

Component 3, Part 4

Japan in World History: Teaching and Learning—Imperial Japan and the World (1868-1945)

During the Meiji Period (1868-1912), Japan experienced significant economic, political, social, and military changes that in large part resulted from wide-spread interactions with the US and leading European powers. By the emperor's death in 1912, Japan was recognized as a world power and had obtained colonies. Students, through short classroom readings and discussions, can gain an overview of the goals of [Meiji political leaders](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_meiji.htm) (http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_meiji.htm) as they sought to meet the Western challenge and modernize Japan. Students will develop a graphic visual sense of Japanese/Western contact through classroom work focusing upon wood block print images from the "[Yokohama Boomtown](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/menu/index.html) (<http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/menu/index.html>)" curriculum. This urban area was a government-designated port for Americans and Europeans.

Japan began to build its empire during this period by asserting dominance over its old mentor, China, in the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese War that was fought over control of Korea. In the "[Throwing off Asia](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/menu/index.html) (<http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/menu/index.html>)" curriculum, students can again use woodblock prints in classroom activities to learn more about this struggle and about Japanese propaganda images of China. The 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War is a significant event in world history that often gets neglected. The war also coincided with the advent and immense popularity of the picture post card. In a superb series of visual literacy activities, teachers and students can engage in classroom activities utilizing both [post cards](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/menu/index.html) (<http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/menu/index.html>) and war photographs, while learning about world images of the war, Western images of Japan, Japanese images of the war, and also how historians approach their craft.

Although the 1920s were a time of relative prosperity for many people who lived in Japan's cities, the 1923 Kanto Earthquake was one of the worst disasters in Japan's history and killed and wounded over 156,000 people in Tokyo and Yokohama. Interested teachers or students might want to view an excellent [photographic gallery](http://dl.lib.brown.edu/kanto/) (<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/kanto/>) of the event and examine related materials about the earthquake that are included.

Although Japan during the early years of the twentieth century showed signs of democratizing, by the early 1930s military and ultra-nationalist factions had political control. Japan then steered a course that led first to war with China and then the US and other Western powers. "[Japan's Quest for Power and World War II in Asia](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1900_power.htm) (http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1900_power.htm)" will provide students with an introductory reading on the causes of the war, subsequent events, and accompanying discussion questions. "[World War II in the Pacific](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/tps/1900_jp.htm) (http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/tps/1900_jp.htm)" provides a variety of narratives and photos for interested teachers and students about the chronological progress of the war.

Teachers and students can investigate the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima through [Primary Source Documents](#)

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1900_bomb.htm)Nagasaki and through examining Japanese survivors' paintings of the events. Teachers and students also are encouraged to access Component 1 of this teaching module to learn about the science behind the first bombs, and their effects on the cities and the people who lived in them.

References

Part 4 Web sites

TITLE: Asia for Educators (AFE)

URL: <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>

TITLE: History Place, The

URL: <http://www.historyplace.com/>

TITLE: The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923

URL: <http://dl.lib.brown.edu/kanto/>

TITLE: University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Asia Program In-Service/Pre-Service Teaching Module

URL: <http://www.utc.edu/Research/AsiaProgram/teaching/>

TITLE: Visualizing Cultures

URL: <http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/menu/index.html>

Part 4 Recommended Sources

The following sources are far from inclusive but do provide educators and students interested in this particular part of Japanese history with additional information.

Books

Cook Haruko and Theodore F. Cook. *Japan at War: An Oral History*. New York: New Press, 1993.

Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Huffman, James L. *Modern Japan: A History in Documents*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2004.

Jansen, Marius B. *The Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, New Ed edition, 2002.

Shirokauer, Conrad. *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations*. Wadsworth Publishing, 3rd edition, 2005.

Journal

Education About Asia

The Association for Asian Studies, Inc.
1021 East Huron St.
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
www.asian-studies.org/ea

Videos

Asian Educational Media Service: Center for East Asian & Pacific Studies
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue MC-025
Urbana, Illinois 61801
<http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/>