

Document-Based Activities on Shogun Japan

Using Primary Sources and the Internet

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Teacher Introduction</i>	v
<i>Overview: Tokugawa Shogun Japan</i>	vii

LESSONS

1. The Politics of Tokugawa Shogun Japan	
<i>Teacher Page</i>	1
<i>Student Worksheet</i>	3
2. The Samurai	
<i>Teacher Page</i>	5
<i>Student Worksheet</i>	7
3. The Kabuki Theater	
<i>Teacher Page</i>	9
<i>Student Worksheet</i>	11
4. Ukiyo-e Artists	
<i>Teacher Page</i>	13
<i>Student Worksheet</i>	15
5. The Treaty of Kanagawa	
<i>Teacher Page</i>	17
<i>Student Worksheet</i>	21
Culminating Activity	23
Appendix	
<i>Answer Key</i>	29
<i>Rubrics</i>	33
<i>Selected Documents</i>	41
<i>Related Web Sites</i>	43
<i>Suggested Curriculum Materials</i>	45

The Politics of Tokugawa Shogun Japan Teacher Page

Overview:

The goal of this activity is to give students an understanding of the political system in Tokugawa Shogun Japan. During the Edo Period (1603–1867), the Tokugawa governed directly through a feudal bureaucracy. The rest of the land was divided among *daimyos* (ruling families), whose members were forced to stay in the capital city of Edo and were under close watch of the shogun. In this lesson, students view an illustration depicting the strict rules and regulations created by the Tokugawa Shoguns.

Objectives:

Students will:

- view an illustration
- discuss the political structure characteristic of Tokugawa rule
- discuss the successes and failures of the Tokugawa Shogun political system

Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

The following site is a part of a virtual tour of Edo Japan. Here students view an illustration depicting the political rules of the Tokugawa.

<http://www.us-japan.org/edomatsu/kawasaki/frame.html>

- Read through the information on the right side of the page
- Click on “questioned in detail” (<http://www.us-japan.org/edomatsu/kawasaki/kowtow.html>) in the sixth paragraph.
- View the illustration on the left side of the page

The illustration is also available as a reproducible handout in the Appendix.

These Web sites can help students to gain background information on Tokugawa Ieyasu and the political structure of Tokugawa Shogun Japan:

- <http://www.samurai-archives.com/ieyasu.html>–Tokugawa Ieyasu
- <http://hkuhist2.hku.hk/nakasendo/tokupols.htm>–the Tokugawa political system
- <http://luxnova.home.mindspring.com/samuraigname/6b.html>–the Tokugawa government

Strategies:

Begin by reviewing and defining the term, “shogun.” What was a shogun? How did one become a shogun ruler? How was a shogun ruler different from an emperor? Who were the shogun rulers of Tokugawa Japan and how did they come to power? Next, have

students view the background information Web sites, look at the primary source for the lesson, and complete the worksheet.

Strategies:

After students complete the worksheet, review answers as a class and use the following questions to lead a discussion.

1. How did the political system of government change under Tokugawa Ieyasu? How did Tokugawa Ieyasu accomplish this change?
2. Was the Tokugawa's system of government effective? Why or why not?
3. Would the Tokugawa Shogun system of government work today in Japan? Why or why not?

Extension Activity:

Do any countries today have governments similar to that of Tokugawa Shogun Japan? Have students conduct research and compare and contrast governments today to that of Tokugawa Shogun Japan. In what ways are they different? In what ways are they similar?

The Politics of Tokugawa Shogun Japan Student Worksheet

Introduction:

“The Tokugawa family controlled Japan from 1603 to 1867. The Tokugawa regime was a centralized feudalism. The Tokugawas themselves held approximately one fourth of the country in strategically located parcels, which they governed directly through a feudal bureaucracy. To control the *daimyo* [lords], who owed allegiance to the Tokugawa but were permitted to rule their own domains, the Tokugawa invented the *Sankin Kotai* system which required the daimyo to maintain residence at the shogun's capital in *Edo* (Tokyo) and to leave hostages there during their absence. Travel was closely regulated, and officials called *metsuke* [censors] acted as a sort of secret police.”¹

All Web links for this lesson can be found at:

<http://www.socialstudies.com/worldlinks.html>

Directions:

Kawasaki: A Military Checkpoint

Go to <http://www.us-japan.org/edomatsu/kawasaki/frame.html>

- Read through the information on the right side of the page
- Click on “questioned in detail” in the sixth paragraph
- View the illustration on the left side of the page

View the illustration then answer the questions below:

1. Describe the setting depicted in the illustration.
2. How many people are in the illustration? How are they dressed?
3. Describe the interactions between the individuals in the illustration. What is happening?

¹ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/T/Tokugawa.asp>

4

4. List three possible questions you think the guard on the elevated platform might ask of the travelers.

5. Why do you think the individuals on the ground are posed in the stances in which you see them? What might this tell us about Japanese society at this time?

6. Do you think the people of Edo resented these travel restrictions, or would they have viewed them as a small price to pay for the “safety, stability and a high level of education and cultural expression” they enjoyed under the Tokugawa Shogunate? Explain.