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Edo Japan: A Closed Society



FIGURE 14-1 This is a monument to Ranald MacDonald in Nagasaki, Japan. What does this monument indicate about Japanese attitudes toward him?

WORLDVIEW INQUIRY

In what ways might a country's choice to remain isolated both reflect its worldview and result from its worldview?

1848. Ranald MacDonald, a twenty-four-year-old Métis, insisted that he be set adrift in a small boat off the coast of Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan.

The captain and crew of the *Plymouth*, the American whaling ship that Ranald MacDonald was leaving, tried to persuade the young man to stay with them. Why did he want to enter a country that was known to execute strangers? When the rudder from his boat was later found floating in the sea, word was sent to North America that the young Métis was dead.

Ranald MacDonald was the son of Princess Raven, a Chinook, and Archibald MacDonald, a Scottish official of the Hudson's Bay Company. He grew up in the Pacific Northwest of the early 1800s. As a child, he had heard of three Japanese sailors who were shipwrecked and landed up in Fort Vancouver. Ranald MacDonald was fascinated by these men and the country they came from, a country that would not let them return.

As Ranald MacDonald grew, so did his plan to visit Japan. He felt a connection between his Chinook ancestry and the Japanese. He dreamed of becoming an interpreter and teacher, to gain fame and fortune when Japan would eventually open up to the world.

Why do you think the sailors who had accidentally landed in Canada weren't allowed to return to Japan?



In This Chapter

In the last chapter, you read about the high value put on honour, duty, and harmony in Edo Japan. Japanese society differed from the others you have studied in its desire and ability to cut itself off from the rest of the world. In Europe from 1600 to the 1850s, the exchange of goods and ideas affected the way people lived and thought. On the other side of the world, the Japanese experienced less change and became more certain of their identity. But no society is free of challenges. How would Japanese leaders respond to challenges from outside? How would their actions affect life within Japan?

Locking Out the World

Why and how did Japan isolate itself from the rest of the world?

What's in a WORD?

"Per capita," which means for *each person*, is from the Latin for *by heads*.

FYI...

In 1597, acting on a rumour that missionaries were spies for Spain, the ruling shogun arrested six missionaries and twenty Japanese converts, and put them to death by crucifixion. Executed for their religious beliefs, these were the first Christian **martyrs** in Japan.

How many people do you know who are immigrants to Canada? Historically, Canada has been a country that has encouraged immigration. Between July 2004 and 2005, Canada received 244 600 immigrants. During that same period Alberta received 17 400 international immigrants. Canada has one of the highest **per capita** immigration rates in the world. How do high rates of immigration fit into your worldview?

In the early 1500s, Japan had welcomed Portuguese traders and their fashions and firearms. But by the time Ranald MacDonald entered Japan in 1848, the attitude toward outsiders had changed. Foreign ships were being fired on and driven away. How did this come about?

Threats from the West

By the late 1500s and early 1600s, the ruling shogun came to consider foreigners a threat to his military control. If the daimyo acquired European weapons, they might challenge the shogun's authority.

New Ways of Belief and Thought

The shogun felt that loyalty to a Christian God and the Church were threats to his authority. In 1614, he responded to rumours about takeover plots by foreigners by ordering all Christian missionaries to leave the country. Churches were destroyed and Japanese Christians who refused to give up their new faith faced execution. This persecution lasted until 1640, by which time it is estimated that many thousands of Japanese Christians and about 70 missionaries were put to death.



FIGURE 14-2 This early 17th century folding screen by an unknown artist records the arrival of exotic looking Portuguese merchants. If you were the shogun, how might you react to these foreigners?

When the shogun ordered the Christian daimyos to give up their new religion, they usually followed his orders. However, converted ronin and peasants were more defiant. Japanese writer Masaharu Anesaki comments on the shogun's response:

It must have been quite inconceivable to him [the shogun] how these people without power and wealth could resist the ruler's will, unless they were mysteriously seduced and supported by a foreign power. They were clearly traitors who deserved the sternest punishment.

Cutting off Contact

Missionaries continued to come to Japan, usually disguised as traders. As a result, shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu (Ee-ay-meet-see) passed isolation, or exclusion, laws. The penalty for breaking any of these laws was death.

Terms of the Exclusion Laws

- ◆ All Christian missionaries and foreign traders were forced to leave Japan. Newcomers were no longer allowed to enter.
- ◆ The Japanese were not allowed to go abroad.
- ◆ Ships large enough to make long voyages could no longer be built and existing ones were destroyed.
- ◆ Japanese who were out of the country were forbidden to return.
- ◆ Most foreign objects were forbidden. All foreign books containing a Christian message were banned; scientific books were forbidden.

In addition, the shogunate tightened controls on movement within Japan. People needed to get special documents to travel from one domain to another, a curfew was instituted to keep people from moving around at night, and wheeled transport was banned.

SKILL POWER

A poster may convey values and a point of view as well as information. When you look at a poster ask yourself:

- What is the purpose of the poster? Who is the intended audience?
- How does the text on the poster communicate the purpose?
- How has the designer used the image to reinforce the text?

Create a poster to present a message conveying information and a point of view about freedom of speech in Canada.

