The rise and fall of Imperial Japan. (by KA)
The Pacific Ocean.
The background.

- Western countries merely wished to exploit Asia and showed much prejudice against her peoples.

- The 19th century Western carving up of China had been a warning to Japan.

- Japan realised that to retain her independence and national character she had to adopt some Western ideas, and quickly.

- In particular Japan copied Western military ideas, for example her navy started building a ‘dreadnaught’ battleship in 1905 - a year before HMS Dreadnaught was started in Britain.

- Japan’s modern military then set about finding ways to promote Japanese interests abroad.

- China was defeated in battle in 1894-5 and Japan got influence on the mainland and Taiwan. This was the First Sino-Japanese War. (Sino=Chinese)
A Japanese print of the Sino-Japanese war of 1895. The Japanese are in white.

How are the Chinese soldiers portrayed here?
One Western power, Russia, dared to challenge this new Japan.

Imperial Russia—some army officers.

They sent a fleet of powerful ships to establish order in the East. The Russian fleet was decisively smashed at Tsushima 1905.

This gave Japan control of Manchuria and knocked out Russian influence in the East.
Battle of Tsushima 1905

Of the Russian fleet of 11 battleships and 8 cruisers, plus other ships, only 2 destroyers and a yacht made it to safety!!
The Japanese lost 4 small gunboats. That’s a ‘slam-dunk’ for you!
The Japanese Empire.

• Japan had a severe lack of natural resources.
• Nearby Manchuria had plenty of coal, plus industries and ports.
• China had already been carved up by the Western powers. Why shouldn’t Japan do the same?
• 1910 Japan moved into Korea.
The Japanese army conquer German Tsingtao 1914

- Japan astutely joined Britain and France for WW1 and took over German Chinese possessions as soon as she could.

- In 1915 Japan presented China with the 21 Demands, taking even more power from China, and indirectly depriving China of her best leader Yuan Shikai.

- After WW1 Japan was not asked to return any Chinese land, despite China supporting the British and French in the war. This caused the May 4 riots in China 1919.
The local Chinese warlord.

- Zhang Zuolin was the Chinese warlord of Manchuria 1928.
- He began to show sympathy for Chiang Kaishek and the new China.
- The Japanese army planted a bomb in his private train and killed him.
The Manchurian Incident 1931

- The Great Depression in the USA was devastating to Japan.
- Many people were in poverty, and half the factories had closed.
- The Japanese army saw conquest as a way out of this.
- The army was also afraid of Chiang Kaishek’s moves to unify China. They thought he would take Manchuria from them.
- Claiming Chinese sabotage of a railway, the Japanese army occupied Manchuria. They renamed it Manchukuo and put the deposed Chinese Emperor Pu Yi up as a figure head.
- This was the run-up to the Sino-Japanese war 1937-45
Japanese tanks of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria
A Japanese propaganda poster

- Notice the flags- Japan, Manchukuo, and China.
- What is the purpose of this poster?
• The deposed Chinese Emperor Pu Yi was now seized upon by the Japanese as the new puppet ruler of Manchukuo.

• Manchukuo means land of the ‘Manchu’. What more fitting than a Manchu leader?

• Explain why the Japanese would want to do this.
Time magazine with Pu Yi.

- Who published this magazine?
- Why?
The Emperor Hirohito 1926-1989

- The Emperor Showa of Japan.
- He had complete control over, and commanded complete loyalty from his subjects.
- It was his responsibility for starting and ending the wars against China, USA, Britain etc.
- He was protected from prosecution in 1945 by the US who needed him to keep Japan from collapsing.
General Hideki Tojo

• Prime Minister of Japan and primary military leader.
• Rose to power in the Manchukuo ‘Kwantung’ army
• Nicknamed the ‘razor’
• Keen on ultra nationalistic secret societies.
• Responsible for 8m civilian deaths, countless deaths and experiments on prisoners of war.
• Commemorated at the Yasukuni Shrine.
• Apologized for military atrocities on his death.
• Executed for war crimes 1948
Gradual Japanese advances.

- The Japanese army gradually crept Southward, through China, fighting all the way.
Japanese soldiers ‘conquer’ the Great Wall 1933
• 1937 the Japanese army clashed with the Chinese at the gates of Beijing (the Marco Polo Bridge).
• This photo is just after the fighting had finished, leaving the Japanese in control.
Japanese occupation of China.

- By 1938 there were 1 million Japanese troops in China.
- By 1941 2 million troops - but this was still not enough.
- Japan could occupy only key areas and cities.
- Out of fear they adopted the ‘Three All Campaign’ (‘Kill all, burn all, destroy all’)
- She simply didn’t have enough soldiers however.
- By 1945 4 million Chinese people had died and 60 million had been displaced.
- Many Chinese cities lay in ruins.
A baby caught up in the bombing of a Shanghai railway station.
A Japanese tank in the streets of Shanghai.
Chinese soldiers 1939
Japanese troops at Nanking
The Japanese army rapidly advanced through China, Indo-China, Malaya, and Indonesia.

- Some Asian people welcome them as liberators from western Imperialists
- Soon they were generally feared as new imperialists, not as Asian liberators
- They treated non-Japanese peoples with ruthlessness, cruelty and severity.
Great cruelty.
Imperial Japanese expansion up to 1941 (in brown)
Japanese things that were potential war winners.
The ‘zero’ fighter plane.

