

Korea & Japan Geography Lesson

Instructions: Read the notes on Korea and Japan below. Answer the questions that follow. Place your answers into ONE Google Doc and share it with me (kwelgoss@wscschools.org).

Notes

Geography of Korea

Korea is located on a peninsula that juts south from the Asian mainland with its tip pointing toward Japan. Mountains and the Yalu River separate Korea from China.



Mountains & Seas

Low, but steep mountains, cover nearly 70 percent of the Korean peninsula. The most important range, the T'aebaek, runs from the north to the south along the eastern coast, with smaller chains branching off to form hilly areas. Since farming is difficult on the mountains, most people live along the western coastal plains, Korea's major farming region.

Korea has a 5,400 mile coastline with hundreds of good harbors. In addition, the offshore waters feature thousands of islands. Since earliest times, Koreans have depended upon seafood for most of the protein in their diet. Today, South Korea has the third largest fishing industry in the world.

The Impact of Location

Korea's location on China's doorstep has played a key role in its development. From its powerful mainland neighbor, Korea received many cultural and technological influences. At times, China extended political control over the peninsula. Throughout its history, Korea has also served as a "cultural bridge", linking China and Japan. From early times, Koreans adapted and transformed Chinese traditions before passing them on to Japan.

Despite the strong ties, the Korean language is unrelated to Chinese. The earliest Koreans probably migrated eastward from Siberia and northern Manchuria during the Stone Age. They evolved their own ways of life before the first wave of Chinese influence reached the peninsula during the Han dynasty. In 108BC, the Han emperor Wudi invaded Korea and set up a military colony there. From this outpost, Confucian traditions, and Chinese ideas about government, as well as Chinese writing and farming methods, spread to Korea.

Geography of Japan

Japan is located on an archipelago, or chain of islands, about 100 miles off the Asian mainland. Its four main islands - Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku - lie to the east of the Korean peninsula.



Land and Sea

Japan is about the size of Montana, but four fifths of its land is too mountainous to farm. As a result, most people settled in narrow river valleys and along the coastal plains. A mild climate and sufficient rainfall however, helped Japanese farmers make the most of the limited arable land. As in ancient Greece, the mountainous terrain at first was an obstacle to unity.

The surrounding seas have both protected and isolated Japan. While it was close enough to the mainland to learn from Korea and China, Japan was too far away for China to conquer. The Japanese thus had greater freedom to accept or reject Chinese influences than did other East Asian lands. At times, the Japanese sealed themselves off from foreign influences, choosing to go their own way.

The seas that helped Japan preserve its identity also served as trade routes. The Inland Sea was an especially important link between various Japanese islands. The seas also offered plentiful food resources. The Japanese, like the Koreans, developed a thriving fishing industry.

Ring of Fire

Japan lies in the Pacific region known as the *Ring of Fire*, which also includes the Philippines, Indonesia, and parts of Australia and South America. This region is subject to frequent earthquakes and volcanoes. Violent underwater can launch killer tidal waves, called tsunamis, that sweep over the islands without warning, wiping out everything in their path. The Japanese came to fear and respect the dramatic forces of nature. Today, as in the past, soaring Mount Fuji, with its snow-capped volcanic crater, is a sacred symbol of the beauty and majesty of nature.



Early Traditions

The people we know today as the Japanese probably migrated from the Asian mainland more than 2,000 years ago. They slowly pushed the earlier inhabitants, the Ainu, onto the northernmost island of Hokkaido.

Yamato Clan

Early Japanese society was divided into uji, or clans. Each uji had its own chief and a special god or goddess who was seen as the clan's original ancestor. Some clan leaders were women, suggesting that women held a respected position in society. By about AD 500, the Yamato clan came to dominate a corner of Honshu, the largest Japanese island. For the next 1,000 years, the Yamato Plain was the heartland of Japanese government.

The Yamato set up Japan's first and only dynasty. They claimed direct descent from the sun goddess, Amaterasu. The rising sun, therefore, became their symbol. Later, Japanese emperors were revered as living gods. While this is no longer the case, the current Japanese emperor still traces his roots to the Yamato clan.

Shinto Religion

The kami, or clan gods and goddesses, were generally nature spirits. This worship of the forces of nature became known as Shinto, meaning "the way of the gods." Shinto never evolved into an international religion like Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam. Still, its traditions have survived to the present day. Hundreds of Shinto shrines dot the Japanese countryside. These Shinto shrines are dedicated to special sites or objects such as mountains or waterfalls, ancient gnarled trees, or even oddly shaped rocks.

Assignment #1

Questions

1. Between which two countries is Korea located?
2. What geographic feature makes up 70 percent of the Korean peninsula?
3. Where do people in Korea tend to live? Why do they live in that region?
4. What is the main industry in Korea today?
5. What impact has Korea had as a cultural bridge, linking China and Japan?
6. Why is it that Korea developed its own language?
7. During which dynasty did Chinese influences make their way to Korea?
 - a. What early ideas made their way from China to Korea?
8. What is the geographical shape of Japan?
 - a. What are its 4 main islands?
9. What makes up most of the surface of Japan's land?
 - a. Where do most Japanese people live?
10. How have the surrounding seas impacted Japan?
11. Was China successful in conquering Japan? Why or why not?
12. What is the main industry of Japan?
13. What is the Ring of Fire?
 - a. How has being a part of the Ring of Fire impacted Japan?
14. How was early Japanese society divided?
 - a. What was unique about each uji?
15. What family set up Japan's first dynasty?
 - a. From whom did they believe they descended?
16. What are kami?
 - a. What did kami evolve into in early Japan?
 - b. What are shinto shrines to?

Japanese Feudalism Lesson

Assignment #2

Instructions: Watch the following video clip **up to 9:30 ONLY** and answer the questions that follow. Place your answers into your Google Doc and share it with me (kwelgoss@wscschools.org)

VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZqvmlKSgZc>

Questions

1. From the 12th to 16th century, what kind of society developed in Japan?
2. What was the decentralized feudal society like?
3. What are the levels of the Japanese Social System (Feudal System)?
 - a. Describe the power and function of each part of this feudal system.
4. In 1603, who unified Japan?
5. What was the government like under the Tokugawa Shogunate?
 - a. What was the goal of the Tokugawa Shogunate?
6. How measures does Tokagawa Ieyasu take to limit the power of the Daimyo?
7. How did the Chinese impact Japanese culture?