



Centers of Progress, Part 30: Tokyo (Technology)

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Lesson Overview

Featured article: [“Centers of Progress, Pt. 30: Tokyo \(Technology\)”](#) by Chelsea Follett

In this article, Chelsea Follett underlines the significance of Tokyo's economic miracle, stating, “Thanks to the ingenuity and determination of the city's people combined with conditions of peace, economic freedom, and the opportunity to engage in global trade, Tokyo became an “economic miracle” that qualifies it as one of modern history's great urban success stories.”

In this lesson, students will explore how “Tokyo, which, after it was nearly destroyed during World War II, was rapidly rebuilt and reinvented itself as a world leader in manufacturing and technology.” They will explore the concept of “gaman” (endurance and resilience), discuss US military strategy and its ethical implications, and investigate another world megacity.

Warm-Up

TOKYO TOP 5

Tokyo is the world's biggest metropolis. In addition to being Japan's capital, Tokyo is a center of finance, technology, and cuisine and is one of the world's safest and cleanest big cities.

To build background knowledge about Tokyo, watch a [YouTube video](#) and answer these questions:

- What is the current population of Tokyo? Why is that number significant?
- How do the majority of the residents and visitors get around Tokyo?
- What was the original name for Tokyo?
- Why did the city rise in importance after 1600 CE?
- During which period did Tokyo become the capital of Japan?
- Describe how Japan's society and economy changed during Emperor Meiji's reign.
- Why is Tokyo known as a food connoisseur's paradise?
- In your own words, summarize your impressions of Tokyo after watching the video. What stood out to you about the city? What surprised you?

Questions for Reading, Writing, and Discussion

[Read the article](#) and then answer the following questions:

- 1. What was the Pax Tokugawa? Name one other period that historians label as Pax -----.
- 2. How does Tokyo's traditional architecture make it vulnerable to natural disasters, especially fires and earthquakes?
- 3. Explain at least 3 specific hardships that the Japanese people faced after World War II.
- 4. Despite the devastation from the war, what advantages did Tokyo have when it began to rebuild?
- 5. Think about American motivations during the Cold War and make inferences.

- Why was the United States interested in an economic turnaround in post-war Japan?
- Why did the United States assume the responsibility for Japan's defense?
- Why do you think Japan's political leadership and people strongly supported demilitarization and pacifism after 1945?
- Explain the meaning of "zaibatsu."
- What were two significant socioeconomic reforms passed during the American occupation?
- What effect did the Korean War have on the Japanese economy?
- Describe Japan's "economic miracle" of the 1950s and 1960s.
- How has Tokyo continued to be a global center of innovation in the 21st century?

Extension Activities/Homework

PRACTICE GAMAN

"Gaman" is a Japanese cultural value that means "resiliency in the face of adversity" and "the ability to endure hardship." On a prosaic (everyday) level, gaman implies patience, understanding, and self-control. The history of post-war Tokyo is a prime example of gaman. After World War II, Tokyo's inhabitants had to rebuild their lives amid significant hardship, including trauma and destruction from the war, lack of food, rampant inflation, and a foreign military occupation. The Japanese people's capacity for endurance and resilience—to literally rise from the ashes of disaster—is a well-documented aspect of the nation's culture.

When taken to an extreme, gaman can lead to the suppression of emotions, which may result in mental health issues such as anxiety. It also may perpetuate a culture of overwork, toleration of unfair situations, and feelings of isolation. However, when practiced in moderation, incorporating the positive aspects of gaman can help build resilience, self-discipline, and emotional strength.

Here are some suggestions on how you can cultivate gaman:

- Build endurance: Practice patience in challenging or awkward situations by focusing on what you can control and letting go of what you can't.
- Delay gratification: Strengthen self-control by delaying gratification in small ways, such as waiting to buy something or sticking to a healthy habit even when it's difficult.
- Focus on solutions: Instead of reacting impulsively in stressful situations, take a moment to assess the problem and think of constructive ways to solve it.
- Find value in adverse situations: Focus on opportunities for learning and growth in difficult situations.

Write a personal journal entry in which you reflect on ways to develop gaman. Specifically, think of a recent situation in which you could have practiced one of the coping behaviors. Describe the problem and how you dealt with it, and visualize alternate ways you could have behaved that would have incorporated more gaman.

HAVE A CIVIL DISCUSSION ABOUT STRATEGIC BOMBING DURING WORLD WAR II

This task aims to engage students in a civil discussion about the ethical, military, and humanitarian implications of US strategic bombing during World War II. Students will learn various perspectives, formulate ideas, and join a structured classroom discussion.

