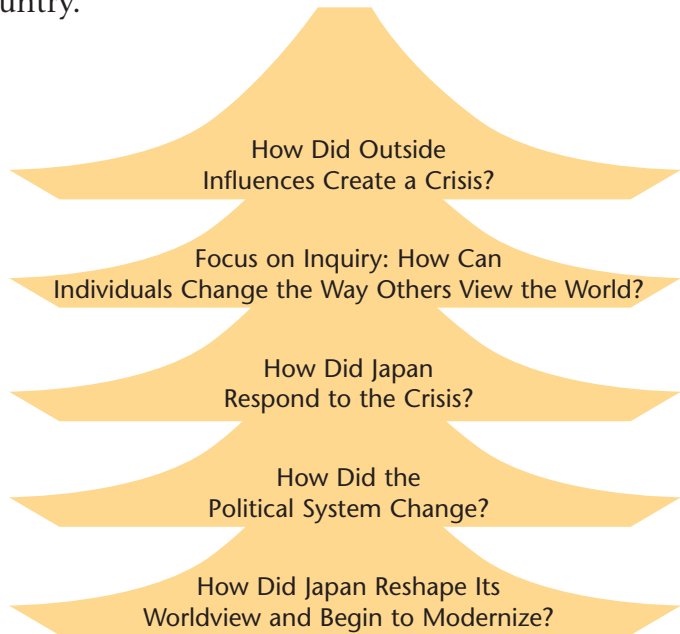


**CHAPTER 5**

# What Factors Influenced Change in Meiji Japan?

By the mid-19th century, Japan was changing into an urbanized society. It had tried to isolate itself from the rest of the world. The shogun, Bakufu, and many Japanese intellectuals wanted to continue the seclusion policy. The outside world, however, would not leave Japan alone.

In this chapter, you will explore how several countries caused Japan concern and how it reacted to them by making many changes to modernize the country.



## Worldview Investigation

In Chapter 4, you created part of the worldview for an imaginary island society. Suppose that your island has been completely isolated from the modern world. You have now discovered that other countries have new technologies and ways of doing things that you don't have; for example, new medical procedures or warfare techniques. Work together in your group to reach **consensus** about this situation.

1. Should you be concerned that other countries have these new technologies? Why?
2. You need to move the society forward in as little time as possible so that it will become a strong, competitive country equal to any other. How will you accomplish this enormous task? Where will you begin? What will be your vision of the new society?

The young Japanese leaders who took over after the downfall of the Tokugawa government had to deal with similar questions. In this chapter, you will learn of the struggles the Japanese leaders encountered as they opened Japan's borders to the world. You will learn how their worldview changed as a new government adopted new ideas and ways of doing things and made Japan a modern nation-state equal to those of the Western world.

**consensus:** a decision reached through common agreement

**compromise:** a settlement through mutual concession

## Compromise and Consensus

Groups can make decisions in many ways, including **compromise** and consensus. How can a group reach a decision through consensus?

- **Starting positions:** Use the Roundtable format to let everyone in the group describe his or her opinion about the topic. Each person might describe the issue or problem, suggest what should be done, and explain the reasoning behind the position.
- **Listen:** Listen carefully. You should be able to retell, in your own words, what you heard each person say.
- **Ask questions:** Gain more understanding of each other's ideas, opinions, and perspectives by asking questions such as "Can you explain...?" Be sure not to argue with the person.
- **If I were you:** Work with a partner. Try to look at the world through each other's eyes. Take turns expressing the other person's points of view through such statements as "If I were you, a concern I would have is..." or "If I were you, I think the solution could be to..."
- **Other perspectives:** List other groups who could be affected or have an interest in this topic. Discuss how the possible decisions could affect each group.
- **Make the decision:** Come to a group decision that everyone can agree with.

### SKILLS CENTRE

Turn to **How to Make Decisions** in the Skills Centre to review other ways to make decisions in a group.

## How Did Outside Influences Create a Crisis?

**czar:** Russian monarch

**crisis:** a situation of urgent need or great danger

Japan's contact with the outside world was inevitable. For example, foreign ships sailed along Japan's rugged coastline on their way to trade with other countries; sometimes, these ships sank and shipwrecked sailors were cast ashore. The shogun and the Bakufu believed that if they abandoned the policy of isolation, they would have less power within Japan. They also feared that Japan might lose its sovereignty if the influence of the other countries grew.

### The Influence of Russia

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Russians began to find it difficult to supply their outposts in central north Asia with food and supplies. As a result, they decided to increase their trading along the Pacific Coast and established the Russian–American Company. The **czar** gave the company the authority to trade with the Ainu and to gain control of the new territories.

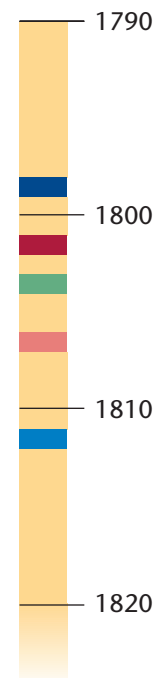
Fortunately for Japan, Russia became involved in wars in Europe and had to turn its focus there, for the time being, giving up its pursuits in the Pacific. This saved Japan from greater conflicts with Russia, but the sentiments of many Japanese intellectuals of the day were reinforced. They warned the shogun that the Bakufu were too concerned with internal affairs and should be more prepared for trouble that could come from the outside world.



Print of Russian arrivals in Japan, early 1800s

### The Crisis with Russia

- 1798 The Bakufu learned that Russian settlers had reached the third Kuril Island and were introducing the Ainu to Russian culture and to Christianity.
- 1801 Not wanting to lose these islands, a team of Japanese claimed the island for Japan and drove the Russians from it.
- 1804 A Russian envoy landed at Nagasaki with a letter from Czar Alexander I asking to establish trade relations with Japan. The Bakufu did not respond for six months and then answered that the Japanese government was not interested in trade with foreign countries.
- 1805 Angered at having been made to sit in Nagasaki for so long waiting for an answer, the ship's captain authorized nuisance attacks on Japanese settlements. He thought Japan would respond to force and change its mind about trading with Russia.
- 1811 The Japanese government became more determined to maintain its isolation policy and also to keep control of its territory. To demonstrate its strength, the commander of a Russian ship was captured and kept in Nagasaki for two years before releasing him to the Dutch.



