

Yoshinogari

On land | Japan | about 400 BCE-300 CE | Grades 3-5

Name _____

Date _____

Yoshinogari was a huge moated village from Japan's Yayoi period, with watchtowers to guard against enemies.

Read the story

The Yayoi period in Japan began roughly 2,500 to 3,000 years ago, when rice farming spread to Japan. People learned to grow rice in wet fields, and they began working bronze and iron.

Yoshinogari started as a small village and grew into one of the largest settlements of its time, with deep moats and wooden fences around it. Watchtowers let guards look out over the land. There were raised storehouses for rice, homes in pits with thatched roofs, and a special area where leaders held ceremonies.

Archaeologists found a long row of large jar burials. Some skeletons had injuries from arrows or had no heads, showing that there were conflicts between villages.

How it ended

As the Kofun period began around 250 to 300 CE, people and power moved elsewhere, and the village was abandoned. It was buried under farmland until it was found in 1986.

Key words

- moat: a deep ditch around a place for protection, sometimes filled with water
- pit house: a home built partly underground with a roof on top
- Yayoi: a period in Japanese history when rice farming spread

Wow facts

- The village was surrounded by a moat about 2.5 kilometers long.
- People were buried in large clay jars placed end to end.
- Raised storehouses kept rice away from mice and floods.

Talk about it

1. Why would rice farming change how people lived?

2. Why might villages build moats and watchtowers?

Try this

Draw a map of Yoshinogari as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. What new kind of farming spread during the Yayoi period?

- A. Rice farming
- B. Corn farming
- C. Cattle ranching
- D. Apple orchards

2. What protected Yoshinogari?

- A. Moats, fences and watchtowers
- B. A volcano
- C. An ocean
- D. A glass dome

3. When was the site found?

- A. 1986
- B. 1066
- C. 1492
- D. 2020

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/yoshinogari/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. Wet-field rice farming spread to Japan.
2. A. It had deep moats, fences and watchtowers.
3. A. Surveys for an industrial park revealed it in 1986.