

# Way of life in Shogunate Japan

Lesson Map: <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education/SpatialActivity86>

## Engage

### Where is Japan?

- Click on the map URL above to open the StoryMap. The title page will be displayed. Scroll down to the section titled *Geographical context* to begin.
- Read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss if necessary.
- **Engage with the map.** Hover your mouse over each number. Each number represents a major Japanese island. You can also zoom in and out to see where Japan is in relation to other countries using the + and – buttons.
- ? Name the four main islands of Japan. What island do you think is the principal island? Explain how you arrived at this answer. [*Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu are Japan's main islands. The principal island is Honshu, which is evident as Tokyo – Japan's capital city – is situated on this island.*]
- ? What countries lie to the West of Japan? [*South Korea, North Korea, China and Russia all lie to the West of Japan.*]
- ? What evidence does the map provide to suggest that Japan has limited land suitable for agriculture? [*The map clearly shows a significant amount of mountainous terrain across all four of Japan's main islands. This mountainous terrain would be poorly suited to agriculture.*]

## Explore

### What was Shogunate Japan?

- Scroll down to the next heading titled *What was Shogunate Japan?* Read the information on the *Heian period (794 – 1185 CE)* and *The shoguns*. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- ? Record a single-sentence definition for each of the following historical terms and concepts: emperor, shogun, clan, bakufu, feudal system.

Download student worksheet [here](#).

### Time

40 minutes

### Activity

Investigate the way of life in Shogunate Japan.

### Learning Outcome

Students will be able to:

- Understand and define key historical terms and concepts
- Understand the roles of different social classes in the Japanese feudal system
- Compare the Japanese feudal system to Medieval Europe's feudal system

### ACARA Curriculum Link

Year 8 History: Japan under the Shoguns (c.794 – 1867)

[ACDSEH012](#) | [ACDSEH063](#) | [ACHHS149](#) | [ACHHS157](#)

### Teacher Feedback:

To share your feedback on this, or any Spatial Activity, please contact [education@esriaustralia.com.au](mailto:education@esriaustralia.com.au)

Term or concept	Definition
Emperor	<i>The traditional ruler of Japan, who was reduced to a religious and ceremonious figurehead under the shoguns.</i>
Shogun	<i>The real authority and power that controlled Japan.</i>
Clan	<i>Groups of related families that were able to trace their history to a common ancestor, and who were the largest landowners in a region.</i>
Bakufu	<i>A military government that ruled the country.</i>
Feudal system	<i>A system that organised society into separate classes that had obligations and responsibilities to each other.</i>

## Explain

*What were the different social classes operating in Japan's feudal system?*

- Scroll down to the major heading titled *Japanese feudal system*. Read the information on each social class and take brief notes as you make your way through each slide (social class).
- ? Navigate the slideshow. As you progress through, attempt to rank each group/individual in terms of their position of hierarchy in the Japanese feudal system. Record your ranking in your subject book or in the space below this question. *Note: '1' is the highest class and '7' is the lowest class.*

Rank	Your ranking	Actual ranking
1	<i>Answers will vary according to student opinion.</i>	<i>Emperor</i>
2		<i>Shogun</i>
3		<i>Daimyo</i>
4		<i>Samurai</i>
5		<i>Peasant farmers</i>
6		<i>Artisans</i>
7		<i>Merchants</i>

- Scroll down to the major heading titled *How was society structured?* Correct your ranking hypothesis for the previous task. Don't erase your first ranking attempt. Instead, record the correct ranking next to your ranking attempt.
- ? How did your rank compare to the feudal system depicted? *[Answers will vary according to student's personal ranking responses.]*
- ? Despite the Shogun having the real power in Japan, the Emperor sits on top of the feudal system. Why may this be the case? *[Although the shogun was the true ruler of Japan, he used the Emperor as a figurehead. He likely did this as the Emperor was thought to be a descendent of the sun-goddess and therefore, would have carried considerable religious influence among the lower classes. By working through the Emperor, the shogun likely reduced risk of revolt, war and unrest.]*

- ? Are any of the class positions surprising? Explain your response. *[There are two class positions that are surprising. Firstly, the position of peasant farmers in Shogunate Japan appears to be elevated. This is surprising as it is in stark contrast to the feudal system that was operating in Medieval Europe, where peasants were the lowest social class. Secondly, it is surprising that merchants are the lowest class of society as they would be much wealthier than peasants, artisans, and even some samurai and daimyo.]*
- Scroll down to the major heading titled *Medieval Europe's feudal system*. Read through the information and take notes as required. Stop to discuss as necessary.

## Extend

*What problems did the Shogunate experience?*

- Scroll down to the major heading titled *Weaknesses of the Shogunate*. Read the information under the sub-headings titled *Government problems* and *Feudal system problems*. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- ? How would lending money and providing loans to financially troubled daimyo and samurai allow merchants to gain a better position in society? *[By providing financial aid and loans to daimyo and samurai, the merchant class would gain a certain level of control over these individuals in several ways. Firstly, the daimyo or samurai would be subject to paying off their debt and any interest attached to it. If they could not pay it back under the agreed-upon terms, they may be subject to further financial losses that the merchant class could demand, like land. Secondly, the merchant class was in control of who they agreed to provide loans to. This means that daimyo and samurai would have to 'play nice' to receive a loan. As a result, merchants may have asked the other party for societal favours.]*

## Next Steps:

*Request a free ArcGIS Online Account for your school:*

Australian schools can request a free ArcGIS Online account as part of Esri Australia's Classroom GIS Initiative. A school subscription provides additional map layers, content, features and privacy.

Learn more about ArcGIS Online, and apply for your ArcGIS Online School subscription at <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education>