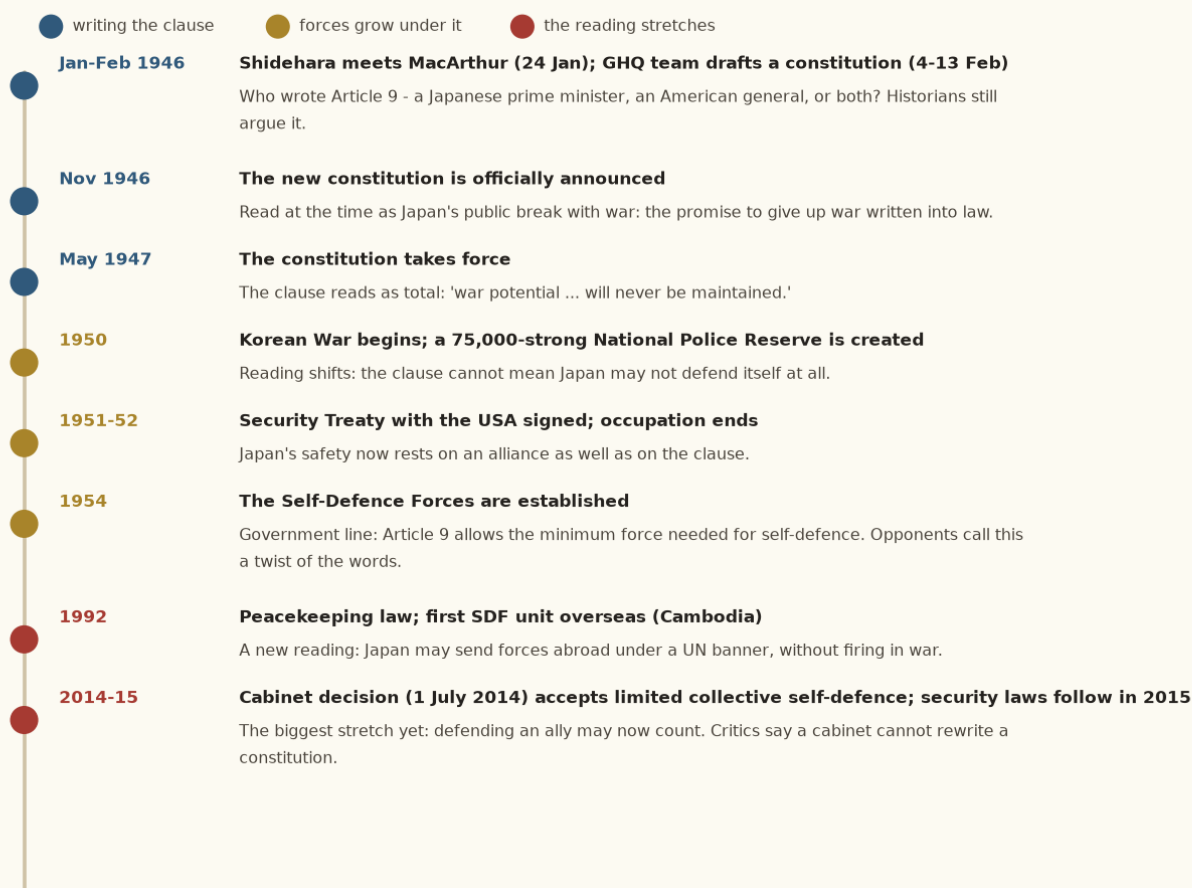
Figure 7 — Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan (1947).

Two words in the clause carry the whole debate. To **renounce** is to give up a right publicly and formally; “war potential” means armed force capable of waging war. Read plainly in 1947, the clause looked total: no war, no armed forces, and none of the legal rights of a country at war. The first debate is even about authorship: the Japanese foreign minister Shidehara Kijūrō said the clause grew from his meeting with MacArthur on 24 January 1946; MacArthur’s staff said their drafting team of early February 1946 wrote it. Historians still argue who wrote Article 9 — a Japanese prime minister, an American general, or both.

One text, a moving reading. The words above have never changed. The reading of them has. Figure 8 lays the movement out in order.

