

## **Lori Dhiraprasiddhi**

**Title:** Comparison of Feudalism in Japan and Europe  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies

**Purpose:** To help students identify and describe various similarities and differences between the two feudal societies

**Essential Question:** What gave rise to this system of government, in this society, at this time?  
How is the unique culture of this country shown?

### **State Standards/Benchmarks:**

#### **Benchmark:**

**History** Interpret relationships between events shown on multiple-tier time lines

#### **Indicators:**

**Feudalism #3** Describe the conditions that gave rise to feudalism, as well as political, economic and social characteristics of feudalism, in Asia and Europe

#### **Benchmark:**

**People in Societies** Compare cultural practices, products and perspectives of past civilizations in order to understand commonality and diversity of cultures.

#### **Benchmark:**

**Social Studies Skills & Methods** Analyze different perspectives on a topic obtained from a variety of resources

#### **Indicators:**

**Thinking and Organizing #1** Describe historical events and issues from the perspectives of people living at the time in order to avoid evaluating the past in terms of today's norms and values

**Obtaining information #1** Compare accuracy and point of view of fiction and nonfiction resources about a particular era or event

### **Learning Goals/Objectives:**

**Students will be able to compare/contrast the feudal systems of Medieval Europe and Japan**

**Students will be able to identify and describe several characteristics of each level of feudal society in both systems**

**Students will be able to construct their own multi-tier timeline with significant events from Europe and Japan from 800-1400 A.D.**

**Materials:** Timeline 700-1800 A.D.  
Map of Europe 850 A.D./1350 A.D.  
Map of Japan 1180 A.D./1880 A.D.

**Resources:** Turnbull, Stephen. Samurai: The Story of Japan's Great Warriors. London: PRC Publishing, LTD, 2004.  
Hall, John W. "Medieval History" Encyclopedia Americana, Vol 15. pp. 820-824. Danbury: Scholastic Library Publishing, Inc., 2004.

### **Activities:**

**Day 1:** Vocabulary for Japan (Shinto, Zen Buddhism, *bushido*, *samurai*, *shogun*, *daimyo*, *karo*, *ashigaru*, *seppuku*, *kabuto*, *tachi*)

Shinto – “Way of the gods” Japanese religion based on respecting the forces of nature (its gods & goddesses) and worshipping one’s ancestors

*Kami* (divine spirits) live in nature, in unusual or particularly beautiful trees, rocks, waterfalls, mountains, etc.

Zen Buddhism – path to enlightenment through meditation with a reliance on self  
Various riddles help achieve enlightenment

*Bushido*- “the way of the warrior”

- Values bravery and loyalty to lord above all else – Fight for lord in exchange for allowance
- Reckless courage, reverence to gods, fairness and generosity towards those weaker than himself
- Will commit ritual suicide rather than face defeat or dishonor because dying an honorable death was more important than living a long life

*Samurai*- “one who serves”

*Shogun* – commander of the forces, general ruler

*Daimyo*- head of feudal estates

*Karo*- top ranking samurai in service of *daimyo*

*Ashigaru* – foot soldiers of medieval Japan-employed by shogun as personal army

*Seppuku* –(*stomach cutting*) ritual suicide

*Kabuto*- helmet used by samurai – bowl with plates that extend down to protect neck

*Tachi*- Japanese sword that was slightly curved

Religion/climate

**Informal Assessment:** From vocabulary, what similarities do you see with Medieval Europe?

**Day 2:** Brief history of Japan during these 700 years

Notes:

- I. Heian Period (794-1185) mostly ruled by Fujiwara family
  - A. In 794, imperial court was moved from Nara to Heian (modern day Kyoto)
  - B. Many noble families followed, moving their homes
  - C. Court life
    1. nobles filled days with elaborate ritual and artistic pursuits
    2. Extensive rules existed describing everything from color or official robes to number of skirts a woman should wear
    3. arts - all expected to write poetry and paint
    4. nobles looked down on the common people
- II. Rise of Feudalism
  - A. Power of central government begins to slip due to so much attention paid to culture/arts and little to governing
    1. Large land owners away from court life in capital set up private armies
    2. Countryside becomes lawless & dangerous
    3. small land owners and farmers traded part of their land for protection to strong warlords
  - B. People

1. *Samurai*
  - a. started as bodyguards for local lords
  - b. lived by code *Bushido*
2. importance of Buddhism
  - a. Shoguns set up official temples
  - b. Zen temples were promoted
  - c. hierarchy of priests also arose
  - d. some secret traditions arose
3. role of women changed -
  - a. marriage had been private matter with women retaining property
  - b. marriage became more important – ways to align families
  - c. women became property of husbands

**Informal Assessment** – questions you have about Japanese culture/history

**Day 3:** Samurai v. knight comparison

Notes:

I. Samuri

A. Clothing

1. Iron collar & facemask
2. Visored helmet
3. Leather shin & thigh guards
4. Chest protector
5. Weapons
  - a. Sword -
  - b. bows & arrows

B. Code of Honor – Bushido

C. Religion – Zen Buddhism - emphasis on spirituality through meditation and self-discipline

D. Role of Women –expected to live by same values of honor & courage

E. Leisure/Arts –

1. poetry
2. stories – told by traveling storytellers accompanied by lute
3. ink brush paintings & sculptures
4. tea ceremony
5. Japanese gardens

II. Knight

A. Clothing

1. Mail and Armor
2. Visored helmet
3. Weapons
  - a. lance
  - b. mace

B. Code of Honor – Chivalry

1. values bravery and loyalty to heavenly God, earthly lord, and chosen lady
2. demands knight show humility
3. fight for lord in exchange for land

- C. Religion-Christianity
- D. Role of Women – weak creatures to be defended and idolized
- E. Leisure/Arts
  - 1. traveling troubadours
  - 2. gothic architecture

**Assessment:**

**Informal**     see above

**Formal:**     Construct a multi-tier timeline with significant events from Europe and Asia spanning 700-1600 A.D.  
Construct a Venn Diagram that compares and contrasts a minimum of 8 features of feudalism in both Europe and Japan