JAPAN

HISTORY

Japan's story began with hunters and farmers on its islands. Emperors, shoguns and samurai ruled for centuries. Then Japan became a modern country.

The First Peoples

People lived on Japan's islands many thousands of years ago. The Jomon people hunted, fished and made some of the oldest clay pots in the world. Later, people from the Asian mainland brought rice farming in flooded fields. In the far north, the Ainu (EYE-noo) people hunted deer and fished for salmon. Ainu people still live in Japan today.



Emperors and Capitals

Japan's **emperor** comes from a family that has held the throne for well over 1,000 years. Buddhism and Chinese writing came from China and Korea. In 710, Nara became the capital. In 794, the capital moved to Kyoto, where it stayed for more than 1,000 years. Around 1000, Murasaki Shikibu wrote The Tale of Genji, one of the world's first novels.

Samurai and Shoguns

In 1192, the emperor named a general, Minamoto no Yoritomo, **shogun**. From then on, shoguns ran the country. They were served by **samurai**, warriors who fought with bows and swords. In 1274 and 1281, Mongol armies attacked from the sea. Samurai fought them, and storms wrecked many Mongol ships. In 1603, Tokugawa Ieyasu (ee-eh-YAH-soo) became shogun. His family kept the peace for more than 250 years and allowed little trade with other countries.

Opening to the World

In 1853, American warships led by Matthew Perry sailed into the bay near Edo, the shogun's city. The United States wanted Japan to open its ports to trade, and in 1854, Japan agreed. In 1868, the shogun's rule ended, and power went back to the emperor. Edo was renamed Tokyo and became the capital. Japan built railroads, factories, schools and a modern army and navy.

War in Asia and the Pacific

Japan wanted land, coal and oil. It won wars against China and Russia and took control of Taiwan and Korea. In the 1930s, Japan's army invaded China. After the United States stopped selling oil to Japan, Japan attacked the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. The United States entered World War II. In August 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan surrendered, and it gave up the lands it had taken.

Modern Japan

American troops stayed in Japan until 1952. A new **constitution** in 1947 made the emperor a symbol of the country and gave power to elected leaders. The Japanese rebuilt their cities and factories. In 1964, Tokyo hosted the Olympics, and the first bullet train began running. Japan became one of the world's richest countries.

JAPAN THROUGH TIME

710	794	1192	1274	1603	1853	1868	1945	1964
Nara becomes the capital	The capital moves to Kyoto	Yoritomo is shogun	Mongols attack Japan	Tokugawa shoguns begin	Perry's ships arrive	Power returns to the emperor	World War II ends	Tokyo hosts the Olympics

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Murasaki Shikibu	Wrote The Tale of Genji around 1000
Tokugawa Ieyasu	Shogun who brought peace in 1603
Matsuo Basho	Poet famous for his haiku
Emperor Meiji	Ruled as Japan became modern
Osamu Tezuka	Artist who drew the Astro Boy comics

WORDS TO KNOW

emperor	a ruler from a royal family
shogun	an army leader who ran Japan
samurai	a Japanese warrior who served a lord
constitution	a written plan for a government