

# The Last Samurai

Name:

Date:

Period:

## Background Information

The Last Samurai is **fiction**, but it is based loosely on real events. It is a Hollywood movie, so they've made up the story line, but we are watching looking for a **few key ideas**:

1. What were some of the aspects of Samurai life?
2. What evidence do you see of Bushido, the Samurai code of conduct?
3. All soldiers share some common characteristics. What were some similarities and differences between Samurai and American soldiers?

The movie is **set in 1876**. **Captain Nathan Algren**, an **American soldier**, had spent his life fighting **"savages."** This is another word for barbarians: people considered uncivilized. He had been fighting Native Americans on the Western frontier of the United States. He **had killed many men and was a hero and legend**. But the killing troubled him inside.

In Japan, the **Shogunate (rule by the Shoguns) was ending**. **The emperor had taken power again**. Samurai were being forced from power. Because Samurai literally means "those who serve," many **chose to serve the emperor**, but the emperor had other ideas. In the movie, he was listening to **advisors who wanted to set up a "western-style" military**. **Western meant Europe and the United States**. The emperor's advisors traveled to the United States to **hire Captain Algren to train their new soldiers**. Algren didn't take the offer seriously, but agreed to go.

Once he got to Japan, he **saw a whole new world**. He **thought the Samurai were savages because they fought with bows and arrows** (just like the Native Americans). He was captured and lived with them for a winter and soon learned their ways. He learned about Samurai life, Bushido, and even their religion.

Watch the movie clip looking for evidence of how the Samurai lived, how they practiced Bushido, and how their culture differed from American culture.

1. Who were the Japanese warriors willing to give up their lives for honor? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What do you think the Samurai in the first scene is doing as he sits quietly with his eyes closed?

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_