### SKILLS CENTRE

Turn to **How to Organize Historical Events** in the Skills Centre to review how to read a timeline like this.



## The Ainu

The Ainu are considered to be descendants of Japan's first Indigenous people, the Jomon, who anthropologists and archaeologists say came from Russia over 25 000 years ago. The Ainu appear quite different from the Japanese, having more hair, lighter skin, and facial characteristics similar to those of Europeans. They have their own language, which is unique and distinct from any other known language. Traditional Ainu believe that almost all natural things have a spirit. Throughout most of their history, the Ainu have not been accepted into the dominant Japanese society, as they were considered non-humans.

The Ainu originally occupied the territory from northern Honshu Island to the Kamchatka Peninsula and parts of the neighbouring Russian coast. They were self-sufficient fishers, hunters, and food collectors, and lived in permanent villages. From the beginning of the 13th century to the 18th century, they were involved in trading furs and other goods with the Chinese and Russians.

Under the Tokugawa shoguns (1603 to 1867), the Ainu were forced to sign an agreement that gave the Japanese the right to fish, hunt, and log the lands of the Ainu. Under the agreement, the livelihood of the Ainu was greatly altered. They could no longer have their own trade agreements with whomever they chose. They were forced to remain separate from Japanese society.

Under the Meiji government (1867 to 1912), life became even more difficult for the Ainu. As Japan became concerned about the Russian presence in the north, it declared Hokkaido a colony of Japan; the Ainu lost their political independence. Under this agreement, the Ainu were forced to **assimilate** with the Japanese. The Ainu language was forbidden and their customs and traditional ways of life were suppressed.

Today, only a small number of Ainu live in their traditional manner and speak the Ainu language. In 1992, the United Nations recognized the Ainu as Japan's Indigenous nation. Ainu activists are now working with government agencies to preserve the Ainu culture.



Ainu Elders at a cultural celebration

*I wonder ... how was the situation of the Ainu similar to that faced by Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit?*

### Japan's Proximity to Russia, 1800



The northernmost areas under Tokugawa control included a region on Hokkaido Island and the islands and areas north of it. The boundaries of these areas were ill-defined and not claimed by any country. Most of the area was inhabited by the Indigenous people, the Ainu, who traded fish and animal pelts with Japanese and Russian traders.

**assimilate:** to be absorbed into a larger group, often by giving up aspects of identity

*I wonder ... what do the Ainu believe about their origins?*

A simile compares two things by using the words *like* or *as*. This is a common way of explaining or describing a situation in language that people can understand easily. Takahashi said that foreigners were “like flies to a bowl of rice.”

*I wonder ... what other similes could be used to describe the attraction of foreigners to Japan?*

## The Influence of Europe

Between 1799 and 1815, most of Europe was embroiled in a series of wars. The Dutch station chief at Deshima was purposely slow in giving out any information about the events in Europe. Although the traders had operated almost independently of Holland’s government for many years, they now lost all direct contact with Holland. The Dutch East India Company, for whom the traders worked, decided to hire ships from other countries to carry on its trade in Asia. Since the Dutch were the only foreigners allowed to set foot in Japan, the ships were told to fly Dutch flags and hide any Bibles and weapons.

Eventually, Japanese officials decided it was important for high-level government officials to learn about the West. They started to import and translate books on European history, institutions, and military science, as well as astronomy and other sciences. Deshima became the centre of studies for government officials who were learning French, Russian, and English. Some Japanese officials believed that European languages were basically one language because all were written horizontally, not vertically, like Asian languages. They wondered if the Europeans were being devious and using different languages to fool their enemies. They also noticed that all Europeans dressed in a similar manner, unlike the people of Asian countries who had different traditional dress. The officials concluded that since all the languages and fashions were similar, there must be one superpower in Europe.

### Japan’s Response — Don’t Think Twice

The Bakufu decided to expel all foreigners *ni-nen naku* (*nee-nen-nah-koo*) — without thinking twice. This new edict began in 1825 on the advice of a government official named Takahashi. He had studied Western countries and felt that Japan should be even more restrictive because foreign ships and foreigners were gathering around Japan “like flies to a bowl of rice.”

Takahashi had learned that other countries did not allow foreign ships to dock without proper papers and protocol. Ships that tried to dock without these documents were turned away.

...Henceforth, whenever a foreign ship is sighted approaching any point on our coast, all persons on hand should fire and drive it off. If the vessel heads for the open sea, you should not pursue it. Allow it to escape. If the foreigners force their way ashore, you may capture and incarcerate them, and if their mother ship approaches, you may destroy it as circumstances dictate.  
— Takahashi

## The Influence of China

In 1842, China lost much of its sovereignty over its seaports when Britain won a war with China and forced it to sign a treaty that gave Britain special privileges. These included the right to land at specific ports, having low fixed tariffs on goods coming into and leaving China, and not having Chinese law applied to Westerners on Chinese soil. The treaty did not treat each side equally, and it left China with few ways to save face.

By signing the treaty, China was seen as weak. To add to China's humiliation, Britain extended these rights to all Western countries who wanted to trade with China.

### Japan's Response — Retreat and Ignore

In Japan, Bakufu officials were surprised that China had been forced to sign this treaty. In their view, China was a powerful country; they now realized how large and powerful the English forces were. They also noticed more American, Russian, and British activity along their own coastline. The combination of China's humiliation and the fear of British forces made the Bakufu reconsider the wisdom of the don't-think-twice edict. They decided to abandon it because they were afraid the policy might cause Britain and other Western countries to invade Japan if Japan did not start negotiating with them.

In 1844, King Willem II of the Netherlands sent a letter to the Bakufu recommending that they open Japan's doors willingly to the West because the Western countries were eager for more trade. The letter warned that if these countries were not welcomed, they might come in by force. Although Japan decided to abandon the don't-think-twice edict, the Bakufu responded by saying that it was impossible for nations to come in by force. However, by the time the answer reached the Dutch, foreign ships were already reaching Japan's harbours.

