

## Samurai: Art of Armor

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SAMURAI WARRIORS RULED JAPAN FOR NEARLY A millennium, from the twelfth through the nineteenth century. Their armor and other battle equipment, once functional military gear, evolved to become coveted symbols of wealth, status, and power. These materials focus on the special exhibition *Samurai: Japanese Armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection* (on view through February 1, 2015). It features both the practical armor used from the Kamakura (1185–1333) through the Momoyama (1573–1615) period as well as the largely ceremonial objects of the Edo period (1615–1868). Educators and students will learn about the samurai, one of the most iconic warrior figures of all time, as well as his role in the wider context of Japanese culture.

The legendary samurai, still frequently depicted in art, literature, and film, symbolized courage, loyalty, and honor. The fierce yet refined imagery of samurai is perhaps one of the reasons they still captivate us today. The name "samurai," stems from the word *saburajū*, meaning "to serve by one's side." These warriors followed a code of idealized behavior known as the "way of the warrior," or *bushido*, which focused on seven virtues: honesty, courage, respect, benevolence, rectitude, honor, and loyalty. *Bushidō* also prescribed acceptance of death, as exemplified by the fact that samurai preferred to commit ritual suicide by disembowelment, known as seppuku or harakiri rather than seem disloyal or suffer a stain on their character.

The elaborate armor and battle gear of the samurai speaks to their duties as both warriors and statesmen. A suit of armor could withstand the rigors of warfare but was also an aesthetic object appropriate for public display.

The armor and trappings of a samurai comprised his *omote dōgu*, or "exterior equipment," and often had extravagant and expensive decorations finely crafted by skilled artisans. Elaborate elements, such as the deer antlers on the helmet illustrated in this packet symbolized a warrior's bravery and sometimes made it easier to identify him on the battlefield. More than just practical outerwear, *omote dōgu* signified the samurai's status as a warrior, member of an elite class, and man of honor.

### **Bu and Bun**

At first, samurai practiced only the art of war. Later, during peacetime, their responsibilities grew to include administrative positions, and samurai had to master literacy and learning. The warriors were expected to be well rounded; they trained their bodies and hearts for war; and their minds for intellectual pursuits. The ideal samurai thus combined *bu*, killing and the art of war, and *bun*, the art of learning. Elite samurai warriors patronized artists, writers, and scholars, often sponsoring playwrights and poets. Many samurai also composed their own poetry, studied the art form of calligraphy, practiced the delicate art of the tea ceremony, and sought mentoring in etiquette from priests.

During the Muromachi period (1392–1573), shogun (although appointed by the emperor, they were the de facto rulers of Japan and samurai were loyal to them) exerted a profound cultural influence. They amassed impressive collections of paintings (one of which is included in this packet), enthusiastically supported theater, and sponsored the construction of beautiful temples and gardens in Kyoto. Many warriors practiced Zen Buddhism. Its emphasis on discipline, the transience of life, and acceptance of death—complemented the samurai code of honor.

## Historic Rise . . . and Fall

Samurai, part of the elite members of society, represented only eight percent of the population. The rise of this warrior class in Japanese culture initially resulted from the inward focus of the emperor and his imperial court, neglecting many administrative duties. Gradually, Japan became fragmented into small, feudal domains controlled by provincial lords or daimyo. The system was similar to European feudalism, with castle lords and their vassals. The daimyo in turn cultivated samurai to help protect and maintain his lands. The increasingly number of samurai created a surge in demand for arms and armor as several craftsmen were needed to make the many different elements required to outfit men and horses. The imperial court would become largely ceremonial, and by the end of the twelfth century, Japan was governed by a military government led by the shogun, or chief military ruler. Eventually, the dress, cultural values, and traditions of the samurai came to dominate Japan.

In 1543, a group of Portuguese sailors, whose ship had been blown off course, landed on the coast of Japan. With them, they brought the matchlock gun, and Japanese warfare and samurai armor were forever changed. Suddenly, traditional armor was ineffective. In response to these new weapons of war, small leather and iron plates gave way to larger, full-frontal iron sheets similar to the armor worn by European knights.

The Edo period (1615–1868) was a time of relative peace accomplished by the Tokugawa shogunate that would prove lasting. Samurai remained ready for combat and kept their privileged status, but they served more as bureaucrats and civil leaders than active warriors. Armor became a leading symbol of pageantry and prestige. Samurai would dress themselves and their horses in full armor and carry weapons for parades and the mandatory biannual processions between their home domains and the capital, Edo (present-day Tokyo). Since the size and splendor of the convoys reflected a daimyo's status, significant resources were invested in creating pieces of great artistic refinement meant to impress, as seen in the included images of samurai cavalry.

In 1853, American Commodore Matthew C. Perry landed on the shores of Japan. He demanded trading rights and forced the weak government to sign a treaty with the United States. This opened Japan to the US and the world. The Tokugawa shogunate was overthrown during what became known as the Meiji Restoration. In 1876, samurai were forbidden by law to wear swords, something that had previously been required and visually designated samurai as part of the elite class. The samurai class was officially dissolved during the Meiji period (1868–1912), but the samurai's experience in government and administration allowed them to make vital contributions to the emergence of a new, modern Japan.

Four images of samurai armor and accoutrements are provided here.

## Credits

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## ***Eboshi-Shaped Helmet (Eboshi Kambuto) and Half Mask (Menpō)***, Japan, late 16th–17th century

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**H**ELMETS WERE A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF A samurai's armor. Styles changed over time but most were shaped in a simple dome and constructed of anywhere from three to one hundred iron plates. Some helmets had an opening on the top for ventilation and to allow the warrior to slip his topknot through.

Samurai often decorated their helmets with distinctive, fearsome embellishments. Such decoration became more important after the introduction of firearms to Japan in the sixteenth century. When guns were used, the battlefields became full of smoke and troops had difficulty seeing. In order to be easily recognizable in battle, warriors began wearing elaborate ornaments, such as the deer antlers seen here. This iron helmet, lacquered in gold, imitates a tall hat, or *eboshi*, worn at the imperial court. A youth of the samurai class received his first *eboshi* at the time of his coming-of-age ceremony, when he was twelve years old. Two crescent-shaped, stylized eyebrows (*uchimayu*) decorate the wide visor.

