



# World History Studies Weekly®



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## Konnichiwa!

Konnichiwa (ko-nee-chee wah) is Japanese for hello or good morning. What comes to mind when you think of the country of Japan? This week we'll explore the geography and early culture of Japan.

The Chinese first mentioned Japan in their writing in about A.D. 57. They originally called the island nation Wa, but people have called the islands Japan for thousands of years. Scientists think at one time there was a land bridge connecting Japan to the Korean peninsula. Can you think of another land bridge you've read about? Evidence shows that people have lived in Japan since 30,000 B.C. Scientists have unearthed early prehistoric tools, including many made of flint.

About 5000 B.C., a group of people established its culture in Japan. These people left behind pottery that they decorated with knotted cords. This group was known as the Jomon, a word for cord marks.

Archaeologists say a different group of people lived in Japan around 300 B.C. They were called the Yayoi. Archaeologists found thousands of their burial mounds, called kofun. And, like the ancient Egyptians, the Yayoi filled their tombs with their personal possessions. One mound still stands in Japan and is about eight stories high. Armor, weapons and pottery were some of the items scientists found in these mounds. Skilled in metalworking, the Yayoi left behind beautiful bronze bells that they used for religious ceremonies.



Around A.D. 300, different sections of the Yayoi organized themselves. One such clan, or group of families, was the Yamato. From the Yamato came a strong leader named Jimmu. Legend says he lived about A.D. 660. He called himself the “emperor of heaven,” and was Japan’s first emperor. Historians say Japan’s emperors can trace their ancestry back to Jimmu. The early Japanese people believed their emperor was a god on Earth. Only he could communicate with the gods on their behalf.

One important Japanese ruler, Prince Shotoku (We’ll read more about him later!) belonged to the Yamato clan.

Shotoku encouraged his people to learn the Chinese culture. This is why Japan and China share many cultural beliefs. Both cultures bow to greet one another and use chopsticks. Both have picture writing that, to many people, looks similar. Japanese and Chinese architecture are also very similar. In addition, the Chinese shared with the Japanese the religion of Buddhism and the Chinese form of government.

During the Heian Period (about the 9th-12th centuries), Japanese warriors called Samurai gradually gained power and influence. Over time, the emperors became rulers in name only, and the highest military leader—called a shogun—held the real power. For about 700 years after the Heian Period, Japan was ruled by the shogun. In 1867-68, the Emperor Meiji regained power, and Japan entered the modern era.

### Connections

## Move Over, Brothers Grimm—New Fairy Tales Found

There’s a magical world out there full of elves, evil queens and beautiful princesses! If you enjoy “Cinderella,” “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Rapunzel,” you have already discovered the work of the Brothers Grimm. These German fairy tales and legends were collected by the Grimm brothers and put into popular books about 200 years ago.

A new world of fairy-tale magic has just been revealed. Researchers found a collection of 500 stories gathered by Franz

von Schonwerth, a German historian who did his work at the same time as the Grimm brothers. Because Schonwerth was a historian, he wrote the stories exactly as the German people told them to him. The Grimm brothers changed some of the stories to make them less frightening for children. The Grimm brothers admired Schonwerth’s work. Jacob Grimm said, “Nowhere in the whole of Germany is anyone collecting (fairy tales) so accurately, thoroughly and with such a sensitive ear.”

Schonwerth’s collection was never as popular as the Grimm brothers’ books. His three volumes of stories collected dust for 150 years until they were rediscovered.

Schonwerth’s collection includes a story of a beautiful girl who gets away from a witch by turning herself into a pond and another tale about a turnip princess. As soon as the stories are translated into English, you will have a whole new collection of fairy tales to read!



# Ancient Japan

Japan has a rich and interesting past. For a while, the leaders of Japan encouraged learning about their neighbors, such as Korea and China. They shared many cultural ideas. Then the Japanese leaders decided to stop contact with the outside world. It was hundreds of years before the Japanese opened their doors to the world once again. Let's learn about the ancient Japanese and their culture.

## Writing

One of the many ideas the Chinese shared with the Japanese was a writing system. The Japanese started their picture writing around A.D. 500. Before this, the Japanese had no writing language. Unlike the Chinese pictures, or characters that stand for words, the Japanese characters stand for sounds. How do you think this change is helpful in learning to read and write Japanese?

