Social Studies Vocabulary: Medieval Japan

1. constitution – a plan of government which establishes the fundamental principles for a state or other organization, usually setting limits on the power of the state
2. animism – a belief that all natural things (winds, mountains, rivers, etc.) are alive and have spirits
3. shrine – holy places where religious rituals are performed
4. samurai – Japanese warriors who served lords
5. shogun – commander of all of the Japanese emperor’s military forces
6. daimyo – powerful Japanese military lords
7. vassal – a samurai who gave an oath of loyalty to a daimyo
8. feudalism – the bond of loyalty between a lord and a vassal which resulted in protection for the lord and land for the samurai

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1. sect – smaller sub-group of a religion; for example, Zen Buddhism is an important sect of Buddhism in Japan
2. martial arts – sports that involved combat and self-defense
3. meditation – the practice of sitting for long periods with the mind cleared of thoughts and desires in order to relax and find inner peace
4. calligraphy – the art of writing beautifully
5. tanka – unrhymed poem of five lines which captures nature’s beauty and the joys and sorrows of life
6. guild – a group of artisans or merchants who work together to set standards for their craft or business, and to protect and increase their profits
7. archipelago – a chain or cluster of islands