Think IT THROUGH

Why do you think the lower classes were more likely to defy the shogun's orders and keep their new religious beliefs? Why did the missionaries risk death to try to convert the Japanese? Use elements of the worldviews icon to support your ideas.



FIGURE 14-3 Apply the skill power questions to this poster.

FIGURE 14-4 This woodblock print called *Sueyoshi's Junk* was created in 1633. Before Japan became a closed society, ships like this one were used to trade with Asian countries. Why were vessels like this later destroyed?



Think IT THROUGH

How do you think isolation from the rest of the world might affect the following aspects of a society: level of technology, economic development, and attitudes toward change?

In 1639, the shogun banned Portuguese ships in Japan and expelled all foreigners except for Dutch, Korean, and Chinese traders. The Dutch were only allowed on a small island in the harbour of the city of Nagasaki. From the shogun's point of view, the isolation policy was essential for national security. It was the only way to eliminate possible threats to his power and to protect the Japanese culture.

FAST FORWARD

Closing Borders

In recent times, countries including the US, Great Britain, Spain, and Canada, were forced to seal their borders because of security threats.

On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked by terrorists who used hijacked airplanes as their weapons. The US responded by immediately sealing its borders. No ships were allowed to dock and unload. Planes heading to the US from all over the world were not allowed to land. Many planes were forced to land in Canadian airports. Even when the US reopened its borders, new, stricter security measures were put in place. Closing the borders was a drastic measure in difficult circumstances.

In August 2006, British security uncovered a terrorist plot to blow up 10 planes in mid-air between the United Kingdom and the United States. As a result, much tighter controls were placed on items that passengers could bring onto planes in their hand luggage.



FIGURE 14-5 When the United States sealed its borders, long line-ups of cars and trucks carrying trade goods were stopped at the Canadian border.

Think IT THROUGH

Although the citizens of the United States did not have the same tradition of loyalty and obedience as the Japanese, they accepted the government's restrictions, even after the borders reopened. How do you explain this?

Problem Solving Using Lateral Thinking

Lateral thinking is a particular way of approaching a problem. Follow these steps:

- Look at problems from many angles.
- Reframe problems based on the multi-angle perspective.
- Challenge your underlying assumptions.

Consider this “classic” lateral thinking problem to see how looking at a problem from many angles and then reframing it can help.

A truck stops at a road just before a bridge. The vehicle is bit too high to pass under—by 2 or 3 cm. Vertical thinking says the driver must turn the truck around and find a different route. The frustrated trucker is about to get back in his truck and do just that when a boy on a bicycle comes by and speaks to the driver. Five minutes later, the truck passes safely under the bridge. What do you think the boy said?

How many of you bike-riders suggested the trucker let some air out of the tires? Lateral thinking helped the boy look at the problem from a different angle than the truck driver. The trucker saw the problem as the bridge being too low. Vertical thinking tells you that you can only go around it. The



FIGURE 14-6 What problem might these students face planting this tree?

boy, however, saw the problem as the truck being too high. How could you make the truck lower?

Applying lateral thinking can help you identify underlying assumptions and challenge them. Here is another “classic” lateral thinking problem:

A father and son are involved in a car accident, and the son is rushed to hospital for emergency surgery. The surgeon says, “I can’t operate on him. He’s my son.” Who is the surgeon?

Many of you will realize right away that the surgeon is the boy’s mother, but several decades ago, this puzzle stumped most people. An underlying assumption in their thinking was that a mother could not *also* be a surgeon.

Try It!

1. One of the reasons the Tokugawa shogunate passed the isolation laws was because it saw the West as a threat to Japanese culture. In other words, it saw the problem as the West. If someone had been able to restate the problem as the “need to protect Japanese culture,” what other possible solutions to the problem might have arisen?
2. Think of a problem you, your classmates, or your community are currently facing. What is the problem? How many ways of stating it can you and your classmates come up with?

The strangely parallel stories of two young men, one a 17th-century European, the other a 19th-century Japanese, show how individuals can sometimes influence the outcome of historical events.

Will Adams: From England to Japan

William Adams, a ship's pilot, set sail for the Far East in 1598. By the time his ship anchored off Japan, only 24 of the original crew of 110 were still alive. When Adams stepped on land in 1600, he was the first Englishman to arrive in Japan.

Adams and the crew were first arrested as pirates and imprisoned, but it did not take long for Adams to become Tokugawa Ieyasu's personal advisor. Ieyasu was impressed with Adams' knowledge and commissioned him to help build Japan's first Western-style ship. The shogun even wrote a letter to the king of England, inviting the English to visit Japan and start up communication and trade between the two countries. It seemed that Japan might become a more open society, thanks to Adams. The English, however, did not take up the shogun's offer.

Yet Adams might also have contributed to the exclusion laws that would later close Japan's doors to Westerners. When questioned about



FIGURE 14-7 The story of William Adams was the basis for the novel, and later the popular TV miniseries, *Shogun*. Why do you think that hundreds of years later, Westerners were so interested in Adams' experiences in Edo Japan?

