**Ancient Japan**

* The first people to migrate into the islands of Japan probably arrived around 8000 BCE these hunter/gathers lived in huts and caves. In the next thousand years, the people of Japan lived off of the land, hunted, farmed, and developed their own unique cultures and religious beliefs.
* Around 200 BCE invaders from the Asian mainland used their superior technology and weapons to defeat and conquer the peoples of these islands.
* These conquerors intermarried with the islanders, and taught them new methods for farming, and new technologies, including the use of both bronze and iron.
* Around 250 CE another wave of invaders entered Japan from the Asian mainland. These invaders had mastered the use of horses in battle, and their warriors were again able to quickly conquer the islanders.
* These warriors would eventually become the ruling class in Japan.
* The people of Japan lived in clans, which were held together by their common descent from a single ancestor. These clans were ruled by a powerful chief, who was also the religious priest of the group. (**Sound familiar)**
* Members of each clan practiced a form of ancestor worship known as Shinto. Clan members believed that the spirit of their ancestors still inhabited their village in order to protect them and better their lives. They worshipped this ancestor and prayed to it for help and guidance.
* The clan chief was their military leader and protected the clan from outsiders and other rival clans.
* Around 370 CE, one clan used their political power began to become the dominate clan. This clan was known as the Yamato Clan. The Yamato Clan was known for their bravery and their superior fighting techniques. As a result, all other clans within Japan became subject to them. The chief of the Yamato Clan became the first emperor of Japan.
* Local clans still ruled their own lands, but they owed their loyalty to the emperor, who by 400 CE had become very powerful.
* By 500 CE powerful clans regained their power and influence, and the title of emperor became largely ceremonial. The people of Japan believed that only the emperor could communicate with the gods in behalf of their people. This insured that the same family remained on the throne.
* In 1185 CE a powerful aristocrat by the name of Yoritomo Minamoto defeated all other opponents, and became the leader of Japan. Yoritomo was called a shogun, which means ‘general’ in Japanese. As the shogun, Yorimoto controlled all the political and military power in Japan.
* Japan fell into a feudal system similar to that of Europe. Landowning warriors known as samurai pledged their allegiance to lords known as daimyos, and fought to protect their lands.
* Poor farmers paid the daimyos taxes for the right to farm their lands. In exchange, the daimyos used his samurais to protect these poor farmers. **(Sound familiar)**