

Liz Newcomb  
Pickerington Local Schools  
7-12 Integrated Social Studies

### **Pressure to Modernize: Japan's Response to Western Influence**

**Recommended for:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade World History/World Studies, Honors/AP World History

**Unit:** Imperialism

**Duration of Lesson:** 3-4 Days

**Ohio New Learning Standards:** MWH.1, 4, 9, 10, 12

**Essential Questions:** How did Japan respond to the pressure to modernize? What aspects of Japanese society changed as a result of western influence? How did the Meiji government try to preserve Japanese traditions?

**Learning Objectives:** Students will analyze Japan's response to modernization by reading primary documents. Students will examine cultural, social, and political influences on changes in Japanese society.

#### **Procedures: Day 1**

1. Pose essential questions to guide students' notes.
2. Basic review of European imperialism and colonial expansion.
3. Provide context of Japan in mid-1800s as a feudal state with an isolated economy. Present an oral narrative of Commodore Perry's visit to Japan and explain that it was a turning point in Japan's history. It changed Japan's social, political, and economic structure.
4. Read and discuss excerpts from Perry's letter to Japan and US-Japan Treaty. Questions to consider: What does Perry write in his letter that is intended to reassure the Japanese about America's intentions? What does he write that might be interpreted as intimidation? Is the treaty fair? How is the treaty comparable to Perry's letter?

#### **Day 2-3**

1. Pass out vocabulary notes sheet.
2. Presentation on Japan's cultural and political responses to Western contact and its imperial expansion, focusing on the Meiji Restoration, the end of isolationism in Japan, Sino- and Russo-Japanese wars, as well as the rise of imperialism and nationalism. Students will begin their vocabulary notes during this time. They should be writing more than a simple definition for each term.
3. Read about State Shinto as an example on how the imperial government used religion as a means to preserve Japanese identity. <https://www.tofugu.com/japan/state-shinto/>
4. Present visual narrative. [https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/throwing\\_off\\_asia\\_01/toa\\_vis\\_02.html](https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/throwing_off_asia_01/toa_vis_02.html)

### **Day 3-4**

1. Review vocabulary notes sheet and answer questions.
2. Students will be given one of the following documents to read and will answer selected questions.
3. Group 1: [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/meiji\\_constitution.pdf](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/meiji_constitution.pdf) p. 1-2  
Questions:
  1. According to the Meiji Constitution, what is the source of the Emperor's legitimacy as ruler of Japan?
  2. Who holds sovereignty over Japan in this constitutional system? Why is this important?
  3. In the Meiji Constitution, the people of Japan are referred to as "subjects," not as citizens. What is the difference, and why is this significant?
  4. What rights do Japanese subjects have under this document?
  5. What evidence do you see of Western influence? Think back to the Harris Treaty.
4. [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/fukuzawa\\_yukichi.pdf](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/fukuzawa_yukichi.pdf)  
Questions:
  1. On what basis does Fukuzawa feel pride in Japan? What qualities in the Japanese does he admire?
  2. How does Fukuzawa compare Japan to other nations? What does he see as the measure of a great nation?
  3. Why do you think Fukuzawa had such a hard time understanding the workings of British democracy?
  4. From these short passages, what insights do you have into Fukuzawa's character and his feelings toward the West?
  5. Optional: Students in each reading group can create a slide or short slideshow to present to the other half of the class OR use a jigsaw strategy so that students can read and discuss both documents with each other.

### **Assessments**

1. Vocabulary notes
2. DBQs

### **Sources/Further Reading:**

Letter from Commodore Perry, 1853

Harris Treaty of 1858

[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan\\_1750\\_perry.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_perry.htm)

[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main\\_pop/ps/ps\\_japan.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/ps/ps_japan.htm)

## Imperial Japan Vocabulary Notes

**Meiji Restoration**

**Isolationism**

**Sino-Japanese War**

**Russo-Japanese War**

**Shinto**

**Imperialism**

**Nationalism**