

SHINTO

Mark It on the Map

Have the students locate on a world map the area shown on the globe on page 4. Then have them locate Japan and note its size in relation to other countries in the world. Ask students to define the basic geographical features of Japan that they can deduce from the maps. Explain that the title “The World of Shinto” refers to the fact that the principal religious practice in Japan is Shinto. Then read the “Note” with the class.

Vocabulary

torii	Noh dramas
clan	miko
nirvana	oracle
kami	palanquin
ideogram	shell midden

Introduction

Ask students to name as many religions as they can, and write them on the board. Have them turn to “Churches,” “Mosques,” “Synagogues,” and “Temples” in the yellow pages and add to the board list any religions that they missed. Determine what the predominant religion is in your area. Read the “Musings” section on page 2 to the class. Address the fact that Shinto is a national religion. Briefly discuss the three types of Shinto, explaining that the division is similar to that found in Protestantism (Lutheran, Episcopalian, etc.).

Questions for Discussion

- What does the name “Shinto” mean? In what ways does Shinto differ from traditional religions? (No founder, no sacred scriptures, no commandments, no statement of beliefs, no houses of worship, followers may practice another religion as well.)
- Why do some Buddhist temples in Japan include Shinto shrines on their grounds?
- What are the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*?
- What do the mirror, sword, and jewel necklace represent in Shinto?
- Who is Ko-no-hana-sakuya-hime? What role did she play in Japan’s history?
- What is the importance of the shrine at Ise? Explain your answer.
- What is the significance of the “rejected fortunes” shown in the illustration on page 19?
- Why do students in Japan honor and pray to Michizane?
- What is the Shichi-go-san?
- What can middens tell archaeologists?
- Why are remains of sea creatures difficult to date?

Writing Workout

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Write an essay explaining your interpretation of the Japanese proverb found on page 2. Include whether you agree or disagree, and why.
- Read the myth and its explanation on pages 10–11. Make up a title for the illustration. Then write blurbs for each of the figures in the illustration, giving the name of the character and having what he or she says relate in some way to the myth of Amaterasu.
- Explain how for followers of Shinto the tales about Izanagi, Izanami, and Amaterasu help to explain questions about death and life after death, and about solar eclipses.
- Choose an image in this unit that you feel best represents Shinto. Explain why.
- Make a list of women’s roles in Shinto.
- Explain what is meant by the first sentence of the article on page 25: “How people worship depends, to a great extent, on who or what they think is divine.”
- Pretend you must write an entry on Shinto for an encyclopedia. Make a list of the five most important facts you feel need to be included in the entry.
- Explain how Professor Edwards’ answers on page 41 helped you better understand the article on pages 38–40.

Think About It

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Have students read about the development of Shinto on pages 5–6. Then have them discuss the circumstances that led to the organization of Shinto practices and how the Shinto philosophy was such that it could accommodate such changes.
- Why do you think the practice of rebuilding the three most important structures at Ise every 20 years developed?
- Read the article on pages 38–40, and then explain the significance of the title “Japan’s New Past.” Be very specific about the meaning of “new.”

Compare and Contrast

Have students read “The Shinto Way, From Birth to Death” on pages 28–31. Then have them divide a large piece of paper into two columns. In one column have them make a list of the various life-cycle events (and the accompanying customs) that followers of Shinto practice. In the second column, make a list of the life-cycle events you and your family celebrate, and the accompanying customs. Compare and contrast the two. Follow-up: Have a class discussion on reasons for the similarities and dissimilarities.

Get Into Art

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Make a poster illustrating the symbols of Shinto: torii and straw rope (shimenawa). Label each and include a brief description.
- Read the article “The Shrine at Ise” on pages 14–18. Use the information to draw a layout of the grounds. Draw the shoden and label the various design elements of this shrine dedicated to Amaterasu.
- Pretend that you must define and explain the origin of each of the words on pages 36–37 to someone who does not understand English. Be creative: a collage for each word, a pantomime skit, a series of illustrations.

Class Project

Read the first paragraph on page 25 to the class. Then explain that Shinto ceremonies consist of four elements: purification, offering, prayer, and a feast. Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group one of these topics. Have each read the appropriate section in the article on pages 24–27 and teach the rest of the class about their topics. They may do so with a lecture, illustrations, a skit, or an activity that involves class participation.

Research Project

Assign students to research the various branches of archaeology and anthropology, such as field archaeology, social archaeology, paleoanthropology. Have the group also define the specific field of study each branch involves.

Just for Fun

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Follow the directions on pages 22–23 and make your own ema.
- Make it a point to celebrate Girls’ Day on March 3 and Boys’ Day on May 5. Replicate as much as possible the practices found on pages 32–33.
- Celebrate Girls’ Day by making a kokeshi doll (pages 34–35).
- Learn what trash can tell you by following the directions on pages 44–45.

Follow These Footsteps

Michizane

Edward Morse

Walter Edwards