Title: Comparison of Feudalism in Japan and Europe

Purpose: To help students identify and describe various similarities and differences between the two feudal societies

Essential Question: What gave rise to this system of government, in this society, at this time? How is the unique culture of this country shown?

State Standards/Benchmarks:

Benchmark:
History
Indicators: Interpret relationships between events shown on multiple-tier time lines

Feudalism #3 Describe the conditions that gave rise to feudalism, as well as political, economic and social characteristics of feudalism, in Asia and Europe

Benchmark:
People in Societies
Indicators: Compare cultural practices, products and perspectives of past civilizations in order to understand commonality and diversity of cultures.

Benchmark:
Social Studies Skills & Methods
Indicators:
Thinking and Organizing #1 Describe historical events and issues from the perspectives of people living at the time in order to avoid evaluating the past in terms of today’s norms and values
Obtaining information #1 Compare accuracy and point of view of fiction and nonfiction resources about a particular era or event

Learning Goals/Objectives:

Students will be able to compare/contrast the feudal systems of Medieval
Europe and Japan

Students will be able to identify and describe several characteristics of each level of feudal society in both systems

Students will be able to construct their own multi-tier timeline with significant events from Europe and Japan from 800-1400 A.D.

Materials:
Timeline 700-1800 A.D.
Map of Europe 850 A.D./1350 A.D.
Map of Japan 1180 A.D./1880 A.D.

Resources:

Activities:

Day 1: Vocabulary for Japan (Shinto, Zen Buddhism, bushido, samurai, shogun, daimyo, karo, ashigaru, seppuku, kabuto, tachi)
Shinto – “Way of the gods” Japanese religion based on respecting the forces of nature (its gods & goddesses) and worshiping one’s ancestors
Kami (divine spirits) live in nature, in unusual or particularly beautiful trees, rocks, waterfalls, mountains, etc.
Zen Buddhism – path to enlightenment through meditation with a reliance on self
Various riddles help achieve enlightenment

Bushido- “the way of the warrior”
- Values bravery and loyalty to lord above all else – Fight for lord in exchange for allowance
- Reckless courage, reverence to gods, fairness and generosity towards those weaker than himself
- Will commit ritual suicide rather than face defeat or dishonor because dying an honorable death was more important than living a long life

Samurai- “one who serves”
Shogun – commander of the forces, general ruler
Daimyo- head of feudal estates
Karo- top ranking samurai in service of daimyo
Ashigaru – foot soldiers of medieval Japan-employed by shogun as personal army
Seppuku –(stomach cutting) ritual suicide
Kabuto- helmet used by samurai – bowl with plates that extend down to protect neck
Tachi- Japanese sword that was slightly curved

Religion/climate

Informal Assessment: From vocabulary, what similarities do you see with Medieval Europe?

Day 2: Brief history of Japan during these 700 years

Notes:
I. Heian Period (794-1185) mostly ruled by Fujiwara family
   A. In 794, imperial court was moved from Nara to Heian (modern day Kyoto)
   B. Many noble families followed, moving their homes
   C. Court life
      1. nobles filled days with elaborate ritual and artistic pursuits
      2. Extensive rules existed describing everything from color or official robes to number of skirts a woman should wear
      3. arts - all expected to write poetry and paint
      4. nobles looked down on the common people

II. Rise of Feudalism
   A. Power of central government begins to slip due to so much attention paid to culture/arts and little to governing
      1. Large land owners away from court life in capital set up private armies
      2. Countryside becomes lawless & dangerous
      3. small land owners and farmers traded part of their land for protection to strong warlords
   B. People
1. **Samurai**
   a. started as bodyguards for local lords
   b. lived by code *Bushido*
2. importance of Buddhism
   a. Shoguns set up official temples
   b. Zen temples were promoted
   c. hierarchy of priests also arose
   d. some secret traditions arose
3. role of women changed -
   a. marriage had been private matter with women retaining property
   b. marriage became more important – ways to align families
   c. women became property of husbands

**Informal Assessment** – questions you have about Japanese culture/history

**Day 3:** Samurai v. knight comparison

**Notes:**

I. **Samurai**
   A. Clothing
      1. Iron collar & facemask
      2. Visored helmet
      3. Leather shin & thigh guards
      4. Chest protector
      5. Weapons
         a. Sword -
         b. bows & arrows
   B. Code of Honor – *Bushido*
   C. Religion – Zen Buddhism - emphasis on spirituality through meditation and self-discipline
   D. Role of Women – expected to live by same values of honor & courage
   E. Leisure/Arts –
      1. poetry
      2. stories – told by traveling storytellers accompanied by lute
      3. ink brush paintings & sculptures
      4. tea ceremony
      5. Japanese gardens

II. **Knight**
   A. Clothing
      1. Mail and Armor
      2. Visored helmet
      3. Weapons
         a. lance
         b. mace
   B. Code of Honor – Chivalry
      1. values bravery and loyalty to heavenly God, earthly lord, and chosen lady
      2. demands knight show humility
      3. fight for lord in exchange for land
C. Religion-Christianity
D. Role of Women – weak creatures to be defended and idolized
E. Leisure/Arts
    1. traveling troubadours
    2. gothic architecture

Assessment:
Informal see above

Formal: Construct a multi-tier timeline with significant events from Europe and Asia spanning 700-1600 A.D.
Construct a Venn Diagram that compares and contrasts a minimum of 8 features of feudalism in both Europe and Japan