## Shintoism

Shintoism is the oldest religion of Japan. The word Shinto is Japanese for "the way of the gods." The followers of Shinto believe nature is very important and that all things in nature, such as rocks, trees, rivers and people, have spirits. They call these spirits kami. Animism is the belief that all things have spirits, or kami. Shinto honors all these spirits with shrines, or holy places, and offerings. Shinto also honors relatives who have died with a shrine in the home. Shinto worshippers believe that kami can help them if they are pure and good. The sun goddess and Inari, the rice maker, are two important kami to the Shinto religion. Can you think why these two spirits are so important

to the people of Japan?

## Sumo Wrestling, Anyone?

Have you ever seen sumo wrestling? Sumo is a very popular, traditional Japanese sport and is a form of Japanese martial arts that has existed for about 1,500 years. Legend has it that sumo originated with the final battle between two gods who were each trying to gain control of the Japanese islands.

Some sumo wrestlers weigh nearly 500 pounds. Many also have long hair that they tie in a traditional knot. The object of sumo is for two men to try to wrestle the other out of a ring. That's a lot of weight charging at you to push you from a ring! A wrestler can

also win if any part of their opponent's body (except the soles of the feet) touches the surface of the ring.

And, if you think these big boys are all fat, think again—it's actually muscle. The weight is important, especially the big stomach, because it helps keep a sumo's center

of gravity low. This makes it harder for his opponent to knock him over.

Sumo wrestlers stay heavy by eating a lot. Most people eat 1,500 to 2,000 calories a day. A sumo wrestler eats about 55,000 calories a day!

## Architecture

Japanese architecture is similar to that of the Chinese. Can you think of how a traditional Japanese building is different from a building in our country?

If you said that many Japanese roofs are curved upwards, you'd be correct. Japanese architecture also includes several tiered-shaped towers called pagodas. Pagodas are religious temples. The Japanese now build in a more Western style after years of cultural contact with different countries.



## Japan

Japan is one of the shakiest places in the world. It is located where several continental and oceanic plates meet, so it experiences frequent earthquakes. Scientists estimate there are more than 1,000 earthquakes each year. Fortunately for this island nation, most of the quakes do not cause much destruction. However, Japan has experienced three devastating earthquakes. One in 1923 killed more than 100,000 people. Another earthquake in 1995 killed about 6,000 people, and one more recently in 2011 killed about 16,000 people.

We call Japan an archipelago, which means a group of many islands. Actually, Japan consists of several thousand islands. There are four main islands, and Honshu is the largest. Japan is about the size of the state of California, and

its capital is Tokyo. Around 127 million people call this country home. It is a densely populated country, which means that many, many people live in the area.

The official name of Japan is Nippon. Nippon means land of the rising sun. If you look at a flag of Japan, it is a red sun on a white background. Japan has more than 100 volcanoes, of which 80 are considered active. In fact, Japan has one-tenth of all the world's 840 active volcanoes. The highest mountain peak is Mount Fuji, which stands 12,388 feet tall. A very mountainous country, Japan can only farm about a fourth of the country. That's why many Japanese turned to the sea to earn a living. Japan has few natural resources and no major rivers.

The United States and Japan were enemies in World War II. Attempting

to gain control of other lands and their resources, the Japanese attacked the U.S. Navy fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The Japanese hoped to cripple our fleet so we couldn't stop them in their efforts to control more land. Today, Japan and the United States are allies.



Mount Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan.



## Samurai

In the 1100s, Japan had a feudal system like that in the Middle Ages of Europe. Although there was an emperor, he had little power. Instead, rich and powerful nobles had warriors (like knights of Europe) protect them and their lands. These warriors were called samurai. Samurai were pretty scary looking. They wore horned helmets and armor made of leather or steel scales, and carried several weapons. They fought both on horseback and on the ground. The word samurai means “to serve.” Samurai lived by the code of behavior called bushido, which means the way of the warrior. This code stressed loyalty, bravery, courage and honor. The Japanese set up schools to teach young boys to become samurais. They taught the boys a traditional education, as well as bushido and the martial arts they needed to become a samurai.