The mask, made of metal, provided protection for the samurai's face and throat. This half-mask covered the lower part of the face and is characterized by rounded cheekbones, a small nose, and a bushy mustache made of horsehair.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What qualities do you associate with deer?
- The deer antlers would have made the samurai readily visible to friend and foe alike. How does this exemplify the ideals of honor, duty, and courage associated with samurai?
- What does this helmet tell us about the samurai warrior who owned it? What can we tell about Japanese culture from it?
- Think about the different types of headgear people wear on different occasions—such as to play sports or to go outside when it's very cold or hot. How is it decorated? What symbols and/or embellishments are used? What does it say about the person wearing it?



*Eboshi-Shaped Helmet (Eboshi Kambuto) and Half Mask (Menpō)*

Japan, late 16th–17th century

Iron, gold lacquer, bronze, horn, and horsehair

Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection

Photograph by Brad Flowers

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## *Byōbu (folding screen)*, Japan, early 18th century

THIS SIX-PANEL FOLDING SCREEN SHOWS A FAMOUS scene from the warrior tale "The Heike Monogatari." The story chronicles the Genpei War (1180–1185), fought between two samurai clans, the Taira (also known as the Heike clan) and the Minamoto (also known as the Genji clan) for control of Japan. Here, two Minamoto warriors, Takatsuna and Kagesue, make a friendly wager with each other to see who can cross the rushing Uji River first. Here, Takatsuna charges ahead on his magnificent horse Ikezuki, renowned for his ability to swim, and arrives at the far side ahead of Kagesue. Their leader, Minamoto commander Yoshitsune, looks on from the right side of the scene. While most literature described the famous horse Ikezuki as white, the artist depicted him as brown, blending in with the undulating waves of the river. The Genpei War would result in the defeat of the Taira clan and the establishment of the Kamakura military rule under Minamoto Yoritomo in 1192.

Folding screens are lightweight and portable and were used as room dividers or as a backdrop during special occasions. The gold background would have helped to illuminate the dark interiors of a Japanese castle.

### Discussion Prompts

Read the following passage from "The Heike Monogatari":

As the chilly dawn broke, the river mist hung heavy over the water, so that one could not clearly discern the color either of the horses or the armor of their riders. Then the commander Yoshitsune rode up to the bank of the river, and wishing to try the courage of his men, with a glance at the foaming torrent, called out: "Shall we turn off to Yodo or Imoarai, or shall we go round by Kawachiji? Or what do you think of waiting until the flood abates?"

Then Hatakeyama Shoji Shigetada of the province of Musashi, who was then but twenty-one years old, stood forth and said: "This river is one that we have often spoken of at Kamakura, and is no unknown stream to baffle us; and moreover, as it flows out directly from the lake of Omi, its waters will not quickly subside, however long you may wait, and as for building a bridge, who is there who can do such a thing? In the battle that was

fought here in the era of Jisho, Ashikaga Matataro Tadatsuna crossed over, and he was but a youth of seventeen years, so here is no matter for god or devil. I, Shigetada, will be the first in the flood."

And as he and his band of five hundred followers were pushing together into the waves, two warriors were seen to gallop forth from the point of Tachibana-no-kojima at the northeast of the Byodo-in: they were Kajiwara Genda Kagesue and Sasaki Shiro Takatsuna. Each had made up his mind to be the first across, though no sign of their determination was visible to the onlookers: Kajiwara was about three yards in front of Sasaki. "Kajiwara, your saddle girth seems to be loose; this is the greatest river in the western provinces, so you had better tighten it up." Thus warned, Kajiwara dropped the reins onto his horse's mane, kicked his feet from the stirrups, and, leaning forward in the saddle, loosened the girth and tightened it afresh.

While he was thus engaged, however, Sasaki rode on past him and leapt his horse into the river. Kajiwara, thinking he had been tricked, immediately sprang in after him. "Ho, Sasaki," shouted Kajiwara, "Take care if you want to be famous; there is a great hawser at the bottom of the river. Look out." At this Sasaki drew his sword and cut through the rope as it caught his horse's feet, and in spite of the strength of the current, as he was mounted on the finest horse in the land, he rode straight through the river and leapt up on to the farther bank.

Kajiwara's horse Surusumi, however, was swept aside by the rush of the water, and his rider reached land some distance farther downstream. Then Sasaki, rising high in his stirrups, shouted with a loud voice: "Sasaki Shiro Takatsuna, fourth son of Sasaki Saburo Yoshihide of Omi, descended in the ninth generation from Uda Tenno, is the first over the Uji River."

Translation by A. L. Sadler

Compare and contrast the written description of the story with the scene on the screen. What is the most significant difference between the image and the text? Think of some reasons for this difference.



Six-panel Folding Screen (*byōbu*)  
*The Competition to Be First at Uji River*  
Mid-Edo period, Early 18th century  
Ink, color, and gold on paper  
The Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection  
Photograph by Brad Flowers  
© Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum, Dallas

## ***Horse Armor (bagai), Horse Mask (bamen), Horse Tack (bagu)***

Momoyama to Edo period, 2nd half of 19th century

### ***Tachidō tō sei gusoku armor***, late Edo period, 1842

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IT IS BELIEVED THAT HORSES WORE ARMOR INTO BATTLE BY the early seventeenth century. Horses played a key role in military strategy and were a vital means of travel. Later, when battles involved thousands of men, many warriors fought on foot, with samurai on horseback leading the way.

Horses were also important during the peaceful Edo period (1615–1868). They conveyed prestige and power for their riders in parades, processions, and ceremonies since only samurai of a high rank were permitted to ride.