ARTICLE 9: ONE TEXT, A MOVING READING, 1946-2015

The words never changed; the interpretation moved with the world around them



Section 5F - each step was argued at the time; the timeline above is the debate itself, laid out in order.

A vertical timeline of interpretations of Article 9 from 1946 to 2015, coloured in three kinds: writing the clause - the Shidehara-MacArthur meeting of 24 January 1946 and the GHQ draft of 4-13 February, the official announcement in November 1946 and the clause taking force in May 1947; forces growing under it - the 75,000-strong National Police Reserve of 1950, the Security Treaty with the USA of 1951-52 and the Self-Defence Forces of 1954 under the minimum-force reading; and the reading stretching - the 1992 peacekeeping law sending an SDF unit to Cambodia, and the 2014 cabinet decision accepting limited collective self-defence with the 2015 security laws

Figure 8 — Article 9: one text, a moving reading, 1946–2015.

Two terms from the later steps need defining. **Self-defence** is defending your own country if it is attacked; since 1954 every Japanese government has held that Article 9 does not forbid the minimum force needed for that. **Collective self-defence** is defending an ally that is attacked, even when your own country is not — the reading the cabinet accepted on 1 July 2014, put into law by the 2015 security legislation. Each step was argued at the time, by lawyers, politicians and citizens: the timeline in Figure 8 is not a list of events, it is the debate itself, laid out in order.

Both sides at full strength. Figure 9 steelmans the two positions.

DEBATE 2 - ARTICLE 9: BOTH SIDES AT FULL STRENGTH

Both sides quote the same 1946 words; they differ over who may say what the words mean

THE CASE FOR HOLDING THE STRICT READING

The words say what they say: war potential 'will never be maintained'. Reading them down weakens the whole constitution.

The peace clause helped Japan return to the world's respect without rearming; trade, aid and diplomacy became its tools.

Public support has stayed strong: citizens' groups nominated Article 9 for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

Changing a constitution by a cabinet decision, instead of by the amendment vote the constitution itself provides, sets a risky rule.

Each stretch makes the next stretch easier: police reserve (1950), forces (1954), peacekeeping (1992), alliance defence (2014).

THE CASE FOR ALLOWING SELF-DEFENCE

The clause was drafted under occupation in 1946 and has never been put to the Japanese voters in a referendum.

Japan faces real dangers in its region and cannot rely on words alone; its safety has rested on the US alliance since 1951.

Since 1954 every government has held the same line: Article 9 does not forbid the minimum force needed for self-defence.

The Self-Defence Forces have served in UN peacekeeping and disaster relief; they are part of how Japan contributes to order now.

Matching the words to the real world, supporters say, is more honest than pretending the 1946 reading can survive unchanged.

Notice the shape: one side defends the text, the other defends fit with the world. Both are real arguments.

Two columns setting out the strongest case on each side of the Article 9 debate: the strict-reading column - the words say what they say, the peace clause earned Japan's return to respect, citizens' groups nominated it for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, a cabinet decision is not the amendment vote the constitution provides, and each stretch makes the next easier; the self-defence column - the clause was drafted under occupation and never put to a referendum, Japan faces real dangers and has rested on the US alliance since 1951, every government since 1954 has held the minimum-force line, and the Self-Defence Forces have served in UN peacekeeping and disaster relief

Figure 9 — Debate 2, steelmanned: the strict reading against the self-defence reading.

Notice the shape of the disagreement: one side defends the *text* — words should mean what they say, and who may change them matters; the other defends *fit with the world* — a reading written under occupation in 1946 cannot be expected to survive the Cold War, the alliance and the 2010s unchanged. Both are serious constitutional arguments. As always, your mark rests on how well you handle them, not on which you choose.

6. Worked inquiry 2 — evaluating interpretations over time

The .E13 skill is evaluating interpretations *over time*: not just stating two readings, but explaining why the reading moved when it moved. Figure 10 shows a model evaluation, colour-coded move by move.

WORKED INQUIRY 2 - A MODEL EVALUATION, MOVE BY MOVE

Question: How and why have interpretations of Article 9 changed over time?

CLAIM

Interpretations of Article 9 have changed over time not because the text changed - it never has - but because the world around it changed.