Allowing other people to save face is very important within many Eastern cultures, such as those of China, Japan, and Korea, and also within many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures. Saving face means dealing with other people in a way that prevents them from being embarrassed, or not allowing public situations to occur where a person could appear incapable, weak, or foolish.

*I wonder ... how would China's treaty with the West affect Japan?*

...The process is irresistible and it draws all people together. Distance is being overcome by the invention of the steamship. A nation that holds itself aloof risks the enmity of others. We are aware that the laws laid down by Your Majesty's enlightened predecessors limit exchange with foreign people severely. But as Lao Tzu says, "where wisdom is enthroned, its product is the maintenance of peace." When ancient laws, by strict construction, threaten the peace, wisdom directs that they be softened.

— King Willem II



## INFLUENCE

## Dutch East India Company

**monopoly:**  
the exclusive  
possession or  
control

In 1602, many small independent Dutch companies combined to form the Dutch East India Company. It became the largest and most impressive of all European trading companies. This company was the first multinational corporation in the world and the first to sell stocks.

The Dutch government granted the company a **monopoly** on Dutch trade in the area stretching from South Africa to India, and all the way to Japan. It had permission to build forts, appoint governors, keep an army, and sign treaties in its name. Between 1602 and 1796, the company sent almost 1 000 000 Europeans to work in the Asian trade. It had a major influence in world trade, with warehouses packed with exotic Asian goods: spices, textiles, porcelain, and silk.

Today, historians are able to learn a great deal about world trade and international business during the 17th and 18th centuries by studying the archives of the Dutch East India Company. The archives include the history and political, economic, cultural, religious, and social circumstances of the regions and people the Dutch traders encountered. There are notes about kings and nobles, traders and manufacturers, and shippers and harbour masters.

The Dutch East India Company was the only group that Japan would trade with, allowing them access through Deshima Island in Nagasaki. The Japanese began to learn about the West through contact with the Dutch.

By 1669, the company reached its peak of prosperity, with 150 trading ships transporting goods between ports in Asia and Europe. However, in the early 18th century, it suffered huge losses when the sugar market collapsed due to oversupply. Political instability in many of its trading areas was also disrupting the company's trade. The losses became too great, forcing the company into bankruptcy. It closed in 1798.

Map showing the region from the Cape of Good Hope in Africa to Australia and north to Japan. Van Keulen made this map in 1680 for the Dutch East India Company. It was in an atlas that the company kept secret from its competitors.

If the shelves of the Dutch East India Company archives in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and the Netherlands were combined, they would stretch more than four kilometres.



## The Influence of the United States

The United States also wanted trade relations with Japan. Japan was on the trading route to China and the Americans wanted to set up a coal station at one of Japan's ports so that they could get fuel for their steamships.

As well, the United States government wanted promises of assistance for any US sailors shipwrecked on Japan's shores. They were angered by tales of shipwrecked US sailors on whaling ships in the Pacific being refused help by the Japanese.

### The Crisis with America: Japan Feared for Its Sovereignty

- 1845** The American government sent a representative to Japan with the hope of discussing trade and establishing a coal station. The ship landed in Edo, but the captain was told that all foreigners had to go to Nagasaki. He didn't want to travel to Nagasaki and he didn't have orders to use force. The ship simply returned to China.
- 1853** Commodore Matthew Perry entered the harbour at Edo with four war ships, each more than six times the size of any ship in Japan. Unmoved by the presence of 5000 armed samurai, Perry met with the Japanese officials. Perry had several objectives:
- to get supplies and coal from Japan
  - to protect sailors and American ships that might need help
  - to enter into an official trade agreement with Japan
- 1854** Commodore Perry returned with an even stronger squadron. Instead of declaring war on Perry, the Bakufu signed the Treaty of Kanasawa. The Japanese felt that they had achieved a major goal because they had entered into an agreement that allowed them to maintain independent authority and control over their country. Although no trade agreement was specified, Perry's two other objectives were met:
- Two ports were to be opened to US ships and coal and supplies would be available there for American ships.
  - Shipwrecked sailors along the Japanese coastline would be helped.
- 1856** Townsend Harris, an American consul, was appointed to organize a more complex trade agreement. The shogun sought support for the treaty from the emperor, but did not receive it.
- 1858** After long negotiations, the Harris Treaty was finally signed. The treaty allowed Americans to live in Edo and Osaka under the protection of American law.
- 1863** Five ports were now open to the US, allowing goods to enter and leave Japan. The US also negotiated an agreement to supply Japan with ships, arms, and technicians.



Japanese perception of a United States city, print, 1861

### SKILLS CENTRE

Turn to **How to Organize Historical Events** to review how to read a timeline like this.





### Japan's Response — Internal Unrest

The Bakufu and the samurai had heated debates as to whether Japan should have conceded to the requests of the United States. Many leading intellectuals in the larger domains saw the agreements with Perry and Harris as favouring the United States and referred to them as the unequal treaties.

Eventually, Japan was also pressured to sign treaties with Russia, Britain, France, and the Netherlands. These treaties were also considered to be unequal. Many Japanese felt that the shogun was no longer in control and had been humiliated. He was no longer viewed as the subduer of barbarians.

Isolation was no longer possible. The leaders of Japan decided that they needed to compete with the West in order to meet the foreign challenges and protect Japan's sovereignty.

Japanese folklore refers to the huge ships of Commodore Perry as *kurofune* (*koo-row-foo-neh*), the black ships, because of their huge black iron hulls.

*I wonder ... is black ships also a metaphor for impending danger?*

*Foreigners' Ship: Steamship*, print by Hiroshige, 1861. This print shows a Japanese man and boy standing on the shore of a harbour in which is docked an American steamship, possibly Commodore Perry's ship.

