

## Heian Period Historical Context

The Heian Period in Japan spans from the 790s to almost 1200. During this time period, the imperial court was moved to Heian-kyo, which is today called Kyoto. This period signaled the rise of a bureaucratic model of government. The beginning of the period is referred to as the Age of Kingly Rule, in which Emperor Kanmu, the 50th emperor of Japan, looked to make a break with the old ways of life in the previous Nara periods. This period spans from 794 to 900. The emperor moved the capital and attempted to purge the court of old Nara administrators and infuse new life and a new style into the governance of Japan. It during this period that governmental efficiency is focused in on and honed to perfection, which has left a remaining influence on the Japanese people and their culture, even to present day.

The middle of the Heian Period, from 900 to 1050, marks the Fujiwara Era, in which the aristocratic elite flourished. This era marked a golden age of courtly decorum and culture. It was during this time period that some of the most well-known classical pieces of literature were produced by the powerful female literati. Specifically, *The Tale of Genji*, which is used in the lessons below, was created during this time period and reflect the courtly values of the ages. The formality and indirectness present in courtly manners is something that is also still present in modern Japanese culture, both in the ways in which the language is used and also in the interacts of respect and humility between the genders.

As the Heian period came to a close, the era of courtly rule began to quickly decline into lawlessness, conflict and eventually war to overtake the monarchy. The ending of this period marks the transition from ancient Japan to a more organized militaristic and political force during the Middle Ages of Japan, which would last from the 1300s up to the 1600s.



## Heian Period Historical Context Kloze Notes

Using the previous reading, fill in the following blank spaces with the appropriate words.

The Heian Period in Japan spans from the (1)\_\_\_\_\_ to almost (2)\_\_\_\_\_. During this time period, the (3)\_\_\_\_\_ was moved to Heian-kyo, which is today called (4)\_\_\_\_\_. This period signaled the rise of a (5)\_\_\_\_\_.

The beginning of the period is referred to as the (6) \_\_\_\_\_, in which Emperor Kanmu, the 50th emperor of Japan, looked to make a break with the old ways of life in the previous Nara periods. This period spans from (7) \_\_\_\_\_ to (8)\_\_\_\_\_. The emperor moved the capital and attempted to purge the court of old Nara administrators and infuse new life and a new style into (9) \_\_\_\_\_. It is during this period that governmental (10)\_\_\_\_\_ is focused in on and honed to perfection, which has left a (11)\_\_\_\_\_ on the Japanese people and their culture, even to present day.

The middle of the Heian Period, from (12)\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, marks (13)\_\_\_\_\_, in which the (14)\_\_\_\_\_ flourished. This era marked a golden age of (15)\_\_\_\_\_ and\_\_\_\_\_. It was during this time period that some of the most well-known classical pieces of literature were produced by the (16)\_\_\_\_\_ literati.

As the Heian period came to a close, the (17) \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ began to quickly decline into (18) \_\_\_\_\_ (19) \_\_\_\_\_ and eventually (20)\_\_\_\_\_ to overthrow the (21) \_\_\_\_\_. The ending of this period marks the transition from (22) \_\_\_\_\_ Japan to a more (23) \_\_\_\_\_, militaristic and (24) \_\_\_\_\_ force during the (25) \_\_\_\_\_ of Japan, which would last from the 1300s up to the 1600s.