

## Marking Scheme & Suggested Answer

**(a) With reference to Source A, identify *two* characteristics of the Meiji Constitution.**

**(4 marks)**

### Marking Scheme

One characteristic plus relevant clue [max. 2 marks]

- e.g. - The Emperor was the most powerful person in the country  
- The people enjoyed limited freedom

### Suggested Answer

Its first characteristic was that the Emperor was the most powerful person in the country. From the source, the constitution ‘placed the Emperor at the heart of the ruling body’ and he held command over the army, enjoying enormous power. Therefore, this should be counted as one of the characteristics.

The second one was the limited freedom enjoyed by the people. The constitution stated ‘some freedom and rights enjoyed by the people’ but only ‘limited democracy and freedom were established’. Therefore, the constitution granted people freedom but it was very limited only.

**(b) Identify the political change in Japan during the Taisho period, as reflected in Source B.**

**(3 marks)**

### Marking Scheme

L1 Able to identify changes without describing how things were changed.

[max. 1]

L2 Able to identify two changes and describe how things were changed. [max. 3]

Change:

- e.g. - Increase in democratic elements

Explanation:

- e.g. - Extension of the right to vote and candidate eligibility  
- Huge increase in the number of electorate

**Suggested Answer**

Political change of Japan was manifested in the increase in democratic elements.

The Source shows the number of electorate jumping from 3 million to 12 million and accounting for more than 20% of Japan's population. The author described this as 'a great step forward in its way to democracy', which shows the higher level of democracy in Japan during the Taisho period.

From the Source, after the implementation of the General Election Law, men aged 25 or above had suffrage and those aged 30 or above had candidate eligibility. This 'gave suffrage to large number of people' and made Japan more democratic.

**(c) To what extent did Japan achieve political modernization during the Taisho period (1912-26)? Explain your answer with reference to Sources A and B, and using your own knowledge. (8 marks)**

**Marking Scheme**

- L1 Cover only aspects that were modernized or not modernized, and/or using Source or own knowledge only. [max. 4]
- L2 Cover both aspects that were modernized and those that were not, using both Source and own knowledge, with a clear viewpoint. [max. 8]

Modernized:

- e.g.
- The Meiji Constitution, dismantling the feudal system, is the first constitution of Japan. (Source A)
  - Promulgation of the General Election Law made Japan much more democratic. (Source B)
  - Hara Kei became the first 'commoner' Prime Minister, marking the start of Japan's party politics. (Own knowledge)
  - The Military Ministers to be Active-Duty Officers Law was abolished after the First Constitution Protection Movement (Own knowledge)

Not modernized:

- e.g.
- The Meiji Constitution gave too much power to the Emperor and too limited freedom to the people (Source A)
  - Still, women had no suffrage (Source B)
  - Freedom was often suppressed (Source B)
  - The military still held great power and had direct access to the Emperor

(Own knowledge)

- The Genro still enjoyed great influence over the position of Prime Minister (Own knowledge)

### **Suggested Answer**

To a small extent, Japan was politically modernized in the Taisho period.

From Source A, it is true that the Meiji Constitution ‘played an influential role in further dismantling the feudal system and promoting political modernization’. The constitution also granted freedom to some of the people and Japan was modernized superficially.

Also, from Source B, the number of electorate jumped from 3 million to 12 million after the General Election Law was introduced. Japan thus became much more democratic and showed another feature of modernization.

From my own knowledge, Hara Kei became the first ‘commoner’ Prime Minister in 1918, marking the start of Japan’s party politics. This also democratized Japan politically and was a characteristic of modernization.

Moreover, the Military Ministers to be Active-Duty Officers Law, formulated by the military-controlled cabinet, was abolished after the First Constitution Protection Movement in 1913. The cabinet became more independent and this was also a feature of political modernization.

However, Japan was not intrinsically modernized in political aspect during the period concerned.

From Source A, the constitution ‘placed the Emperor at the heart of the ruling body’ and gave him command over the army. He enjoyed extremely huge power and it is clear that the Meiji Constitution was a power-centralizing one, under which Japan practiced rule by law instead of rule of law.

Source A even indicates that the constitution allowed very ‘limited democracy and freedom’ and sowed the seeds of the rise of militarism, which led to wars waged by Japan. The low levels of freedom and democracy also show Japan’s failure in achieving modernization.

From Source B. ‘women had no suffrage’ even after the implemented of the General Election Law. Women were still treated unfairly in political aspect and the political modernization was far from complete.

Worse still, Source B shows the government’s frequent suppression of people’s freedom. For example, the Public Security Preservation Law, enacted in May 1925, was used to stifle ‘peaceful acts, including speech about liberalism’. This shows that the people’s freedom was curtailed and it was not modernized to be like this.

From my own knowledge, the military still enjoyed great power. They had direct access to the Emperor and their actions were free from the cabinet’s control. The excessive power of the military was opposite to modernization.

Moreover, the Genro still enjoyed great influence over the position of Prime Minister. For example, the reason why Hara Kei became the first ‘commoner’ Primer Minister in 1918 and formed a cabinet is that he was endorsed by Yamagata Aritomo, one of the Genro who was called the ‘Primer Minister Maker’. Japan was still autocratic in political aspect.

Therefore, despite features of modernization seemed to appear in Japan’s politics, its autocratic nature had never changed and this even became the breeding ground for militarism. Japan was modernized to a small extent only.