

Tokugawa control over Japanese society

Lesson Map: <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education/SpatialActivity87>

Engage

Historical context

- Click on the map URL above to open the StoryMap. The title page will be displayed. Scroll down to the section titled *Historical context* to begin.
- Read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss if necessary.
- ? Identify the location of the daimyo in the image depicting samurai fighting on a field. What aspects of the image led you to your conclusion? [*The daimyo is in the top-left corner of the image and appears to be dressed in yellow armour. This conclusion was arrived at as this part of the battlefield appears to be on a rise, giving the daimyo a clear view of the battle. Furthermore, the daimyo appears to be flanked by samurai guards and flag bearers.*]

Explore

The unification of Japan under Toyotomi Hideyoshi

- Scroll down to the next heading titled *Unification of Japan* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- ? What motivations may have led Hideyoshi to order the Great Sword Hunt? Explain your answer. [*Hideyoshi likely had several motivations for ordering the Great Sword Hunt of 1588. From the perspective of protecting Japan's newly established unity, a driving motivation in confiscating weapons from significant numbers of the population would be to simply secure this unity in the short-term to ensure long-term peace. Hideyoshi's personal motivations in calling for the collection of weapons may have been out of desire to reduce the power and size of rival daimyo's armies. By doing so, he would also protect his position as Imperial Regent.*]
- ? Explain how the introduction of Confucianism would encourage members of society to uphold the newly established peace and unity that Hideyoshi had achieved in Japan. [*The introduction of Confucianism into Japanese culture would encourage members of different social classes to uphold and protect the newly established peace and unity as its philosophical ideas stressed the importance of social harmony*]

Download student worksheet [here](#).

Time
60 minutes

Activity

Investigate how the Tokugawa shogunate was able to control Japanese society.

Learning Outcome

Students will be able to:

- Understand and define key historical terms and concepts
- Understand the measures put in place by the Tokugawa shogunate to control Japanese society
- Engage with sources and identify evidence
- Create historical arguments that refer to historical evidence

ACARA Curriculum Link

[Year 8 History: Japan under the Shoguns \(c.794 – 1867\)](#)

[ACDSEH012](#) | [ACDSEH063](#) | [ACHHS149](#) | [ACHHS156](#) | [ACHHS157](#)

Teacher Feedback:

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and moral integrity. As a result, actions like betrayal, lying, violence, and scheming would be frowned upon by society and those that continued to resort to such practices would likely lose favour with other members of society.]

Explain

How did the Tokugawa shoguns assert their control over Japanese society?

(Engaging with sources)

- Scroll down to the major heading titled *Engaging with sources*.
- ? To understand how the Tokugawa shoguns were able to control Japanese society so successfully, you will engage with six sources and complete a retrieval chart. You can access the retrieval chart [here](#). As you read through each source, record how the Tokugawa shoguns controlled each social class by completing the retrieval chart. *[Teachers and educators can access the answers in the appendix section of this lesson resource.]*

Click here to access the
retrieval chart and sources

- You can navigate between the sources in the StoryMap by clicking on the **arrow** icon to the right of the section displaying the sources.

Extend

Review and paragraph response

- Scroll down to the major heading titled *Extension*. This section contains a series of questions and a paragraph response task. Read the questions and paragraph response task carefully before formulating a response for each.
- ? What particular rules, regulations or edicts of the Tokugawa shogunate likely benefited Japanese society? Explain your response. *[Answers may vary. Example response: The new set of instructions for the samurai class likely benefited wider Japanese society. Not only did the code of Bushido give samurai alternative virtues and skills to pursue and master, but also gave them fulfilment in the absence of warfare. Furthermore, wider society may have also benefited from the cultural art that samurai produced, like poetry or works of art.]*
- ? What particular rules, regulations or edicts of the Tokugawa shogunate were likely harmful to Japanese society? Explain your response. *[Answers may vary. Example response: Tokugawa Iemitsu's rules decreeing what people ate, what they built their*

houses out of and what objects they could use in everyday life may have been detrimental to Japanese society. This may have hindered the poorer classes who may have only been able to afford certain types of food or building materials. It may have also impacted what tools they could use to complete their everyday jobs.]