- Much faster and more maneuverable than any other fighter at the time.
The two biggest battleships ever!

Photo # NH 63433  Japanese battleship Yamato fitting out, Sept. 1941
Japanese battleship Musashi leaving Brunei, 1944
The aircraft carrier.

- Only a few people realized that old battleships were finally made obsolete by the aeroplane.
- Pacific naval wars were to be decided by planes from ships, not by big guns.
The army could move very quickly through the region whether or not roads were ‘good.

- NB This is an actual Japanese army bike.
Soldiers.

- Soldiers, highly skilled in attack, defence, and jungle warfare.
- Highly motivated to defend their Emperor and their land to the death.
• By November 1941 the Japanese were poised to even strike Australia!
• Campaigns to attack Burma and Midway Island were to be a prelude to this.
• The bombing of Darwin was a precursor of invasion.
The British government- alarmed at the rapid Japanese advance-decided to send some big warships to show strength.

They ignored the advice of the navy that already knew that aeroplanes could now sink ships easily.

Both ships were sunk by over 100 Japanese planes.

It was a major blow to Britain. Another pointer to the new nature of naval warfare.
The Prince of Wales, and the Repulse - both sunk Dec 1941.
The Japanese capture Hong Kong.

24.12.1941
Pearl Harbour (Hawaii)

The major fleet base of the US navy in the Pacific. It was home to all the major US warships in the Pacific. Destruction of these ships would take out all the resistance to Japanese expansion to the East and South.
7th December 1941—the ‘day of infamy’.

The Japanese launch a surprise attack.

The Japanese had been shown how to attack a harbour with planes by the British attack on the Italian fleet in Taranto 11.11.1940. The US navy had chosen to regard the feat as a ‘fluke’.
• US warships sinking at anchor.

• Japanese carrier planes ready to take off.
The US fleet lies destroyed.
Unfortunately the Japanese destroyed battleships, but no US aircraft carriers. They also failed to either destroy or capture the harbour.
The USS Enterprise

• Only luck kept this ship out of Pearl Harbour on the 7th. She arrived the following day.

• She was to lead the US Navy back into the fight in the Pacific.
Singapore surrenders 15.2.1942

General Percival comes out to surrender to the Japanese. It was Britain’s greatest ever military defeat.
Burma- 1942-3

- Heavy fighting.
- The Japanese pushed out British forces by superior jungle fighting techniques.
- The British reliance on motor vehicles was exploited as a weakness by simple tree-felled road blocks.
- The Japanese prepared to attack India
- The British counter attacked in Arakan but were again beaten
The infamous Burma railway. This is where the Japanese put civilian and military prisoners to work in the rain forest. Huge numbers died.
Burma 1944-5

- The British adopted new techniques. Instead of trying to hold territory generally they made sure of holding well-defended ‘boxes’ of strategically important land.

- The Japanese found themselves unable to defeat their enemy and unable to utilise the land to their advantage. They also now found themselves dependent on hugely long, and very vulnerable, supply routes.

- Battle of the ‘Admin Box’ was a British victory in 1944. The Japanese army had, at last, to retreat.
The Burma road—a lifeline to China

- Built at huge effort this road was a link between the allies in Burma and China.
- Vast amounts of supplies were trucked over the mountains to help the fight against the Japanese.
The Rape of Nanking
Dec 1942-Feb 1943.

The Japanese army were allowed to run riot.
Up to 300,000 civilian Chinese deaths
• 1,000 rapes a day
• Hospital patients tortured.
• Soldiers bayoneted and shot people at will.
Five Chinese civilians being buried alive.
• Japanese soldiers use prisoners for bayonet practice.
Up to May 1942 the Japanese are unstoppable. They possess territory from the border of India to the Soviet Union, and from the Aleutian Islands to nearly Australia. They have not defeated their enemies’ forces however.
The British Army is retraining in jungle warfare.

The USA and Britain join forces.

The US navy is quick to realize the importance of carriers and sets up ‘naval task forces’.

The US marines train to fight in jungles and attack islands.
Massive American industrial resources are brought against Japan.

Modern business techniques produce huge amounts of warships, guns, planes and everything else.

Modern design technology means that Japanese know-how was rapidly outstripped.

Both Britain and the US send war material to help Chiang Kaishek fight the Japanese in China.
• US aid to China included these Curtis fighter planes, the ‘Flying Tigers’
• They actually had shark mouths painted on because it was thought the Japanese were afraid of sharks!
Fantastic industrial output allows the US to pour new ships into the Pacific.
Midway Island. May 1942

A Japanese carrier on fire and sinking.

US aircraft carriers outclass the Japanese carriers and catch them off guard. The Japanese navy loses 4 of its precious aircraft carriers in this one battle. Japan cannot replace the loss quickly—unlike the US. It is the turning point of the war.
The Japanese Shinano.
-to make up for losses, the Japanese built the world’s largest aircraft carrier. Due to bombing it had to put to sea whilst still unfinished, and with workers onboard still building it!
-it was sunk by a US submarine shortly afterwards, still incomplete.
Mighty Japanese battleships are pounded to pieces by US carrier planes. They are obsolete.