## Shoguns

Although Japan had emperors in the 9th to 12th centuries, military leaders had the real power. The Japanese called a military leader a shogun, which meant commander in chief. Yoritomo Minamoto was one of the most powerful shoguns in Japanese history. Shoguns ruled both politically and militarily until 1867, when Emperor Meiji regained power.

## Kublai Khan

Kublai Khan of China and his men entered the historical picture in the 1200s. Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, long thought that Japan had lots of gold. So, in 1274 the Chinese leader sent a fleet of ships to invade Japan. On the first attempt, a terrible storm turned the Mongols back. Powerful storms again defeated the invading Mongols during their second attempt in 1281. The Japanese called these storms the divine winds. Their word for powerful typhoons is kamikaze. During World War II, the Japanese used the word kamikaze again for the pilots who crashed their airplanes into American warships.

## Contact with Europe

In 1542, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to come to Japan. The Dutch, Spanish and English soon followed. The shoguns didn't want contact with the Europeans and closed all their ports, except for one city—Nagasaki. Why do you think the Japanese leaders didn't want contact with the outside world? How do you think such behavior might have helped the shogun? How do you think such behavior might have hurt the people of Japan? It wasn't until 1853 that things changed. That's when American Commodore Matthew Perry went to Japan and opened trade between the two countries.

## Prince Shotoku

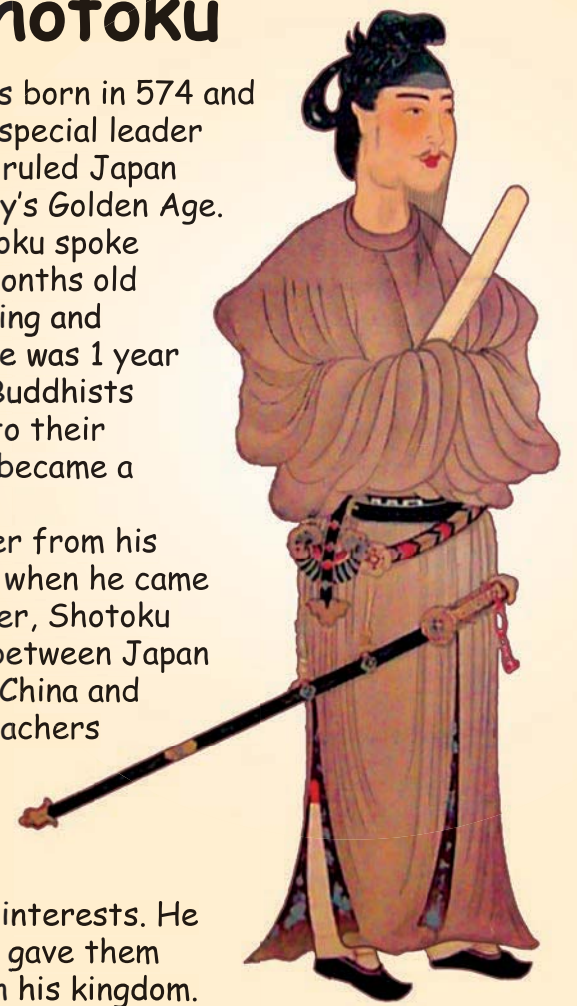
Prince Shotoku was born in 574 and grew up to be a very special leader of ancient Japan. He ruled Japan and began the country's Golden Age. People say that Shotoku spoke when he was only 4 months old and that he was reading and writing by the time he was 1 year old. As a young boy, Buddhists introduced Shotoku to their religion, of which he became a follower.

Shotoku took power from his aunt, Empress Suiko, when he came of age at 20. As leader, Shotoku encouraged contact between Japan and the countries of China and Korea. He brought teachers from these lands to teach his people their knowledge of medicine, astronomy, geography and other interests. He valued educators and gave them important positions in his kingdom. Shotoku promoted new ideas in learning and cultural contact, which was why his era was called the beginning of Japan's Golden Age.

Shotoku built many temples and spread the religion of Buddhism throughout Japan. One temple, Horyuji, is the oldest wooden Buddhist temple still standing in Japan. He also valued the Japanese religion of Shinto. He told the people that both religions could be practiced together.

