

Hoffman, Yoel. "The Haiku." "Death Poems and Zen Buddhism." and poems by Kozan Ichikyo, Suzuki Shosan, Taigen Sofu, Takuan Soho, Zoso Royo, and Basho. *Japanese Death Poems*. Rutland, VT: C. E. Tuttle, 1986. ISBN: 9780804831796. pp. 22-27, 65-76, 108, 117-19, 129, 143.

A good assignment for this reading is to have students compose a haiku (even approaching the next week with a Buddhist eye for an appropriate natural poetic image) and a death poem.

- What's the harm in saying too much -- either in haikus or in their analysis?
- How do you want to die, if you are to have a voluntary death? Concentrate more on the approach than the circumstance.
- Why is death normally feared? What assumptions underlie that fear?
- What is "thought" and how does it interfere with wisdom?
- How can death be both central and insignificant to Zen?
- How can Zen Buddhism uphold both the dying of Essai (chosen) and Sengai (disliked)?
- Are death poems beautiful?

Story, Richard. "Zen and the Sword." *The Way of the Samurai*. London, England: Orbis Books, 1978. ISBN: 9780856134043. pp. 43-61.

Japanese society finally crystallized after hundreds of years of upheaval. That crystallization found a place for the very war-like and the very Zen, in a very complex and seemingly contradictory whole.

- How is Zen an appropriate technology for the samurai?
- Warriors aren't known for their philosophical bents -- so how did the samurai embrace Zen?
- In what ways are morality and aestheticism interchangeable?
- Western culture's morality comes from the idea of sin and results in a culture of license; Japanese culture's morality holds sin as an extrinsic element, but results in a shame culture. Why?
- How much does our triple breakdown (Shinto, Buddhism, Zen) of this integral philosophy affect our view of it?
- How does the sword reflect the philosophy of its society?
- What role does the tea ceremony have in a samurai's preparation?
- Why did Japanese culture at the height of the samurai have so much upheaval?
- What does the sword hunt tell us about Japanese culture in the late 16th century?
- How would Japanese history be different if it had not closed its borders?

Suzuki, Daisetz. "What is Zen?" and "Zen and the Samurai." Chapters I, IV in *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970. ISBN: 9780691017709. pp. 7-15, 70-85.

A nice way to open the discussion for this reading is by reading some more koans. Americans grapple with nothing remotely like Zen. Zen and the Tao are things that cannot be explained, described, or even definitively pointed to. Yet, an understanding of them is essential to understanding the Samurai.

- Is a staff a staff?

- Culture Tech is a combination of learning by doing and discussion. Which is better?
- Which profession produces the best path to Zen?
- Do the self-deprecating descriptions of Zen given in this chapter tell you what it is? How do they hope to?
- How does one go about teaching Zen?
- "No great work has ever been accomplished without going mad." Do you agree?
- What place to honor and death have in American culture?
- Why is a gestalt of death essential to the Samurai?
- What's the relationship between Zen's no-thought and death?
- Is it possible to transcend the fear of death? Personally? Culturally?

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