

The Meiji Restoration



The Tokugawa Shogun had single-handedly ruled Japan for over 250 years. During the reign of the Shogun, Japan's Emperor acted only as a mere figurehead, mainly participating in religious ceremonies. The Japanese people were part of a strict hierarchy of Daimyo, Samurai, Peasants, and Merchants. However, Japan's contact with the West sparked a radical uprising in the Japanese government and society. Unhappy politicians blamed the government in power – the Tokugawa Shogun for Japan's military weakness.

In 1868, a small group of middle level samurai supported the Emperor's return to true power in Japan. The Tokugawa Shogun's government was removed and the young Meiji Emperor created a new Western style government in Japan.

The Japanese (Meiji) Constitution ~ 1889

The Empire of Japan shall be ruled over by the Emperors of the dynasty which has reigned in an unbroken line of descent for ages past.

The person of the Emperor is sacred and inviolable.

The Emperor exercises the legislative power with the consent of the Imperial Diet (legislature – parliament)

The Emperor declares war, makes peace, and concludes treaties.

No Japanese subject (person) shall be arrested, detained, tried, or punished, except according to law.

Japanese subjects shall, within reason, enjoy freedom of religious beliefs.

Japanese subjects shall, within limits of the law, enjoy liberty in regard to speech, writing, publication, public meeting, and associations.

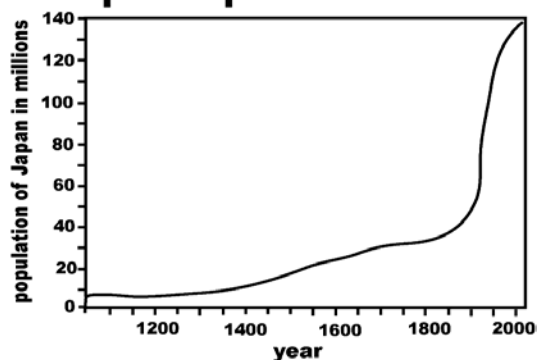
How has the role (the position) of the Japanese Emperor changed as a result of the new Meiji Constitution?

Technology & Industrialization

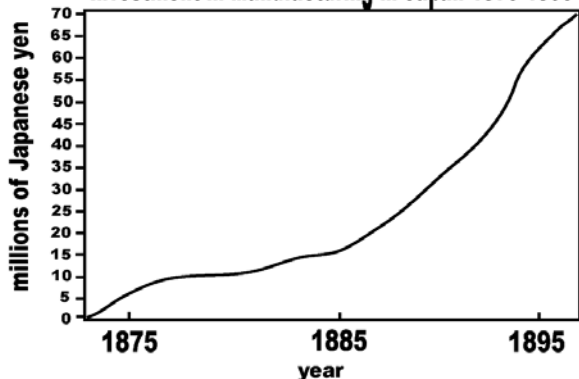
“... I am willing to admit my pride in this accomplishment for Japan. The facts are these: It was not until 1853 that a steamship was seen for the first time. Only seven years after the first sight of Perry's black ships, the Japanese people were able to make a trans-Pacific crossing without help from foreign experts. I think we can boast before the world of this courage and skill. . . .”

The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi, 1934

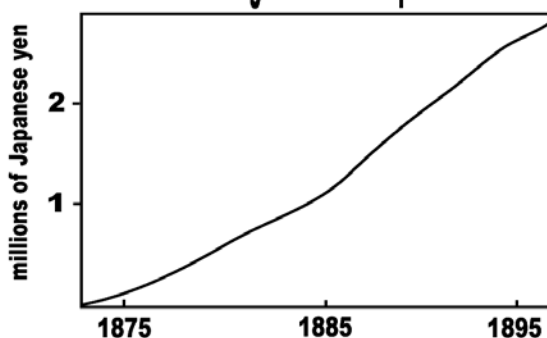
Japan Population Timeline



Investment in Manufacturing in Japan 1875-1895



Investment in Agriculture in Japan 1875-1895



TASK: Work with a partner to create a newspaper headline that uses information from at least three of the documents above.

December 10, 1905

The Japan Times

日本新聞

Social Reform

A renowned Japanese author, Bunroku Shishi recalled in 1967 his experiences as a boy growing up during the Meiji era:

...But the rapid spread of Western civilization, and the intellectual enlightenment [that occurred in Japan], also are phenomena (amazing events) inseparably bound up in the Meiji Era mood. Nights became bright with gas and electric [lights]. Diseases long regarded as incurable surrendered to improved medical science. Travel became immeasurably easier with the introduction of railways and tram-cars.

My sister and I wore Western clothes. They were made by a tailor who catered to foreign customers. I was made to wear a high, stiff collar and broad "Bohemian" tie with my suits and suffered agonies of embarrassment when other children poked fun at me.

Vehicles rumbling through the often unpaved streets of Meiji times were also interesting, not least because the types were constantly changing. Horse-drawn carriages were replaced by electric trolleys. They had much the same shape as the horse-drawn vehicles, but their source of power was fascinating to the public.

Amazement. There was a lot of that in Japan for those of us who shared the fantastic Era of Meiji.



List the social changes have occurred in Japan:

The Satsuma Rebellion

The sudden changes of the Meiji Restoration came as a shock to many Japanese. The powerful politicians who overthrew the Tokugawa Shogun wanted to entirely Westernize Japan. But the Samurai, a traditional warrior class were still hanging on to the old traditions.

Saigo Takamori was one such Samurai who refused to adopt the new ways of the Meiji Restoration. He gathered an army of about 40,000 men and waged a rebellion against the new Japanese Imperial army. This resistance movement is known as the **Satsuma Rebellion** of 1877.



Saigo Takamori ↑ prepares his troops for battle

Watch the film and answer the questions below:

1. In the battle scene, how were the last Samurai's defeated?

2. Even though they are on opposite sides, why do you think the soldiers bow after the last Samurai dies?

3. *How does the Emperor feel about the changes that have occurred in Japan?

Discussion: Could the Japanese have preserved their traditional ways and still modernized?