The extraordinary horse armor seen here was formed of small tiles of gold-lacquered leather, which were then stitched onto fabric to protect the horse's back, neck, shoulders, and hindquarters. The face of the horse was decorated with a mask; this one includes a gold disc ornament similar to a frontal crest. The saddle includes leather pads lacquered in green and emblazoned with a spray of gold waves, a traditional

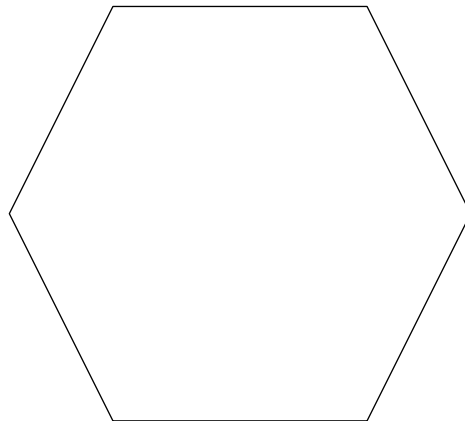
Japanese motif that signifies overcoming obstacles.

The rider here wears a black lacquered *tachidō*-style suit of armor (named for its "standing chest armor") that dates to 1842. The chest armor (*dō*) is dominated by a large gold heraldic family crest (*mon*), which may have belonged to the Sōma family. The helmet, mask, and chest armor are signed by Yoshikaz, the craftsman who probably made them.

#### **Discussion Prompts**

Family crests decorated samurai armor and banners in order to distinguish the different clans on the battlefield. Notice the family crest on the armor of the rider. How would you describe it? What symbols are used? What do the symbols communicate about the samurai and his family?

Use the shape below to design your own crest! What symbols will you use? What would you like to communicate about your family?





Horse Armor (*bagai*), Horse Mask (*bamen*), and Horse Tack (*bagu*)  
Momoyama to Edo period, 2nd half of 19th century (horse armor)  
Late 16th century (horse mask), 17th century (horse tack)  
Iron, wood, lacquer, leather, silk brocade, horsehair, gold, and hemp  
*Tachidō tōsei gusoku* armor, late Edo period, 1842  
Iron, gold, lacing, bear fur, silver, and wood  
The Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection  
Photograph by Brad Flowers  
© The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum, Dallas



## *Tengu Tōsei Gusoku Armor*, Japan, 1854

A WARRIOR-MONK KNOWN AS A *JAMABUSHI*, MAY HAVE commissioned this remarkably complete set of armor. The distinctive iron helmet (*kabuto*) with the head of a crow represents a *tengu* (*karasu tengu*), a legendary hybrid creature from Japanese folklore that is half-man, and half-bird. *Tengu* can be mischievous and inclined to play tricks on humans but are also thought to have magical skills in the martial arts. They are characterized by their long beak-like noses. A small black lacquered cap that fits on top of the *tengu*'s head. This type of cap is worn by members of the Shugendō Buddhist sect of which the *yamabushi* belong, hence the belief that it was commissioned by a warrior-monk. A striking halo of stripped feathers forms the helmet's crest.

Samurai armor consists of a helmet (*kabuto*), mask (*mengu*), and chest armor (*dō*) paired with shoulder guards, sleeves, a skirt, thigh protection, and shin guards. A complete set might weigh between twenty and forty-five pounds in total. (See Samurai Armor diagram.) The armor, very light when compared to European or Persian armor, was made of small, perforated plates that were often lacquered and held together with colored lacing and silk cord. Many materials were required to produce a Japanese suit of armor that was as beautiful as it was functional. Iron, leather, brocade, and precious and semiprecious metals were often used.

The chest armor (*dō*) on this figure is made up of two parts fastened by a hinge on the left side. Seven horizontal plates lightly sculpted to imitate muscle structure lace together in the shape of a human torso. The iron plates covering the shoulder straps are attached with a hinge and are decorated with a family crest. Gold-colored cords suspended on each side from the second horizontal plate are tied in a shape resembling a double *vajra*, a Buddhist symbol.

Creating armor was a highly specialized art form that required exceptional knowledge and skill. Several artisans worked for many months to create a suit of samurai armor. Blacksmiths created the metal pieces, and leather craft workers designed the protective leather elements. Weavers and embroiderers made and embellished the textiles. Metalsmiths created and applied the gold and copper embellishments. Certain pieces stood out because of their construction and materials, while others bore striking motifs and symbols. The artisans found inspiration in many—and sometimes extraordinary—sources to create pieces that reflected samurai spirituality, folklore, and nature.

### Discussion Prompts

Look closely at the suit, and working with a partner, fill out the following jobs. Refer to the attached diagram of samurai armor.

Who?	What?	Where do you find this on the suit?
Blacksmiths	Created metal pieces	
Weavers	Wove and embellished the textiles	
Metal smiths	Created and applied copper embellishments	
Craft workers	Designed and made the leather weather-proof	



Armor of the Tengu Type (*tengu tōsei gusoku*)  
signed Kaei kanoetora aki kaigen Ansei Kiyotoshi kitaeru (forged by Kiyotoshi during the autumn of  
the kanoetora year of Kaei [1854], when the era name changed to Ansei) on helmet top, Munekiyo  
kitaeru (forged by Munekiyo) and Ryūsuikei saku (made by Ryūsuikei) on helmet side  
Japan, 1854