European ways, Adams told the shogun stories about the Spanish Inquisition—how the Roman

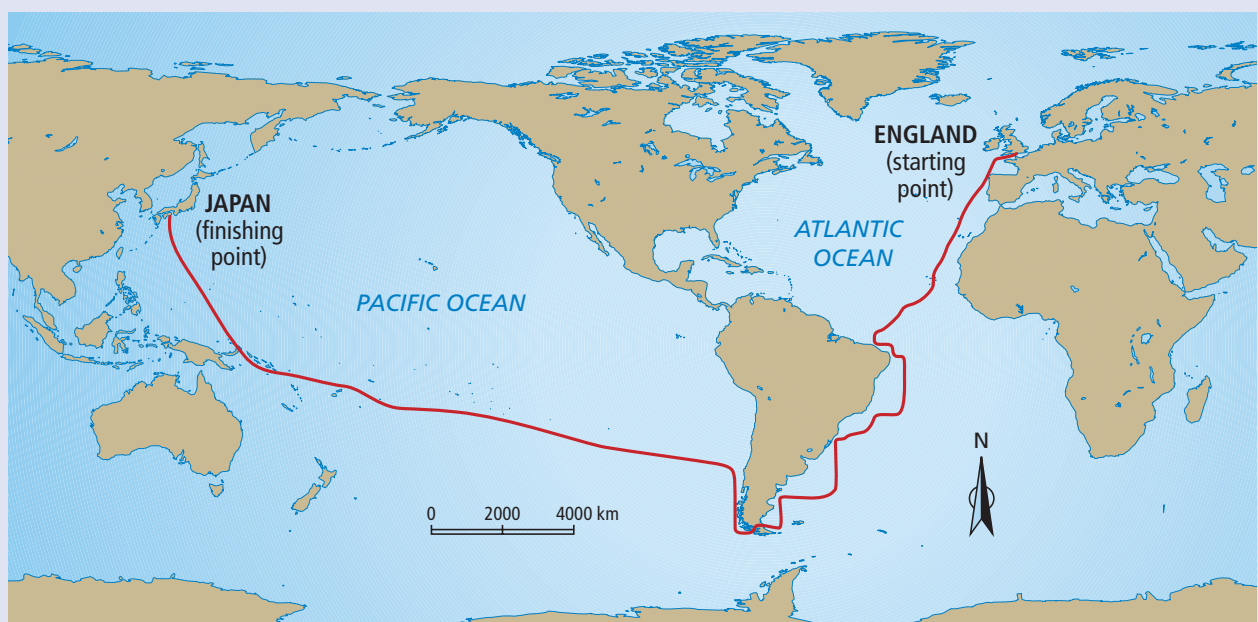


FIGURE 14-8 William Adams's route to Japan

Catholic Church persecuted those who opposed its teachings. These stories caused the shogun to become more suspicious of Europeans, intentions. He and later his son Tokugawa Hidetada (Hee-day-tuh-duh), moved to expel most foreigners.

Adams was granted the social status of a samurai with the Japanese name Miura Anjin (Mee-oo-ruh Un-jeen). He married a Japanese woman and they had a son and a daughter. After 13 years in Japan, Adams was given permission to leave, but he decided that his ties to Japan were too strong. He remained in Japan until his death in 1620 at age 56.

Nakahama Manjiro: From Japan to America

More than 200 years after Adams became the first Englishman to set foot in Japan, a Japanese man named Nakahama Manjiro (Mun-jee-ro) became the first citizen of Japan to set foot in the United States. His story reads almost like fiction.

Like the Japanese sailors who so intrigued Ranald MacDonald, 14-year-old Manjiro and four



FIGURE 14-9 This is Manjiro. Is he presented in the same way as other samurai? Why or why not?

other fishers were caught in a fierce storm that took them far out to sea. Eventually, they shipwrecked on a deserted volcanic island. In 1841, they were rescued by a passing whaling ship and taken to Hawaii. There, the four men found work, but Manjiro accompanied the ship's captain to live in Massachusetts. He was given the name John Mung and was enrolled in school. In 1849, Manjiro went to California to prospect for gold, and had some success in making his fortune. He decided it was time to go home to Japan, despite the great risks.

When Manjiro arrived in Japan, he was imprisoned according to provisions of the exclusion laws. But he was not executed, despite countless trials. He was too valuable to the shogun. Manjiro spoke fluent English and knew much about the West.

When the American Commodore Perry arrived in Japan in 1853, the shogunate sent for Manjiro. He provided background knowledge for the Japanese, but he was not allowed to translate, except for letters. Japanese officials feared that he would be too sympathetic to the Americans. Manjiro did succeed in getting his countrymen to soften their attitude to the American "barbarians."

Like Adams, Manjiro helped instruct the Japanese in shipbuilding and naval training and, even though he had been a peasant when he was lost at sea, he was awarded the rank of samurai. In 1860, when the Japanese sent an embassy to the United States, Manjiro went along as a navigator and an interpreter.

- What do you think might have made Tokugawa Ieyasu build Western-style ships?
- Why were the experiences and points of view of Adams and Manjiro considered valuable by the shogun?
- In the 1800s, thousands of people rushed to California, lured by the promise of gold. Would Manjiro have had the chance to make his fortune this way in Japan?

FYI...

Around 1720, the shogun introduced the Western calendar to Japan. It would let farmers predict growing seasons more accurately than the traditional Japanese calendar, and improve crop production. He also arranged for Western watches and the knowledge of watch-making to be brought to Japan.