The question students will discuss is:

- In total war, is strategic bombing justified? Why or why not?

LEARN

Since the end of World War II, a debate has raged among historians about whether the United States' dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was justified to end the conflict. Watch a [BBC Studios video](#) to get a glimpse of the horrors of the bombing. Then, watch a [Washington Post video](#) to learn more about the decision to drop the atomic bombs in August 1945.

Less well known is the controversy over the March 1945 firebombing of Tokyo that killed 100,000 people in one night. Watch this clip from the documentary [The Fog of War](#) to learn about it. Robert McNamara helped plan the US bombing of Japan. Later, during the John F. Kennedy administration, McNamara was secretary of defense and was in charge of the Vietnam War. He made this documentary late in life, perhaps regretting his wartime decisions.

Read this chart from [The Economist](#).

The second world war



Selected bombing campaigns

AND SELECTED EVENTS

Target	Estimated deaths*	Date	Carried out by
Warsaw, Poland	25,800	Sep 1939	Germany
Britain (of which London)	40,000 (20,000)	Sep 1940-May 1941	Germany
Hamburg, Germany	43,000	Jul-24-3rd Aug 1943	Britain & US
Dresden, Germany	18,000	Feb 13th-15th 1945	Britain & US
<i>VE DAY (Victory in Europe) - Germany signs Instrument of Surrender</i>		<i>May 8th 1945</i>	
Japan† (of which Tokyo‡)	300,000 (100,000†)	Nov 1944-Aug 1945	United States
🌋 Hiroshima, Japan	140,000	Aug 6th 1945	United States
🌋 Nagasaki, Japan	74,000	Aug 9th 1945	United States
<i>VJ DAY (Victory in Japan) - Japan announces surrender to Allies</i>		<i>Aug 15th 1945</i>	
<i>Japan signs Instrument of Surrender</i>		<i>Sep 2nd 1945§</i>	

*Immediate deaths, thousands more succumbed to injuries and the effects of radiation at later dates †Excludes atomic bombs

‡March 9th-10th 1945 §Recognised as VJ Day by America

Source: *The Economist*

THINK AND WRITE

Write a one-page reflection on your initial thoughts about US strategic bombing during World War II. Your reflection should include:

- Your understanding of the reasons for the bombings
- Ethical concerns you may have
- Your initial stance on whether the bombings were justified

Keep this reflection because you will add to it after the discussion.

DISCUSS

You will be divided into two groups:

- Group A: Argue in favor of US strategic bombing
- Group B: Argue against the bombings

You will be divided regardless of your personal views to encourage understanding of multiple perspectives.

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

- Engage respectfully, listen to opposing views, and respond thoughtfully.
- Support your arguments with evidence such as historical facts and ethical theories.

DISCUSSION STRUCTURE

Address this question:

- In total war, is strategic bombing justified? Why or why not?
- Opening statements from each group (5 minutes)
- Rebuttals (3 minutes)
- Open floor discussion where students can ask questions or challenge each other's points (15 minutes)
- Closing statements (3 minutes)

REFLECT

Take out the paper on which you reflected on your initial thoughts about US strategic bombing during World War II. After the discussion, write a one-page reflection on how your views may have changed or evolved after hearing different perspectives. Your reflection should include the following:

- Arguments from the opposing side that you found compelling
- Any new insights that you gained
- Whether you still hold your original stance or have adjusted your views

INVESTIGATE A WORLD MEGACITY

Tokyo had a **million inhabitants** by 1750. By the 1940s, the wider Tokyo metro area had 7 million people. During World War II, Tokyo's population plummeted. But after the war, people returned, and the city steadily grew. Even though the overall population of Japan is shrinking, the number of people in Tokyo continues to rise, reflecting the opportunities the metropolis provides.

The United Nations projects that 68 percent of the **world's population** will live in cities by 2050. By 2030, the world is projected to have 43 megacities with more than 10 million inhabitants. Where will these megacities be located? What will life be like for their inhabitants? What are the opportunities and challenges they present?

Work with a partner to investigate a world megacity. Choose one metropolis from the **Wikipedia article for Megacity**. Gather information about the urban area based on the chart below and then compose a 500-word report about the megacity. Include a bibliography or a list of references.

The information in the table below will give you a well-rounded perspective on the megacity you are studying and insight into its past, present, and future.

Name	Population	Population density
Country	Region	Migration patterns
Ethnic makeup	Languages	Wealth distribution
Geographic features	Climate	Poverty rate
Natural resources	Historical background	Main economic sectors
Transportation systems	Housing and urban sprawl	Pollution levels
Green spaces	Administration and planning	Entertainment
Future challenges	Innovative solutions	Future projections