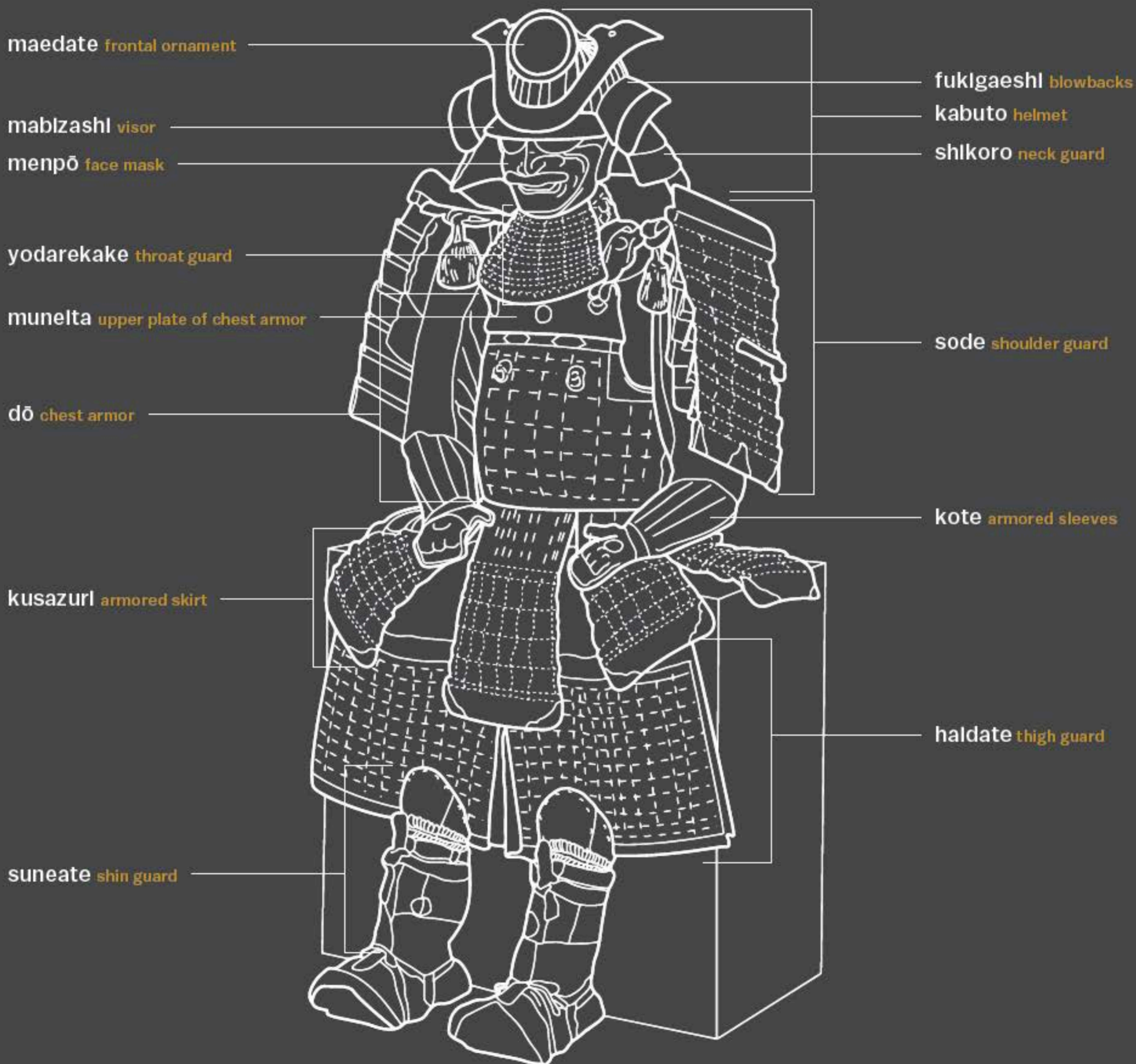
Iron, lacquer, vegetable fiber, bear fur, leather, feathers, and fabric

Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection

Photograph by Brad Flowers

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# Components of a *tōsei gusoku* suit of armor



# Classroom Activity

## Family Crest

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<b>Essential Question</b>	How do people identify themselves with family crests ( <i>mon</i> )?
<b>Grades</b>	K–2
<b>Time</b>	One class period
<b>Art Concepts</b>	Line, geometric shapes and organic shapes, positive and negative space, form
<b>Materials</b>	Heavy black cardstock (8.5 x 11") precut into large geometric shapes (circles, squares, rectangles, triangles), scratch paper for sketching, metallic colored paper and decorative paper (multiple sizes no larger than precut black cardstock), pencils, black markers, scissors, and glue sticks
<b>Talking about Art</b>	<p>View and discuss the printed image <i>Horse armor (bagai)</i>, <i>horse mask (bamen)</i>, and <i>horse tack (bagu)</i>, Momoyama to Edo period and <i>Tachidō tō sei gusoku armor</i>, late Edo period, 1842,</p> <p>What do you see? What do you know about this image? This photograph shows a samurai warrior riding a horse, both samurai and horse in full armor. Often adorned with gold lacquered (gold-painted) leather, horses were very important for samurai warriors and the armor they wore symbolized their wealth and status.</p> <p>Look closely at the armor worn by the samurai. What do you notice? What materials do you think the armor is made of? In the center of the samurai's chest is a family crest, or <i>mon</i>. What shapes do you see? What colors did the craftsman use to make the <i>mon</i>? How would you describe it? Family crests decorated samurai armor and banners to distinguish different clans on the battlefield. The designs often resembled things in nature, for example butterflies, birds, insects, and plants. What does the family crest on this samurai armor remind you of?</p> <p>What do you wonder about the <i>mon</i> and armor? Questions might include, "How was this <i>mon</i> made?" and "Why did the samurai warrior want a symbol of nature on his armor?" Discuss your ideas with a partner. Like the samurai, other wealthy aristocrats and families used a crest too. Over time <i>mon</i> were used by commoners and adopted as part of organizations, artistic guilds, temples and shrines.</p>
<b>Making Art</b>	If you made a <i>mon</i> for a family member, what symbols would you use to describe that person? What is their personality like? Write three characteristics that describe someone in your family. Now, think about how you would illustrate those characteristics. Sometimes the <i>mon</i> that samurai wore, such as in this <i>Tachidō tō sei gusoku armor</i> , were very simple geometric shapes.

On scratch paper, brainstorm a few ideas of symbols that would represent your family member in their own *mon*. Will you use geometric shapes or organic shapes (curvy)?

Choose a black pre-cut geometric shape, or for older grades make your own. This will be the base for your *mon*. Once you decide what shape you will use as the background, think about how you will utilize the space for your design. Look back at your original sketches. What changes do you need to make? How will the symbols fit the space?

