

Lesson Title: Samurai Swords

Grade Level (s) and Subject: 6th through 8th grade, Social Studies and Physical Education

Goals and Objectives

- Students will analyze the samurai's use of sword and armor.
- They will practice and demonstrate the three basic swings of the samurai sword.
- They will create and present their version of the swings in a dance/steps to music for their peers.

Time required/class periods needed: Two 43- minute class sessions

Primary source bibliography:

Deconstructing History: Samurai: <https://youtu.be/NP5VuWnJDL4>

Types of Japanese Swords: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jlwy05pDQII>

Sword Skills: <https://youtu.be/YHlU-4tWspg>

Japanese Drum Music: <https://youtu.be/DUqDKza4q5U>

Other resources used:

Picture of Samurai armor (below)

Graphics of sword swings (below)

Required materials/supplies:

- *Gym to accommodate 24 students*
- *Foam swimming noodles for each student*
- *Flag belts or karate-type cloth belts*
- *Poly-spots markers*
- *Computer*
- *Presentation equipment (Video projector or Smart TV)*

Vocabulary:

Katana: A samurai sword with a moderate curve; **Overhead swing, Diagonal swing – right & left, Horizontal swing – right & left, Uppercut –right & left** (advanced – if time allows), **Figure 8** (advanced – if time allows)

Procedure:

Lesson One: Introduction to Samurai Swords and Armor

- Show short video clip below to draw students into the day's lesson. *Deconstructing History: Samurai:* <https://youtu.be/NP5VuWnJDL4>
- Initiate quick class discussion asking students to share some things they learned from the video clip.
- Show the following video. Afterwards discuss the types of Japanese swords: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jlwy05pDQII>
- Show the *Picture of the Samurai Suit* (below). Ask students to describe how and how well the armor would work with the weapons that Samurai used.
- Show the basic sword skills: <https://youtu.be/YHIU-4tWspg>
- If time allows, have the students find a spot in the gym and practice the stance and the arm motions of the swings. They must stay in a personal space and not move around. Make sure there is plenty of personal space for safety.

Lesson Two: Sword Practice:

- Re-play the basic sword skills: <https://youtu.be/YHIU-4tWspg>
- Explain to students that they will be working with on samurai sword techniques, using katana foam noodles (Just like the samurai did for hundreds of years!)
- Distribute noodles and belts to the students. Direct them to tie the belt around their hips loosely enough to slide the katana into it.
- Give each student a Poly-spot marker and direct them to find a personal space on the gym floor, making sure they are far enough from a neighbor not to hit her when swinging.

Procedure (cont'd):

- Using the video, stop after each swing and have students practice by pulling sword from belt and swinging then replacing sword in belt. Do this for every swing.
- Turn off the video then call out the names of swings and have students perform the swing. “Overhead”, “Diagonal Swing - Right”, “Diagonal Swing – left” “Horizontal Swing - Right”, then “Horizontal Swing - left”. Roam and check for correct form after each swing and assist when needed.
- If time allows, you can add the other two swing types.
- Have students form groups of three or four. Play the drum video or any other Japanese music you prefer. Have each group work on a “sword swing dance” to the music. The dance must use all of the swings they have learned. Have each group perform their “dance” for the rest of the class.

Assessment/Evaluation:

