

Background Essay 7:

Matthew Perry

TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE Japan enjoyed more than 250 years of relative peace and stability between 1600 and 1850. The country had been well organized by the shogun, Ieyasu Tokugawa, whose family continued to control the government, generation after generation. But many of the Tokugawas that followed Ieyasu were not strong leaders. They gave many responsibilities of government to administrators and daimyos. Now, they could spend more time enjoying their wealth and privilege. But the Tokugawas lost the respect and fear that Ieyasu had once commanded.

JAPAN REMAINS CLOSED During the Tokugawa shogunate, Japan remained closed to foreign trade and influences. Except for the port at Nagasaki, Japan had no way to know about progress in the rest of the world. Japanese citizens were forbidden to leave the country. The Tokugawa government ordered that no ocean-going ships were to be built. Foreigners attempting to land on Japanese soil, even if by accident, were often punished by death. The Japanese favored and developed those things that were Japanese, such as the tea ceremony, and the Kabuki and No theater. But the government discouraged and outlawed those things introduced by foreigners. Muskets, once introduced by the Portuguese, were now banned. The sword was once again the weapon of choice for the samurai. The Christian religion also remained banned in favor of Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism. Japan progressed little in the 250 years of Tokugawa rule, preserving a society like no other on earth.

PERRY ARRIVES A time for surprise and awakening for the Japanese occurred in 1853. Late that year, Commodore Matthew Perry, an American, sailed into a Japanese harbor with his four steam-powered warships. These modern vessels were equipped with massive guns of the latest design. The Japanese had developed no new weapons in the past 250 years, and they knew they were powerless to resist these modern weapons of war. Although Perry had no authority to use the guns against the Japanese, the show of power shocked the Tokugawa government. Perry's warships frightened the Japanese, but his mission was actually one of peace. He wanted Japan to once again open its doors, at least to American sailors. Perry brought a friendly letter from the president of the United States and presented it to the Tokugawa government along with Western gifts that demonstrated the progress of the outside world. The Japanese were especially fascinated with a sewing machine and a miniature railroad. Commodore Perry stayed only 10 days, then sailed off, promising to return in the spring.



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*Perry
 returned to
 Japan in
 1854*
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PERRY'S SECOND VISIT Commodore Perry returned to Japan early in 1854, this time with 10 steam-powered warships. But Perry's return was once again friendly, and the Japanese were courteous to him. They had spent the past few months thinking about how far behind many other nations Japan had fallen. Plans to open Japan to ideas of the Western world were discussed by the shogun and the emperor. The Japanese, proud of their past, never being conquered by another country, knew that a change had to come. A treaty was signed by Japan with the United States. It provided that shipwrecked U. S. sailors would be treated kindly, and not be beheaded, that U. S. ships could dock and purchase provisions in Japan, and that a representative of the United States government could live in Japan. With this treaty, Perry had successfully opened the doors between Japan and the modern world.

FALL OF THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE The powerful foreign nations had experienced an amazing degree of development in the past 250 years, while Japan, with its doors closed to the outside world, had changed very little. The Japanese knew that something had to be done. For the past 2,000 years Japan had never been conquered by another nation. The proud Japanese recalled the divine beginnings of their country with Jimmu, descendent of the gods. All the emperors of Japan had been relatives of Jimmu, and no one wanted the line of royalty to end now. The Tokugawa government could not decide what should be done. Finally, Emperor Meiji took control of the government, ending the Tokugawa rein of power.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF JAPAN

Directions:

Read the information below about the geography of Japan. Use the NORTH, EAST, SOUTH and WEST direction markers on the compass rose to help you find the important locations on the map. Then fill in the names of the locations on the map.

Japan is an archipelago, or a chain of islands, located in the Eastern and Northern hemispheres. This small but densely populated nation is made up of four main islands and hundreds of smaller islands.

The main island farthest to the north is (1).

South of Hokkaido is the largest of the islands, (2).

(7) is the smallest of the main islands, and it is surrounded by the (6).

The main island farthest south is called (9).

(10) is the largest city on Kyushu.

(3) is the capital city of Japan. This modern city is located on Tokyo Bay and is one of the world's largest cities. In earlier times Tokyo was known as Edo.

Near Tokyo is the famous and beautiful (13), where many Japanese people enjoy hiking, sightseeing, and meditating.