Once you are happy with the design of your symbols on scratch paper, choose a metallic or decorative paper to transfer your sketch. With a pencil, draw the outline of your symbol lightly. Using scissors, cut along the pencil line.

Arrange the shapes you cut out on top of your black shape. Are you happy with your composition? Rearrange your shapes to create different designs. Cut out new shapes to add or replace until you are satisfied with your design. Then, use a glue stick to adhere the shapes onto the black paper.

Lastly, use black marker to add details to your *mon*. You may choose another metallic paper to add a frame around your *mon* or add other details.

## Reflection

Display all of the *mons* throughout the classroom for a gallery walk. Facilitate a discussion about the work as a whole. What similarities do you notice? What differences can you find? What shapes and colors do you see? Share your *mon* with the class. Some discussion questions may include, "Who was the inspiration for your *mon*?" "What do you like about this *mon* and why?" and "What did you learn about making your own?"

## Curriculum Connection

As an extension to the artmaking process of the *mon*, ask students to write a story about their family member. Instruct students to provide a narrative that includes key details, connecting with the following Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.2

With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

# Classroom Activity

## *Kabuto Creations*

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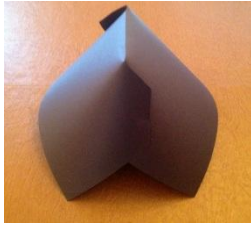
<b>Essential Questions</b>	How do the samurai draw inspiration from the world around them? How do they manipulate available resources to create forms that are both decorative and functional?
<b>Grades</b>	3–5
<b>Time</b>	One class period
<b>Art Concepts</b>	Line, contour, shape, form, contrast, pattern, balance, symmetry, decorative, functional, two-dimensional to three-dimensional transformation
<b>Engineering Concepts</b>	Identify a problem, specify criteria for developing a solution, explore multiple solutions, improve a solution based on simple test results
<b>Language Arts Concepts</b>	Speaking, listening, and reasoning skills; storytelling; writing
<b>Materials</b>	12 x 18" black construction paper, 12 x 18" yellow construction paper folded into thirds and cut into three bands, black markers, glue dots, scissors, diagram of <i>Samurai Armor</i> for reference (see Curriculum CD), pencils, and scratch paper
<b>Talking about Art</b>	<p>View and discuss the printed image of <i>Eboshi Shaped Helmet and Half Mask</i> (late 16<sup>th</sup> century).</p> <p>What do you notice about this object? Use your finger to draw the outline, or contour, of this work. Pay close attention to the direction of the contour and where it intersects with other lines. Did you use geometric (straight, angular) or organic (curvy) lines to describe the outline? Imagine you are sitting in front of this object, but looking at it from a different perspective. How might the outline change? Use a pencil and paper to predict what the contour might look like from another point of view.</p> <p>Does the form (three-dimensional shape) of this helmet remind you of something that you have seen before? What is the function, or purpose of this object? What materials do you think this object is made out of? This is a helmet and half mask, called a <i>kabuto</i> that would have been worn by a samurai warrior. What elements do you think are decorative (not functional)? Where might the artist or maker have drawn his inspiration? Share your observations, interpretations, and inferences with a thinking partner.</p>
<b>Making Art</b>	<p>Discover the artistic process of sculpture by creating your own paper samurai <i>kabuto</i> inspired by the historical object in the curriculum. How will you transform two-dimensional materials into a three-dimensional sculpture?</p> <p>First, fold one sheet of 12 x 18" black construction paper in half, hamburger style. Cut on the folded line a few inches toward the center on one side and a few inches toward the center on the other side. Overlap the paper where cut and use a glue dot to secure into place on each side creating a dome shape of the <i>kabuto</i>. Be careful not to cut the sides, called <i>shikoro</i>. Next, notch a straight line across the front to create the shape of the <i>mabizashi</i>, or visor. Using a template or by free hand, lightly draw the outline of the paper, reaching lengthwise to the edges and using curved, organic lines for one of the horns on one yellow band of construction paper. Try to use the entire space</p>



for the horn. When you are happy with your design, layer a second band of yellow construction paper underneath the one you have drawn on and carefully cut along your lines. Make sure to cut through both pieces of paper so you have a matching set. Save any leftover scraps, you will use them later.



Next, make a one-inch fold at the base of each horn and attach to either side of the helmet with glue dots. Working in pairs, take turns having a partner try on your helmet. Where will you attach the horns? Try to attach your horns so your *kabuto* is symmetrical. After testing out multiple locations, think about how you will attach the pieces. Take two of your long matching left over pieces of yellow paper and glue them together along the top edge. Gently flare out the sides. Place this piece on the top ridge of the *kabuto* and glue front flaps in place only.



Next, turn the *kabuto* around so you are looking at the back. Fold back the tabs and attach to the base of the horns with glue dots for support. The horns should stand securely out rather than lying flat on the sides. This may take a few adjustments, ask your partner for help if needed. Once secure, take the remaining yellow band and fold in half, hamburger style, and cut along the line. What texture should the armored plates, or *jukigaeshi* have? Using a black marker, draw texture by creating a repeating pattern on each half of the yellow construction paper. Try to make the patterns as similar as possible to maintain symmetry. Use glue dots to adhere these pieces to each side of your *kabuto*.



Lastly, use leftover pieces to add details to the *mabizashi* (visor) and the back of the *kabuto*. As you build, make sure to turn your work 360 degrees while you work and make changes as you go.

### Reflection

Display the *kabutos* in the classroom and facilitate a gallery walk. Reflect on the artmaking experience by responding to the following questions orally or in written form:



Does your *kabuto* incorporate organic lines or geometric lines?

How does the contrast of color play an important part in the look of your artwork?

What visual changes did you make along the way?

What structural changes did you make along the way to ensure stability?

How does the final piece compare to your original idea?



In what ways is your *kabuto* decorative and/or functional? What types of materials would you need to have to make it functional? How does this differ from the original samurai *Eboshi Shaped Helmet and Half Mask*?



