

TO: Parents of Students in Dr. Neufeld's History Class
FROM: Dr. Neufeld
RE: "The Last Samurai"
DATE: February 7, 2017



I would like to share **our next film** "The Last Samurai" for several reasons. In chapter 7, we first studied the many dynasties of China and strength of the Mongols from the north. In chapter 8, we are concluding our study of Asia with the history of Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

One thing we learned about Japan in particular was their sealing off their country from the world for over 250 years and how the U.S. forced the Japanese to open their country again in the 1800s. We also have learned much about the life of the samurai warriors in Japan. There is an excellent film that links the strength of the samurai with an American soldier who visited Japan in the 1800s...this film is "The Last Samurai."

This film was made in 2003 and stars Tom Cruise. He plays the role of American soldier Nathan Algren whose personal and emotional conflicts bring him into contact with the samurai in the wake of the restoration of an empire in Japan in 1876. The film involves the historical roles of the British Empire, the Netherlands and France and their role in Japanese westernization after the advancement of the United States. These details, characters in the film and the real story are simplified for plot purposes. I have edited this film for time **and for content** (for the battle scenes) to match what we have learned about Japan in the 1800s. Please let me know if you would like to see the film before making a decision.

On the back of this paper is more information on the film. I have posted the preview for this film on my web site. To see the preview, please ask your child to show you my site. I also listed two web sites you could use to learn more about the film. I have also posted the preview of the film on my website as well as some excerpts used on The History Channel. If you would like more information, or if you would like to see the film yourself, you can e-mail me at doug_neufeld@lawndale.k12.ca.us. You can see the trailer for this movie on my website DrNeufeld.com

Thank You!

Please return this form by Friday, February 17!

Name of Student _____

Period _____

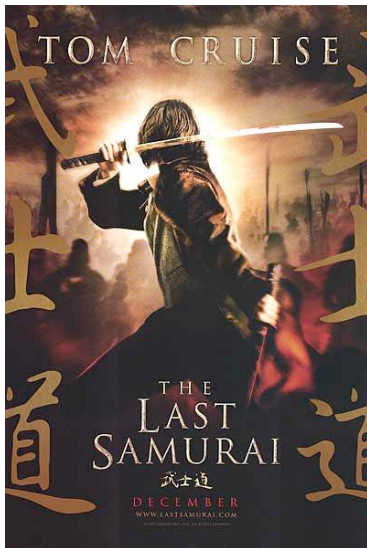
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Yes, my child can watch the 2003 film "The Last Samurai."

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No, I prefer that my child not watch the film and complete another project instead.

Parent Signature



Three reviews of **The Last Samurai**:

In the 1870s, Captain Nathan Algren, a cynical veteran of the American Civil war who will work for anyone, is hired by Americans who want lucrative contracts with the Emperor of Japan to train the peasant conscripts for the first standing imperial army in modern warfare using firearms. The imperial Omura cabinet's first priority is to repress a rebellion of traditionalist Samurai -hereditary warriors- who remain devoted to the sacred dynasty but reject the Westernizing policy and even refuse firearms. Yet when his ill-prepared superior force sets out too soon, their panic allows the sword-wielding samurai to crush them. Badly wounded Algren's courageous stand makes the samurai leader Katsumoto spare his life; once nursed to health he learns to know and respect the old Japanese way, and participates as advisor in Katsumoto's failed attempt to save the Bushido tradition, but Omura gets repressive laws enacted- he must now choose to honor his loyalty to one of the embittered sides when the conflict returns to the battlefield.

2nd review: Set in Japan during the 1870s, The Last Samurai tells the story of Capt. Nathan Algren (Tom Cruise), a respected American military officer hired by the Emperor of Japan to train the country's first army in the art of modern warfare. As the Emperor attempts to eradicate the ancient Imperial Samurai warriors in preparation for more Westernized and trade-friendly government policies, Algren finds himself unexpectedly impressed and influenced by his encounters with the Samurai, which places him at the center of a struggle between two eras and two worlds, with only his own sense of honor to guide him.

3rd review: Captain Nathan Algren is a man adrift. The battles he once fought now seem distant and futile. Once he risked his life for honor and country, but, in the years since the Civil War, the world has changed. Pragmatism has replaced courage, self-interest has taken the place of sacrifice and honor is nowhere to be found--especially out West where his role in the Indian Campaigns ended in disillusionment and sorrow. Somewhere on the unforgiving plains near the banks of the Washita River, Algren lost his soul. A universe away, another soldier sees his way of life about to disintegrate. He is Katsumoto, the last leader of an ancient line of warriors, the venerated Samurai, who dedicated their lives to serving emperor and country. Just as the modern way encroached upon the American West, cornering and condemning the Native American, it also engulfed traditional Japan. The telegraph lines and railroads that brought progress now threaten those values and codes by which the Samurai have lived and died for centuries. But Katsumoto will not go without a fight. The paths of these two warriors converge when the young Emperor of Japan, wooed by American interests who covet the growing Japanese market, hires Algren to train Japan's first modern, conscript army. But as the Emperor's advisors attempt to eradicate the Samurai in preparation for a more Westernized and trade-friendly government, Algren finds himself unexpectedly impressed and influenced by his encounters with the Samurai. Their powerful convictions remind him of the man he once was. Thrust now into harsh and unfamiliar territory, with his life and perhaps more important, his soul, in the balance, the troubled American soldier finds himself at the center of a violent and epic struggle between two eras and two worlds, with only his sense of honor to guide him.

For more information about this film, check out these two web sites:

<http://lastsamurai.warnerbros.com/home.php>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0325710/>