

Name _____

Discovering Japan - A Journey into Culture and Traditions

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Calligraphy plays a significant role in Japanese culture as it reflects the importance of aesthetics and precision. It is the art of beautiful writing and involves creating artistic and expressive characters using specialized brushes and ink. Calligraphy is often used for decorative purposes, in traditional ceremonies, and for conveying deep thoughts and emotions. It embodies the values of balance, harmony, and attention to detail, which are highly regarded in Japanese culture.
2. Bowing is a common form of greeting and showing respect in Japan. It signifies respect and politeness. The depth and duration of the bow can vary depending on the situation and the level of respect being conveyed. In contrast to handshakes or hugs in some Western cultures, bowing is a non-contact form of greeting that aligns with Japanese values of humility, respect for others, and maintaining personal space. It is considered a formal and polite way to show respect and acknowledge others.
3. Shintoism and Buddhism have significant influences on Japanese culture and daily life. Shintoism involves the worship of kami, or spirits, and is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture. Shinto shrines can be found throughout Japan, and rituals and festivals often involve paying respects to kami. Buddhism was imported from China and has also become an integral part of Japanese spiritual life, with temples and rituals that coexist with Shinto practices. Both religions have influenced Japanese traditions, festivals, and rituals, promoting values of reverence for nature, ancestors, and spirituality.
4. The concept of "group harmony" (wa) plays a crucial role in Japanese society. It affects decision-making and problem-solving by prioritizing consensus and cooperation within groups. In daily life, this concept can be observed in meetings and discussions, where individuals may avoid direct confrontation and aim for consensus. It also emphasizes maintaining a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere within families, workplaces, and communities. Examples include group activities in schools, where students work together to achieve common goals, and corporate culture, where employees often collaborate closely to ensure the success of the organization.

