

Revolution, Reform and Social Change

*A Half-Century of Crisis and
Achievement (1900–1945)*



China and Japan

The Russian Revolution

Nationalism and revolution

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Religion and thought



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will have learned about revolutions and reforms in China and Japan in the early 20th century and be able to answer these key questions:

- What were the causes of early 20th century revolutions in China?
- How did China change from an imperialist state to the People's Republic of China?
- How did Japan go from being an isolationist country to an imperialist power in a matter of a few decades?



Looking back timeline



In order to contextualize early 20th century revolution, reform and social change, use this timeline to recap previous key historical events. Either press on a date or drag the pointer along the timeline to find out information about what happened in each year.

Press **start** to begin.

start





During the 19th and early 20th centuries, China was ruled by emperors of the **Qing**, or **Manchu Dynasty**. The majority of the Chinese were poor peasant farmers who accepted the rule of their emperor as a “Mandate from Heaven”.

Industrialization had not yet occurred and the national focus remained on preserving traditions and the old ways of living.

Toward the end of the 1800s, the emperor’s power became decentralized and left mostly to local warlords who funded and controlled 31 of the 36 divisions of the Manchu army.





European imperialists turned to Asia in the 1800s in an effort to find new sources of raw materials and markets for their manufactured goods.

As a nation, China had a huge population and possessed many goods Europeans desired, such as silk, tea, and valuable minerals.



China was viewed as weak by European powers who were quick to exert their authority and establish “spheres of influence” in which each nation had exclusive trading rights.

Why do you think Europeans felt China was perfect for economic exploitation?



Spheres of influence in China

This map shows the spheres of influence each country had in China around 1900.





The Boxer Rebellion

Anger over foreign control and a failing government led to the development of a Chinese nationalist movement in the 20th century.

In 1900, a group known as the “**Boxers**” staged a revolt against the European powers in an attempt to rid their nation of foreign influence.



European troops quickly defeated the **Boxer Rebellion** and the emperor remained powerless against the exploitation of foreign governments.

Why do you think Europeans were so easily able to defeat Chinese uprisings?



The foundation of the republic



Read this passage about the foundation of the Republic in China, and select the correct word to fill each gap.

Press **start** to begin.

start





The rise of the communists



In the early 1930s, vast amounts of China's northern territory fell to Imperial Japan as the Nationalists and Communists struggled for power. In 1936 Chiang's Nationalists again joined forces with the Communists, who were now led by **Mao Zedong**, in an effort to defeat the advancing Japanese army.

Decide whether the following statements about the rise of the Communists in China are true or false.

Press **start** to begin.

start





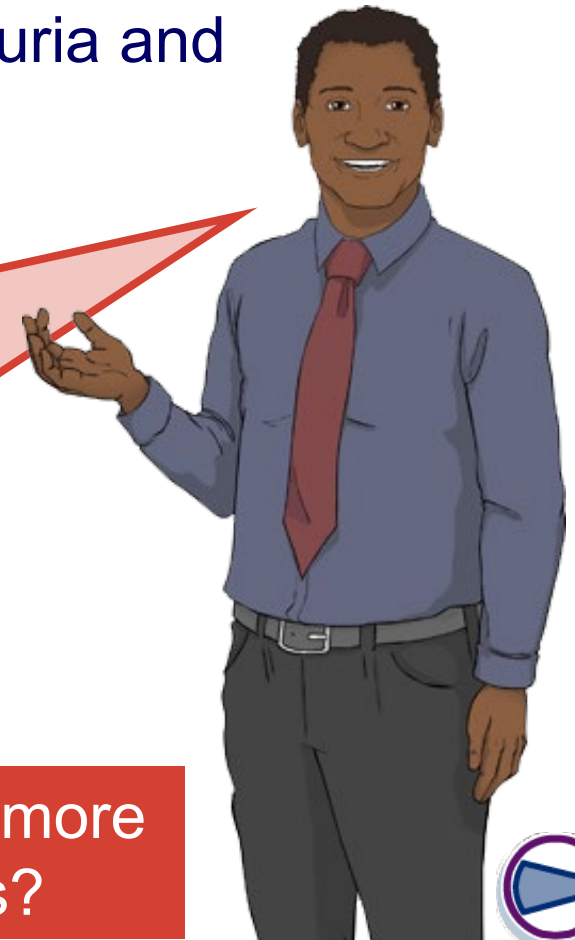
The Chinese Civil War



After the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II, the Communists and Nationalists raced to take control of the newly freed provinces.

The Communists gained control of Manchuria and much of Northern China.

Despite American support, the Nationalist Party weakened. Divided amongst themselves, they faced bitterness from the Chinese population over growing inflation during Nationalist rule.



Why were the Communists more popular with the masses?



Communist victory

The Communists were able to improve their fighting abilities and capture much needed munitions during World War II, so they were a united front with the support of the masses.

With Russia's support, the civil war turned in favor of the Communists in 1948 and the Nationalists were forced to flee to the island of Formosa (Taiwan).

On October 1, 1949, the **People's Republic of China** was founded under the leadership of Communist Chairman Mao Zedong.





Review what happened in
China in the first half of the 20th
century by matching the years
with the correct events.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Feudal Japan

From the 12th to the 19th century, Japan was ruled by a strict feudal system. Drag the different levels of Japanese society into the correct order. Press on the information buttons to read about each social class.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Japanese isolationism



Unlike China and India, Japan was able to limit the impact of foreign nations on its homeland.

Japan succeeded in blocking European trade and power until the mid-19th century when Japan finally opened its doors to foreign trade in the face of rising taxes and food shortages.



Instead of getting sucked in by western powers, Japan was able to ward off European imperialists.

Looking at its geography, why do you think Japan was able to limit the influence of foreign powers?





Rapid industrialization

While Japan was in a state of isolation, the **Emperor Meiji** again exerted his power over the shoguns and new industries were introduced to Japan.

Leading Japanese students were sent to study abroad in European and American universities and the emperor set about enlarging and modernizing their military.

Japan coupled its natural resources like coal, iron and oil with the knowledge of science and technology that its top students gained while studying abroad.





Japan's modernization



Japan's agricultural strengths also allowed for a continual food supply that supported its rapid industrialization.

The emperor formed a conscripted military and a national education system, and a **bicameral legislature** was created to provide political stability.



Japan became a unified world force that soon turned its attention to dominating many of its neighboring countries. By 1918 it was a major exporter of goods to large nations like China and the United States.



Japanese imperialism



Starting in the late 1800s, Japan began its own journey to imperialism with the military conquest of many surrounding nations. Watch the following animation to learn how Japanese imperialism progressed through the beginning of the 20th century.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Japan quiz



Test your knowledge of Japan's isolationism, industrialization and imperialism with this quiz. Choose the correct answer to each question to see how much you can remember.

Press **start** to begin.

start

