

The Nanking Massacre

In August 1937, the Japanese army invaded Shanghai, China where they met strong resistance and suffered heavy casualties. The battle was bloody and often fought in urban hand-to-hand combat. By mid-November they had finally captured Shanghai with the help of a naval bombardment. In December, the Japanese army was next ordered to capture Nanking (now spelled Nanjing), then the capital of the Republic of China.

After losing the [Battle of Shanghai](#), Chinese general Chiang Kai-shek knew that the fall of Nanking was only a matter of time. To preserve his army for future battles, most of it was withdrawn in hopes of pulling the Japanese army deep into China and using China's vast territory as a defensive strength. As the Japanese army moved closer to Nanking, panicked Chinese civilians fled in droves. The Japanese military breached the last lines of Chinese resistance and arrived outside the walled city of Nanking on December 9. The military dropped leaflets into the city, urging the surrender of Nanking within 24 hours and promising annihilation if refused. Even though he had already fled, Chiang Kai-shek refused to surrender the city.

Eyewitness accounts say that over the next six weeks following the fall of Nanking, Japanese troops engaged in rape, murder, theft, arson, and other war crimes. Some of these accounts came from foreigners who opted to stay behind in order to protect Chinese civilians from harm. Other accounts include first-person testimonies of [Nanking Massacre](#) survivors or eyewitness reports of journalists.

In Japan, newspapers covered a “contest” between two Japanese officers, Toshiaki Mukai and Tsuyoshi Noda, in which the two men were described as competing with one another to be the [first to kill 100 people with a sword](#) before the capture of Nanking. The headline of the story of December 13 read “Incredible Record [in the Contest] to Behead 100 People—Mukai 106 – 105 Noda—Both 2nd Lieutenants Go Into Extra Innings.”

A small group of American and European businessmen and missionaries set up a refugee camp within the city known as the Nanking Safety Zone. As the Japanese army murdered and assaulted thousands of people in the city, all that could fled into the safety zone for protection.

After Japan surrendered and World War II ended, both Toshiaki Mukai and Tsuyoshi Noda, along with the Japanese generals who led the massacre, were arrested and executed for their war crimes. There are no official numbers for the death toll in [the Nanking Massacre](#), though estimates range from 200,000 to 300,000 people.



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Directions: After reading [about the Nanking Massacre](#), answer the following questions.

1. You can best infer that the Battle of Shanghai was fought –
 - a. at sea
 - b. on farmland
 - c. in the city
 - d. in trenches
2. What was Chiang Kai-shek's strategy for defeating the Japanese?

3. In paragraph 2, the word “breached” means –
 - a. lost to
 - b. moved through
 - c. interacted with
 - d. violated a law
4. How would you describe the tone of the newspaper headline about Toshiaki Mukai and Tsuyoshi Noda?

5. Which excerpt from the newspaper headline contains a metaphor?
 - a. Incredible Record [in the Contest
 - b. to Behead 100 People
 - c. Mukai 106 – 105 Noda
 - d. Lieutenants Go Into Extra Innings

6. How do you think Japanese readers reacted to the newspaper story?

7. How did the Nanking Safe Zone provide protection for civilians?