

Unit: 1960s

Aim:

Can Johnson make the "Great Society" a reality?

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cities and paid them as much as half of the crops they grew. Since the average "farm" was little more than an acre, many farm families lived in poverty. The land reform took land away from big landlords and redistributed it to the farmers, so that farm families could own the land they worked. Because farm families became more independent economically, they could participate more freely in the new democracy.

The Americans also tried to make workers in the industrial sector more independent by changing the laws to allow free trade unions. Before the war there were only a few small unions; by 1949, about half of all industrial workers belonged to a union.

To democratize economic power further and create competition, the Occupation intended to break up the giant business corporations, the *zaibatsu*, but this reform was not implemented, in part because it would have made Japan's economic recovery more difficult.

Changes in Civic Values: Besides changing Japanese institutions, the Americans wanted the Japanese people to understand better the idea of democracy. To do this, the occupation government used its control of newspapers and magazines to explain and popularize democracy.

They used American democracy as a model to be copied. The complete defeat and devastation of Japan after the war had left many Japanese shocked and disillusioned with their own military leaders, and they were open to the new ways of their American conquerors. To ensure that Japanese children learned democratic values, the Americans insisted that the education system and the laws regulating families be revised. "Moral training" in schools was abolished, and instruction in democratic ideas was begun. Control of education and censorship of textbooks were taken from the central government and given to local administrations. The laws giving the head of the household complete control of every family member (for example, he could withhold his consent when his children wished to be married) were changed to make each family member more equal and thereby more democratic.

Support for Change Within Japan: After the Americans left, the reforms that did not find strong support within the Japanese system were discontinued. The anti monopoly laws were weakened, and new giant businesses appeared. The central government assumed control of the schools, although the democratic school structure and curriculum remained. The ruling conservative party suggested other changes, including re-introduction of "moral training" in the schools and abolition of the "peace clause," Article 9 of the constitution, but these were not adopted. In sum, there was great popular support for most of the changes, and the changed system thus continues to the present.

Discussion Questions

1. What authorities designed and supervised the reforms carried out during the Occupation? Why were they able to do this?
2. How many years did the occupation last? What were the dates?
3. What did the Occupation authorities think made countries aggressive? How did they propose to make Japan less aggressive?
4. What did the American Occupation authorities think was important to a lively democracy? Make a list of the factors.
5. What were *zaibatsu*? How did the American occupation authorities see economic reforms--land reform, reform of the *zaibatsu*, and the strengthening of labor unions--to be related to a healthy democracy?
6. Why did some reforms introduced by the American Occupation authorities not last?