## REFLECT AND RESPOND

- How does the Ainu loss of territory to the Japanese and the current regaining of Indigenous rights compare to the experience of Canada's Indigenous peoples?
- Imagine that you are an advisor to the Bakufu. Create a map for them that shows which foreign countries are having an influence on Japan.
- Work in a group to complete one of the following tasks:
  - Make a cause-and-effect diagram of the outside influences that made Japan think about changing its policy of isolation. Decide which type of diagram shown in the Skills Centre you want to use, or design your own cause-and-effect diagram.
  - Discuss how a change in the policy reflected a change in Japanese worldview.
  - Takahashi used a simile to express his concern about foreign ships when he said that foreigners were gathering "like flies to a bowl of rice." Find political cartoons that use similes to comment on current events. For each one, write a paragraph to explain what the simile means.
  - Imagine the negotiations between Commodore Perry and the Bakufu. Write a script for a re-enactment of the contact between them.

### SKILLS CENTRE

Turn to **How to Organize Information** in the Skills Centre to learn more about cause-and-effect diagrams.

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the exclusive  
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control

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## PROFILE

### Commodore Perry (1794–1858)

Matthew Calbraith Perry was born in Rocky Brook, Rhode Island, into a well-respected naval family in America. In 1809, at the age of 15, he joined the navy using the name of his older brother, Oliver Hazard Perry.

In 1837, Perry supervised the construction of a naval steamship, the *Fulton*, and became its first captain. He wanted the navy to build more steamships and became known as the father of the steam navy.

In 1841, he was promoted to the rank of **commodore** and, in 1843, commanded a schooner ship that sailed to Africa in the United States Navy effort to stop the transatlantic slave trade.

In 1850, Perry proposed a plan for diplomatic missions to Japan and three years later, left for Japan to negotiate a Japanese trade treaty. He was unable to secure everything he wanted on his first trip, but returned within one year with more ships and a greater show of force. A trade treaty was then signed between the United States and Japan.

Commodore Perry was instrumental in ending Japan's self-imposed isolation. Shortly after an agreement was signed with the United States, France, Britain, Russia, and the Netherlands soon negotiated similar treaties with Japan.

**commodore:** a former US Navy ranking above captain and below rear admiral



Commodore Matthew Perry played a key role in the relationship between Japan and the United States, opening up Japan to the West.

Signing of the US–Japan Treaty of Amity in 1854 in Yokohama. The tree on the right still stands at the Yokohama Archives building.





## FOCUS ON INQUIRY

### How Can Individuals Change the Way Others View the World?

*I wonder ... what kind of sources would scholars and samurai have used at that time?*

*I wonder ... what Western technologies are they talking about that would help Japan become more powerful?*

*I wonder ... how would I feel if ships six times as big as our largest ships landed on my island?*

Each person changes the world in some way. Family histories, community histories, and other histories are full of stories about those who have changed the way others look at the world. In Japan, Sakuma Shozan (*sah-koo-mah-show-zahn*) (1811–1864) and Yoshida Shoin (*yoe-shee-dah-show-een*) (1830–1859) were two such people.

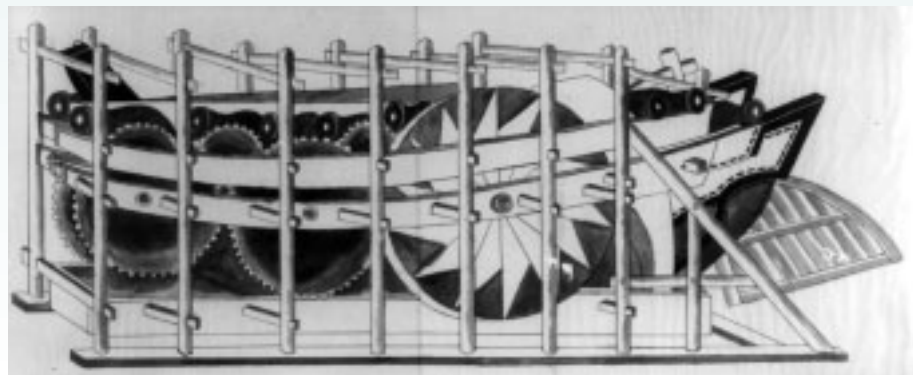
Sakuma and Yoshida were both inspirational samurai teachers who were interested in Western technology and also thought that war against the West was inevitable. They valued and taught the Confucian teachings of loyalty, dedication to society, and combining knowledge with action. They taught questioning and inquiry, along with the bushido ideals. They insisted that their pupils needed to have many experiences and to consider the good ideas from many sources. They urged their students to visit foreign countries to find out about foreign technologies such as guns and steamships.

Sakuma and Yoshida watched Commodore Perry's warships, the black ships, sail into the Edo harbour in 1853. When they studied the technology that powered the enormous steamships, both knew that if Japan were to win a war against the foreigners, it would have to know more about Western science. They believed that a mix of the strengths of the two worldviews, Eastern morality with Western skills, would make Japan more powerful and permit it to keep its independence.

Sakuma and Yoshida did not agree about what Japan should do to maintain its sovereignty and to become a world leader.

- Yoshida urged the overthrow of the Bakufu and wanted to return power to the emperor. He also recommended that Japan declare war on Korea and other neighbouring countries.
- Sakuma continued to work with the Bakufu and to promote the learning of Western technology.

Third panel of the *Machinery Scroll* depicting Perry's expedition to Japan in 1853, showing the paddle wheel mechanism of a side-wheel steamship



Yoshida believed in taking action to promote his point of view.

- He decided to find out more about the West by ignoring the ban on foreign travel and boarding one of the American ships. Both he and Sakuma, who was his teacher, were arrested and imprisoned.
- He wrote many political articles, some still in print today, against the Bakufu.
- He was arrested when he tried to assassinate one of the shogun’s officials. He was beheaded on November 21, 1859, two months after his 29th birthday.

Today, both men are heroes in Japanese folklore. Each had broken many of the nation’s laws, yet they were regarded as courageous and brilliant. They were examples of *shishi*, which means “people of spirit,” or “people of high purpose.”

