

**Lesson Title:** Comparing Samurai and European Knights

**Class and Grade level(s):** World History, grades 4-6

**Goals and Objectives -** The student will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the two codes of behavior; chivalric(knight), bushido (samurai)
- Understand the weapons and armor of the knight and the samurai

**Time required/class periods needed:** Three 45-minute class periods

**Primary source bibliography:**

Gibson, Michael. The Samurai of Japan. London. Wayland Publications. 1973.

McDonald, Fiona. A Samurai Castle. New York. Peter Bedrick Books. 1995.

Calliope. "Samurai." Cobblestone Publishing Co. Peterborough, New Hampshire. Volume 3 Number 3. 1993. (available on their website <http://shop.cricketmedia.com/calliope.html> )

Darn, Geoff. Eyewitness Books on Knights.

Boehm, Richard. Our World's Story. Harcourt Brace. Jovanich. 1999.

**Other resources used:** n/a

**Required materials/supplies:** n/a

**Vocabulary:**

European Knight Vocabulary

Accolade: A tap on the shoulder or back of the neck with the flat of the sword as the squire kneels to receive knighthood.

- Chivalry: A code of honor and social behavior that obligates a knight to follow certain behaviors, such as respecting ladies and defending them against harm.
- Crusader: A knight who invaded the Moslem countries to convert infidels and make holy sites safe for Christian pilgrims.
- Dubbing: The act of being proclaimed a knight. This could occur on the battle field or in the king's palace and would come in the form of an accolade. An official dubbing required a specific ceremony.

## **Vocabulary (cont'd):**

### European Knight Vocabulary (cont'd)

- Page: The lowest rank on the path to becoming a knight; the page runs errands, learns etiquette, basic horsemanship, fencing, hunting and hawking.
- Squire: The middle rank where a page becomes a personal attendant to a knight as well as perfects the skills of a page. Squires also learn to bear inconveniences such as hunger, thirst and sleeplessness.

### Samurai Vocabulary

- Bakufu: Japanese military rule
- Bushi: A name given to all warriors in families with a warrior tradition
- Bushido: A code of honor and social behavior obligates a *samurai* to follow certain behaviors such as bravery and loyalty
- Daimyo: A feudal lord to whom a legion of *samurai* pledged loyalty and service and who, in turn, swore allegiance to them according to the rules of *bushido*.
- Ken-jutsu: The warrior art of using a sword in battle. This form fell into decline during the Meiji Restoration (1868) when the samurai class dissolved. Elements of it morphed into a more modern form..
- Kendo: One of the martial arts (*budo*) using a sword (*ken*) that came after *ken-jutsu*
- Ninja: Men and women trained for espionage and assassination. *Ninja* were used by *daimyo* to penetrate and assassinate the enemy.
- Ronin: The name given to all *bushi* and *samurai* who did not serve a particular master
- Samurai: A class of *bushi* warrior dedicated to the protection of their lord and specially trained in martial arts.
- Seppuku: The act of ritual suicide performed by *samurai*.
- Shogun: A title of given by the Emperor to the *daimyo* who was the richest and most powerful of lords.

## **Procedure:**

### Introduction:

There are many similarities between the role of the samurai in Feudal Japan and the role of the knight in Feudal Europe. Each provided military service and protection to their 'lord' or 'daimyo' often in exchange for land or the right to rule over the people who lived and worked the land. Both sets of knights adhered to a code of behavior known as "chivalry" in Europe, "*bushido*" in Japan.

1. The students will first be divided into two groups: "European" and "Japanese".
2. Each of these groups will then divide itself into two groups: "Equipment" and "Behavior".
3. Each group will research its topic.
4. The "Equipment" group will create a life-sized figure of either a knight or a *samurai* in full uniform with parts fully labeled and explained.
5. The "Behavior" group will give a presentation on "a day in the life of," either a knight or a *samurai* being sure to give examples of the way chivalry or bushido affected their daily lives.

**Assessment/evaluation:** Essay: How were the samurai and European knights similar? How were they different? Was one better than the other? If yes, what made that group better?