Think IT THROUGH

Consider a dilemma:

Imagine you are a Dutch scholar. The exposure to new languages and ideas is making you question the values and attitudes you have grown up with. Will you ask the shogun to release you from your job? Or will you come up with another solution to your situation?

Exceptions to the Exclusion Laws

While all other Europeans were being expelled from Japan, a small number of Dutch traders were allowed to remain. The shogun considered them less threatening because they were interested in trade, not religion. Nevertheless, the Japanese took no chances. The families of the Dutch traders were not allowed to join them, and their Japanese servants were forbidden to talk with them. Once a year the Dutch were required to make an expensive trip to Edo to pay their respects to the shogun and stay there for three months. There, officials asked them many questions about the West, especially about current events and developments in medicine. How does this compare with the way the shogun controlled the daimyo through alternate attendance (see pages 285–286)?

The shogun also had a small number of Japanese scholars learn about Dutch medicine and the Dutch language. They were called the **Dutch scholars** and were directed to educate themselves about Western ways. The sons of samurai were also sent by their daimyo to study the Dutch language.

There were some positive responses to Western studies in the 1700s. For example, around 1720 importation of European books into Japan was allowed, with the exception of books on Christianity. Also, the shogun encouraged the study of astronomy and had an observatory built in Edo in 1744. Most Japanese, however, were not exposed to the new ideas of the West. The shogun feared that these ideas might “confuse” them and make them forget that they owed absolute obedience to him.



FIGURE 14-10 This 1804 image by an unknown artist is called *Deshima off Nagasaki*. The Dutch were confined on this tiny island in Nagasaki harbour, with guards stationed at the bridge and police spies planted among them. What details in this painting identify this location as the Dutch settlement at Nagasaki?

A New Way of Thinking

The shogun’s advisors told him of a new way of thinking in the West. It was the scientific method you read about in Chapter 4.



FIGURE 14-11 Pieter van Musschenbroek did early experiments on electrical charges.

People of the red-hair country [the Dutch and English] customarily do things by mental reckoning and by reason; they only use implements they can see; if a fact is not certain, they . . . do not make use of it . . .

- From what you know of the Japanese beliefs and view of the world, how might they react to the idea of trusting only what can be seen?

Maintaining Rule in Japan

While all of this was happening, Japan maintained its feudal system. The economy was tied to agriculture, and social classes were rigid and unchanging. The shogun was determined to prove that Japan was strong, that his rule was strong.

Think IT THROUGH

The Tokugawa shogun put in place the “closed country period.” How does this illustrate the effect of leadership on worldview? Explain.

Over to YOU

1. a. Using the template below, create a cause-and-effect diagram.

Hint: Remember to include the exceptions to the isolation of Japan in the effects.



1. b. Using the causes from your diagram, consider what effects might result if these factors were applied to Canada today. Write a letter to the editor of a national newspaper, presenting your ideas as to whether or not there are threats to the safety and identity of Canada. Include suggestions as to how Canada should handle such threats.

2. What is meant by the expression “thinking outside the box”? Compare thinking outside the box with the Building Your Skills on Problem Solving Using Lateral Thinking on page 309. Is thinking outside the box the same as lateral thinking?
 - a. Think of a decision you need to make soon or a problem you must solve. What steps you do need to take?
 - b. Now jot down some ideas for thinking “outside the box.” How might this step change your plan of action?
3. To what extent should Manjiro be subject to the Japanese exclusion laws, which forbid contact with foreigners? Prepare an argument from Manjiro’s point of view, and one from the Shogun’s point of view. Conduct a horseshoe debate: should he be completely exempt or should he be imprisoned or killed?

Change Within Isolation

In what ways did isolation lead to political, economic, and social changes in Japanese society?

During the Renaissance and the period of history known as the Enlightenment that followed it, there was a positive attitude toward change in Europe. Progress was seen as a beneficial force; there seemed to be no limit to the good it could bring to society. To what extent do you think that these attitudes are shared by Canadians today? What is your attitude toward change and progress?

Attitudes Toward Change

What did Ranald MacDonald find when he reached what he referred to as “mysterious dread Japan”? It was a stable society that had changed little in 250 years. Edo Japan had had a long time to establish its own particular kind of society—the result of interaction within the country.

SKILL POWER

The dictionary defines the word “progress” as “improvement,” but some improvements can also have negative effects. Using the chart below, explore some examples of *faster*, *bigger*, and *improved* changes to your life. For each example, think of a positive and a negative effect.

	Example	Positive	Negative
Faster			
Bigger			
Improved			

FIGURE 14-12 This is a painting of the Battle of Balaklava on October 25, 1854, during the Crimean War. The Japanese did not have any of this turmoil. How do you think this affected their worldview?



Toward an Ideal Society

The Japanese wanted to live in a society that embodied the things that were important to them:

- ◆ Peace, safety, and security
- ◆ Harmony, respect, and a sense that everyone has his or her place
- ◆ Leisure time and opportunities for personal expression and enjoyment of the arts, sports, entertainment, and crafts.

The peace and security in Edo society came at a cost. Life was controlled by rigid rules. People could not move from the social class of their birth and they were not encouraged to think for themselves. There was little personal freedom, such as the freedom of expression.