## Classroom Activity

### *Using your Wits*

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<b>Essential Question</b>	Why did samurai warriors depict stories on functional objects?
<b>Grades</b>	5–8
<b>Time</b>	Two class periods
<b>Art Concepts</b>	Watercolor, layering, foreground, middle ground, background, focal-point, visual sequencing, panorama, transformation of two-dimensional watercolor drawing/painting into a three-dimensional object/screen
<b>Literacy Concepts</b>	Narrative, introduction, climax, conclusion, protagonist, antagonist, hero, challenge, triumph, focus, emphasis, commemorate, honor, scene, Zen, Bushido
<b>Materials</b>	Narrow strips of rigid watercolor paper, watercolor (gold), watercolor pencils, pencils, ink pens, markers, tissue, decorative paper, glue sticks, scissors, magazine images, tracing paper
<b>Talking about Art</b>	<p>View and discuss the printed image of <i>Six-panel Folding Screen (byōbu)</i> (Japan, early 18<sup>th</sup> century) depicting <i>The Competition to be First at Uji River</i>. Some discussion questions may include:</p> <p>What do you see? What makes you say that? What event do you think this artist is commemorating? What makes you say that? What materials do you think this artist used?</p> <p>This gold, six-panel folding screen shows a famous Japanese warrior tale "The Heike Monogatari." The story chronicles the Genpei War (1180–1185), fought between two samurai clans, the Taira (also known as the Heike clan) and Minamoto (also known as the Genji clan) for control of Japan. In the scene depicted here, two Minamoto warriors, Takatsuna and Kagesue, make a friendly wager with each other to see who can cross the rushing Uji River first. Takatsuna tricks Kagesue by telling him that his saddle is loose. When Kagesue reaches down to fix it, Takatsuna charges ahead on his magnificent horse Ikezuki, renowned for his ability to swim, and arrives at the far side ahead of Kagesue. Their leader, Minamoto commander Yoshitsune, looks on from the right side of the scene.</p> <p>While most literature described the famous horse, Ikezuki as white, the artist depicts him brown, blending in with the undulating waves of the river. The Genpei War would result in the defeat of the Taira clan and the establishment of the Kamakura military rule under Minamoto Yoritomo in 1192.</p> <p>Folding screens like this one are lightweight and portable and were used as room dividers or as a backdrop during special occasions. The gold-background would have helped illuminate the dark interiors of a Japanese castle.</p>



## Making Art

Why do you think samurai warriors would have wanted to depict a story like this on objects that were used for special occasions? Think of a time that you have used your wits, like Takatsuna tricking Kagesue. Turn to a partner and share this moment in your life. How is your story different from your partner? How are they similar? After sharing stories, create a short list of moments in the story where you used your wits. Then, plan your story on the horizontal watercolor paper. Decide how to sequence the commemorative event. How will you choose to illustrate it? Will you use one panoramic scene, or a sequence of singular events?

A Japanese *byōbu* (folding screen) often has six panels. The story you illustrate on the screen may have a sequence of six moments depicting the event, like a comic strip or storyboard, or one panoramic scene, such as in *The Competition to be First at Uji River*.

If you are hesitant about your drawing skills, use collage photos and trace images with tracing paper. What other techniques can you think of to transfer images to your mini screen? Once you sketch your mini screen with pencil, use a variety of materials to add color and fill in details, i.e. colored pencils, markers, watercolors, etc.

After completing your design, fold the watercolor paper accordion style so that your 2-D design can stand to become a 3-D *byōbu*.



## Reflection

Share your artwork with the class. How did you and your classmates commemorate a moment of using your wits to overcome a difficult situation? How were your techniques similar or different from your classmates? How were some of your techniques similar to the traditional ones found in the original artwork? What contemporary techniques did you use?

## Curriculum Connection

Compare this artwork with others from LACMA's permanent collection, such as *Nitta Shiro Tadatsune Entering a Cave with a Torch*, which can be found on the LACMA website ([www.collections.lacma.org](http://www.collections.lacma.org)).

What are other positive moments or stories from the past or present would you like to commemorate in the form of a folding screen?

## Classroom Activity

### *Samurai Armor and Animal Symbolism*

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**Essential Question** How did animal symbols assist samurai warriors in battle?

**Grades** 6–12

**Time** One class period

**Visual Art Concepts** Aesthetic, design, form, organic, geometric

**Academic Concepts** Symbol, century, samurai, folklore, hybrid

**Materials** Pencil and paper

**Talking about Art** View and discuss the image of the *Armor with the features of a tengu* (*tengu tōsei gusoku*), late Edo period, 1854, included in the printed and digital curriculum. Some discussion questions may include:

- What do you see?
- What is the first detail you noticed when looking at the armor?
- What forms or shapes do you notice? How many can you find?
- Did you find more organic or geometric forms?
- What animal characteristics did you notice on the armor?
- Can you think of a few characteristics that describe the animal the armor represents?

The armor seen here depicts *Tengu*, a creature from Japanese folklore. He is a hybrid creature that is half-man, and half-bird. *Tengu* is shown with a crow's head and a human body. In addition to the helmet being in the shape of a crow's head we can also view a halo of stripped feathers that forms the helmet's crest. *Tengu* can be mischievous and inclined to play tricks on humans but are also thought to have magical skills in the martial arts. They are characterized by their long beak-like noses.

How might this object have been used? This armor in particular may have been used for ceremonial purposes as it was created during the Edo period, a relatively peaceful time in Japan. Despite the fact that the armor is elaborate, the craftsmanship of the armor, leather, and helmet are so finely crafted, that it could still be used to protect a samurai warrior in battle.

## Writing Activity

With a thinking partner, think and discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think the artist designed the armor with a crow's features?
- How do you think a crow's traits could inspire a samurai in battle?
- Think about an obstacle you are dealing with at school. What type of animal would have abilities that could encourage and help you work through that obstacle?
- Which animal did you choose, and why? How can the animal's characteristics help you in dealing with that challenge?

Using your imagination write a detailed narrative that depicts your challenge and how it was resolved, with the help of your animal and its characteristics. Make sure to include an exposition (beginning), climax (middle), and resolution (end). Who are your characters? What is their importance in your story?

