

# Lesson Plan for Japan

## **Purpose:**

Did cultural beliefs and attitudes enable Japan to industrialize much faster than many other countries, especially China?

Essential Questions:

1. What cultural beliefs and attitudes allowed Japan to industrialize so quickly?
2. What attitudes and beliefs did China have that may have held them back from industrialization?
3. What were the outcomes of Japan and China's decisions about industrialization?

## **Rationale:**

1. For students to understand that cultural attitudes and beliefs can cause countries to make good decisions and bad decisions.
2. For students to understand that sometimes for countries to make proper decisions, they must examine and possibly change their existing attitudes and beliefs.

## **Materials:**

Articles on the Samurai & Bushido

## **Activities:**

1. Teacher to give information about how Japan was forced to open up to foreign trade.
2. Introduce the question: What cultural beliefs and attitudes allowed Japan to industrialize so quickly?
3. Have the students read *The Samurai and their use of Bushido* and discuss what they read with a partner.
4. Have the students read *Bushido: The Way of the Warrior* and discuss what they read with a partner.
5. Reintroduce the question: What cultural beliefs and attitudes allowed Japan to industrialize so quickly?
6. Teacher will review, through the use of question and answer, the key points of the previous unit on China.
7. Class will discuss what attitudes and beliefs did China have that may have held them back from industrialization?
8. Brainstorm with students on what were the outcomes of Japan and China's decisions on industrialization? Teacher will fill in the gaps.
9. Students will write an essay on why Japan and China took differing approaches to industrialization and the effects of their decisions.

## **Assessment:**

1. Quality of discussion
2. Quality of the essays
3. Scores of unit test

## **Grade Adaptation:**

This lesson plan is designed for grade 9 or 10. For lower grades the articles could be read aloud in class using questions to check comprehension.

# THE SAMURAI AND THEIR USE OF BUSHIDO

In Japan the warrior class was known as samurai, also called bushi (hence bushido). They formed a class in and of themselves during the 9th and 12th centuries. They emerged from the provinces of Japan to become the ruling class until their decline and later total abolition in 1876 during the Meiji Era.

The samurai were fighting men, skilled in the martial arts. Samurai had extensive skills in the use of the bow and arrow and the sword. They could just as likely have killed you with their bare hands. Samurai were also great horsemen.

These warriors were men who lived by Bushido; it was their way of life. The samurai's loyalty to the emperor and his overlord, or daimyo, was unsurpassed. They were trustworthy and honest. They lived frugal lives with no interest in riches and material things, but rather they were interested in honor and pride. They were men of true valor. Samurai had no fear of death. They would enter any battle no matter the odds. To die in battle would only bring honor to one's family and one's lord.

Samurai usually would rather fight alone, one on one. In battle a samurai would call out his family name, rank and accomplishments. Then he would seek out an opponent with similar rank and do battle. When the samurai has killed his opponent he severs his head. After battle he takes the heads of his enemies back to show proof of his victory. Heads of generals and those of high ranks were transported back to the capital and displayed for the officials and others. The only way out for a defeated samurai was death or ritual suicide: seppuku.

Seppuku--or disembowelment or hara-kiri (belly slicing)--is when a samurai stabs a knife into his abdomen and literally disembowels himself by cutting out his guts. After the samurai disembowels himself another samurai, usually a kinsman or friend, slices his head off. This form of suicide was "performed under various circumstances: to avoid capture in battle, which the samurai did not believe to be dishonorable and degrading, but generally bad policy; to atone for a misdeed or unworthy act; and perhaps most interestingly, to admonish one's lord" (Varley, 32). A samurai would rather kill himself than bring shame and disgrace to his family name and his lord. This was considered an act of true honor.

The samurai became the ruling class during the 1400s and the 1500s. In the 1600s there was a time of unification; warring in Japan had ceased. Then toward the end of the Tokugawa Era (the late 1700s), Japan began to move towards a more modernized and Western way of life. There was no need for fighting men, for warriors, for samurai. The samurai and their way of life was officially abolished in the early 1870s, but it was not forgotten.

# Bushido

## *The Way of the Warrior*

### INTRODUCTION

Bushido, literally translated "Way of the Warrior," developed in Japan between the Heian and Tokugawa Ages (9th-12th century). It was a code and way of life for Samurai, a class of warriors similar to the medieval knights of Europe. It was influenced by Zen and Confucianism, two different schools of thought of those periods. Bushido is not unlike the chivalry and codes of the European knights. "It puts emphasis on loyalty, self sacrifice, justice, sense of shame, refined manners, purity, modesty, frugality, martial spirit, honor and affection" (Nippon Steel Human Resources Development Co., Ltd. 329).

### ORIGINS AND INFLUENCES

Bushido comes out of Buddhism, Zen, Confucianism, and Shintoism. The combination of these schools of thought and religions has formed the code of warrior values known as Bushido.

From Buddhism, Bushido gets its relationship to danger and death. The samurai do not fear death because they believe as Buddhism teaches, after death one will be reincarnated and may live another life here on earth. The samurai are warriors from the time they become samurai until their death; they have no fear of danger. Through Zen, a school of Buddhism one can reach the ultimate "Absolute." Zen meditation teaches one to focus and reach a level of thought words cannot describe. Zen teaches one to "know thyself" and do not to limit yourself. Samurai used this as a tool to drive out fear, unsteadiness and ultimately mistakes. These things could get him killed.

Shintoism, another Japanese doctrine, gives Bushido its loyalty and patriotism. Shintoism includes ancestor-worship which makes the Imperial family the fountain-head of the whole nation. It awards the emperor a god-like reverence. He is the embodiment of Heaven on earth. With such loyalty, the samurai pledge themselves to the emperor and their daimyo or feudal landlords, higher ranking samurai. Shintoism also provides the backbone for patriotism to their country, Japan. They believe the land is not merely there for their needs, "it is the sacred abode to the gods, the spirits of their forefathers . . ." (Nitobe, 14). The land is cared for, protected and nurtured through an intense patriotism.

Confucianism gives Bushido its beliefs in relationships with the human world, their environment and family. Confucianism's stress on the five moral relations between master and servant, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger brother, and friend and friend, are what the samurai follow. However, the samurai disagreed strongly with many of the writings of Confucius. They believed that man should not sit and read books all day, nor shall he write poems all day, for an intellectual specialist was considered to be a machine. Instead, Bushido believes man and the universe were made to be alike in both the spirit and ethics.

Along with these virtues, Bushido also holds justice, benevolence, love, sincerity, honesty, and self-control in utmost respect. Justice is one of the main factors in the code of the samurai. Crooked ways and unjust actions are thought to be lowly and inhumane. Love and benevolence were supreme virtues and princely acts. Samurai followed a specific etiquette in every day life as well as in war. Sincerity and honesty were as valued as their lives. Bushi no ichi-gon, or "the word of a samurai," transcends a pact of complete faithfulness and trust. With such pacts there was no need for a written pledge; it was thought beneath one's dignity. The samurai also needed self-control and stoicism to be fully honored. He showed no sign of pain or joy. He endured all within--no groans, no crying. He held a calmness of behavior and composure of the mind neither of which should be bothered by passion of any kind. He was a true and complete warrior.

These factors which make up Bushido were few and simple. Though simple, Bushido created a way of life that was to nourish a nation through its most troubling times, through civil wars, despair and uncertainty. "The wholesome unsophisticated nature of our warrior ancestors derived ample food for their spirit from a sheaf of commonplace and fragmentary teachings, gleaned as it were on the highways and byways of ancient thought, and, stimulated by the demands of the age formed from these gleanings a new and unique way of life" (Nitobe, 20).