The Influence of the Shogun

In Chapter 13, you read how the Edo shogun increased their political power and control over the people. As an uninvited stranger in Japan, Ranald MacDonald knew that he risked execution. The shipwrecked Japanese sailors he had encountered in British Columbia were not allowed back into Japan because their contact with other cultures might “contaminate” Japanese society.

But not all threats to peace and order come from outside a country’s borders. Crime also disrupts life. Bandits, robbers, and pirates were common in most countries at this time, but social controls and the threat of harsh punishments under the Tokugawa shogunate effectively discouraged this kind of behaviour in Japan.

A Booming Economy

Long periods of stability and peace usually result in more wealth for a country. In some ways, Edo Japan had a booming, or expanding, economy.

- ◆ Farmers increased production by irrigating and growing two crops on the same piece of land during one growing season.
- ◆ Road improvements financed by the daimyo helped increase trade.
- ◆ The population increased in urban centres.
- ◆ Silver and gold coins were introduced as currency, or money.

On the other hand, little foreign trade, the overtaxing of peasants, and the continued use of rice for payment in most transactions held the economy back.



FIGURE 14-13 In Japan, police boxes, or *kobans*, are located in every neighbourhood. Officers at these mini police stations give directions and help citizens with accidents, theft, and other emergencies. How do you think the constant presence of law enforcement might affect the behaviour of Japanese people?



FIGURE 14-14 This 18th century image by an unknown artist is called *Sado Gold Mine*. It shows gold coins being stamped and weighed. After centuries of an economy based on rice, what challenges might people face in switching to a money economy?



Since there was little trade with foreign countries, Edo Japan had to rely on its own natural resources. Forests cover most of Japan, and the Japanese built their buildings mostly from wood. They burned wood to heat homes and cook food. Forests were cut to create more farmland. Over time, the vast forests started to dwindle. The loss of trees contributed to soil erosion and floods, which in turn caused famines.

Then in 1657, a fire destroyed half of Edo and more wood than ever was needed to rebuild. This catastrophe became the wake-up call for the nation. The shogun ordered conservation and woodland management. The Japanese became the first people to learn how to scientifically replant forests from seedlings.

- Based on what you know about the values and political structure of Japan, why were the Japanese so successful at restoring their forests?



FIGURE 14-15 Today, Japan has the highest percentage of forested land among developed nations; however, that area may seem small to us. How do you think a Japanese person might react to the vast forests of Canada?

- What values and attitudes need to be balanced in Canada today to achieve forest management and conservation?

VOICES

What Makes a Society Civilized?

Lord Elgin: Japan Is Civilized

Lord Elgin, a British representative in Japan, was impressed with the civilized society he found in Edo Japan:

A perfectly paternal [fatherly and protective] government; a perfectly filial [respectful and loyal, like a son] people; a community self-supporting; peace within and without; no want [poverty]; no ill will between classes. This is what I find in Japan after one hundred years' exclusion of foreign trade and foreigners.

Peter Tasker, *The Japanese: A Major Exploration of Modern Japan.*

Commodore Perry: Japan Is Uncivilized

Commodore Perry, the first American to arrive in Japan, wrote in his journal that the Japanese were a “singular [remarkable] and isolated people.” However, he went on to say that the Japanese still hadn’t joined “the family of civilized nations.”

Think IT THROUGH

1. What criteria did Lord Elgin use to define “civilized”? What is your response to his criteria?
2. What are your criteria for judging whether a society is “civilized”? To what extent is Canadian society civilized?

A Golden Age of Culture

As a direct result of the peace and prosperity of Edo Japan, the arts and culture were able to flourish. Many things we associate with Japanese culture to this day developed during the years of isolation.

LINK UP

In Chapters 3 and 4 you read about the explosion of creativity that took place in Renaissance Europe. ■



FIGURE 14-16 *Kabuki*, shown here, is a form of theatre. Male actors played both male and female roles. The productions are lavish and sometimes violent. What other society do you know of that restricted theatrical roles to males only?



FIGURE 14-17 The purpose of the rituals of the Japanese tea ceremony is to bring enjoyment and peace of mind to the participants. Can you think of other rituals with these aims?



FIGURE 14-18 *Sumo wrestling* originated in ancient times as a religious performance. It became a popular form of entertainment in Edo Japan as shown in this 1864 print by Kunitzuna Utagawa. What other sports do you know of that had religious or spiritual beginnings?

FIGURE 14-19 *Haiku* was a new poetry form in the Edo period. The formal structure of syllables paints a brief word picture that offers insight into life. What other poetic forms can you think of?

In the sky at night
Stars known as "the rice basket,"
Blossom like flowers.



FIGURE 14-20 In puppet theatre, or *bunraku*, large—almost life-sized—puppets enact the ordeals of separated lovers or duelling samurai.

FIGURE 14-21 This woodblock print was done in the early 18th century by Torii Kiyomasu. It is called *Street vendor of illustrated books*. About half of the male population could read—a higher literacy rate than in most European countries of the time. Why do you think literacy rates are historically limited to male readers?



FIGURE 14-22 The Japanese used woodblock prints to advertise as shown in this 19th century kabuki poster. These advertisements were often outstanding works of art themselves. Do you consider advertisements today works of art? Why or why not?