## Reflection

Share your story with a partner. Where does your partner see evidence of your character's attributes in your story? How did those characteristics help you overcome the challenge? Switch and answer the same questions about your partner's story. Record your findings and present them to the rest of the class.

## Curriculum Connection

Research other animals that were symbolically important to samurai warriors. List some of their characteristics and why they would have been important attributes for samurai warriors to emulate. You may want to use LACMA's collections online at [www.collections.lacma.org](http://www.collections.lacma.org). Use search terms in the search bar such as "samurai," "animal," or "honor." If you go back and edit your original story, would you include other animals? Why or why not?

In addition to the story you wrote, illustrate the climax of your story with pencil and paper. Make sure to include main characters from your story. Think about how you will incorporate the animal attributes into your character. What will your character look like? What elements of the animal will you include?

# The Age of the Samurai: A Timeline

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## Nara Period 710–794

- Nara is established as the capital of Japan.
- Buddhism continues to grow.
- Chinese concepts such as a written language, the practice of recording history, the use of coins, and the standardization of weights and measures are adopted.

## Heian Period, 794–1185

- In 794, new capital is established in Heian-kyo (capital of "peace and tranquility," now known as Kyoto), where the emperor and his court reside. Kyoto remains the nation's capital (at times in name only) until 1867.
- The imperial court enjoys a period of peace and political strength lasting nearly four hundred years.
- The aristocratic Fujiwara family controls the politics and culture of this era. Courtiers encourage an aura of sophistication, including appreciation of the visual and literary arts. This interest is reflected notably in the literary classic *The Tale of Genji*, written by a member of the Fujiwara clan.
- Official relations with China end.
- Pride in Japanese culture surges, leading to innovations such as kana script, which facilitates the writing of the Japanese language; *waka* poetry, and a characteristically Japanese painting style, *yamato-e*, which emphasizes native scenes and depictions from Japanese literature.
- By the second half of the twelfth century, domination by the Fujiwaras wanes and political power shifts from the nobility in Kyoto to military landowners in the provinces.
- In 1185, the Genji clan defeats its chief rival, the Heike, and succeeds in establishing in Kamakura a government controlled for the first time in history by military generals, or shogun.
- Esoteric and Pure Land sects of Buddhism gain popularity during this time.

## Kamakura Period, 1185–1333

- Power shifts from the nobility to landowning military men in the provinces.
- The *bakufu*, or government by warrior chieftains (shogun), controls the country from its base in Kamakura, near modern Tokyo.
- The emperor remains the titular head of state in his capital in Kyoto. A binary system of government is established, whereby emperors reign but shoguns rule.
- Zen Buddhism is introduced.

## Nabokuchō Period, 1333–1392

- In 1333, a coalition of supporters of Emperor Go-Daigo (1288–1339) topples the Kamakura regime, initiating a period of constant strife.
- In 1336, a member of a branch family of the Minamoto clan, Ashikaga Takauji (1305–1358), seizes control and drives Go-Daigo from Kyoto. Takauji establishes a new military government in Kyoto.
- Go-Daigo travels south and takes refuge in Yoshino. There he establishes the Southern Court, at odds with the rival Northern Court supported by Takauji.
- A shift in Japanese aesthetics occurs, whereby the warrior class favors artists who treat their subject matter with direct honesty and virile energy, establishing an age of realism.
- For the first time in its history, Buddhism is actively promoted among the Japanese masses.

## Muromachi Period, 1392–1573

- Members of the Ashikaga family occupy the position of shogun; their headquarters is located in the Muromachi district of Kyoto.
- Provincial warlords, called daimyo, retain a large degree of power, enabling them to strongly influence political events and cultural trends during this time.

- Rivalries between daimyō generate instability and conflict erupts, culminating in the Onin War (1467–1477).
- Despite the social and political upheaval, the period is economically and artistically innovative.
- The first steps are taken toward the establishment of modern commercial and transportation networks.
- Renewed contact with China enriches and transforms Japanese culture.
- Zen culture dominates many forms of art, including landscape paintings.
- The basic principles of the tea (*chanoyu*) aesthetic, influenced by Zen ideals, are developed by elites.
- Patrons of the tea ceremony also sponsor *renga* (linked-verse poetry) and *No* theater, a subtle, slow-moving stage performance featuring masked and elaborately costumed actors.

#### **Azuchi-Momoyama Period, 1573–1615**

- With the decline of Ashikaga power in the 1560s, daimyos begin their struggle for control of Japan, introducing four decades of constant warfare.
- Unity is gradually restored through the efforts of three warlords. Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) takes control of Kyoto and deposes the last Ashikaga shogun. He is followed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who continues the campaign to reunite Japan. Peace is finally restored by one of Hideyoshi's generals, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616).
- Art of this period is characterized by opulence and dynamism, with gold applied lavishly to architecture, furnishings, paintings, and garments.
- Interaction with Portuguese and Dutch merchants and Catholic missionaries brings an awareness of different religions, new technologies (including guns), and previously unknown markets and goods to Japanese society.

#### **Edo Period, 1615–1868**

- The Edo, or Tokugawa, period is a time of relative peace and stability.
- Although the imperial court continues to exist and maintains nominal authority, the Tokugawa shogunate (*bakufu*) based in Edo (present-day Tokyo) wields actual political power. Control of the country is divided between the shogunate and approximately 270 regional military lords, or daimyo, who owe loyalty to the shogun while ruling their own domains (*han*).
- Stability leads to an extraordinary expansion in the national economy, including increases in agricultural production, transportation infrastructure, commerce, population, and literacy.
- New forms of highly entertaining drama, literature, painting, and woodblock printing cater to popular demands of the day, marking the Edo period as an active and innovative time for the arts.
- By the late 1630s Japan chooses isolation. Contact with the outside world is cut off through official prohibition of foreigners.
- Restricted trade with Chinese and Dutch merchants is permitted in Nagasaki only, spurring development of Japanese porcelain.
- In 1853, the American Commodore Matthew C. Perry lands on the shores of Japan, ending Japan's self-imposed isolation.
- By 1876, samurai are forbidden to wear swords, which had visually distinguished them as part of the elite class.

