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**Japanese Swords--Supplementary Materials:**

## WRITING MINI-PROMPT

**Lesson Focus Question:** *How did swords represent the economic and cultural exchange between Japan and mainland Asia?*

**Directions:** Write a paragraph in response to the lesson focus question. Use your notes from the reading and data chart on trade and your observations and interpretations of the sword images as sources of evidence.

The opening to your paragraph has been provided for you.

The import of goods and ideas from mainland Asia is a well-documented factor in the development of Japanese culture. But trade is a two-way transaction and it was the value of Japanese products, such as swords, that enabled these imports. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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## DATA ANALYSIS ACTIVITY (Key)

**Exports from Japan to China in 1453**

**Source: “**Exports from Japan to China in 1453,” adapted from Charlotte von Verschuer, *Across the Perilous Sea* (2006).

**Context:** Information organized into charts and tables provides easy access to evidence. This chart helps us understand the value of selected Japanese trade goods (including swords) to the Chinese mainland.

**Directions:** After examining the tables, and determining the value of trade goods, respond to the questions.

**Exports from Japan to China in 1453**

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| **Products** | **Quantity** | **Value per Unit in China,  calculated in coins\*** | **Total Value** |
| Sapanwood (lbs.) | 106,000 | 70 | 7,420,000 |
| Sulfur  (lbs.) | 364,400 | 50 | 18,220,000 |
| Copper Ore (lbs.) | 152,000 | 60 | 9,120,000 |
| Long Swords | 417 | 6,000 | 2,502,000 |
| Short Swords | 9,483 | 6,000 | 56,898,000 |
| Fans | 250 | figure unknown |  |
| Gilt Bronze Pitchers | figure unknown | 4,000 |  |
| Gold Lacquerware | 643 | 600 | 385,800 |

\*While the value of trade goods are given in “coins”, actual trade between Japan and the mainland was usually in the form of goods exchanged for other goods and not cash transactions

**Analyzing an Artifact (key)**

**Inquiry Question**: *What might have been the appeal of Japanese swords for consumers in China and other countries?*

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| **Artifact:** Short sword **(**wakizashi) and long swords (katana) forged and tempered steel,  sheathed and unsheathed  **Creator:** unknown craftsman  **Possible Users:** samurai warriors, Japanese merchants, wealthy aristocrats  **Place and Time:** Japan. Muromachi period (1333-1573) |
| *Observe the swords carefully. What do you see? Can you make any connections to what you learned in your Expert Groups?* List or sketch specific details.  One sword shorter than the other decorated handle—tsuka covering is well-wrapped  Blades curved materials include gold and bronze = valuable    Single edged sheaths shiny, black and white, dotted  Pointed, polished blue cord tied around  Grooved along side black cap on end |
| *Considering our research into trade between Japan and mainland Asia, why would Japanese swords be seen as valuable goods for trade?* (possible responses)  Japanese swords were high quality weapons. They would be very effective in combat, doing great damage to an enemy. The two lengths could be used in different fighting situations. The swords were beautiful examples of fine craftsmanship and might be considered artworks in themselves. The decorations on Japanese sword fittings often conveyed values and beliefs important to the samurai. All of these reasons made Japanese swords desirable products. Buyers were willing to pay high prices for them. |

**Directions:** Use the information from both the text and data chart to answer the questions.

**Comprehension Questions (key)**

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| 1. *Why did Japan trade with the mainland?* | ...to obtain luxury goods and other items they otherwise wouldn’t have had access |
| 2. *Who conducted trade between Japan and the mainland?* | first the Japanese state,  then powerful Japanese aristocrats  later merchant cooperatives and wholesalers |
| 3. *What goods were traded between Japan and China?* | (imports) raw materials for perfumes and medicines, textiles, ceramics, Chinese books, furs, bamboo, exotic animals  (exports) gold, metals, sulfur, pearls, paper, construction wood ,mother of pearl items such as lacquerware, also fans  and swords |
| 4. *Based on data in the chart, what were the most valuable trade goods for the Japanese?* | short swords |

**Interpretive Questions** (potential answers)

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| 5. *Who would likely buy and use these traded goods?* | soldiers, military suppliers, wealthy aristocrats |
| 6. *What values or ideals might have traveled with the swords that were traded?* | respect for craftsmanship and artistry that went into making each sword; the way swords symbolize the owner’s soul; the way the art displayed on the sword might convey philosophical beliefs (such the transitory nature of life) |
| 7. *What might the value of Japanese exports mean for Japanese access to imports?* | The high value of Japanese swords as exports meant that Japan could import a great many Chinese products |