FIGURE 14-23 During the peace and prosperity of the Edo period, the emphasis of Japanese martial arts, such as *kendo*, shifted from teaching the techniques of how to kill people to developing the person, especially the samurai, through a well-disciplined life.

The Floating Worlds

Cultural activities, like *kabuki* and *noh*, took place in areas called the floating world. There the rules and controls of Tokugawa society were relaxed. The merchant's money counted for more than the samurai's rank or status. Once they had fulfilled their duties to their occupation and family, men could temporarily unwind and enjoy themselves.

The shogun tried to suppress the *kabuki* theatre and discouraged the samurai from wasting their time and money. But, rather than closing the businesses in the floating world, the authorities kept these entertainment districts under surveillance. What important purpose might the floating world provide in a tightly controlled society such as Japan?



FIGURE 14-24 *Noh* was a musical dance drama. The actors wore masks that symbolized character types and spiritual states. Why do you think masks were used?

FYI...

The shogunate issued many laws to try to control people's behaviour. In fact, some of these laws were either ignored by the people, or they found ways around them. In other words, the laws of a country do not always reflect an accurate picture of how people in the country live. Can you think of any examples of this in Canadian society?

Over to YOU

- Using an organizer like the one below, fill in the ways Japan changed politically, economically, and socially during the period of isolation.

Political Changes	Economic Changes	Social Changes

- Consider elements of Japanese life that did not change because the isolation of Japan was enforced by law. Organize these elements by social class.
- A society's values are usually the same as those of most of the people making up that society. What happens when individuals have different values?
 - Make a list of Canadian society's values. Compare it with a list of your own individual values. Are they the same? If not, what, if any, action do you take to assert your own values?
 - Write a profile of a character whose values are completely in conflict with your list of Canadian values. Include the ways that the character expresses these values.
 - List all of the leisure activities in which you participate. Rank them from your favourite to least favourite. Re-rank them based on most to least expensive. Write two observations about the relationship between leisure activities and the need for wealth. Compare these observations and develop a theory about prosperity in Japan during the Edo period.

Cracks in the Foundation

How did isolation contribute to the end of Japan's closed, feudal society?

Ranald MacDonald found much to admire about the Japan he had dreamed of visiting. His first contact was with the Ainu, who greeted him warmly. Once in the hands of Japanese officials, he was repeatedly questioned about himself and the outside world. The officials realized that MacDonald's ability to speak English might be useful to them in dealing with future visits by American and British ships. He was given the job of teaching English to a group of 14 interpreters. One of his students, Moriyama Einosuke (Mo-ree-yuh-muh Aye-no-skay), played an important role in the negotiations between the Japanese government and Commodore Perry in the 1850s.

After ten months in Japan, MacDonald left on an American war-ship. He travelled widely during his life but he wrote:

[T]here are none to whom I feel more kindly—more grateful—than my old hosts of Japan; none whom I esteem more highly.

Zoom In > A Global Language

If you went to Japan today, you would find many people your age wearing T-shirts and other clothing items that have English words on them. David Crystal, an internationally recognized scholar of the English language, argues that English has become the global language. Media such as Hollywood movies and popular music, and the globalization of trade are two factors that have contributed to the position of English worldwide. Today, English is

the language most used to express technical concepts. In an age of rapidly changing technology, especially in the area of communications, this has also helped to spread English. The Japanese language changed little during the Edo period. However, modern Japanese is full of terms adopted from other languages, especially English.



FIGURE 14-25 For the last half of the 20th century, most Japanese were eager to learn English. How might the spread of English affect the ideas and attitudes of societies around the world?

Changes Within Japan

Japan's feudal society, which had been established by the shogun in times of conflict and poverty, was becoming outdated. No matter how hard most shogun discouraged change, they could not stop the clock.

The Class System in Upheaval

Toward the end of the Edo period, merchants gained wealth and power because more people needed their services. The merchants were in charge of storing rice and converting it into cash or credits. They also lent money at a time when everyone needed loans.

Peasants needed money to pay their high taxes. Because of the high cost of alternate attendance and road construction, many daimyo were nearing bankruptcy. There was little real work for the samurai, and many were too proud to take other jobs. Some even survived by marrying the daughters of merchants, going against strict social rules.

Everyone looked for someone to blame. Often, that was the shogun and his extravagant officials. Some people claimed that the Tokugawa clan held power illegally, and that their power rightfully belonged to the emperor. In fact, the emperor had not actually ruled for many centuries.

Disasters and Hard Times

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, Japan was struck by many natural disasters that brought about famines and took many lives. A third of the population died of starvation. Land was deserted as peasants fled into the cities, where often they could not find work. Rice was so scarce that its price rose steeply. City dwellers rioted over price increases and attacked the homes of the wealthy. Many people felt that the shogunate's responses to these problems were ineffective.

LINK UP

In Chapters 1 and 2 you read about the changing social structures in late Medieval and Renaissance Europe. What similarities can you see between this period in European history, and the Edo Period in Japan? ■

FYI...

By the end of the 1700s, Edo was a bustling commercial centre with a population of about a million people. It was the largest city in the world.



FIGURE 14-26 Homeless people are a concern in Canada today. Approximately 200 000 Canadians are homeless. Young people under the age of 18 make up the fastest growing segment of homeless people.

