

Use the following background essay and your Samurai and Knights Mini-DBQ Document Pack to answer the questions that follow.

You live in a country with a weak government and an even weaker army. During your ancestors' time, an emperor ruled and kept the country together. Now, however, the central government has lost power, and dangers lurk beyond every moat and castle wall. Warlords fight each other to see who can control the most territory. Warriors from other lands threaten to invade and destroy your way of life. How can men, women, and children in your region protect themselves?

About one thousand years ago, people in two societies halfway around the world from each other faced this problem. In Europe, the mighty western Roman Empire had fallen in the late 400s, leaving a continent divided among weak kingdoms. A new western European empire rose briefly but it, too, soon fell apart. On the other side of the globe, Japanese emperors and the imperial court was challenged by the rise of clans. Like Europe, Japan found itself in pieces.

To keep order in the land, both regions developed a system that historians call **feudalism**. Lords acquired large estates of land. They granted some of their lands to lesser nobles who promised to fight for the lords when conflicts arose. In turn, these nobles trained warriors who, in exchange for farmland or food and lodging, swore to be loyal to the nobles and to defend them. The warriors of Europe were called **knights**. The warriors of Japan were called **samurai**. At the base of the feudal system in both Japan and Europe were peasants who farmed the land and provided food for the classes above them.

During the late 1100s in Japan, two large military clans called the Taira and the Minamoto fought to control the country. The Minamoto won the civil war and set up a new government headed by a powerful general called the **shogun**. It is fair to think of the shogun as the top samurai, the head of the samurai warrior class. Over the next several hundred years, various shoguns rose and fell. Each ruled the country in the name of the emperor—yet the shogun held the reins of power.

Europe never developed a position quite like the shogun. Instead, because most of Europe had converted to Christianity, the Catholic Church acted to unify the many kingdoms. The Pope, head of the Catholic Church, held power over rulers because he could excommunicate, or ban, them from the Church. On some occasions in England, France, and what is now Germany, lords gathered together a following of knights and answered the Pope's call to go on a crusade against the Muslims in the Holy Land. At other times, conflict was local, pitting lord against lord, or France against England. The important idea is that from roughly 1000 to 1600 CE in Japan and Europe, samurai horsemen and knight horsemen were the muscle and the soul of the warrior class.

The idea of soul, and its blood relative honor, was very important to both groups. European knights developed a code of behavior called **chivalry**, which blended Christian ideals with military values. In Japan, the samurai warriors developed a code of honor called **bushido**. Bushido blended the Confucian values of obedience and duty with the Buddhist belief that life is temporary and full of suffering. The way to avoid suffering was by giving up selfish desires.

1. What conditions led to the development of feudalism in both Western Europe and Japan?
2. In the feudal system in both Europe and Japan, what did lesser nobles give to lords in exchange for grants of land?
3. What different religions or belief systems influenced people in the two regions?

Document A

4. What group in Japan was like lords in Europe?
5. In Japan, what was the relationship between samurai and daimyos?
6. In Europe, what was the relationship between knights and lords?

Document B

5. About how many acres might be needed to support a knight in western Europe?
6. What evidence is there that the bond between lord and samurai in Japan was strong?

Document C

7. What are three examples of the kind of training received by young samurai hopefuls?
8. What are three examples of the kind of training received by pages hoping to become knights?

Document D

9. Both the samurai and knights generally fought on horseback. Who would have had the most difficulty if he was knocked from his horse or his horse had been killed? Explain your thinking.
10. Military historians speak of the difference between shock warfare (striking the enemy with weapons like swords, lances, or axes) and projectile warfare (shooting or throwing arrows, javelins, and bullets). Judging from the armor, which kind of warfare was fought by samurai and knights? In each case, explain your thinking.

Document E

11. What are the main characteristics of bushido? What are the main characteristics of chivalry?

Document F

12. In general, were the responses to death of the samurai and the knight similar or different? Explain.