BUSHIDO: THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR

DOCUMENT A

The samurai had an unwritten code of behavior that became known as bushido or “the way of the warrior.” The samurai code emphasized loyalty and family values. It placed great value on courage, honor, self-discipline, and samurais put the needs of others in front of their own. Capture of surrender were dishonorable.

DOCUMENT B – Seppuku

Rather than fall into enemy hands, samurai commonly committed suicide. This act was performed by stabbing a knife into the left side of the abdomen, drawing across to the right and giving a final upward twist to the chest. Samurai committed suicide in this fashion not only to avoid capture, but to make up for any unworthy behavior.

DOCUMENT C – The Code of Bushido

“The business of the samurai consists in reflecting on his own station in life, in discharging loyal service to his master if he has one, in deepening his fidelity (faithfulness) in association with friends, and with the due consideration of his own position in devoting himself to duty above all.”

- Yamaga Soko (1622-1685)

“The way of the warrior (bushido) is to find a way to die. If a choice is given between life and death, the samurai must choose death. There is no more meaning beyond this. Make up your mind and follow the course. Someone may say, ‘You die in vain if you do not accomplish what you set out to do.’

“If the samurai misses his objectives and continues to live, he must be seen as a coward. If he misses his objectives and chooses death … this must be a noble act. It is of utmost importance for bushido. Day and night, if you make an effort to think of death and at a moment’s notice, you and the bushido will become one. In this way throughout your life you can perform your duties for your master…”

- Hagakure by Yamato Tsunetomo, 1716
DIRECTIONS: Read the scenarios below and then answer the questions that follow each one. Use the information from the documents to answer the questions.

SCENARIO # 1: While walking to your Global Studies class, you notice that a fellow classmate is being attacked by a group of students.

Q: What would a samurai do in this situation? Give support from the documents.

Q: What would you do in this situation?

SCENARIO # 2: It is near the end of the year and you already know that you are getting a B for your final grade in the class. However, your teacher has offered you the opportunity to do an extra credit project that will require a lot of research and writing to earn a A- or possibly an A for the year.

Q: What would a samurai do in this situation? Give evidence!

Q: What would you do in this situation?

SCENARIO # 3: Due to a bad financial year, the company that you have worked for more than seven years has decided to lay off people. As a result, you lose your job.

Q: What would a samurai do in this situation? Give evidence!

Q: What would you do in this situation?