Catfish and Commodores

As you read in Chapter 12, a Japanese legend explains that earthquakes are caused by a giant catfish called Namazu. In 1855, after the second visit of Commodore Perry, Edo (now Tokyo) was shaken by a powerful earthquake that killed over 7000 people and destroyed 14 000 buildings. For the Japanese, this earthquake showed that there was something very wrong with society and that the gods were trying to fix it up. Immediately after the earthquake, artists began to make Namazu-e prints giving their ideas about the situation.

One view of Perry's Ships

In this print, Namazu is shown as a huge whale, which is sprouting money, not from its blowhole, but from the spot where a smoke stack would be on a steamship like that of Commodore Perry's. The people on the shore are waving Namazu closer to shore, so that they can get the money.



FIGURE 14-27 This anonymous print produced in 1855 is called *The shaking of greater Edo*.

Another view of Perry's Ships



FIGURE 14-28 Produced in 1855, this print by an anonymous artist was called *An exchange with the namazu of the great earthquake, second year of Ansei, second day, tenth month, nighttime*.

This print shows Namazu and Commodore Perry having a tug-of-war and an argument. In the text above the figures, Namazu begins by saying:

You stupid Americans have been making fun of us Japanese for the past two or three years. You have come and pushed us around too much . . . Stop this useless talk of trade; we don't need it . . . Since we don't need you, hurry up and put your back to us. Fix your rudder and sail away at once.

Journal of Social History

Think IT THROUGH

1. What two points of view about the arrival of Perry do the prints illustrate?
2. These prints are similar to the editorial cartoons in modern newspapers. Find three editorial cartoons and discuss how the cartoonists used images and words to communicate a message about a current event.

The Expansionist Threat from Outside

By the early 1800s, several nations were knocking on Japan's door. Russia, England, and the United States, in particular, requested trade, or at the very least, water and coal for their passing ships. In 1825, the shogunate responded with the "No Second Thought Expulsion Order":

... whenever a foreign ship is sighted approaching any point on our coast, all persons on hand should fire on it and drive it off.... If the foreigners force their way ashore, you may capture and incarcerate [imprison] them and if their mother ship approaches, you may destroy it....

Anti-Foreignism

VOICES

Views from the West

A Matter of Rights

A British newspaper declared:

The compulsory seclusion of the Japanese is a wrong, not only to themselves but to the civilized world... The Japanese undoubtedly have an exclusive right to the possession of their territory; but they must not abuse that right to the extent of the barring all other nations from a participation in its riches and virtues.

W. G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*.

A Matter of Economics

When Perry arrived in Japan in 1853, he carried a letter from the American president that said, in part:

Our great State of California produces about sixty millions of dollars in gold every year, besides silver, quicksilver, precious stones, and many other valuable articles. Japan is also a rich and fertile country, and produces many very valuable articles. Your imperial majesty's subjects are skilled in many of the arts. I am desirous that our two countries should trade with

each other, for the benefit both of Japan and the United StatesIf your imperial majesty is not satisfied that it would be safe altogether to abrogate [ignore] the ancient laws which forbid foreign trade, they might be suspended for five or ten years, so as to try the experiment.

If it does not prove as beneficial as was hoped, the ancient laws can be restored. The United States often limit treaties with foreign States to a few years, and then renew them or not, as they please.

Think IT THROUGH

1. What criteria did the British use to decide that Japan was wrong? Were they justified in saying that Japan didn't have the right to exclude other nations from its riches?
2. From the American perspective, why was trade between Japan and the US a good idea?
3. In his letter to the Japanese emperor, US President Millard Fillmore asked that the Japanese help shipwrecked American sailors in the future. Why was this request necessary?

The reasons for the United States' interest in Japan were largely based on geography or economics, or both, as shown in Figure 14-30. Were these reasons enough for the United States to try to force its way into Japan, to break open a country that had declared itself closed to most Western countries for more than 200 years?

