

Japan and the Koreas

Section 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. The early histories of Japan and Korea were closely linked, but the countries developed very differently.
2. Japanese culture blends traditional customs with modern innovations.
3. Though they share a common culture, life is very different in North and South Korea.

Key Terms and Places

Kyoto Japan's imperial capital, known before as Heian

shoguns powerful military leaders of imperial Japan

samurai highly trained warriors

kimonos traditional Japanese robes

kimchi Korean dish made from pickled cabbage and spices

Section Summary

HISTORY

China has had much influence on both Japan and the Koreas. One example is Buddhism, which was once the main religion in both countries. Japan's first government was modeled after China's. Japan's emperors made their capital Heian (now called **Kyoto**) a center for the arts. Some of them paid so much attention to the arts that they allowed generals called **shoguns** to take control. Shoguns had armies of warriors called **samurai** who helped them rule Japan until 1868, when a group of samurai gave power back to the emperor. During World War II, the Japanese brought the United States into the war by bombing its naval base at Pearl Harbor. To end the war, the Americans dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

China ruled the Korean Peninsula for centuries. Later, the Japanese invaded. After World War II, Korea became independent. However, the Soviet Union helped Communists take control in the north while the United States helped to form a

Underline the sentence that explains how the shoguns gained power.

Which country helped Communists take control in North Korea?

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democratic government in the south. In 1950 North Korea invaded the south, wanting to unite Korea. The United States and other countries helped the South Koreans remain separate.

JAPANESE CULTURE

The Japanese system of writing uses two types of characters. Some characters, called kanji, each represent a single word. Others, called kana, each stand for a part of a word. Most Japanese people combine elements of Shinto and Buddhism in their religious practices. In the Shinto tradition—native to Japan—everything in nature is believed to have a spirit, or *kami*, which protects people. Through Buddhism, people in Japan have learned to seek enlightenment and peace. Most people in Japan wear Western style clothing, but many also wear the traditional **kimono** on special occasions. Traditional forms of art include Noh and Kabuki plays.

Circle the names of the kinds of characters used to write Japanese.

What do Japanese people wear most of the time?

KOREAN CULTURE

People in both North and South Korea speak Korean. Unlike Japanese, written Korean uses an alphabet. In the past, most Koreans were Buddhist or Confucianist. Today, about one fourth of South Koreans are Christian. Communist North Korea discourages people from practicing any religion.

Underline the names of religions practiced in Korea.

The people of Korea have kept many old traditions, such as **kimchi**, a dish made from pickled cabbage. Traditional Korean art forms remain, especially in North Korea, where the Communists think Korean culture is the best in the world. In the south, people have adopted new ways of life and forgotten some of their traditions.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Sequencing Write a paragraph describing three periods or events in Japan's history.