*I wonder ... if I were a samurai at the time, which viewpoint would I take? Or what combination of viewpoints might I take?*

*I wonder ... how did Yoshida and Sakuma use their ideas to influence others?*

*I wonder ... in what ways were Yoshida and Sakuma influenced by foreigners?*

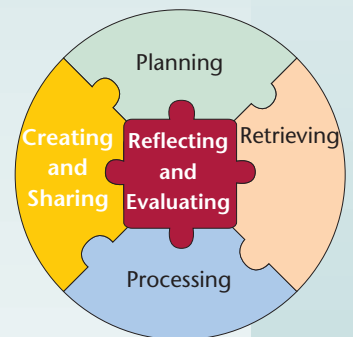
## Using Your Inquiry Skills

In this activity, you will practise parts of the Creating and Sharing phase of the inquiry process.

### How can individuals change the way others view the world?

Use the story of Sakuma and Yoshida as the starting point for understanding how people can influence others to change the way they act, think, or live. Plan to tell the story of someone you admire — someone who is, or was, influential and changed the world, even in some small way. Which element of worldview — culture, social systems, or political and economic systems — did this person impact the most?

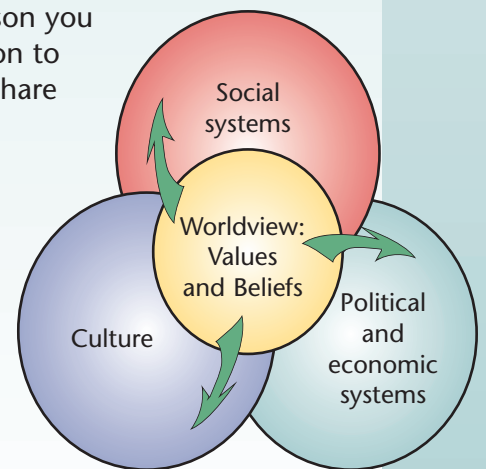
You can work alone or in a group. Begin by choosing a person you believe is an example of *shishi*. Collect and organize information to support your case. Then, create a communication product to share your ideas with others.



### Creating and Sharing Phase

#### Step 1 — Think about the audience

- Who will see the product that you are making?
- What does the audience already know about the person or topic?
- What do you need to tell them or to show them?
- What can you do to interest them in your message?



### *Step 2 — Create a communication product*

- What product format will you create?
- What messages do you want to present?
- Will an organizer, such as a storyboard, help you to plan the product?
- Have you made a rough sketch or a storyboard plan before making the final product?
- How can you share the work?

### *Step 3 — Revise and edit*

- Have you looked at the product with fresh eyes, as if you were a member of the audience?
- Have you asked someone to give you ideas about how to improve the product?
- Did you revise, rethink, and reorganize the information to improve the product?
- Do you have a good conclusion or ending? Does it show how this person changed how others view the world?

### *Step 4 — Present the product*

- How will you display or present the product in a visually appealing manner?
- Have you practised what you will say about the product so the audience understands your main ideas?
- How will you involve the audience in your presentation?

### **Reflecting and Evaluating Phase**

- What types of activities are involved during the Creating and Sharing phase?
- What were the different feelings you experienced in the Creating and Sharing phase?
- What would have improved your presentation?
- How do you think your personal point of view was influenced by this individual?



## How Did Japan Respond to the Crisis?

### Different Points of View

Two conflicting viewpoints caused a great deal of internal conflict in the Bakufu during this period.

- One group thought that it would only be a matter of time before Japan would be forced to trade with Western nations. This group believed that it would not be possible for Japan to remain isolated, but they did not want to be taken over by another country. They felt that Japan needed to use Western technologies to become more powerful and to remain independent.
- Another group believed that Japan could remain isolated, that it should declare war on the Western countries, and that all foreigners in Japan should be killed. This anti-foreigner group believed that “barbarians” would expose the common Japanese — the peasants, merchants, and artisans — to a different way of living and different technologies that would undermine the social structure and class system.



Tokugawa Nariaki (*toe-kee-gaw-wah-nah-ree-ah-kee*), the lord of the Mito (*mee-toe*) domain, argued against any agreements with the US and pressed for war. He also believed that the shogun should resign and the imperial court should be in charge of the government as a way to maintain national sovereignty.



Ii Naosuke (*ee-ee-nah-oh-soo-keh*), a powerful warlord and statesman who was Grand Councillor under the shogun, believed it was in Japan’s best interest to begin trade relations with the West. He argued that it was important for Japan’s future to gradually open its borders. Ii and his followers did not necessarily want permanent relations with foreign countries. They believed, however, that by signing the treaties, Japan could take the time to build enough strength to ban foreigners again in the future.

Tokugawa and Ii shared the same worldview, but they had different opinions about how Japan should deal with foreign influences. In a similar way, political groups in Canada share the same worldview but have different ideas about how to govern the country.



## Civil Unrest

In the mid-1800s, there was unrest across the country. Bad weather had caused poor crops and the farmers and peasants were starving. They began to question the taxes they were forced to pay. Some people began to question whether the government was to blame for the unrest because it could not overcome the difficulties; support for the Bakufu weakened. Citizens were asking questions about all the changes the government was making.

Many samurai began to support the emperor instead of the Bakufu. They were angry because the Harris Treaty had been signed against the wishes of the emperor. Many felt a stronger loyalty to him and the imperial court than to their daimyo and the shogun. The samurai activists were especially strong in Choshu, Satsuma, Tosa, and Saga, which were large domains that had never really supported the shogun. Some of these leaders had secretly travelled to England and did not actually fear the presence of the foreigners. They used the issue of foreign presence to fuel contempt for the Bakufu.

The critics of the shogun wanted to create a new government headed by the emperor. They worked to rally the people around this idea. They used the slogan “Sonno Jo” (*sone-no-jo*), which means “Revere the emperor! Expel the barbarians.” They began increasing their military armaments and even purchased weapons and ships from the West. Even groups of women broke with tradition to form military brigades to fight the shogun’s troops.

*Fighting Women’s Army of Kagoshima*, woodprint, 1877, by Nagayama Umosai. Fighting government troops in the Satsuma Rebellion.