EVIDENCE

In 1947 the clause was read as giving up war totally. By 1950, with the Korean War under way, a 75,000-strong police reserve existed. In 1954 the Self-Defence Forces were created under the reading that Article 9 allows the minimum force needed for self-defence. In 1992 a peacekeeping law sent an SDF unit to Cambodia. In 2014 a cabinet decision accepted limited collective self-defence, and the 2015 security laws put it into force.

EXPLANATION

Each move followed an outside pressure: the Korean War, the Cold War alliance with the United States, UN duties after the Cold War ended, and the security worries of the 2010s. The reading bent to fit each new world.

COUNTER

But the words never moved, and each bend has been contested. Opposition parties called the 1954 forces unconstitutional; legal scholars split over every step; and the 2014 decision drew large public protests because a cabinet had changed the meaning without the amendment vote the constitution provides.

JUDGEMENT

Article 9 is a clean case of interpretation over time: one fixed text, a moving frame of reading. To trace it like a historian, hold both halves together - what the words say, and what each generation needed them to say.

Five moves: claim, evidence, explanation, counter, judgement. This is the shape section 8D builds on.

A colour-coded model evaluation of how and why interpretations of Article 9 changed over time, labelled by move: claim - the text never changed but the world around it did; evidence - the total reading of 1947, the police reserve of 1950, the Self-Defence Forces of 1954 under the minimum-force reading, the 1992 peacekeeping law, and the 2014 cabinet decision with the 2015 security laws; explanation - each move followed an outside pressure; counter - the words never moved and each bend was contested, with protests against the 2014 decision; judgement - hold both halves together, what the words say and what each generation needed them to say

Figure 10 — Worked inquiry 2: a model evaluation, move by move.

Check you can use the model:

1. The claim says the text never changed but the world did. Which five changes in the world does the evidence move date?
2. What does the explanation move add that the evidence move does not?
3. The counter move concedes a point to the strict-reading side. Which point — and why does conceding it make the judgement stronger, not weaker?

7. The wider field — six more debates, and why readings move

The two worked debates are the curriculum's Japan option at full depth; .E12 names more referents, and each one is a real argument among historians. Figure 11 surveys them — dated hooks, named writers, open questions.

THE WIDER FIELD: MORE DEBATES FROM THE SAME RECORD

Each row is a real argument among historians - dated hooks, named writers, open questions

THE WAR WITH RUSSIA 1904-05

A blow against empire - or the start of Japan's own? Across colonised Asia and Africa, nationalists celebrated: Nehru later recalled his boyhood thrill at the Japanese victories (An Autobiography, 1936). But the same wars fed Japan's empire: Taiwan from 1895, Korea from 1910.

VERSAILLES 1919: THE RACIAL EQUALITY PROPOSAL

Japan asked the League of Nations covenant to condemn racial discrimination; a majority of the commission voted for it, but the chair ruled it needed to be unanimous, and it failed. Australia's PM Hughes openly opposed it. Historian Naoko Shimazu (1998) asks whether the rejection helped turn Japan away from the Western order.

THE WAR IN ASIA: CAUSES AND MEMORY

Why did Japan go to war? One reading weighs the resource squeeze - the US oil embargo of July 1941 - and the fear of encirclement. The other starts earlier: Manchuria in 1931, full-scale war in China from 1937, and the suffering occupation brought to Asian peoples. The memory battle runs on: Ienaga Saburo's textbook lawsuits (from 1965), and the Murayama apology of 1995.

THE EMPEROR AFTER 1945

Was Hirohito an active wartime ruler, or a figurehead swept along? Herbert Bix (2000) argued the emperor was heavily involved in war decisions and was kept from trial by US policy. Others hold that Hirohito was powerless against his advisers - a view the occupation authorities themselves helped to spread.

THE US OCCUPATION 1945-52

Reform imposed, or embraced? John Dower (Embracing the Defeat, 1999) told the story from below: ordinary Japanese took the occupation's promises and ran with them. Critics of the occupation point to the 'reverse course' from 1947, when Cold War fears turned the priority from reform to stability.