As leader, Shotoku created a strong united government. Using the Chinese government as his model, he established a constitution of how government should run. Shotoku also valued the ideas of Confucius and used Confucianism during his rule. He stressed the importance of high ethical standards in government and wrote, “Punish that which is evil and encourage that which is good.” With his strong Buddhist faith, Shotoku stressed peace and honesty.

People think Shotoku was the first to call Japan “Nippon,” the land of the rising sun. He also wrote the first book on Japanese history a year before he died in 622.



## This Week's Question

### How did Japan become a leader in automobile manufacturing?

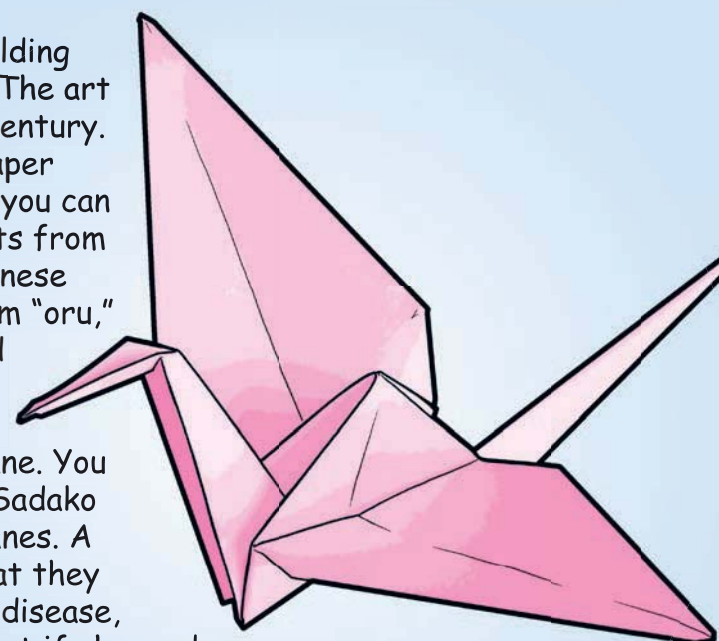
How do you manufacture cars if you don't have rubber, aluminum, steel and other needed resources? That's the problem for Japan, a country without many natural resources. Yet, Japan became a world leader in the making of automobiles. How did they do it? How did Japan become a leading industrial nation? In order for Japan to work, it must purchase raw materials from other countries—materials such as iron, oil and coal. The people use the raw materials they purchase to make products. They then sell the finished products to other countries. With the money, the Japanese purchase more raw materials. It's a continuing circle, one in which all of Japan must cooperate. What does cooperation mean to you? Can you think of something that involves cooperation in your school or in your community? What about in the United States?

## Origami

## Activity

Origami is a paper folding art with a long history. The art dates back to the 7th century. Using just a sheet of paper and no scissors or glue, you can create animals and plants from folding paper. The Japanese word origami comes from “oru,” which means to fold and “kami,” the word for paper. A very popular origami is the paper crane. You may know the story of Sadako and the 1,000 paper cranes. A young girl, sick with what they called the atomic bomb disease, heard about a legend that if she made 1,000 paper cranes, her wish to be cured would be granted.

Read “Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes.” (Your school library probably has a copy.) The directions for making a paper crane are at the back of the book. Try making your own paper crane using the directions in the book or the ones at <http://www.origami-resource-center.com/paper-crane.html>.



