

Lesson Title: The Japanese Constitution: Traditional Influences, American Impositions

Grade Level(s) and Subject: 10th Grade World History

Goals and Objectives: *The objectives below are designed to be conceptual in nature and can be applied across multiple units and topics in social studies.*

1. Students will examine the role of historical context in nation-building and policymaking.
2. Students will examine the role of their own country in promoting democracy and use historical evidence to form their own arguments on this issue.

Time required/class periods needed: Two 45-minute class periods or one 90-minute class period

Primary source bibliography:

Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (effective 1947)

Text and analysis available from Library of Congress at

<https://www.loc.gov/law/help/japan-constitution/article9.php#Pacifist>

Other resources used:

None

Required materials/supplies:

1. Access to Internet – smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktops all acceptable
2. Students will need their own notebooks or devices for taking notes during personal research activities and during class discussions.
3. Homework assignment (2 pages) “Should the U.S. Help Form Democracies? You Decide!”

Vocabulary, in order of appearance/chronology:

Shogunate – term used to describe the rule of military leaders alongside a weak, figurehead emperor for centuries of Japanese history; final shogunate was in Tokugawa era (1603-1868)

Meiji Restoration – restoration of imperial rule under the Meiji family; Meiji family ruled 1868-1912 during period of modernization and heightened Western influence; Imperial Diet (legislature) established during this time

Taisho democracy – period during which increased Western influence and an aging imperial ruler allowed democratic ideas to develop under the power of the Diet, also a period of economic challenge, gaining military leaders influence toward the end of the era (period lasted 1912-1926)

Militarism – policymaking dominated by military policy; in Japan, militarism came to the fore from 1926-1945 under rule of Emperor Hirohito

Constitution – founding document of a country delegating and describing powers of the government, its branches, and its institutions

Procedure:

First Half/Day One

- (Anticipatory set, 5 min.) Project the bulleted items below on the board. Explain that the first is a list of Japanese actions in the 1930s/1940s, while the other is Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution after the end of WWII in 1945. Review with the students and ask, “What changed in such a short period of time?” The ultimate goal of this priming activity is for the teacher to lead students to the understanding that this change was precipitated by a sharp change in how the Japanese government operated. As it happens, those changes were a combination of traditional Japanese ideas and new ideas imposed by American victors after WWII. (Note: They may need help understanding what Article 9 means – if necessary, briefly explain that it means Japan will never again have an offensive military; their forces are for defense-only.)
 - Invasion of Manchuria (1931), Rape of Nanking in China (1937), Attack at Pearl Harbor (1941)
 - Article 9: “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.” (1947)
- (Transition) Divide the class into four groups and explain that they will be looking at what could have led to such a quick change by first looking into the background of the Japanese government, military, and expansion. Each group will be assigned one of the following topics: the Tokugawa shogunate, Meiji restoration/Meiji period, the Taisho period, and Japanese expansion/Emperor Hirohito (1926-1941).
- (Activity, 15 min.) Each group is to use their devices to quickly research their topic and answer the following questions as well as they can:
 - What did Japan do during this period?
 - Who controlled the government? Who/what had the power?
 - What government institutions existed or were formed at this time?
 - Do you think Japan was democratic at all during this time? Why? Why not?
- (Discussion, 15-20 min.) Call the class back together. One person from each group briefly report their answers to the questions. Start with the Tokugawa group, then the Meiji group, then the Taisho group, and then the Hirohito group. The teacher needs to cover the following points if they are not mentioned by the students:
 - Tokugawa group: Rule by shogun, emperor as figurehead with little power, significant influence of the samurai warriors
 - Meiji group: decline of military influence (but still present), restoration of power to the emperor, establishment of the Diet (Japan’s new elected parliamentary/legislative body) in 1880s, heightened Western influence
 - Taisho group: Increased democratization, continuation of Western influence, imperial ruler aging at this time, Diet becomes more powerful, economic challenges allowed military to become more influential in the end
 - Hirohito group: many Japanese believe in the need to expand to obtain resources and power (especially because other Western countries had empires at this time), invasion of Manchuria 1931, Rape of Nanking 1937, Attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941 in response to American sanctions for expansion, defeat by Americans in WWII after dropping of atomic bombs
- (Transition/Debriefing, if splitting into two classes): Explain to students that WWII ended with the United States preparing to rewrite the Constitution of Japan. All of what

we have just discussed set the context and laid the groundwork for the way Americans would consider reshaping the Japanese government and society going forward.