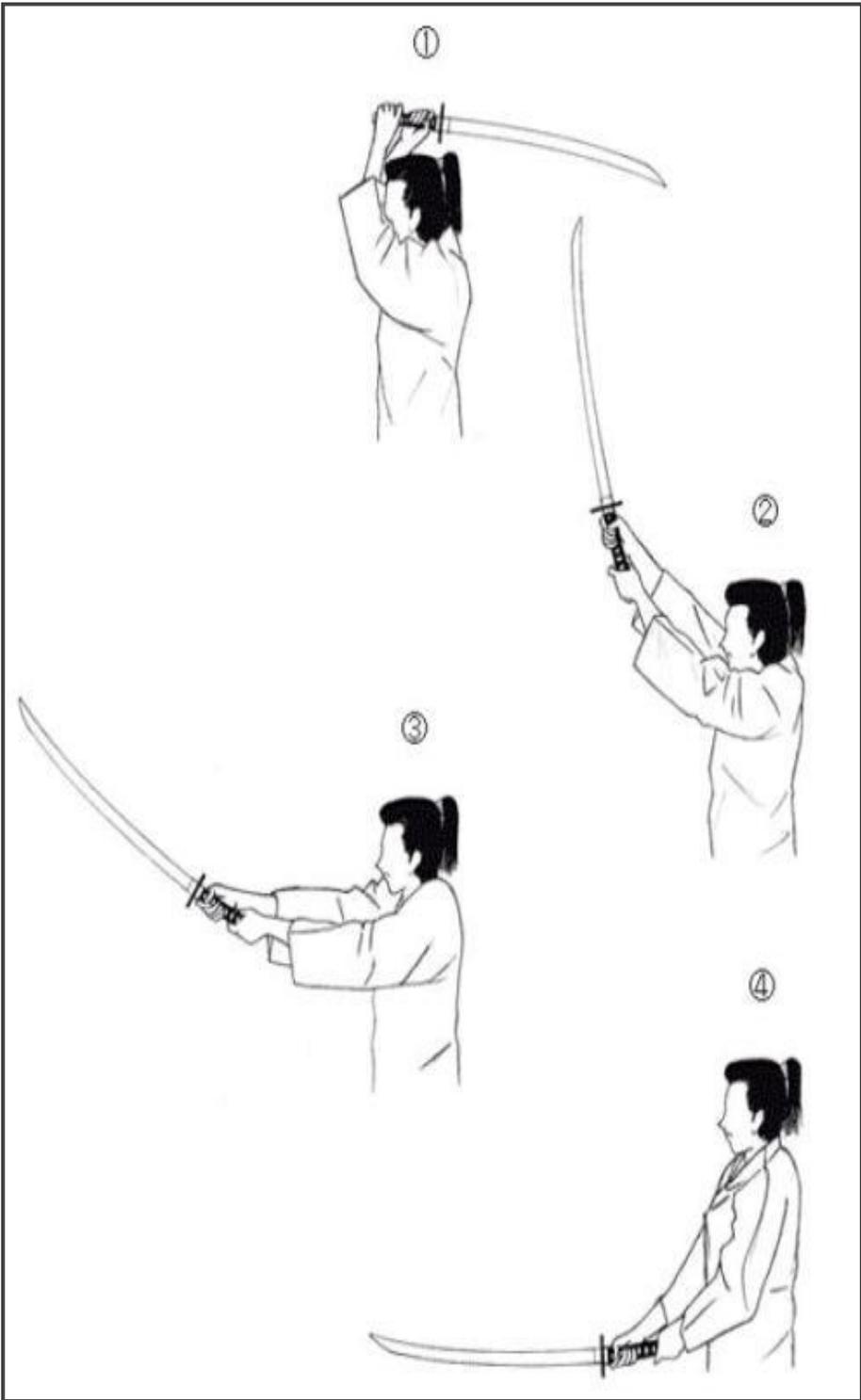
1. Accuracy in mimicking the motions
2. Concentration and attention to form.
3. Rhythm of final dance.
4. Does final dance include all the sword swings they practiced?

