

World History textbook #1

Opening Up Japan

While the shogun faced troubles at home, disturbing news reached him from abroad during the 1830s and 1840s. He was alarmed by news of the British victory over China in the Opium War. Even more disturbing was the way in which imperialists had forced China to sign unequal treaties. Surely, the shogun reasoned, it would not be long before western powers began seeking trading rights in Japan.

External Pressure and Internal Revolt. Then, in July 1853, a fleet of well-armed American ships commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry sailed into Tokyo Bay. Perry had a letter from the President of the United States. The letter demanded that Japan open its ports to diplomatic and commercial exchange. The shogun's advisors debated what to do. As Lord Ii noted, Japan did not have the ability to defend itself against the powerful United States Navy. In the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854, the shogun agreed to open two Japanese ports to American ships, though not for trade.

The United States soon won trading and other rights, including rights of extraterritoriality and a "most favored nation" clause. European nations demanded and won similar rights. Like the Chinese, the Japanese deeply resented the terms of these unequal treaties, which they found humiliating. Some bitterly criticized the shogun for not taking a stronger stand against the foreigners.

From: Elisabeth Ganyner Ellis and Anthony Ellis. *Prentice Hall World History. Connections to Today. The Modern Era.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005: p. 343

World History textbook #2

Japan Ends Its Isolation

The Japanese had almost no contact with the industrialized world during this time of isolation. They continued, however, to trade with China and with the Dutch merchants from Indonesia. They also had diplomatic contact with Korea. However, trade was growing in importance, both inside and outside Japan.

The Demand for Foreign Trade. Beginning in the early 19th century, Westerners tried to convince the Japanese to open their ports to trade. British, French, Russian, and American officials occasionally anchored off the Japanese coast. Like China, however, Japan repeatedly refused to receive them. Then, in 1853, U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry took four ships into what is now Tokyo Harbor. These massive black wooden ships powered by steam astounded the Japanese. The ships' cannons also shocked them. The Tokugawa shogun realized he had no choice but to receive Perry and the letter Perry had brought from U.S. president Millard Fillmore.

Fillmore's letter politely asked the shogun to allow free trade between the United States and Japan. Perry delivered it with a threat, however. He would come back with a larger fleet in a year to receive Japan's reply. That reply was the Treaty of Kanagawa of 1854. Under its terms, Japan opened two ports at which U.S. ships could take on supplies. After, the United States had pushed open the door, other Western powers soon followed.

From *Modern World History. Patterns of Interaction*. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell Inc., 2005: p.376.

American History Textbook

A Closed Door

Japan was a small island nation. Fearing the influence of outsiders, in the 1600s it imposed complete isolation on itself. It expelled Westerners and ended trade with foreigners. Only one ship a year from the Dutch East India Company was allowed to trade at the port of Nagasaki.

Perry's Mission. American merchants wanted to open Japan to trade. They also wanted the Japanese to help shipwrecked sailors who washed up on their shores. To achieve these goals, President Millard Fillmore sent Commodore Matthew Perry to Japan in the early 1850s.

Perry's four warships streamed into Tokyo Bay in July 1853. The Japanese had never seen steam-powered ships. They denounced Perry and his squadron as "barbarians in floating volcanoes" and ordered them to leave.

Before sailing away, Perry presented Japanese officials with a letter from President Fillmore. In it, the president asked the Japanese to open up trade with the United States. Perry said he would come back the following year for an answer.

A New Treaty. Perry returned with seven warships in February 1854. The Japanese were impressed with this show of strength. The following month, the Japanese emperor signed the Treaty of Kanagawa. In it, he agreed to American demands to help shipwrecked sailors. He also opened two Japanese ports.

From: *The American Nation*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995: p. 622-625.