

Experiencing Japanese Feudalism Lesson Plan – East Asia

Purpose

Big Concept:

A system of feudalism similar to that of medieval Europe developed in Japan by 1300.

Essential Questions:

1. What was the social hierarchy of feudal Japan?
2. What was the cultural basis for the relationships among social groups?
3. How was feudal Japan similar to and different from feudal Europe?

Rationale

Ohio Standard: History

Benchmark C:

Describe the characteristics of feudal societies and the transition to the Renaissance and Reformation in Europe.

Indicator 3:

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

Materials

role cards for emperor, shogun, daimyo, samurai, peasants

labels for emperor and four estates

copies of the T-chart for students

copies of the Venn diagram for students

Books (Background Information):

- The World; Scott Foresman, 2005.(textbook)
- Japan by Patricia D. Netzley; Lucent Books, San Diego, CA, 2000.
- Cultures of the World: Japan by Rex Shelley, Teo Chuu Yong, & Russell Mok; Benchmark Books, New York, 2002.
- Japan: Enchantment of the World by Ann Heinrichs; Childrens Press, New York, 1998.
- What Life was Like: Among Samurai and Shoguns by the editors of Time-Life Books; Time-Life, Alexandria, VA, 1999.
- Samurai: An Illustrated History by Mitsui Kure; Tuttle Publishing Company, Boston, 2001.
- Samurai: The Story of a Warrior Tradition by Harry Cook; Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1993.

Internet Resources:

- <http://johnmgarvey.com/apworld/unit2/chp20/feudalismSterns.html>
- www.hcc.hawaii.edu/distance/hist/tokugawa.htm
- http://edtech.floyd.edu/~lnewby/feudal_japan.htm
- www.globaled.org/japanproject/lessons/lesson03_3.php
- www.smith.edu/fceas/curriculum/berkwood.htm

Activities

Experiential Exercise:

- For this activity, the classroom will be turned into a model of feudal Japan. Although not every detail will be represented, students will act out the basic roles of the society so they get an idea of the structure.
- Arrange the room into four estates, possibly with a table standing for each one. Attach a long (10 feet) piece of rope to each table. Place a stool in the front of the room.
- Students receive role cards as they enter the classroom that tells them which group they will be a part of: emperor, shogun, daimyo (lords), samurai, or peasants. Inform the students that a series of steps will be followed to set up their model of feudal Japan.
- Step 1: The emperor should sit on the stool in the front of the room showing the perceived power but should also sit with his/her hands behind his/her back to represent very little real power. The shogun should stand next to the emperor to show that he/she is in a more powerful position.
- Step 2: The peasants should find their assigned estate and take their places on the land by sitting on the floor and holding onto the rope. They should be told that they are not allowed to leave and feel some obligation to farm the land and produce food for their estate.
- Step 3: The daimyo go to the shogun and take their estate assignment (attached to the shogun's role card). They get to choose their estate based on the number of swords on their role cards; the one with the most gets first choice, and so on. When the daimyo arrive at their estates, they sit on the table to symbolize their power. They then give each of their peasants an honor token to show they will protect them while each peasant gives his/her daimyo a loyalty token to show their dedication to the daimyo.
- Step 4: The samurai will then need to find a daimyo and estate to protect and help rule. To do this, the samurai may negotiate with the daimyo. Both must agree to the partnership and depending on the size of the class, an estate may have more than one samurai. The daimyo may offer loyalty tokens to the samurai as an incentive to join their estate. The samurai have military power and rank to offer in the form of the number of swords on their role cards; the more swords, the better warrior they are. After the samurai have found their places, they should kneel next to their daimyo to symbolize their loyalty.

- Debrief the activity by discussing with students what it felt like to play each role. Discuss the relationships between each feudal group. Also discuss how feudal Japan is similar to and different from feudal Europe.

T-Chart:

- As a class, complete the T-chart relating what happened in the classroom exercise to historical reality.

Venn Diagram:

- Students work in groups to complete the Venn diagram comparing Japanese feudalism with European feudalism.

Assessment

Informal:

- Students will be assessed by discussion participation as well as how they complete the T-chart and Venn diagram.

Journal Entry:

- Students write a journal entry from the perspective of someone living in feudal Japan. They must describe what their life is like and how they interact with other groups.

Unit Test:

- Questions about the content of this lesson will appear on the chapter test from the textbook.

Grade Adaptation

Target Grade: 7th

Adaptations:

- This activity would be appropriate as is for students up to 10th grade. The depth of discussion and comparison between Europe and Japan could easily be scaled up to meet the abilities of older students.
- The experiential exercise in this lesson would be appropriate for students up to two grades below 7th grade. The intricacies of the lesson may need to be simplified and students may not directly compare Europe and Japan.