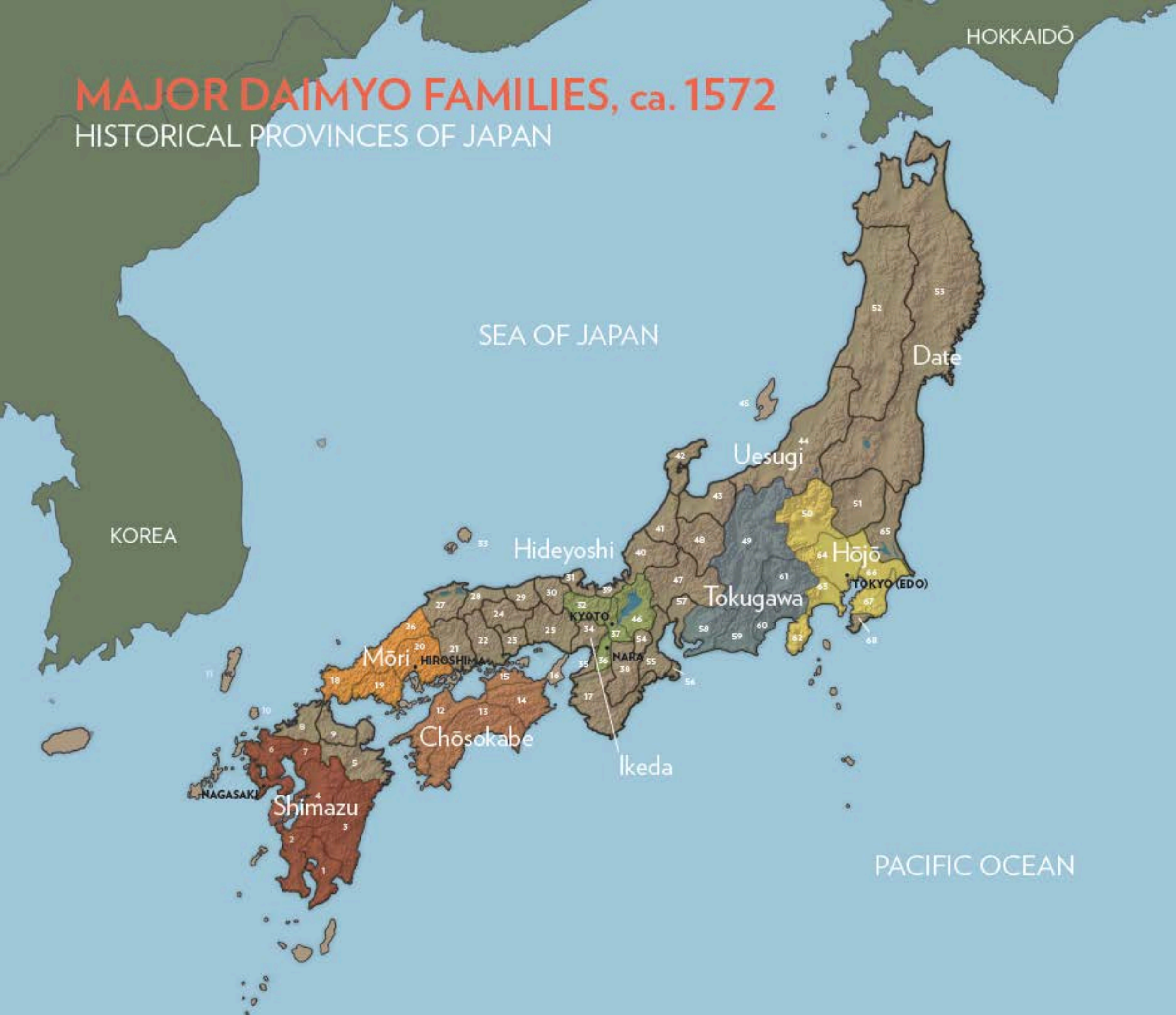
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Adapted from "Japan, AD 500–1000" in *Helibrunn Timeline of Art History*. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000) <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/?period=06@ion-eaj> (October 2001).

HOKKAIDŌ

# MAJOR DAIMYO FAMILIES, ca. 1572

## HISTORICAL PROVINCES OF JAPAN



### MAJOR DAIMYO FAMILIES

DATE	TOKUGAWA	MŌRI
HŌJŌ	HIDEYOSHI	CHŌSOKABE
UESUGI	IKEDA	SHIMAZU

### PROVINCES

1 SUMI	13 TOSA	25 HARIMA	37 YAMASHIRO	49 SHINANO	61 KAI
2 SATSUMA	14 AWA	26 IWAMI	38 YAMATO	50 SHIMOTSUKE	62 IZU
3 HYŪGA	15 SANUKI	27 IZUMO	39 WAKASA	51 KŌZUKE	63 SAGAMI
4 HIGO	16 AWAJI	28 HŌKI	40 ECHIZEN	52 DEWA	64 MUSASHI
5 BUNGO	17 KII	29 TAJIMA	41 KAGA	53 MUTSU	65 HITACHI
6 HIZEN	18 NAGATO	30 INABA	42 NOTO	54 IGA	66 SHIMŌSA
7 CHIKUGO	19 SUŌ	31 TANGO	43 ETCHŪ	55 ISE	67 KAZUSA
8 CHIKUZEN	20 AKI	32 TANBA	44 ECHIGO	56 SHIMA	68 AWA
9 BUZEN	21 BINGO	33 OKI ISLANDS	45 SADO	57 OWARI	
10 IKI	22 BITCHŪ	34 SETTSU	46 ŌMI	58 MIKAWA	
11 TSUSHIMA	23 BIZEN	35 IZUMI	47 MINO	59 TŌTŌMI	
12 IYO	24 MIMASAKA	36 KAWACHI	48 HIDA	60 SURUGA	