MAIN IDEAS

1. **Government** The emperor of Japan grew weaker, and noble families gained power.

2. **Government** The rising power of the samurai led to military government in Japan.

3. **Government** Military leaders ruled Japan for centuries.

TAKING NOTES

Reading Skill: Explaining Chronological Order and Sequence

To explain chronological order and sequence means to put events in order based on the time they happened. As you read about Japan during the age of the samurai and shoguns, record major events on a time line like the one shown.

![Samurai Armor](image)

A warrior’s armor was usually made of iron, leather, and copper. The helmets were often beautifully decorated.

**CALIFORNIA STANDARDS**

7.5.3 Describe the values, social customs, and traditions prescribed by the lord-vassal system consisting of shogun, daimyo, and samurai and the lasting influence of the warrior code throughout the twentieth century.

7.5.6 Analyze the rise of a military society in the late twelfth century and the role of the samurai in that society.

HI 2 Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long- and short-term causal relations.
Samurai and Shoguns

**Build on What You Know** As you read in Lesson 1, an emperor ruled Japan. But wealthy noble families often held the real power. Nobles would battle one another to gain the power the emperors no longer had.

**Nobles Gain Power**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** Who lost power in Japan?

Japan remained strong and united after Prince Shotoku’s rule ended with his death in 622. It was a time of relative peace. The emperor still headed the central government. But he was only a figurehead—someone who appeared to have power but did not. In the 800s, wealthy nobles of the Fujiwara (FOO•jee•WAH•ruh) clan, or family, became the real rulers of Japan. They remained Japan’s most powerful family for 300 years.

**The Central Government Grows Weak** During the 1100s, the power of the central government and the Fujiwaras declined. The government was running out of money. It began to lose authority over larger landholders. These estate owners, called daimyo (DY•mee•OH), paid no taxes to the government. They also had their own private armies of trained warriors called samurai (SAM•uh•RY), whom you read about in Starting with a Story.

▲ A Noble’s Household
This fan-shaped illustration shows servants performing daily chores in a noble’s household in the 1100s.
Feudalism Begins in Japan  

Daimyo hired samurai warriors both to protect themselves and to attack other daimyo. Powerful families, such as the Taira and the Minamoto, had large armies of samurai. Daimyo often fought among themselves to try to gain more land to increase their wealth and power.

As the power of the daimyo increased, the central government weakened and lawlessness increased. Small landowners wanted protection. To win the aid of a more powerful lord, they pledged their loyalty to that lord. Often, their loyalty included military service. A person who received land and protection from a lord in return for loyalty was called a vassal. This lord-vassal system increased the power of large landowners. It also marked the start of feudalism in Japan. This was a system of local rule similar to ancient China and medieval Europe. (You will read about European feudalism in Chapter 9.)

Why did power shift from the central government to the nobles?

The Rise of a Military Society

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  How did Japan become a military society?

While nobles fought among themselves, the emperor remained in office. But the emperor no longer held real power. This continued the pattern begun early in Japan’s history.

The Emperor and the Shoguns  

Now military leaders called shoguns had taken control. Shogun means “supreme commander of the army.” A shogun ruled on the emperor’s behalf. But usually his own interest came first. Minamoto Yoritomo (MIH•nah•MOH•toh YOH•ree•TOH•moh) became the first shogun in 1192. As shogun, he led more than just the army—he ruled the country. Japan would be under a shogunate, or military government, for nearly 700 years.

The Samurai and the Warrior Code  

Samurai were fearsome warriors. They vowed to fight for their lord, even if it meant that they could not protect their own family. Dying an honorable death was more...
important to them than a long life. Women in warrior families learned
to handle weapons to protect their families from bandits when the
men were away fighting. At this time, women had higher status than at
earlier times. Some inherited land. A few even became samurai.

Samurai lived by an unwritten code of honor called bushido. This
warrior code called for honor, loyalty, and bravery. It was similar to
the chivalry code followed by knights in medieval Europe. Samurai
pledged to show respect for the gods and generosity toward the poor.
Zen Buddhism was an important aspect of their lives. Samurai values
and traditions continued to appeal to the Japanese into the 1900s.

**REVIEW** Who held power in Japan’s military society?

**Japanese Society**

**INTERACTIVE**

**SKILLBUILDER**

**INTERPRETING VISUALS**

What activities do you see being performed? At what level does
production of goods take place?

**Emperor** This ruler was at the top
of Japanese society but had little
real power.

**Shogun** He was the most important
daimyo, or large landholder, and the
actual ruler of Japan.

**Samurai** They were Japan’s warriors.

**Peasants and artisans** These
workers made up the largest class.

**Merchants** Unlike peasants and
artisans, they produced no goods
that contributed to society.
Three Powerful Warriors Unify Japan

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  How did powerful military leaders unify Japan?

A succession of three strong military leaders helped to unify the country. They ended the fighting between rival daimyo.

**Oda Nobunaga**  In the mid-1500s, a daimyo named Oda Nobunaga (OH•dah• NOH•boo•NAH•gah) began to reunite Japan. He was a fierce warrior who recognized the importance of the guns European traders had introduced into Japan. His soldiers were the first Japanese to use guns in battle and defeated armies that were many times larger than his own. Through wars and negotiations, Nobunaga won control of nearly half of Japan before his death in 1582.

**Toyotomi Hideyoshi**  Shortly after Nobunaga died, his best general, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (TOH•yoo•TOH•mee HEE•deh•YOH•shee), took his place. Hideyoshi was born a peasant. Under Nobunaga, he had risen from a common soldier to become a superb military leader. Through force and political alliances, Hideyoshi controlled all of Japan when he died in 1598. Then his generals fought wars among themselves to rule Japan.

**Tokugawa Ieyasu**  In 1603, the winner of the wars, Tokugawa Ieyasu (TOH•goo•GAH•wah EE•yeh•YAH•soo), was named shogun. He founded a dynasty that held power in Japan until 1868. He established his capital at Edo, later called Tokyo. The rule of Ieyasu and his successors in the Tokugawa family was called the **Tokugawa Shogunate**.

History Makers

**Tokugawa Ieyasu**  (1543–1616)

Conflict surrounded Tokugawa Ieyasu most of his life. When he was two, his mother was separated from the family because of fighting between the families of his mother and father. When he was six, his father was murdered. As an adult, Ieyasu was often in battles, first as a warrior and then as a military leader.

When he became ruler, Ieyasu wanted to make the country peaceful and stable. He had studied history and concluded that only a strong, united government could bring peace and stability.
When Ieyasu became shogun, Japan had growing ties with Europe. Traders and missionaries brought Western ideas and goods to Japan. But Ieyasu and his successors worried about changes foreign influence would bring to Japan. So they drove out foreign merchants and missionaries. They banned Christianity and executed Japanese Christians. They also forbade the Japanese to leave Japan and ended nearly all foreign trade.

In the mid-1600s, Japan went into a period of isolation, or separation from the world, which would last until the 1850s.

**REVIEW** What was the result of the unification of Japan?

**Lesson Summary**

- As Japan’s central government grew weak, violence increased and noble families hired samurai for protection.
- Japan had a military government for centuries.
- In the mid-1500s, three powerful military leaders began to unite Japan.

**Why It Matters Now . . .**

Japan remains a strongly united country today. It continues to limit immigration and control the country’s dealings with foreigners.

---

### Samurai Sword

A samurai sword was not only a weapon but was often a work of a swordsmith’s artistry.

---

### Internet Activity

Use the Internet to research the code of the samurai. Create a poster using simple images with labels to show the main principles. (7.5.3)

**INTERNET KEYWORD:** samurai code