Shogun

Estate

A

Estate

B

Estate

C

Estate

D

Emperor

Daimyo

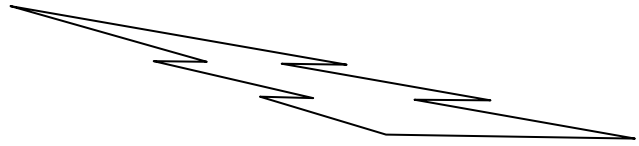
Honor
Token

Honor
Token

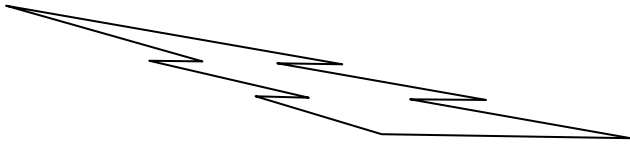
Honor
Token

Honor
Token

Samurai



Samurai



Samurai



Peasant

Loyalty
Token

Loyalty
Token

Loyalty
Token

Loyalty
Token

Emperor's Throne

Estate A

Estate B

Estate C

Estate D

Experiencing Japanese Feudalism

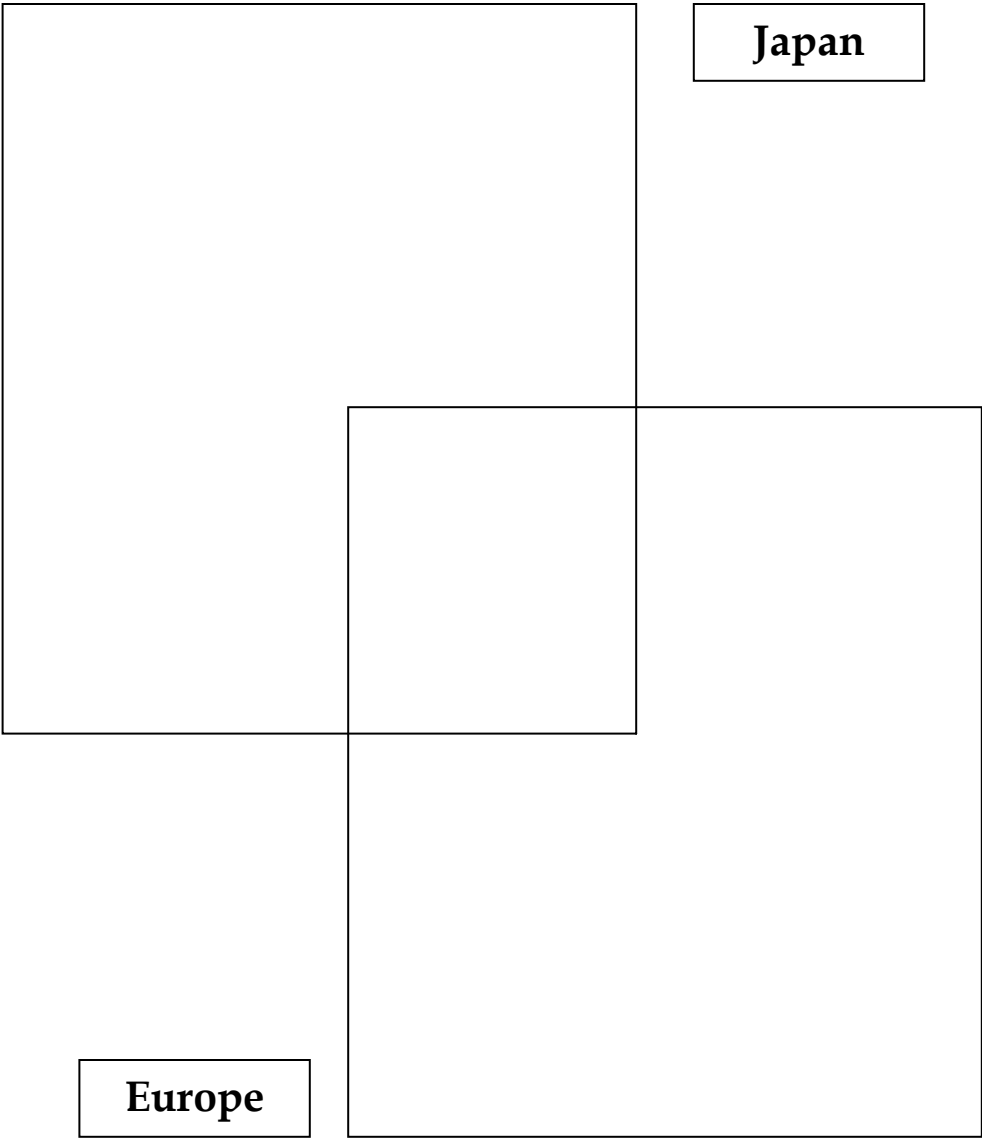
Classroom Experience	Historical Reality

Experiencing Japanese Feudalism (Possible Answers)

Classroom Experience	Historical Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role in activity randomly determined by teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social class determined by birth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students could not trade or switch roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No social mobility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student who was emperor had little control over land because the shogun had the real power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emperor had the land, but shogun controlled it and decided who received it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students playing daimyo got their estates from the student playing the shogun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daimyo provided shogun with warriors in exchange for land
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peasants had to sit on the floor and hold onto the ropes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peasants were tied to the land and had very little opportunity to move around
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students playing peasants had to give their loyalty tokens to the lord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peasants were bound to their daimyo by a sense of loyalty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students playing samurai fought for the daimyo in exchange for loyalty tokens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samurai offered military services out of a sense of honor and loyalty

Venn Diagram

Japanese vs. European Feudalism



Venn Diagram (Possible Answers) Japanese vs. European Feudalism

