

Background Essay Reading Guide

Directions: Read the essay on Meiji and Taishō Japan to answer the questions below.

A. Meiji Japan

1. In one or two sentences, describe the main concerns of the leaders who established the Meiji government in 1868. What did they want to accomplish for their country?
2. When the Meiji period began in 1868, Japan had several large urban centers and a well-developed commercial economy, but it was still a largely rural country with little industrial or technological development. By the end of the period in 1912, however, Japan was a highly industrialized, modern country that had defeated major Asian (China) and Western (Russia) powers in war and gained the status of a modern country. For each category below, describe the changes that took place in Japan under the Meiji government to create a modern nation.
 - a. Armed forces/military
 - b. Social and economic classes
 - c. Education
 - d. Type of government/political system
 - e. Transportation and communication
 - f. Industry
 - g. Social changes
3. What were three key areas of the economy that Japan developed and modernized during the Meiji period?
4. How did Japan become recognized as a world power?

B. Taishō Japan

1. The Meiji period was followed by the Taishō era (1912-1926), named for the ruling emperor. Dramatic changes took place in the Taishō era. Taishō democracy is a term often attached to this period because of political changes. How did politics change from the Meiji period to the Taishō?
2. What social changes took place during the Taishō period?
3. What happened to literacy levels during Taishō Japan?
4. Who were the “moga”?
5. In 1924, a popular novel was published that featured a young woman named Naomi. What was the point of this novel?