- ? What particular rules, regulations or edicts appear to purely serve as a means to strengthen the Tokugawa shogunate's power and influence? Explain your response.
- [A rule that appeared to purely serve to strengthen the Tokugawa shogunate's power and influence was the sankin-kotai (alternate attendance) system. This is supported by Helen Hopper (n.d.) from the University of Pittsburg who states, "Without a doubt the most unique law enacted to protect the power of the Tokugawa at Edo was the sankin-kotai system." The Tokugawa shoguns were able to greatly reduce the potential threat of the daimyo by forcing them to spend large sums of money on secondary residences, keeping them away from their lands for long periods of time and by keeping their family members as hostages.]*

- ? **Paragraph response:** Choose one of the groups below and write a paragraph response explaining how and why the Tokugawa shoguns placed certain rules, regulations or restrictions over the group. As a part of your paragraph response, **refer to specific evidence from the sources** you previously engaged with to support your explanation. *[Student answers will vary. Model response provided below.]*

- Daimyo
- Samurai
- Foreigners

The Tokugawa shoguns placed certain regulations and restrictions over foreigners to protect traditional Japanese culture and safeguard their power and control over Japan. Although Toyotomi Hideyoshi was the one to introduce a strict feudal system and Confucianism, the Tokugawa shoguns maintained both during their rule as it strengthened peace and unity in Japan. New ideas like Christianity and Catholicism, spread by religious foreigners, would have threatened the social structure of Japan, and challenged ideas like Confucianism and their national religion, Shintoism. This is one reason why the Closed Country Edict of 1635 (Source 5) stipulated that, 'all incoming ships must be carefully searched for the followers of priests,' to reduce the influence of Christian or Catholic foreigners who had arrived in Japan. The Tokugawa shogunate also excluded the Portuguese from entering Japan in 1639 as the Portuguese were assisting Christian daimyo by providing them with western weapons and financial aid. This directly threatened Tokugawa control and power over the daimyo. In response to this threat, the Tokugawa shogunate decreed that any Portuguese ships entering the country, 'must be destroyed and anyone aboard those ships must be beheaded' (Source 6). By taking such action, the Tokugawa shoguns were eliminating both the spread of Christianity and the wealth and weapons onboard the ships. Ultimately, the restrictions placed on foreigners by the

Tokugawa shogunate were put in place to protect traditional Japanese culture and social structure, as well as to protect Tokugawa control.

Appendix:

Individuals / Groups	Measures of control & source of information
Daimyo	<p>Source 1: Tokugawa shoguns forced daimyo to build and maintain a residence in Edo.</p> <p>Source 1: Tokugawa shoguns forced daimyo to reside in Edo every second year, away from their lands (sankin-kotai)</p> <p>Source 1: When the daimyo returned to their lands at the end of the year, they were required to leave behind family members as hostages.</p> <p>Source 2: Daimyo are depicted assembling at shogun Tokugawa Seisiroku's castle for a festive occasion</p> <p>Source 4: controls over daimyo recreation</p>
Samurai	<p>Source 3: In the absence of warfare, the code of Bushido was developed which stressed spiritual and cultural development, not just martial training</p> <p>Source 3: Samurai still expected to train warrior-like virtues like loyalty, martial arts, honour</p> <p>Source 3: Samurai now encouraged to master moral virtues like frugality and self-control, and pursue cultural interests like poetry and art</p> <p>Source 5: Samurai are not permitted to purchase any goods from foreign ships or Chinese merchants</p>
Others in society	<p>Source 4: rules decreeing everyday life of people = what they ate, built with, objects they could use in everyday life</p> <p>Source 4: regulations regarding dress, behaviour, manners, and morals</p> <p>Source 4: Peasants not allowed to put their rice fields and land up as payment for loans</p>
Japanese seeking to travel overseas	<p>Source 5: Japanese ships forbidden to leave for foreign countries</p> <p>Source 5: No Japanese is permitted to go abroad; those that attempt to will be executed</p> <p>Source 5: Japanese returning from overseas will also be put to death</p>
Foreigners	<p>Source 6: Portuguese entry to Japan is forbidden upon punishment of death (beheading)</p> <p>Source 5 and 6: all ships entering Japan to be searched for priests, Christians, or Catholics</p>

Next Steps:

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