THE ECONOMIC 'MIRACLE'

How did a ruined country become the world's second-largest economy by 1968? Chalmers Johnson (MITI and the Japanese Miracle, 1982) credited state-led industrial policy. Others answer: US aid and open markets, high saving, and a hard-working, schooled people. Symbols of the recovery: the Shinkansen and the Tokyo Olympics, both 1964.

Any one of these rows could grow into an investigation of its own - the skill in section 7F works on all of them.

A table of six debate rows on Japan's history: the 1904-05 war with Russia, celebrated by nationalists across colonised Asia and Africa - Nehru recalled his boyhood thrill - yet feeding Japan's empire in Taiwan and Korea; Versailles 1919, where Japan's racial equality proposal won a majority but failed on a unanimity ruling, with Australia's PM Hughes opposed, and Naoko Shimazu's 1998 question about its rejection; the war in Asia, read through the 1941 oil embargo or through Manchuria 1931 and China 1937, with Ienaga Saburo's textbook lawsuits from 1965 and the Murayama apology of 1995; the emperor after 1945, Herbert Bix's 2000 argument of an active ruler shielded by US policy against the figurehead view the occupation spread; the US occupation, John Dower's 1999 story from below against the reverse course from 1947; and the economic miracle, Chalmers Johnson's 1982 state-led reading against US aid, open markets, saving and schooling, with the Shinkansen and Olympics of 1964 as symbols

Figure 11 — The wider field: more debates from the same record.

Every row of Figure 11 is a debate you could steelman exactly as in parts 3 and 5. The war row, for instance: one reading starts from the American oil embargo of July 1941 and a fear of encirclement; the other starts earlier, from Manchuria in 1931 and full-scale war in China from 1937, and from the suffering occupation brought to Asian peoples — a memory battle fought in courtrooms through the historian Ienaga Saburō's textbook lawsuits (begun 1965) and in politicians' words through the Murayama apology of 1995. Same record; different starting points; different judgements.

Why interpretations change over time. Step back and the section's debates share a pattern. Figure 12 names the five reasons readings move.

WHY INTERPRETATIONS CHANGE OVER TIME

Five reasons, each with an example from this section's debates

NEW EVIDENCE	NEW QUESTIONS	DIFFERENT FRAMES	TIME OF WRITING	PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE
Diaries, private papers and official records surface later - Bix (2000) drew on palace and court diaries opened only after the war generation had died.	Each generation asks what the last one took for granted: Gordon (1991) asked about workers where older histories asked only about leaders.	Marxist, liberal, Cold War and post-war frames sort the same facts differently - that is why the 1920s camps and the 1960s school disagreed.	Norman wrote in 1940, as Japan marched towards war with the West; the modernisation school wrote in 1960, with Japan a US ally. The moment shapes the reading.	A courtroom, a schoolbook, a museum and a politician's speech each use the past for a job - Ienaga's lawsuits made school text itself a battlefield.

The facts stay fixed; the reading moves. That is why historians date each other's books,
not only the events - section 7F teaches the full toolkit for judging these moves.

Five cards giving the reasons interpretations change over time, each with an example from this section: new evidence - palace and court diaries opened late, used by Bix in 2000; new questions - Gordon in 1991 asking about workers where older histories asked about leaders; different frames - Marxist, liberal, Cold War and post-war frames sorting the same facts differently; time of writing - Norman in 1940 against the modernisation school in 1960; and purpose and audience - a courtroom, a schoolbook, a museum and a politician's speech each using the past for a job, as in Ienaga's lawsuits

Figure 12 — Why interpretations change over time.

The facts stay fixed; the reading moves. That is why historians date each other's books, not only the events. Section 7F teaches the full toolkit for judging these moves; sections 7C–7E teach the source skills behind them, and 8D teaches you to build a sustained interpretation of your own.

8. Practice tasks

Scaffolded tasks — work with the supports provided.

