LOC TPS AP World History Meiji Restoration
Period 5
9-12 Grades

This activity is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

One to two class periods of 45 – 60 minutes
Description of activity: Read an excerpt of an autobiography, analyze the Charter Oath, examine images related to the Meiji Restoration, describe the structure of and influences that shaped the Meiji government of Japan.

Activity Goals
Focus Question: Why did the Tokugawa Shogunate fall and the Meiji government rise to power in Japan? How was this new government a product of traditional and western influences?

Context: This activity should help to solidify students’ understanding of the Meiji Restoration in Japan.

Objectives: Identify and explain the structure of and foreign influences on the Meiji government.

Virginia SOLs
STANDARD WHII.1a, b,
The student will improve skills in historical research and geographical analysis by
a) identifying, analyzing, and interpreting primary and secondary sources to make generalizations about events and life in world history since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
b) using maps, globes, artifacts, and pictures to analyze the physical and cultural landscapes of the world and to interpret the past since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);

STANDARD WHII.9d, e
The student will demonstrate knowledge of the effects of the Industrial Revolution during the nineteenth century by
d) explaining the rise of industrial economies and their link to imperialism and nationalism;
e) assessing the impact of European economic and military power on Asia and Africa, with emphasis on the competition for resources and the responses of colonized peoples.

AP World History
Key concepts 5.1.V; 5.2.II
Skills causation

Assessment: Analysis questions, class discussion, optional summative assessment.
Activity Details
Primary Sources: see below
Procedure: Students will read and analyze the excerpt of a self-described “son of a samurai loyalist,” the Charter Oath, and two images. After students have read and answered the questions, the teacher should discuss all elements before asking students to complete an assessment.

What you will need before implementing: You will need color copies of every document and description information on the back.

Read the following excerpt:

Ozaki, Yukio, 1858-1954.
Translated by Fujiko Hara, with a foreword by Marius B. Jansen
published 2001
http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/prin031/00065211.html

Chapter 1
THE BIRTH OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT IN JAPAN
IN SETTING OUT these recollections of Japanese constitutional government, it is not my intention to write an academic study. There are enough scholars for that. This is to be a personal memoir. I shall tell the story of constitutional government in Japan through my own experience, how it germinated and evolved, where it is today, and where it should be going.

Ever since the Movement for Freedom and People’s Rights (*jiyuminkenundo*) was launched in the first years of the Meiji era, I never stopped working to promote the development of constitutional government in Japan. From the very first assembly of the newly founded national parliament, the Diet, in 1890, I have held a seat in the House of Representatives without a break. My entire life has been dedicated to the development of constitutional government. These memoirs, therefore, should be instructive in some degree for people today as well as for later historians. It was with the establishment of the Progressive Party (*Kaishinto*) under Okuma Shigenobu in 1882, that I first became directly involved in the mainstream of Japanese constitutional government. However, I would like to begin by briefly outlining the circumstances of my birth and the development of constitutional government in Japan prior to that date.

SON OF A SAMURAI LOYALIST
I was born in the Sagami hills, in a village by the name of Matano in the county of Tsukui. Here, the pure streams that gushed and trickled from the green Musa-shino, Kai, and Sagami mountains gathered into the Sagami river, famous for its *ayu* trout fishing. This makes it sound rather idyllic, but in reality it was an unremarkable and remote place where one’s dreams would be trapped in the skirts of the pressing hills. My family members were apparently long-term residents of Matano, and the Buddhist mortuary tablets and graves of successive generations of my ancestors are to be found in the Shosenji temple in Osawa, about one *ri* [2.44 miles] away. We are descended from Ozaki Kamon-no-kami Yukinaga, an important official in the
Improving Historical Thinking Skills through Source-Based Instruction
Paige K Solomon, Norfolk Collegiate

pre-Tokugawa government. In Matano one can still see what remains of Fuukumaden Castle, where he is believed to have lived, and below the castle ruins there is a field by the name of Ozaki. Nothing, however, is known about what he did or where he came from. The mortuary tablets at Shosenji suggest that he died in 1622 and was followed by his wife in 1628, but apart from this there is not a single record pertaining to him. The year 1622 came toward the very end of the reign of the second Tokugawa shogun, and the third shogun, Iemitsu, acceded the following year. The shogunate was thus still only newly established, and it may have been the case that my ancestor retired to Matano to live a secluded life after having fallen into disfavor for rebelling against the Tokugawa. In any event, the wording on his mortuary tablet indicates that he was a man of considerable status, although “Fuukumaden Castle” can only have been a modest structure on the top of the hill, nothing like what would ordinarily be thought of as a “castle.”