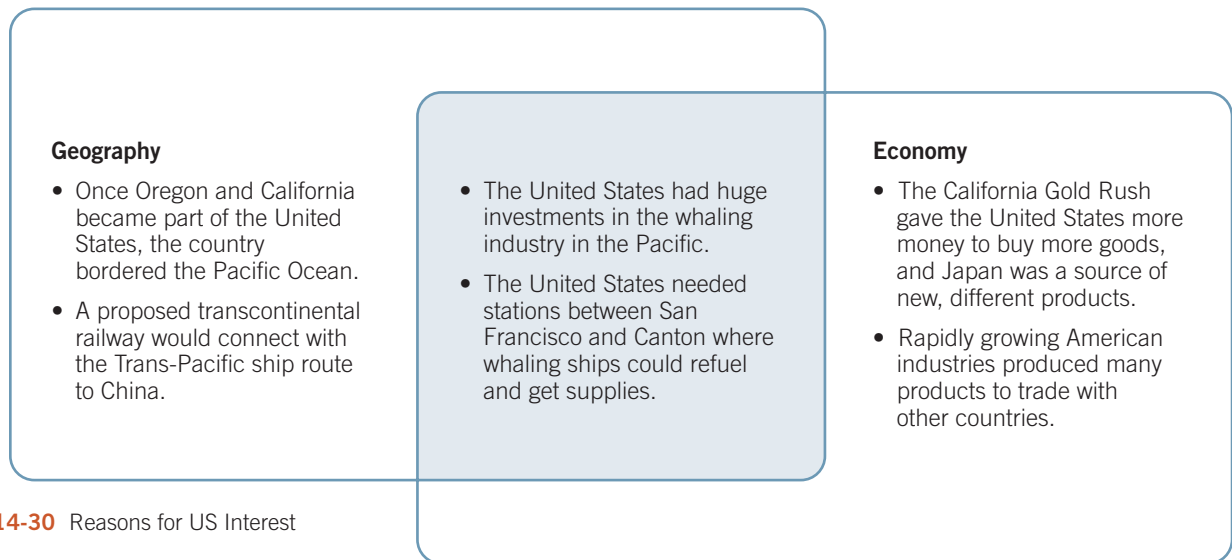


FIGURE 14-30 Reasons for US Interest in Japan

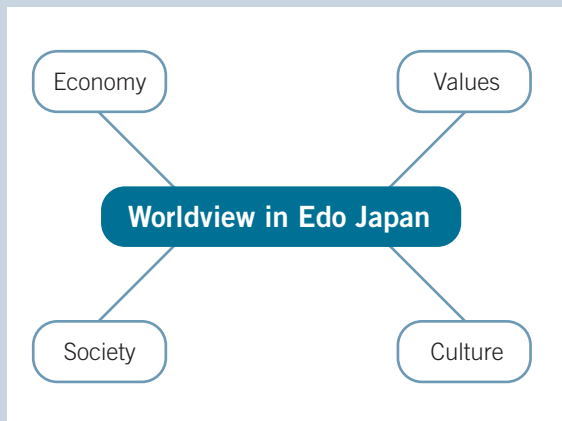
Over to YOU

1. **a.** Create a graphic organizer to summarize the internal and external factors that contributed to the end of isolation.
 1. **b.** Write an opinion piece on the isolation of Japan during the Edo period. Use one of these titles: “A Golden Age of Peace and Prosperity” or “A Society in Stagnation.”
2. Describe the conditions you think are necessary to justify using force in international situations. How many of these conditions were present in Edo Japan in the 1800s?
3. **a.** The shogun at the time of Perry’s arrival, Iyeyoshi (Ee-ye-yo-shee), was seen to be a weak leader. How might the outcomes have been different if a stronger, more forceful shogun had dealt with Perry? Explain.
 3. **b.** Gather information from the media and the Internet about a present-day political leader. He or she may be the leader of a country, a state or province, or a city. Organize your information in a chart that lists the strengths and weaknesses of that person’s leadership style.
4. **a.** What similarities can you see among the relationships between the following groups:
 - the Americans and the Japanese
 - the Europeans and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas
 - the Japanese and the Ainu
 4. **b.** In the Voices box on page 323, you read that Britain agreed that “The Japanese undoubtedly have an exclusive right to the possession of their territory...” How might Canada be different if the British had applied that attitude toward First Nations? Create a collage or a poem expressing your ideas.
5. **a.** What happens to homeless and economically disadvantaged people in your community? Where do they go and how do they live?
 5. **b.** What action could you take to raise awareness of this problem in your community? What action could you take to help?

Explore the Big Ideas

In 1635, the ruling shogun passed laws that severely restricted contact between Japan and the rest of the world.

- Using the graphic organizer below, think about how the components of the Japanese worldview in the boxes both encouraged the isolation of Japan and were affected by it.



- In a group of four, with each group member choosing a different component from the organizer, prepare a short dramatic presentation. Decide together on a device that will symbolize the exclusion laws. Each group member personifies his or her chosen component before and after the exclusion laws, with words and actions showing how each component is both a cause and effect of isolation.
- After the dramatic presentation, your group will lead a class discussion of how your representations were similar to or different from your understanding of your own worldview. Try to come to a consensus on whether Canada would be better off if it was more or less isolated than it is today.

- Imagine that you are a roving television news reporter who has a time machine. Make a list of questions that you would ask each of the following. Try to discover their motives to critically grill them about the consequences of their actions.
 - Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first of the Edo period shogun.
 - Ieyasu's grandson Hidetada, the shogun who supervised the execution of the Christians.
 - Tokugawa Ienari, the shogun who brought in the 1825 "No Second Chance" edict.
 - Edit your "interviews" into a short news piece, featuring soundbites from each of the

shogun. Make an audio or video clip, or write a description, of the news piece.

- Make a poster informing the literate—those who can read—about the exclusion laws. Make another one for those who cannot read.
 - Work in small groups to produce an Edo newspaper. Have your paper include stories about the political, economic, and social trends. Include an editorial that gives an opinion on an issue current at the time.
- Find out about countries currently described as having "oppressive regimes" by watching television, reading newspapers, searching

the Internet, etc. What characteristics do their leaders have? How do these characteristics contribute to the situation in the country?

- Does a leader stand a better chance of coming into power if feared or admired? Survey your classmates to determine their perspective. Outline elements of a planned election campaign for a fictional candidate using what you have discovered.
- Look back to Chapter 9. Make a chart listing how the motives of the Americans in the 1800s compared with those of the Portuguese in the 1500s and 1600s.