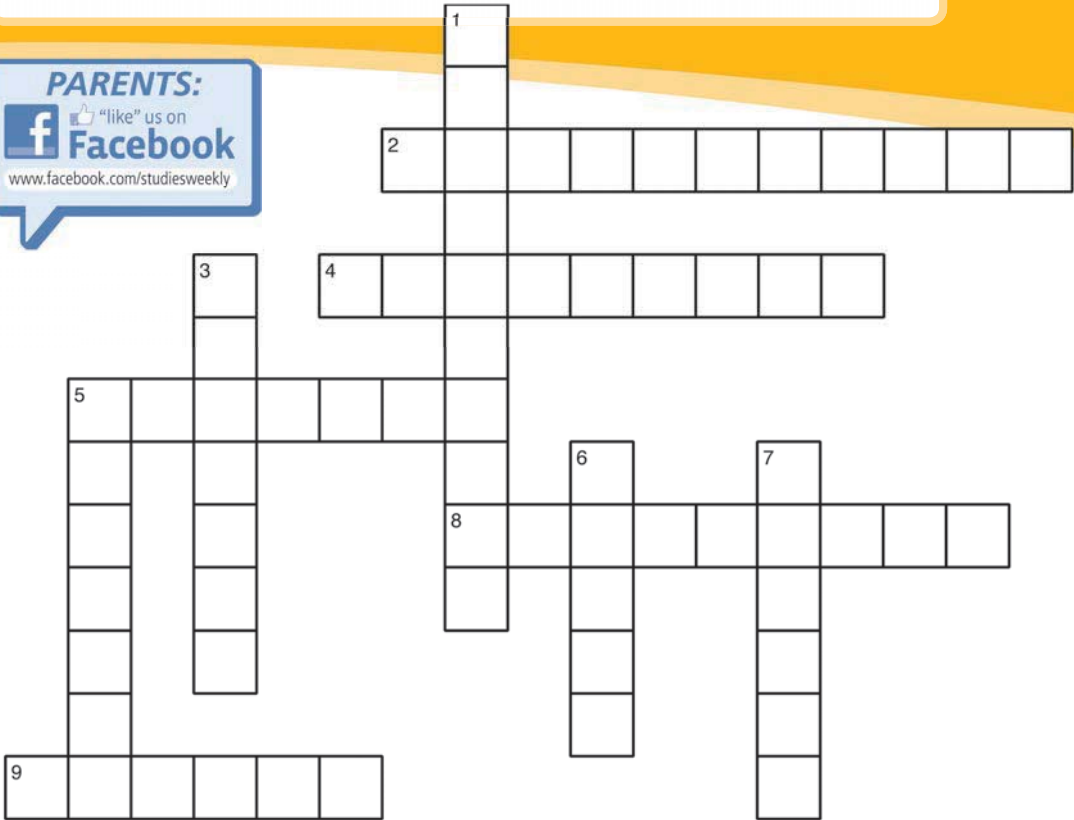
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- ACROSS
2. a large group of islands

4. highest mountain in Japan

5. leader of Japan who began the Golden Age and spread Buddhism

8. oldest religion of Japan

9. name that means "land of the rising sun"
- DOWN
1. first Europeans to come to Japan

3. military leaders of ancient Japan

5. warriors of ancient Japan

6. Japan's first emperor

7. Japanese characters stand for these



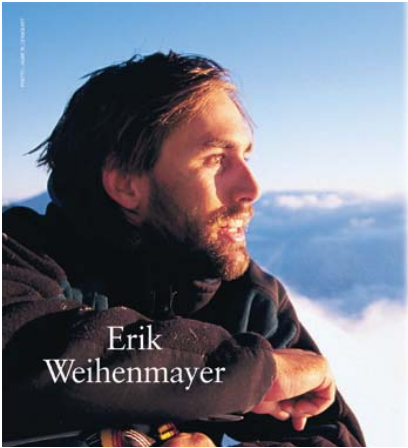
As you read this week's lesson, circle or highlight all proper nouns with any color pen or highlighter. This will help you find some of the crossword answers and get ready for this week's test.

# Japan

Look at the map of Japan and answer the following questions:

1. On which island is the capital city of Tokyo?
- \_\_\_\_\_
2. On which island is the city of Sapporo?
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which sea lies south of the island of Shikoku?
- \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which city is closest to Tokyo—Sapporo or Osaka?
- \_\_\_\_\_
5. On which island is the city of Nagasaki?
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Mapping & Charting



## Climbed Everest. Blind.

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## Let's Write

Haiku is a very old form of poetry that originated in Japan. These short, three-lined poems have 17 syllables and are usually written in three lines. The first line has five syllables, the second has seven syllables, and the third line has five syllables. The topics of Haiku are often things in nature: trees, birds, clouds, rain, sun, insects, etc. Write a haiku. Remember you can count syllables by placing your hand under your chin. Each time the chin drops counts as a syllable. How many times does your chin drop when you say, "elephant"? (Three) Remember to check your poem for the correct syllable count and review your work for proper spelling.

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