The area is on the border of the Kai and Sagami districts, where there had been frequent warfare between the Hojo and Takeda families, and so it may have been that a watchtower of some sort was built there. Either way, it certainly is a tale shrouded in mystery. When I was about three years old a fire destroyed our home and everything in it, including all the family records. Later I learned from books published in the Tokugawa era that the Ozakis were an “old family.” Beyond that, however, I could discover nothing more about my ancestry. I hold no particular sentiment regarding the provenance of my family, and it matters little to me whether we are descended from apes or men. In this sense, I am not at all bothered by our lack of a family tree. I was aware, though, that my family was given special treatment in the village, and I do recall that my parents treated ordinary people in the village as if they were their retainers. I was born in November 1859. This was the year of the notorious Ansei Purge, which was followed the next year by the assassination of the Shogun’s Chief Minister, Ii Naosuke, outside of the Sakurada-mon gates. Six years earlier Commodore Perry had sailed his “black ships” into Uraga Bay, and ten years more would bring the Meiji Restoration. It was thus a time in which the crises of the late Edo period were building to a climax.

My father, Yukimasa, had been adopted into a family from the Mineo family of Sanda village in Hachioji. I was his first son. It was difficult for a small child to understand what was happening at the time, but riding the tide of history, my father seems to have become involved with loyalist activists from an early stage, and he travelled the country to promote their cause. He was hardly ever home when I was a child. I vaguely remember the day when we received news of his death. We were soon informed that the report had been incorrect, but it seems that at the time of the Restoration he led a troop of Koshu ronin [masterless samurai] called the “Dan-kin-tai,” which had joined Itagaki Taisuke’s expeditionary army when it set out to subdue the recalcitrant Aizu clan in the Restoration War of 1868. I never heard much about the details.

One of the interesting men with whom father was closely associated in those days was Ochiai Naosuke. He was both a very good friend and a relative of my father’s. He came from a village called Komagino, across the river from Matano, in the Bushu country at the foot of the Takao mountains. From early childhood Ochiai had been trained in the Motoori and Hirata schools and was an ardent loyalist. He was the father by adoption of Ochiai Naobumi, a well-known literary figure in the Meiji period.

Ochiai Naosuke was a resourceful and determined man. On a number of occasions he conspired to bring down the Tokugawa shogunate, at one point with Kiyokawa Hachiro, and at another with Fujimoto Tesseki. In 1867 he had been plotting with the Satsuma forces to incite an insurrection in Edo, but before any of these plans could achieve their purpose he was found out
by the shogunate, and forced to flee. Chased by a warship with orders to take his life, he managed to escape safely to Satsuma, where he linked up with Saigo Takamori and Iwakura Tomomi and went on to render meritorious service in the campaign to restore Imperial rule.

With my father away like this, our household was very poor, and we lived a truly lonely existence up in those mountains. Around us there were a number of families with the surname Wako, who were all said to be descended from former retainers of my family. Yet, by this point, as a result of the mysterious fire, our home had been completely destroyed and only the godown was left standing. In this situation and with father absent, the Ozaki household teetered on the brink of extinction and came to know utter poverty. There was only my mother and myself, and although we had some relatives, they lived far away and were of no help to us.

To make matters worse, I did not have a strong constitution as a child. From infancy I was tormented every day by headaches. And, as if this were not enough, my entire body was plagued by itchy boils. My childhood was quite miserable. My mother apparently worried less about educating me than keeping me alive. Later I shared her attention with my brother and sister, but in my early childhood my health and well-being were her sole concern. As for my education, there were no schools or teachers in the mountain areas in pre-modern Japan. I recall on those rare occasions when father was home that he taught me verses from an anthology of T’ang poems. Even now I can remember thinking to myself at the time how difficult and incomprehensible “scholarship” was! This is of course understandable, for imagine the shock it would cause today if first-year elementary school textbooks began with T’ang poetry. In any case, I received only the roughest of educations. I was taught Chinese characters by my parents but never had to practice writing very much. This was how I spent my childhood, without any proper education, in a mountain village forgotten by the world.

may have been both of vanity and as an expedient to avoid complications in official documents. Much later, he gave his real age and often wrote it in the calligraphy he produced.

Eventually the Tokugawa shogunate fell and Imperial rule was restored. My father, like the other samurai loyalists who had been constantly on the move in their struggle to bring this about, now found himself in the employ of the Meiji government. In the first year of the new Meiji era he became a civil servant and was assigned to Tokyo. I was ten years old by the Japanese way of counting.

THE FIVE ARTICLES OF THE CHARTER OATH

In that same first year of Meiji that I accompanied my father to Tokyo, a solemn ceremony to proclaim the Charter Oath took place in Kyoto. On April 6, in the Hall of State Ceremonies, Emperor Meiji read out the following covenant before the gods of heaven and earth:

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.
3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue his own calling so that there may be no discontent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.
These five articles of the Charter Oath laid the foundation for constitutional government. Following the wishes of his forefathers, Emperor Meiji had graciously enunciated the basic principles of the nation and in so doing had clearly defined the noble objective of building a constitutional government in a most unprecedented manner. On that same day, Saigo Takamori and Katsu Kaishu had been in Edo (present-day Tokyo) to negotiate the surrender and evacuation of Edo Castle. My young heart filled with emotion to think that on that historic day the course of national policy had been given to posterity by the emperor himself. Needless to say, the ten-year-old boy that I was then hardly appreciated the historical significance of the Charter Oath. Later, when I became involved in the movement for constitutional government, words could not express the strength we were able to draw from the covenant. It meant more to us than having a million allies. A clear national policy had been set. Devoting our energies to the cause of constitutional government was to obey the Imperial will and serve the empire. The belief that anyone who obstructed the realization of a constitutional government was a traitor to the people and an enemy of the throne gave us courage to stake our lives on the cause.

