Westernization of Culture

S: Taisho democracy was able to achieve change and modernization of urban culture:

- Literary Societies, mass-audience magazines, new publications flourished
- Estimated that nearly half of Japan’s 11 mln households subscribed to a daily newspaper
- Intellectual journals e.g. Kaizo, Taiyo, Chuo koron
- By 1919, circulation of Chuo koron shot up from 5K to 120K
- European-style cafés
- Western-style clothing
- Moga - ‘Modern Girl’, mobo - ‘Modern Boy’
- Thriving film, music, especially jazz, and theatre culture

S: From the perspective of urban middle class and many young people this was a strength as Japanese society was modernizing and changing together with the world

W: From the perspective of militarists Taisho was corrupting Japanese society

W: presence of conscription meant Army reinforced traditional values (NB 1882 Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors)

W: Cultural changes did not affect rural Japan

W: suicide of General Nogi (1912) after Emperor Meiji’s funeral according to the samurai practice of junshi (following one’s master to death).

While this could be interpreted as expiation for the casualties at Port Arthur, from the perspective of conservatives it was remainder that new Western ways are corrupting Japanese society and that old practices may be assimilated into new political context of nationalism. Also shows weakness because shows that not everyone supported Taisho cultural change.

Extent of Democracy

S: influence of Political Parties e.g. Rikken Seiyūkai, Kenseikai increased

S: Representative democracy e.g. 1925 Electoral Law all men over 25 given vote NB this is W from conservative/nationalist perspective

S: Generally civilian politicians and Diet had greater political influence as power of genro declined