The political situation was becoming chaotic. In 1867, samurai from Tosa convinced the shogun to resign and take a leading role in a new government. However, before this new government could be established, military forces from Satsuma and Choshu intervened. They proclaimed Meiji as the emperor. The new emperor quickly abolished the office of the shogun and ordered the Tokugawa family to surrender their ancestral lands.

The shogun responded with a military attack. The battle continued until the shogun's military forces were defeated in the spring of 1869. The city of Edo surrendered without battle. After centuries, the imperial court was once again the highest authority in Japan. The new emperor moved into the Tokugawa castle of Edo and renamed the city Tokyo, which means "Eastern Capital."

The Tokugawa Era, which had lasted more than 250 years, was over.

#### REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. a. What kinds of civil unrest did the Bakufu have to deal with during the 250 years leading up to the Meiji Period?  
b. Compare the arguments for and against opening Japan to foreign trade.
2. Work in a group to complete one of the following tasks:
  - a. Simulate an informal debate between the two sides of the argument about what Japan should do about foreign influences. One side should argue from the perspective of a member of the Bakufu; the other side should take the perspective of a daimyo who supports the emperor.
  - b. List the different ways that people in Japan tried to resolve conflicts during this period. Describe two other ways that they could have used to try to resolve their conflicts peacefully and fairly.
  - c. Select a political situation that is currently in the news and has two sides to the issue. Analyze the situation by doing the following:
    - State the position of each side of the argument.
    - List the strategies used by each side to influence public opinion.
    - Think about how this situation compares with Japan during the late Edo Period when people had different ideas about how to deal with foreign influences.
  - d. In what ways can Canadians show their support for policies relating to a particular issue, whether political, social, or economic? How might Canadians show support for or concern about particular individuals?



## How Did the Political System Change?

**inviolable:** not to be violated or injured

**regalia:** distinctive, elaborate, or emblematic clothing or decorations

*I wonder ... do today's politicians sometimes create stories around people or events to influence citizens' views?*

The Meiji leaders used the creation story to their advantage when they declared the emperor sacred and **inviolable**. They tried to appeal to the Japanese traditionalists and build loyalty to the government by using the young emperor as a symbol of unity. The creation story about the emperor made it impossible for the Japanese not to revere him. Traditional processions and festivals welcomed him wherever he travelled, and he became an icon to bind the country together.



Emperor Meiji (1852–1930) was a symbol of unity. The surviving son of Emperor Komei, he ascended the throne on February 3, 1867, at the age of 14. *Meiji* means “Emperor of Enlightened Rule.”

### Origin of the Emperors of Japan

This is the creation story about the Japanese emperor, a traditional story about how things in the world began. The sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami (*ah-mah-teh-rah-soo-oh-mee-kah-mee*), presented the imperial **regalia**, or *sanshu no jingi* (*sahn-shoo-no-jeen-gee*), to her grandson, Ninigi no Mikoto. He then passed these items on to his descendants, who were the emperors of Japan.

The regalia consisted of a mirror, a sword, and a carved jewel — symbols of the legitimacy and authority of the emperor. The ancient Japanese believed the emperor had magical powers and could talk to the gods.

The emperor was considered a divine being until after World War II when a new constitution made him a symbol of the state.

## The Charter Oath

The organizers of the takeover knew it was important to gain the confidence of all of the domains in the new government. They wanted other samurai to know that this new government was not the same as the old Bakufu.

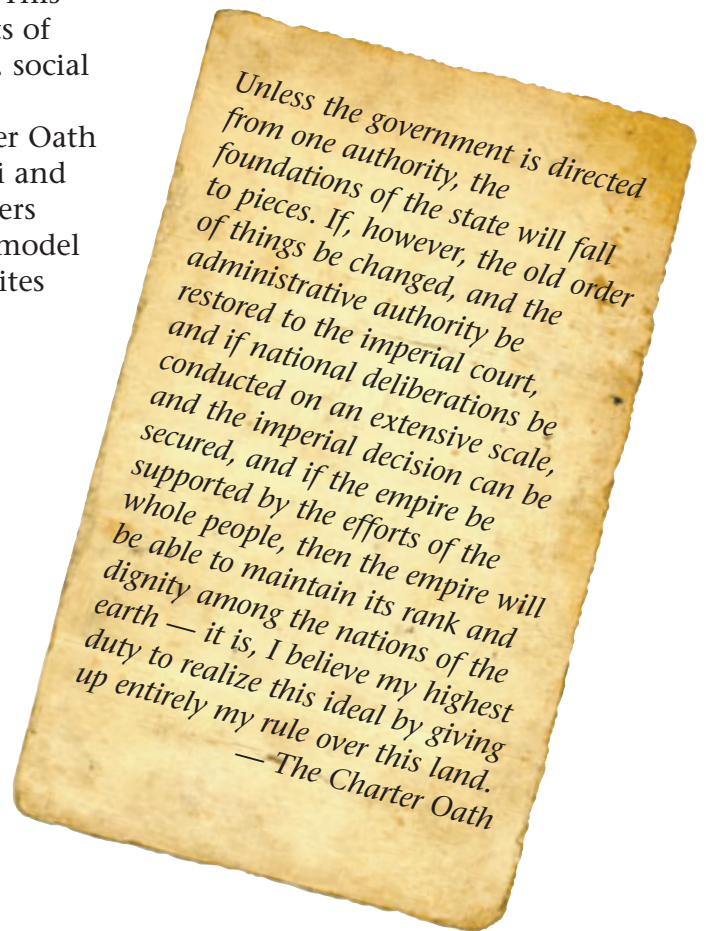
In April 1868, Emperor Meiji signed the Charter Oath that outlined the goals of the new regime. It decreed that future policies would be based on the consensus of the daimyo of all domains.

It took many drafts to write a charter that all of the domains would support. In its final form, the language of the Charter Oath was broad enough to satisfy the points of view expressed by all who worked on it. This charter showed change in all three elements of worldview: political and economic systems, social systems, and culture.

The ritual ceremony in which the Charter Oath was presented included both Emperor Meiji and members of the new government. The leaders hoped that this would be viewed as a new model for Japan, which they called the Unity of Rites and Rule.