Second Half//Day Two

- (Activity/Anticipatory set, 10 min.) Ask students to use their notes from the previous day and put themselves in the position of General Douglas MacArthur, the American general who accepted the surrender of the Japanese and played a significant role in reshaping Japan after WWII. Ask the students to consider the following: “Thinking about the history of Japan we just discussed, what would you be concerned about in regard to Japan going forward? What would you want to change? What, if anything, would you want to keep?” They can discuss this in pairs if it helps spark thinking/discussion. After giving them a few minutes to discuss/think about this, have several students share their thoughts. Predictably, someone will mention that Japanese expansion needs to be limited or that the military is a general concern of theirs. A student may even mention that Japan did previously have some democratic elements, such as the parliamentary body (the Diet).
- (Transition) Explain that such things were on the mind of MacArthur and other Americans at the end of WWII. From their perspective, after years of war that began with an attack on their own navy, the Americans wanted to limit Japanese military power and to prevent Japan from expanding into other territories in the future. At the same time, they recognized that the Japanese would be more accepting of a Constitution developed by Americans and more likely to remain peaceful if some Japanese traditions were respected and included as part of the new government.
- (Activity, 30 minutes) Divide the students into four groups again. Use the same groups as previously if desired (will save time if used in one 90-minute lesson). Assign each group one of the following topics: constitutional monarchy, the Diet, Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, and Self-Defense Forces. Each group is to quickly look up their topic and write a brief description on their own paper – that is, each member should have his or her own notes from this activity. After about 10 minutes, split the students into new groups; each new group should have at least one member who knows about one of the four topics they just researched. In this jigsaw activity, the students will go around the group and share what they learned about their topic, taking notes as the students around them speak.
- (Debriefing) Call the class together. Reiterate that the new Japanese constitution was established as a combination of Japanese traditions and American impositions that arose from concerns over Japan’s recent history, which we discussed in the first half of the lesson. In order to maintain Japanese respect and unity, the new government would retain the emperor as a figurehead (a constitutional monarchy), and the elected legislative body (the Diet) would be allowed to remain in existence. The military, however, would be limited; Article 9 of the Constitution forbids Japan from ever raising an offensive military force again, but allows for the establishment of the domestic Self-Defense Forces, which are in use to this day. Even now, Japanese politicians debate this Constitution – many feel that it was undemocratic for the United States to impose it upon them, and they wish to be able to raise their own military again. As the victors of WWII, the U.S. maintained that the Constitution was fair for the sake of maintaining peace and preventing future expansion. Historians can debate this, but now it is time for the students to decide for themselves (introduce and explain homework assignment).

- (Homework) This assignment can be due the next class period, or students can be given several days to complete it depending on their ability level. The assignment (attached) asks students to explain briefly how the Japanese Constitution was written as a fusion of Japanese tradition and American ideas, and it then asks them to use evidence from this lesson to explain briefly their stance on the role of their own country in spreading democracy and in helping establish other countries.
- Optional Activity: Have a debate with one team arguing in support of the American involvement in the writing of the Japanese constitution and one team arguing against it. Teams may also argue about Article 9 with one team arguing that Japan should never be allowed to raise an offensive army again and the other arguing that this restriction has been in place long enough and should be lifted.

Assessment/evaluation:

This lesson relies heavily on formative assessment. Opportunities for such assessments are numerous throughout this lesson; in the first half, it can be done during the research activity and during the whole-class discussion; in the second, during the jigsaw activity and during the debriefing.

Formative assessment can also be conducted via examination of the homework assignment students complete and turn in the following class period (attached).

Name: _____

Should the U.S. Help Form Democracies? You Decide!

Directions: Answer each of the questions in 1-2 paragraphs. *Be sure to support your answers with evidence from the lesson.*

1. Explain how the new Japanese Constitution was established as a fusion of Japanese traditions and American ideas.

2. Should Japan be allowed to maintain an offensive military force? Why or why not?

3. In your opinion, what could justify the U.S. involving itself in the establishment of another country's government (i.e., what types of historical events would lead you to support this)? Should the U.S. involve itself in spreading democratic ideas to other countries?