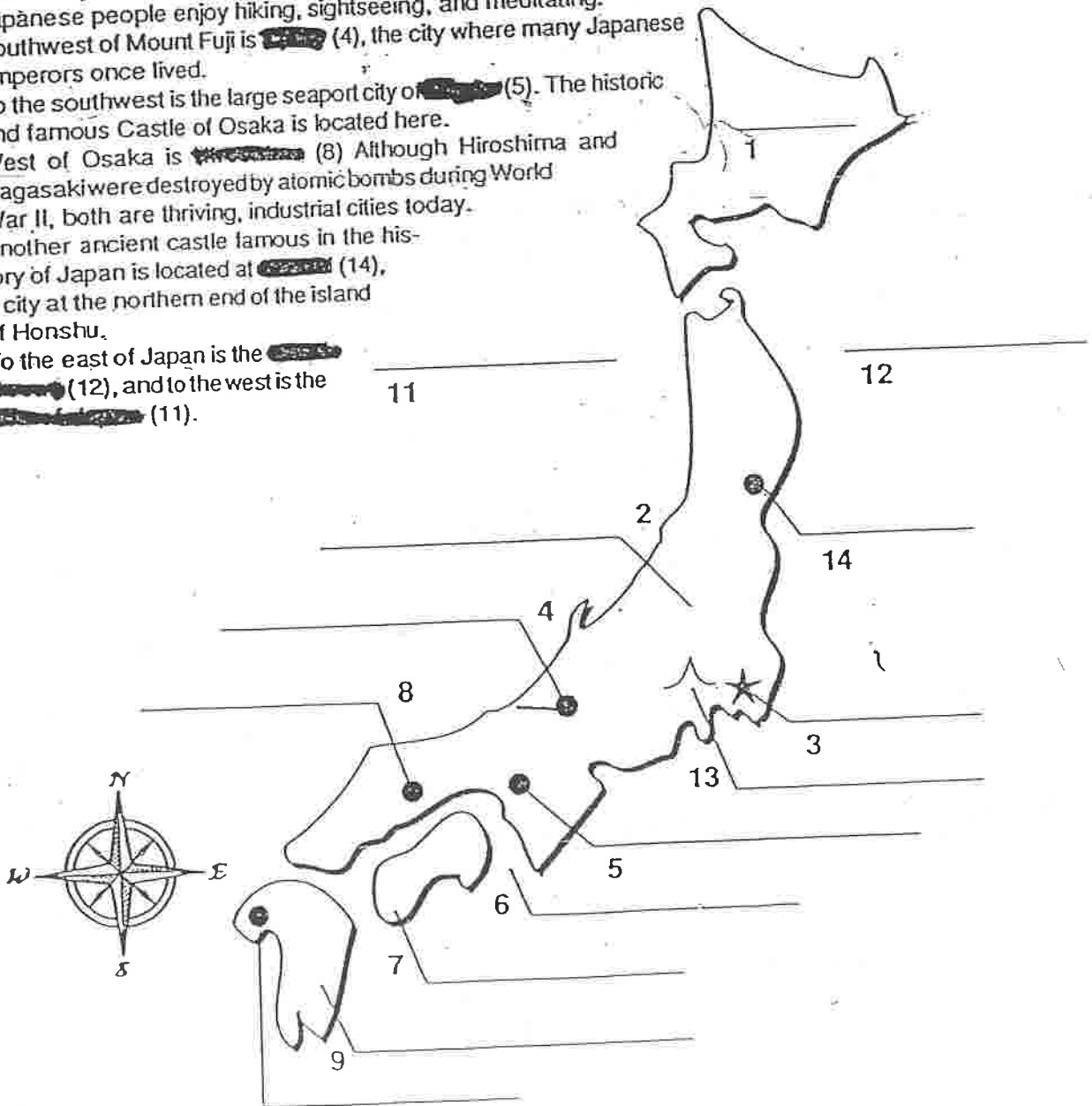
Southwest of Mount Fuji is (4), the city where many Japanese emperors once lived.

To the southwest is the large seaport city of (5). The historic and famous Castle of Osaka is located here.

West of Osaka is (8) Although Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by atomic bombs during World War II, both are thriving, industrial cities today.

Another ancient castle famous in the history of Japan is located at (14), a city at the northern end of the island of Honshu.

To the east of Japan is the (12), and to the west is the (11).



ESSAY OBJECTIVE TEST 7

1. The Tokugawa shogunate ended after more than 250 years of power?
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. For many years, this city was the only port that foreigners were allowed to visit.
 - a. Tokyo
 - b. Kyoto
 - c. Nagasaki
3. Who was the American that opened trade with Japan in 1854?
 - a. Commodore Perry
 - b. General MacArthur
 - c. President Wilson
4. Japan changed very slowly after it opened to world trade in the 1850s.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. On what type of ships did the United States arrive in Japan?
 - a. Steam
 - b. Sailing
 - c. Cruise
 - d. Submarines
6. The number of times Japan had been conquered by another nation between the time of Jimmu and 1854.
 - a. None
 - b. Once
 - c. Twice
 - d. Thrice

Questions