The new government was formed as a result of a **coup** that restored the emperor as head of the government. The last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu (*yoe-shee-noe-boo*) (1837–1913), resigned because the samurai convinced him that Japan needed a strong central government to keep the country united, to maintain Japanese traditions, and to make the necessary changes to deal with outside powers.

**coup:** from the French expression *coup d'État*, the sudden violent overthrow of a government



### The Charter Oath

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of the state.
3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue their own calling so that there shall be no dissent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be ended and everything shall be based on the just laws of nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of Imperial rule.

This signalled that leaders who did not participate in the coup would be consulted in the formation of a national policy. It suggested to ambitious former samurai, without directly stating it, that they would not be left out of building the new regime.

This was a challenge to the old class structure of Japan and a plea for national unity. The status-class system that existed under Tokugawa rule was to end. Members of all classes would be involved in state affairs.

This statement promised to abolish the feudal system, creating opportunities for social and occupational mobility. Individuals would be free to travel and live where they wished.

The evil customs referred to the status-through-heredity practice of the Tokugawa Era. It was important that, under the new rules, men of talent would be rewarded on merit, not on family connections. Major changes in how the country would be governed and who would be able to have government positions were implemented.

This statement shows that Japan believed opening its boundaries to foreign knowledge would increase its power. The old desire to expel the barbarians would no longer be part of the political beliefs.

#### REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. How did the restoration of imperial rule unify Japan as a nation?
2. Imagine that you were there when the Charter Oath was written. Work in a group to discuss the different points of view that could have been presented as the leaders developed the wording of the clause. How can you reach consensus?
3. Imagine what it would have been like to become the emperor at age 14. Find out more about Meiji using library sources and the Internet. Begin by listing the questions that you wonder about.
4. Research the roles and responsibilities of today's emperor of Japan. Which Canadian political role is most similar to that of Japan's emperor: the Prime Minister or the Governor General?



## Same Time, Different Place

### Advances Around the World, Late 1800s, Early 1900s

During the Meiji Period, as Japan was becoming a more modern nation, new ideas, inventions, and discoveries continued to appear around the world. Find other discoveries to add to this timeline.



#### Washington, DC, United States — 1866

The United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, although racial discrimination continued.

#### Newfoundland and Britain — 1866

A transatlantic cable between Europe and North America was successfully laid down. This allowed almost instant communication through telegraphs and Morse code.

#### Suez Canal, Egypt — 1869

The Suez Canal, an idea of Ferdinand de Lesseps of France, was officially opened, joining the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, dramatically shortening the distance for European ships to reach the Far East.

#### Nova Scotia, Canada — 1876

Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, making possible instant voice communication across wire.

#### France — 1880s

French physician E.J. Maily made the first motion pictures.

#### North Carolina, United States — 1903

Orville and Wilbur Wright flew the first powered heavier-than-air aircraft.

# How Did Japan Reshape Its Worldview and Begin to Modernize?

## New Leadership

Although the emperor was the official head of the government, he did not rule directly. The men who had overthrown the Tokugawa Bakufu formed an oligarchy and were in charge. They created changes in Japan that promoted economic growth and industrialization. Their slogan was “Enrich the country; strengthen the military.”

The leaders of the new Meiji Era were young, intelligent samurai who were eager for change. When they came to power in the Meiji government of 1868, their average age was only 30. All had academic and military skills, many had travelled to other countries or had met Westerners in Japan, and many had studied under Yoshida or Sakuma. Like Yoshida, most were originally against foreigners, but they revised their opinions when they realized the quality of Western technology and believed it could prove beneficial for Japan.

They had two key goals:

- to modernize Japan and make the economy grow
- to renegotiate the unequal treaties

To accomplish this, they realized Japan had to change politically and economically to negotiate from a position of strength. They wanted Japan to be seen as an equal partner in any treaty agreement.

The challenge of the Meiji leaders was to develop a nation that would be competitive in the modern world and yet continue to be Japanese.

When the call for the restoration of the imperial court first arose, it was a call to restore traditional ways. After the fall of the Tokugawa, however, the new leaders decided that Japan must remake its society. They wanted to distance themselves from old traditions and build a new, modern Japan.

These new leaders wanted models they could apply to the rebuilding of Japan. They looked to Western nations for these models because they saw Europe and North America as being wealthy and powerful.

Through this process, Japan's worldview changed drastically. For generations, the samurai had feared and distrusted any foreign presence in the country. Now Japan welcomed what foreigners had to offer. Foreign educators and experts in manufacturing and industry were invited to assist with the move towards modernization. The new Meiji leaders even sent half their members abroad to learn about the institutions, laws, and customs of the successful Western nations.

Japan's mission, headed by Prince Iwakura, leaves Yokohama in 1871 for the United States, Europe, and other regions.



**representative government:**  
a government in which  
decisions are made by  
elected representatives

## The Iwakura Mission

In 1871, the new government sent 50 officials and 50 students on a 22-month world trip of 12 countries. The purpose of the voyage was to find the best ideas around the world and bring them back to Japan.

Iwakura Tomomi (*ee-wah-koo-rah-toe-moe-mee*) (1825–1883), a leader in the government, led the mission as the Chief Ambassador of Japan. The two Vice Ambassadors were Kido Takayoshu (*kee-doe-tah-kah-yoe-shoo*) and Okubo Toshimichi (*oh-koo-boe-toe-shee-mee-chee*). Iwakura chose a young scholar, Kume Kunitake (*koo-meh-koo-nee-tah-keh*), as the mission recorder. The progress of the mission was recorded in Kume's daily journal, and his final report was completed in 1878.

Kido wrote in his diary:

**Our people are no different from the Americans or Europeans of today; it is all a matter of education or lack of education.**

The ambassadors made these conclusions:

- The West is wealthy and powerful because these nations have representative governments. Our people need to participate in government. The Charter Oath should be used as the foundation for a national constitution that will shape the laws of Japan. However, we should be cautious. **Representative government** should not be considered until the people are ready for a parliamentary system of government.

