

# Japan Study Guide



## Geography:

- Japan is part of the continent of Asia, and located in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of China
- The capital of Japan is Tokyo - in ancient Japan, this city was known as Edo
- The two bodies of water that border Japan are the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan
- Japan is a long string of islands that has volcanoes and mountains
- The major mountain in Japan is Mount Fuji, it also an active volcano
- Japan is geologically unstable due to earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and monsoons
- Japan is smaller than the state of California
- Cherry Blossoms are Japans national symbol
- Wild life includes cranes, Japanese macaque (monkey), and Iriomote wildcat

## Culture:

- Outdoor Markets are where most Japanese people do their shopping
- New Years - this is Japan's most popular celebration in which children receive gifts, families send cards, they clean their house, eat lots of food, and go to a parade where you can see the cloud dragon
- Foods Japanese enjoy eating: rice, sushi, noodles, soups, and fish
- Japanese Tea Ceremony - A special way of making green tea, which Japanese drink frequently
- Japanese enjoy technology, comics ("Manga"), sumo wrestling and other martial arts, art, puppet shows, theatre, sports (baseball, soccer, and basketball), skiing and snowboarding, and traveling the world.
- Basho is a famous Japanese poet. He is best known for writing haikus, which are still written today.

## History:

- Japan's flag is white with a red circle in the middle
- Japan is thousands of years old and was highly influence by the Chinese culture.
- Japan's history is full of conflict over land and power. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century a Japanese warrior took control of the country after a battle. He was the first shogun (military king).
- Japan was ruled by shoguns for more than six hundred years.
- During the shogun period, the shoguns allowed the imperial family to serve as emperors, but they had little power.
- Samurai (fierce warriors) followed a strict code of honor, and were brave and skilled fighters.
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japan became a democracy, in which people elected leaders to the parliament.
- Outdoor markets and fishing were a big part of Japan's history.
- The arts (poetry, dancing, singing, theatre, puppets, etc.) are very important to Japan's history.
- Traditional homes had straw mats called tatami and low tables.
- Sumo wrestling began as a religious ritual hundreds of years ago and is Japan's national sport.
- A large fire destroyed the city of Edo and they had to re-build it.
- For many years, Japan's leaders closed the country off from the rest of the world. They did not allow people to go there. You needed passports during this time.

## Economy:

- Money is called Yen
- Well known for making popular electronics (e.g: Nintendo) and automobiles (e.g: Toyota)
- Main agricultural produce is rice and fish

## Politics:

- Capital: Tokyo
- Ancient Japan was run by emperors and shoguns
- All citizens in ancient Japan needed passports
- Present-day Japan is run by a democracy
- Emperors are still elected today, but they have no power because they are a symbol of the country's traditions and unity.
- Samurai - warriors/military