- Read the record.** Using Figure 2: (a) which two events are dated 1871–73, and what did each change? (b) put in order: the Meiji Constitution, the war with Russia, the racial equality proposal defeated at Versailles, the seizure of Manchuria. (c) True or false, and fix the false ones: (i) the Self-Defence Forces were created in 1947; (ii) the Tokyo Olympics and the Shinkansen both belong to 1964; (iii) the 2015 security laws followed a 2014 cabinet decision.
- Match the historian.** Match each name — Yamakawa Hitoshi, Noro Eitarō, E. Herbert Norman, the modernisation school (Jansen, Ward, Smith, Reischauer), Carol Gluck, Andrew Gordon — to its position in Figure 4, and add the date each position was put forward. Which two historians were silenced by the wartime state, and what happened to Noro?
- Weigh the columns.** From Figure 3: (a) list three facts the triumph column weighs and three the cost-and-control column weighs; (b) which single fact appears in both columns' world but is weighed differently? (c) which measure — state power, or ordinary lives — does each column trust?

4. **Read the clause.** Using only Figure 7 and its provenance line: (a) when was the constitution officially announced, and when did it take force? (b) what does paragraph 1 renounce? (c) what does paragraph 2 say about armed forces, and about the legal rights of a country at war?
5. **Order the readings.** Using Figure 8: (a) put in order: the Self-Defence Forces created, the GHQ team drafts the constitution, the peacekeeping deployment to Cambodia, the National Police Reserve, the cabinet decision on collective self-defence; (b) label each step in the figure's three kinds — writing the clause, forces grow under it, the reading stretches;
(c) which step drew large public protests, and why?
6. **Match the debate.** Match each row of Figure 11 to its referent in .E12 (the 1904–05 war with Russia; how Japan responded to the Treaty of Versailles; its invasion of Asia during World War II; the post-war emperor; the US occupation; Japan's economic recovery and prosperity), and name one dated fact or named writer each row uses.

Unscaffolded tasks — no supports; build your answer from scratch.

7. **Evaluate significance.** “The Meiji period was the most significant turning point in Japan's history.” In one paragraph of 4–6 sentences, evaluate this claim using at least three dated facts from parts 2–4. State which measure of significance you are using, and admit the other measure before you judge.
8. **The steelman task.** “Article 9 has been a success for Japan.” Write the strongest case for this statement, then the strongest case against it, then give your own judgement with the evidence that decided you. Both cases must use real referents from parts 5–6, and neither may be a straw figure.
9. **Compare interpretations.** E. Herbert Norman wrote in 1940; the modernisation school wrote around 1960. In one paragraph, explain why their readings of the Meiji period differed, using at least two of the five reasons in Figure 12. Which facts did each weigh that the other underweighed?
10. **Interpretations over time.** Using Figures 8 and 10, explain how and why the reading of Article 9 changed between 1947 and 2015. End by judging whether the 2014 cabinet decision was a legitimate reinterpretation or an improper rewriting — and say which of the two positions in Figure 9 your judgement rests on, and why.

9. Source-based inquiry

Read this primary source, then answer the questions below it.

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognised.”

— Article 9, Constitution of Japan. Official English translation. Officially announced 3 November 1946; in force 3 May 1947. Drafted under the US-led occupation by a team in General MacArthur's headquarters in early February 1946, on the Japanese account growing from Shidehara's meeting with MacArthur on 24 January 1946; the authorship is itself debated. (“Belligerency” = the legal standing of a country at war.)

1. **Formulate:** write two historical questions this source could help you answer.
2. **Infer:** what does the source tell you about how its drafters wanted Japan's place in the world to change? Quote one phrase from the source in your answer.
3. **Context:** the source was written in 1946, by and for a defeated country under occupation. What was different about Japan's situation by 1954, and by 2014, and why does that difference put pressure on the reading of the words?
4. **Perspective:** whose voice is in this source, and whose might be missing? Use Figure 8 to think about who in Japan — politicians, lawyers, citizens' groups — has argued over who may say what the words mean.
5. **Evaluate:** is this source more useful as evidence of *what Japan decided in 1946* or of *why interpretations of Japan have moved since*? Explain your choice, and name one other source that could test your answer.

What to look for

Score student work against the band achievement standard (Level 9–10): students analyse the features, content and context of sources; identify the perspectives that individuals and groups held; connect short- and long-term causes with intended and unintended consequences; and judge historical significance by criteria. Expected responses below are a guide, not a script. Per CONTESTED_TERMS Rule 5, mark the reasoning — terms defined, assumptions surfaced, both sides steelmanned, evidence cited, limits acknowledged — never the conclusion reached. Chapter 5 carries no First Nations content (§2A “Not affected”); if a student raises such material, redirect to the front-of-book note and do not develop it (D3).

