

LEVELED BOOK • K

Japan



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Japan



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Japan



Where Is It?

Japan is made up of a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean. It is just off the east coast of Asia. Japan has four main islands and thousands of smaller islands. The entire country is smaller than the state of California.



Tokyo is the largest city in Japan.

Tokyo (TOH-kee-yoh) is the capital city of Japan. It is on the largest island, called *Honshu* (HON-shoo). Tokyo has many tall **skyscrapers**. More than thirty-two million people live there.



People cross one of Tokyo's busiest streets.

People

More than 127 million people live in Japan. The country's main language is Japanese. More people live in cities and towns than in the country. City life in Japan is very busy. Most cities have little space, and people are crowded together.



Farmers in Japan grow large amounts of rice in very little space.

Most people in Japan eat rice. Japan grows much of the rice it uses. The Japanese also catch many fish and sell them across the world.



Mount Fuji is on the island of Honshu.

Land

Most of Japan is covered with mountains. The country has more than seventy **volcanoes**. The most famous one is Mount Fuji (FOO-jee). It has not erupted in many years. **Earthquakes** are also common.

Japan's Landforms



The land near the coast is the only flat land in Japan. Japan's biggest cities are on the coasts. The country has many rivers and lakes.



Japanese Kanji

fire

火

mountain

山

rain

雨

The Chinese characters borrowed by Japanese writing are called *kanji* (KAHN-jee).

History

Japan is thousands of years old. Ancient Japanese and Chinese people traded things and ideas. Some experts think that Japan learned to grow rice from China. Japanese writing even borrows from Chinese writing.



Samurai warriors in Japan wore armor to protect them.

In the past, Japan was an **empire**. It was ruled by emperors. Later, powerful military leaders called **shoguns** (SHOH-guns) took control away from the emperors. **Samurai** (SA-muh-rye) warriors also had power. The samurai were known as brave and skilled fighters.



Children in Japan often get kites, spinning tops, and cards for New Year's.

Celebrations

The Japanese New Year is an important holiday in Japan. It starts a week before the first day of January. People send cards for the New Year's holiday. They also clean their homes, and children often get gifts.



noodles



rice



sushi

Food

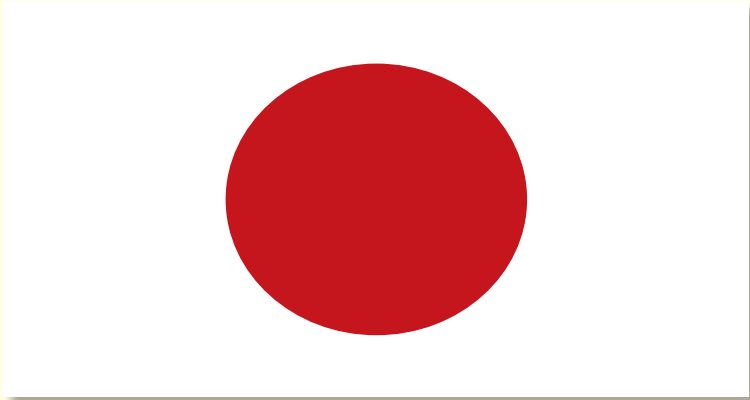
Rice is an important food in Japan. It is eaten at most meals. Noodles are also served with some meals. Another important food is fish. Japanese people sometimes eat raw fish called *sushi* (SOO-shee).



Children's Day in May celebrates the good health and happiness of children.

Conclusion

Japan is a small island country, yet it has many people. It has tall mountains and volcanoes. It also has crowded cities with skyscrapers. Japan is a mix of many things—old and new, large and small.



Population: 127,250,000

Land: 364,485 sq km (226,480 sq. mi.)

Capital City: Tokyo

Primary Language: Japanese

Currency: Yen



Source: Central Intelligence Agency (July 2014), World Bank

Glossary

earthquakes (<i>n.</i>)	shaking of Earth's crust (p. 8)
empire (<i>n.</i>)	nations or people ruled by one person who has total power (p. 11)
shoguns (<i>n.</i>)	military rulers in ancient Japan (p. 11)
samurai (<i>n.</i>)	a powerful class of warriors that lived in ancient Japan (p. 11)
skyscrapers (<i>n.</i>)	very tall buildings (p. 5)
volcanoes (<i>n.</i>)	places in Earth's crust where gases, ash, and lava come onto the surface (p. 8)

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Front and back cover: The Golden Pavilion is a palace in Japan.

Title page: Japan has many beautiful castles that were built long ago.

Page 3: Most children in Japan wear uniforms to school.

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Japan

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Discussion Questions

Analyze:

Why do you think ancient Japanese and Chinese people shared ideas?

Cause and Effect:

Why do you think Japan's biggest cities are on the coast?

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