

# HISTORY OF SAMURAI WOMEN

*Directions: Read the passage below. Then, answer the questions that follow.*

Everyone knows about the history and legends of the Japanese samurai. People still don't know about the fierce female samurai. These female warriors were part of the important **samurai** class in **feudal** Japan. Just like the boys, young girls were trained in martial arts and weapons. It was up to them to protect their household, family, and honor during times of war.

Men fought on the battlefield and used the **katana**. Women were expected to defend towns and taught to fight with different blades.

The naginata is a cross between a sword and a spear. It has a curved blade rather than a straight one. The weapon allowed them to fight without being as close to their enemy. During the Edo Period, it became a symbol of the social status for women of the samurai class.

Girls from samurai families were given a dagger. She would carry it on her at all times. It was used for self-defense in small spaces.

Their role as protectors changed over many centuries. People think of samurai as only being men. Before this, Japanese history told of powerful female fighters. These women were highly educated in science, math, and literature. Most importantly, they fought alongside men.

Sadly, there are no records of women serving in the army. **Archaeological** evidence tells a different story. Thirty percent of skulls found in three separate ancient battlefields were those of women. This means that one-third of the warriors were women.

Today, many schools focusing on the use of the naginata are still around. This style of fighting is still practiced as a sport in Japan and around the world. It's proof of the inspiration and strength of female samurai warriors.



## QUESTION & ANSWER

1. In your own words, describe the difference between male and female samurai.

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2. Why did girls learn to fight with the naginata?

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3. What would samurai women keep on them at all times?

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4. What three subjects were samurai women taught besides martial arts?

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## MATCH THE WORD TO ITS MEANING

<b>samurai</b>	a curved blade at the end of a long pole
<b>honor</b>	a Japanese warrior who practices a strict code of honor
<b>katana</b>	a time in Japanese history between the years 1603 and 1867
<b>feudal</b>	purity and good reputation
<b>naginata</b>	the study of things left behind by people long ago.
<b>Edo Period</b>	a medieval political or social system
<b>archaeological</b>	a long, single-edged sword

# SAMURAI WOMEN WORD SEARCH

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Honor

Japan

Feudal

Archaeological

Katana

Protect

Fight

Warrior

Battle

War

Samurai

Women

Family

Blade

Strength

Enemy

Weapon

Defend

B A O V R W Y S P T N A T R

C A L V E W T C H L R R I R

D I T A B R K G A L D C A E

R T P T E F I D Q F G H R N

K O B N L F U B T F K A U E

N R G T C E T O R P E E M M

B T O R F D N E F E D O A Y

H N K I O K N G Q P W L S F

N A Q K R N B S C A L O Q A

I P O N J R O L R T A G J M

K A T A N A A H A O E I X I

K J W O M E N W N D C C W L

N G W W U C S J L V E A T Y

B H R J R A Z C Y F S L E A