- **The record (part 2):** student can place the fifteen dated events of Figure 2 in order and by kind (Perry 1853–54; Restoration 1868; domains and land tax 1871–73; Meiji Constitution 1889; China war 1894–95; war with Russia 1904–05; Versailles proposal defeated 1919; Manchuria 1931; war in China and the Pacific 1937–45; surrender and occupation 1945; constitution and Article 9 1946–47; police reserve to SDF 1950–54; Olympics and Shinkansen 1964, second-largest economy by 1968; Cambodia peacekeeping 1992; reinterpretation and security laws 2014–15). Dates are treated as shared by all sides.
- **Debate 1 (parts 3–4, .E12 first referent):** the two columns of Figure 3 are recognised as weighing different facts from the same record (state power vs ordinary lives); the four positions of Figure 4 are placed in order with the shift described (what kind of revolution → who paid → how successfully modernised → whose story was left out), with Yamakawa and Noro (Rōnō-ha and Kōza-ha, Noro arrested 1933, died in custody 1934), Norman (1940), the Hakone 1960 school, Gluck (1985) and Gordon (1991) correctly attributed; *feudal* is used as a stated frame with the objection flagged. The model paragraph shows claim–evidence–counter–judgement and states its measure.
- **Debate 2 (parts 5–6, .E13):** the clause is quoted accurately (renounce; war potential never maintained; the state denied the rights of a country at war); the official announcement of 3 November 1946 and force 3 May 1947 given; the authorship dispute (Shidehara–MacArthur 24 January 1946 vs the GHQ draft of 4–13 February 1946) named as itself debated; the five moves of Figure 8 dated and labelled (1947 total reading; 1950 police reserve; 1951–52 Security Treaty; 1954 SDF minimum-force reading; 1992 peacekeeping; 2014–15 collective self-defence and security laws); both steelmans of Figure 9 present (text and amendment procedure vs occupation drafting, real dangers, the consistent government line since 1954, peacekeeping service). The model evaluation explains *why* the reading moved, concedes a counter, and holds both halves together.
- **Wider field (part 7, remaining .E12 referents):** each of the six rows of Figure 11 is attached to its referent with at least one dated fact or named writer (Nehru’s *An Autobiography*, 1936; the Versailles majority vote and unanimity ruling, Hughes, Shimazu 1998; the July 1941 oil embargo vs Manchuria 1931 and China 1937, Ienaga’s lawsuits from 1965, Murayama 1995; Bix 2000 vs the figurehead view spread by the occupation; Dower 1999 vs the reverse course from 1947; Johnson 1982 vs US aid, markets, saving and schooling, Shinkansen and Olympics 1964, second-largest economy by 1968). The five reasons of Figure 12 are applied to at least one debate.
- **Source inquiry (part 9):** questions are genuinely historical; the inference quotes the clause; the context answer notices the 1946 vantage point of a defeated country under occupation against 1954 and 2014; the perspective answer names the domestic arguers (governments, opposition parties, legal scholars, citizens’ groups); the evaluation distinguishes evidence of a 1946 decision from evidence of later interpretive movement and names a test source (a 1954 Diet debate record, a cabinet decision, a public opinion survey, a 2015 protest account).

Cross-links to skills sections: reading historical sources for purpose, features, content, context (7C); evaluating the value of sources as evidence (7D); analysing perspectives, beliefs, values and attitudes from sources (7E); evaluating historical interpretations and debates (7F — this section is 7F’s main content partner); sorting causes and consequences by time span and intention (8B); evaluating historical significance (8C — used in tasks 7 and 10); constructing sustained historical interpretations and arguments (8D). Sideways links: the chapter’s record sections 5A–5E carry the Japan narrative this section debates; the Pacific war and its ending also appear in 3C and 3E; the occupation, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force and the 1951 treaties appear in 4D; Japan’s post-war place in the region returns in 7C–7F examples and in 8C–8D.

Sources for this section. All figures are original artifacts drawn for this book from the values stated here (SOURCE_USE Rule 3). Quotations and real-world data carry the following source lines; web collections were retrieved 2026-08-25.

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