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Historical Context:

The Meiji Restoration took place in Japan following the arrival of American naval Officer Matthew Perry in 1853. Realizing how far behind the rest of the world Japan was, the Japanese government began a program of westernization, modernization and industrialization.

Directions: Read each document and respond to the questions in complete sentences

Document 1

The Charter Oath (of the Meiji Restoration), 1868

By this oath we set up as our aim the establishment of the national weal on a broad basis and the framing of a constitution and laws.

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.
3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue his own calling so that there may be no discontent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.

1) What changes in Japanese society occurred as a result of the Charter Oath?

Document 2

Encyclopedia entry on the impact of the new Japanese constitution

The government led the way in this, building railway and shipping lines, telegraph and telephone systems, three shipyards, ten mines, five munitions works, and fifty-three consumer industries (making sugar, glass, textiles, cement, chemicals, and other important products). This was very expensive, however, and strained government finances, so in 1880 the government decided to sell most of these industries to private investors, thereafter encouraging such activity through subsidies and other incentives. Some of the samurai and merchants who built these industries established major corporate conglomerates called zaibatsu, which controlled much of Japan's modern industrial sector.

The government also introduced a national educational system and a constitution, creating an elected parliament called the Diet. They did this to provide a good environment for national growth, win the respect of the Westerners, and build support for the modern state. In the Tokugawa period, popular education had spread rapidly, and in 1872 the government established a national system to educate the entire population. By the end of the Meiji period, almost everyone attended the free public schools for at least six years. The government closely controlled the schools, making sure that in addition to skills like mathematics and reading, all students studied "moral training," which stressed the importance of their duty to the emperor, the country and their families.

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The 1889 constitution was "given" to the people by the emperor, and only he (or his advisers) could change it. A parliament was elected beginning in 1890, but only the wealthiest 1 percent of the population could vote in elections. In 1925 this was changed to allow all men (but not yet women) to vote.

2) **What were three specific things the Japanese government did to reform Japan during the Meiji period?**

Document 3

An excerpt from Barbara Tuchman's book on The American General and China expert Joe Stillwell, Stillwell and the American Experience in China

"Japan's startling success in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 gave impetus to the 'self-strengtheners.' The Japanese example appeared as something to emulate. (Chinese) Students seeking a higher education in tune with modern times went to Tokyo."

Stillwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945 pg. 49-50 Barbara Tuchman

3) **Why did Chinese students want to study in Japan?**

Document 4

By comparing the Japan of fifty years ago with the Japan of today, it will be seen that she has gained considerably in the extent of her territory, as well as in her population, which now numbers nearly fifty million. Her government has become constitutional not only in name, but in fact, and her national education has attained to a high degree of excellence. In commerce and industry, the emblems of peace, she has also made rapid strides, until her import and export trades together amounted in 1907 to the enormous sum of 926,000,000 yen. Her general progress, during the short space of half a century, has been so sudden and swift that it presents a rare spectacle in the history of the world. This leap forward is the result of the stimulus which the country received on coming into contact with the civilization of Europe and America, and may well, in its broad sense, be regarded as a boon conferred by foreign intercourse. Foreign intercourse it was that animated the national consciousness of our people, who under the feudal system lived localized and disunited, and foreign intercourse it is that has enabled Japan to stand up as a world power. We possess today a powerful army and navy, but it was after Western models that we laid their foundations by establishing a system of conscription in pursuance of the principle "all our sons are soldiers," by promoting military education, and by encouraging the

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manufacture of arms and the art of shipbuilding. We have reorganized the systems of central and local administration, and effected reforms in the educational system of the empire. All this is nothing but the result of adopting the superior features of Western institutions. That Japan has been enabled to do so is a boon conferred on her by foreign intercourse, and it may be said that the nation has succeeded in this grand metamorphosis through the promptings and the influence of foreign civilization.

From: Okuma, Fifty Years of New Japan (Kaikoku Gojunen Shi), 2d Ed., (London: Smith, Elder, 1910), passim

4a) What are three ways Japan has changed in the past 50 years?

4b) Who and or what does the author credit for these changes?

Document 5

The Japanese occupation of Nanking, the southern capital of the Republic of China, led to one of the greatest horrors of the century. This eyewitness report was filed by a New York Times reporter. Aboard the U.S.S. Oahu at Shanghai, Dec. 17 [1937].

Through wholesale atrocities and vandalism at Nanking the Japanese Army has thrown away a rare opportunity to gain the respect and confidence of the Chinese inhabitants and of foreign opinion there.... The killing of civilians was widespread. Foreigners who traveled widely through the city Wednesday found civilian dead on every street. Some of the victims were aged men, women and children. Policemen and firemen were special objects of attack. Many victims were bayoneted and some of the wounds were barbarously cruel. Any person who ran because of fear or excitement was likely to be killed on the spot as was anyone caught by roving patrols in streets or alleys after dark. Many slayings were witnessed by foreigners.

...The army men performing the gruesome job had invited navy men from the warships anchored off the Bund to view the scene. A large group of military spectators apparently greatly enjoyed the spectacle.

...

Many were killed where they were found, including men innocent of any army connection and many wounded soldiers and civilians. I witnessed three mass executions of prisoners within a few hours Wednesday. In one slaughter a tank gun was turned on a group of more than 100 soldiers at a bomb shelter near the Ministry of Communications.

...

Nanking's streets were littered with dead. Sometimes bodies had to be moved before automobiles could pass.

The capture of Hsiakwan Gate by the Japanese was accompanied by the mass killing of the defenders, who were piled up among the sandbags, forming a mound six feet high. Late Wednesday the Japanese

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had not removed the dead, and two days of heavy military traffic had been passing through, grinding over the remains of men, dogs and horses.

The Japanese appear to want the horrors to remain as long as possible, to impress on the Chinese the terrible results of resisting Japan. ...

From F. Tillman, "All Captives Slain," *The New York Times*, December 18, 1937, pp. 1, 10.

5. What did the Japanese do with the bodies of the people they killed in Nanking? What does the New York Times reporter say might be the purpose of this?



Directions: In each column, list the names of territory that Japan conquered during that timeframe

1870-1932	1932-1940	After Pearl Harbor (1940-1945)
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