With the oath the emperor also released a letter declaring his intention to promote the welfare and honor of the nation. In it he stated: “At this time of national renewal, if any person shall be unable to realize his full potential it shall be deemed Our own failure. Therefore, we are conscious of Our duty to fulfill our mission and be worthy of Our people, as we hold ourselves accountable for the achievement of Our objectives, being the first to face adversity, following faithfully the wisdom of the sages, and promoting good administration throughout the land.” He further encouraged the people: “You shall enjoy happiness in life by fulfilling our wishes, elevating each other and setting aside personal interest for the public good. Assist us in Our enterprise, defend the integrity of Our divine land, and thus console the spirits of Our Imperial ancestors.” Who would not be moved in his heart and stirred to great deeds by these words? As loyal subjects we had no choice but to follow the Imperial will and dedicate ourselves body and soul to achieving true constitutional government.

Its fundamental principle, as surely as the sun is in the sky, was established by the first article of the Charter Oath: “Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.” The other four articles also concerned themselves with constitutional government. Article 2 states: “All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.” Communicating the minds of the leaders to the people and theirs to those who lead them is the essence of constitutional government. A true debate can only be had if there is effective communication. Article 3 states: “The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue his own calling so that there may be no discontent.” In the despotic feudal age the bureaucracy and military did not live up to their mandate and citizens were unable to fulfill their aspirations so that in the end they no longer supported the government of the shogun. The rest can be easily imagined. Article 4 states: “Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.” Of all the transgressions of the autocratic government that had but lately been overthrown, the worst was that the lives of the common people were at the mercy of the samurai. People were treated like animals and their rights to life and property ignored. To treat humans as
they ought to be treated was the foundation of constitutional government as well as the path of justice. Article 5 states: “Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of Imperial rule.” The political history of civilized countries teaches us that constitutional government is the supreme form of political institution. With such a government in place, love of one’s country and loyalty to the emperor would join to promote the highest good for our land.

The Five Articles of the Charter Oath laid the foundations of Japan’s constitutional government. The challenge lay in building a fitting edifice on this sure foundation. This was a grand venture that the people of Japan should undertake together in compliance with the Imperial will. My own life was totally given to this momentous purpose. I felt immense pride in the fact that the first page of the history of constitutional government in Japan was graced with the emperor’s inexpressibly grand oath.

THE NEW MEIJI GOVERNMENT

After coming to Tokyo with my father in the first year of Meiji we lived for some time with the Yasuokas at their Surugadai residence. A loyalist, Yasuoka Yoshitaka was a country samurai from Nakamura village in the county of Hata in Tosa domain (today’s Kochi Prefecture). He was trained in the Hioki school of archery and the Otsubo school of horsemanship. He had also practiced the martial arts with sword and spear under Hijikata Kenkichi and studied artillery with Tadokoro Sayoji. In addition to these skills, he was well versed in literature as a distinguished student of Kamei Tetsutaro of Chikuzen (northern Kyushu). He was, in short, a man of both martial and literary excellence. His outstanding background stood him in good stead when he joined the Restoration forces in the campaign to subdue the eastern clans. After the Restoration he was chosen to occupy important government positions, first as an official in the judiciary (danjodai daichu) and then the Deliberative Assembly (shugi’in hankan) and the Ministry of Civil Affairs (minbu shokyoku). My father served as a government official under Yasuoka for about ten years.

Describe the background of the author.
Why did he write this autobiography?
How did he characterize his father?
What did he think about the Meiji Restoration?
When considering the childhood of the author and the position of his family, can you explain why he and his family supported the fall of the shogunate?

What were the main tenets of the Charter Oath?
What made it so appealing to Ozaki Yukio and others like him?
In what ways can you find a blend of traditional Japanese and western influences to create something new (an example of syncretism)?
Illustration of the Imperial Diet House of Commons with a Listing of all Members
Toyohara Kuniteru III
http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/55267

How might this image be significant?
What details strike you?
What are important similarities between the Japanese Diet and the German Diet or parliament?
Were there any significant differences between the Japanese Diet and the German Diet or parliament?
The Japanese imperial family
Kasai, Torajirō, artist
October 1900
https://www.loc.gov/item/2009631618/

What details do you notice?
Explain the reasons for the Western influences.
What was the likely purpose of this painting?

Formative assessment:
Characterize the Meiji restoration. Why did some former samurai support it? What promises did it offer? Describe the structure of the government. What were important influences in its development?