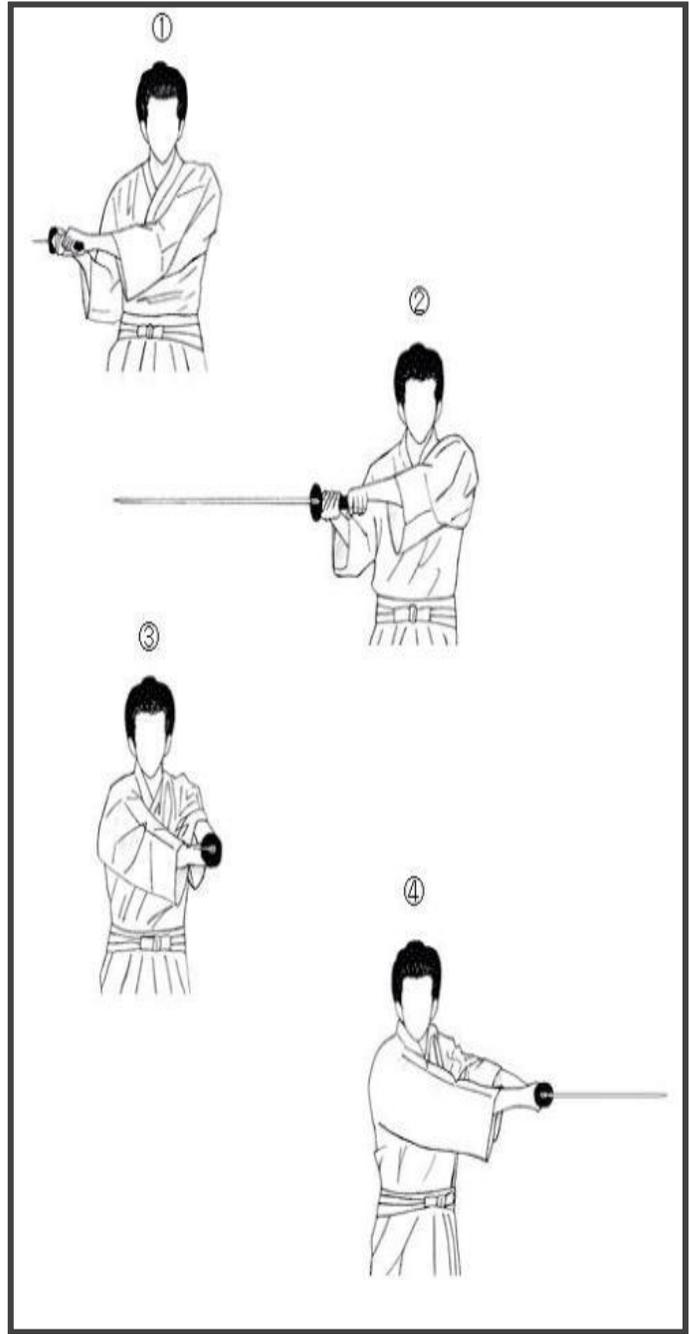
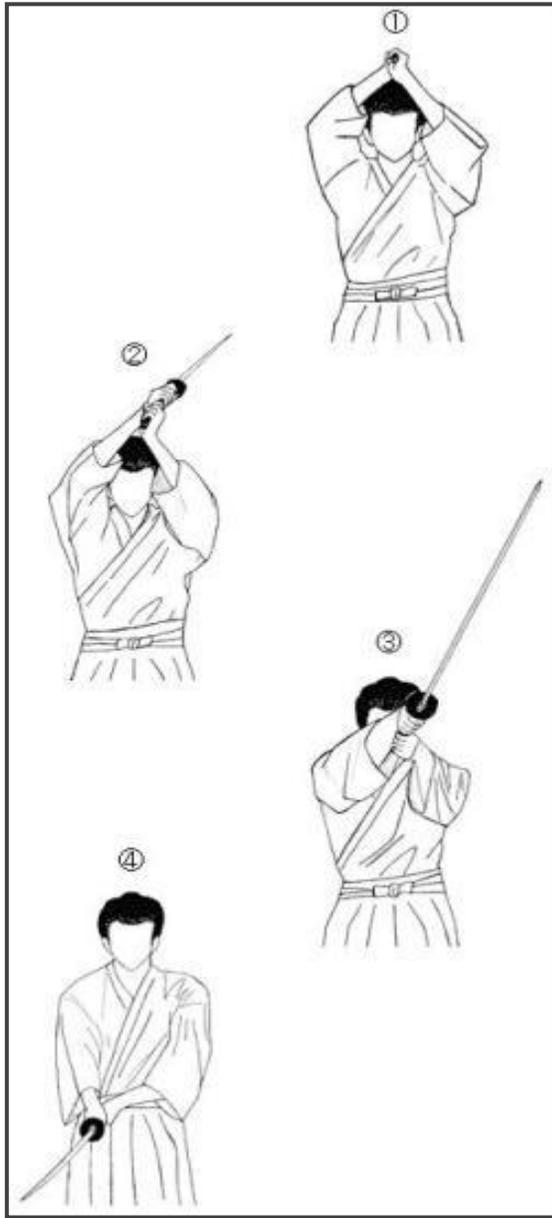
Extend this Lesson:

Students can present their dance at the school’s multicultural night or a similar recital for parents and community members.

To deepen understanding of the meaning of each sword movement show the following video:

<http://www.sword-buyers-guide.com/japanese-sword-training.html>





THE MODERN ARMOR

The Gusoku type of armor was developed in the 16th century, eliminating some of the complexity of the O-yoroi and the Domaru. The armor was laced under the right arm and had a compact Do plate.



Illustration by: Juan Calle