

Component 3, Part 2

Japan in World History: Teaching and Learning—Medieval Japan and First European Contacts (1185-1585)

Students and teachers can work through a general lesson on medieval Japan and beyond in [The Age of the Samurai](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1000ce_samurai.htm) (http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1000ce_samurai.htm). Literature can be used as a window to better understand the cultural changes and the fighting that surrounded much of medieval Japanese history. Excerpts from [The Tale of Heike](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1000ce_heike.htm) (http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1000ce_heike.htm) also assist students in understanding the trauma of the Gempei War between two great families that marked the beginning of the era and the rise of the first shogun. Japan faced and surmounted two attempted Mongol invasions in 1274 and 1281. Interested students can use [original scrolls](http://www.bowdoin.edu/mongol-scrolls/) (<http://www.bowdoin.edu/mongol-scrolls/>) and gain a visual sense of these seminal events in Japan's history.

One of the major cultural events of the medieval period was the expansion of Buddhism from a religion of a few aristocrats to that of all classes of society. Educators and students can access concise but content-rich lessons on both [The Origins of Buddhism](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/cosmos/ort/buddhism.htm#origins) (<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/cosmos/ort/buddhism.htm#origins>) and [Buddhism in Japan](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/japan/japanworkbook/religion/jbuddhis.html) (<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/japan/japanworkbook/religion/jbuddhis.html>) and gain a basic understanding of this spiritual tradition and its role in Japan. Those teachers and students who have more questions about Buddhism and its historical and contemporary influence are highly encouraged to explore Stanford Universities' interactive [JGUIDE](http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2055.html) (<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2055.html>). The medieval period was a Buddhist age and the samurai in particular embraced Zen. [Zen Guide](http://www.zenguide.com/) (<http://www.zenguide.com/>) provides teachers or students who are interested with a range of information about this sect of Buddhism that would eventually profoundly influence a number of elements of Japanese culture ranging from the martial arts to the tea ceremony.

Teachers and students can explore [Japanese Gardens](http://learn.bowdoin.edu/japanesegardens/) (<http://learn.bowdoin.edu/japanesegardens/>) via the web and gain appreciation for one of Zen's most enduring and world-famous cultural influences upon Japan.

Students can also explore [Noh](http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/being-noh-introduction-japanese-noh-plays) (<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/being-noh-introduction-japanese-noh-plays>), Japan's oldest form of drama that was also influenced by Buddhism, and that developed during the this period.

The end of the medieval period brought Japan's first extensive contact with European countries. Most American and Western students will have a better background in European than Asian history and a lesson on [Japan and the West](http://www.askasia.org/teachers/lessons/plan.php?no=97&era=&grade=&geo=) (<http://www.askasia.org/teachers/lessons/plan.php?no=97&era=&grade=&geo=>) should help students better understand comparative historical events.

References

Part 2 Web sites

TITLE: Asia for Educators (AFE)

URL: <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>

TITLE: AskAsia.org

URL: <http://www.askasia.org/>

TITLE: Historyteacher.net □ PowerPoint Palooza

URL: <http://www.pptpalooza.net/>

TITLE: Japanese Gardens

URL: <http://learn.bowdoin.edu/japanesegardens/>

TITLE: JGUIDE

URL: <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2055.html>

TITLE: Mongol Invasion Scrolls

URL: <http://www.bowdoin.edu/mongol-scrolls/>

TITLE: National Endowment for the Humanities - Edsitement

URL: <http://edsitement.neh.gov/>

TITLE: Zen Guide

URL: <http://www.zenguide.com/>

Part 2 Recommended Sources

The following sources are far from inclusive but do provide educators and students interested in this particular part of Japanese history with additional information.

Books

Beasley, W. G. *The Japanese Experience: A Short History of Japan*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1st edition, 1999.

Friday, Karl. *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*. Routledge, 1st edition, 2003.

Shirokauer, Conrad. *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations*. Wadsworth Publishing, 3rd edition, 2005.

Stanley- Baker, Joan. *Japanese Art*. Thames & Hudson, Revised & Expanded edition, 2000.

Journal

Education About Asia

The Association for Asian Studies, Inc.

1021 East Huron St.
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
www.asian-studies.org/ea

Videos

Asian Educational Media Service: Center for East Asian & Pacific Studies
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805 West Pennsylvania Avenue MC-025
Urbana, Illinois 61801
<http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/>