- We have seen the importance of religious freedom in the lives of both Americans and Europeans.

- Governments can encourage private enterprise and business innovation.

- The world in which Japan will be competing is based on the Western values of competition, participation, and colonial expansion.

The most urgent matter was to change Japan's education system. The delegation was very impressed with educational institutions in Germany and the United States and used them to develop a new educational system for Japan.

The ambassadors recognized that there were different models of participatory government. While in France, the French scholar Maurice Block warned them against moving too quickly towards a government based on representation.

No other nation they visited banned Christianity, so they instituted religious freedom upon their return.

A new education system would have to develop the appropriate knowledge and technical skills for this to happen. However, the mission also understood that Japan had to develop its own model for economic advancement.

The leaders understood that Japan must carefully choose the models to successfully modernize Japan.



The ambassadors concluded that Japan was not in any immediate danger of losing its independence to another nation. They recommended that Japan modernize its society. They noted that the Western nations had made enormous gains since the early 1800s; Japan was not hopelessly behind as they had feared.

### Iwakura Mission, December 1871–September 1873



- 1 Great Britain
- 2 France
- 3 Belgium
- 4 Netherlands
- 5 Russia
- 6 Prussia
- 7 Germany
- 8 Denmark
- 9 Sweden
- 10 Austria
- 11 Italy
- 12 Switzerland

### The Modernization of Japan

The Meiji Period includes the time and events from 1868 to 1912 that led to the restoration of imperial rule and the entire period of change that occurred during the reign of Emperor Meiji. Historians often refer to this time as the beginning of modern Japan.

The Japanese were in a position to rapidly move towards industrialization because of the legacy left by the Tokugawa rule. The economy under Tokugawa had prospered. The last shogun had invited Western experts to the country to assist Japanese engineers and technicians with Western technology. Some Japanese were ready for change. The country was well-positioned to face new challenges.

No other country in the world had ever sent its *government* on a voyage of exploration, such as the Iwakura Mission.

#### REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Why did Japan gather ideas from the West? What types of ideas did they decide were the most important to consider?
2. Pick one these questions and discuss it in a group:
  - a. How could Japan become modern and, at the same time, keep its traditions?
  - b. How did the worldview of Japan change during the Meiji Period?
  - c. What were some of the mottos and slogans used by the Japanese leaders to spread ideas and values? What are some examples of mottos or slogans used nowadays in Canada to influence opinions?

# End-of-Chapter

## Conclusion

Japan could not maintain its policy of isolation. There were external and internal pressures for it to open the doors to the rest of the world.

External Pressures	Internal Pressures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The world economy was more and more being fueled by trade between countries. When the Western nations began trading with China, it was inevitable that they would want to trade with Japan.</li> <li>• Russia was making its presence felt in the northern islands. Japan took over Hokkaido, harming the Ainu people.</li> <li>• More European nations wanted to trade with Japan, but the Dutch were the only nation allowed. Other countries' ships pretended they were Dutch and managed to trade with the Japanese.</li> <li>• China had been a very powerful country in the region. When China lost its power to Britain and other European countries, Japan realized how powerful the Europeans were becoming in the region.</li> <li>• The United States sent warships; they suggested threats of invasion if Japan did not sign a trade treaty. They signed a treaty that began opening Japan up to the world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the Japanese government sent young men to study at Deshima, they were exposed to new ideas and philosophies of the West.</li> <li>• Young intellectuals in the Bakufu believed that for Japan to remain an independent nation, it had to open its doors. Many of them secretly visited Western nations.</li> <li>• Civil unrest in the country reduced support for the Bakufu. Citizens questioned whether the Bakufu were weak and unable to take care of the country.</li> <li>• Enemies of the shogun and the Bakufu used the civil unrest and the signing of the unequal treaties to their advantage. They began to call for the return of the emperor to rouse feelings of nationalism.</li> </ul>

A new government was formed. Its policy was to keep Japan united and maintain Japanese traditions, yet make changes to Japan's government, economy, and social systems. The government sent the Iwakura Mission to visit major Western countries to gather information that it would use to begin the modernization of Japan. The government introduced the best of what Japan found in the West that allowed it to modernize and remain strong, stable, and independent.

## Review and Synthesize

1. Use a graphic organizer or map to summarize all of the influences that led to change during the Meiji Period.
2. In groups, create a television news story about one of the key events in this chapter and present it to the class. Include the what, who, when, where, why, and how of the event so that the audience can understand why it was important. You will need to imagine that television fits in with this time period, even though it hadn't been invented yet!
3. In groups, simulate a discussion among the new leaders of Japan as they try to make a decision about one of the issues facing them. Prepare to act out the discussion for the whole class by selecting an issue, deciding who will represent each position on the issue, and what steps the group will take to make a decision. Review what you learned about Compromise and Consensus in the Worldview Investigation on page 165.

## Inquiry

4. Demonstrate what you have learned about the Creating and Sharing phase of inquiry by telling the story of an influential person from the late Edo and early Meiji Periods in Japan. Think about different types of products or presentations that you could make, such as a biography, a television documentary, or acting the part of the person. Work in groups to collect and organize the information you will need about the influential person. Then, work alone to complete the product or presentation.

## Show What You Know

5. Imagine that you are a reporter for the *Meiji News*, a fictitious newspaper during the Meiji Era in Japan. You have been given the assignment of covering one of the major news stories and given one of the following headlines:
  - Shogun Resigns!
  - Emperor Returns to the Throne
  - Charter Oath Promises Change
  - Iwakura Mission ReportsSelect one of the headlines and write a news story for the *Meiji News*.
6. Create a cause-and-effect diagram to explain why Japan decided to change radically during the Meiji Period.
7. Compare the arguments for and against opening Japan to foreign trade.

## Closure

8. **Share:** In groups, create metaphors for the transition from the Edo to Meiji Periods. Decide how you will share your metaphor with the class.
9. **Discuss:** What can Canada learn from Japan's experience with rapid adaptation?
10. **Reflect:** As you grow older and have new experiences, how does your worldview change? Do you have core values that you believe will never change?