



## Free Lesson Plans

## Castle Town Maze Activity Lesson Introduction

*(Lesson adapted from Castle Towns: An Introduction to Tokugawa Japan)*

This curriculum unit offers an introduction to life in Japan during the late feudal period (1600-1868), known as either the Tokugawa or Edo Period. This castle town maze activity adds a first-hand sense of how towns were established to protect the castle from opposing forces. It can be used in middle and high school classes of world geography, history, or culture, and prepares students to make broad generalizations regarding the history and development of other world areas. The town, castle and maze are entirely fictional, but are based on Matsue, an actual castle town. Estimated time for this lesson is 2 class periods.

- [Materials](#)
- [Procedure](#)
- [Follow-up Activity](#)

### Materials

[Castle Town Maze Directions](#), one for each

- About SPICE
- SPICE Catalog
- Current Projects
- Free Lesson Plans**
- Ordering Information

group

[Castle Town Maze](#), one for each student

[Answer Key](#)

## **Procedure**

1. Divide the class into five groups and hand out one copy of the Castle Town Maze Directions to each group. Distribute one copy of the Castle Town Maze to each student.
2. Each group must find the most direct route from their respective starting points (numbers 1-5) on the outskirts of the castle town to the castle. (For suggested solutions, see Answer Key)
3. Have students trace all routes in order to find the most direct one, or assign individuals to certain starting points.
4. The next day, ask the students to decide which route might be the best, based on distance and safety (i.e., where more of the homes of samurai can be avoided).
5. This activity may also be assigned as homework.

## **Follow-up Activity**

Have the students use the same devices and rules to create their own castle town mazes. This could be done in class or as an out-of-class project. You may remind students that the assignment is much like drawing a maze, except for the fact that people are supposed to live in the castle

town. So, it should not become too unwieldy for its "inhabitants." Ask students to study this maze before they begin their own plan and keep the following points in mind:

- Castles were located near the center of a particular town.
- Individual sections of the town have regular street patterns.
- There are a large number of bridges in the inner sector of town.

Ask each group to designate a starting point on their plan located on the outskirts of their imaginary town, and give its maze/plan to another group to solve. See who can come up with the most difficult, accurate design.





## Free Lesson Plans

[About SPICE](#)[SPICE Catalog](#)[Current Projects](#)[Free Lesson Plans](#)[Ordering  
Information](#)

### **Castle Town Maze Directions**

Imagine that you are leading a group of attackers in a raid on the castle in order to help your daimyo (feudal lord) add the castle town to his domain. He wants to gain power over more people and resources. You are to work in a group or individually to find the shortest, most direct route from your assigned starting point to the castle.

In order to do this, remember that although the streets seem to be laid out in a regular manner, there are no straight lines leading from the outskirts of the town to the castle at the center. This was one way of protecting the castle from invaders. Also remember to stay on the roads and to cross water by using bridges. (The grey filled-in parts are water.)

After tracing the route on your castle town plan, answer the following questions:

- How many turns did you have to make?
- How many times did you have to cross water?
- How many times did you have to go from a wide space to a narrow one? (For example, maybe the street you were on narrowed or perhaps you went from a plaza onto a narrow

street or bridge.)

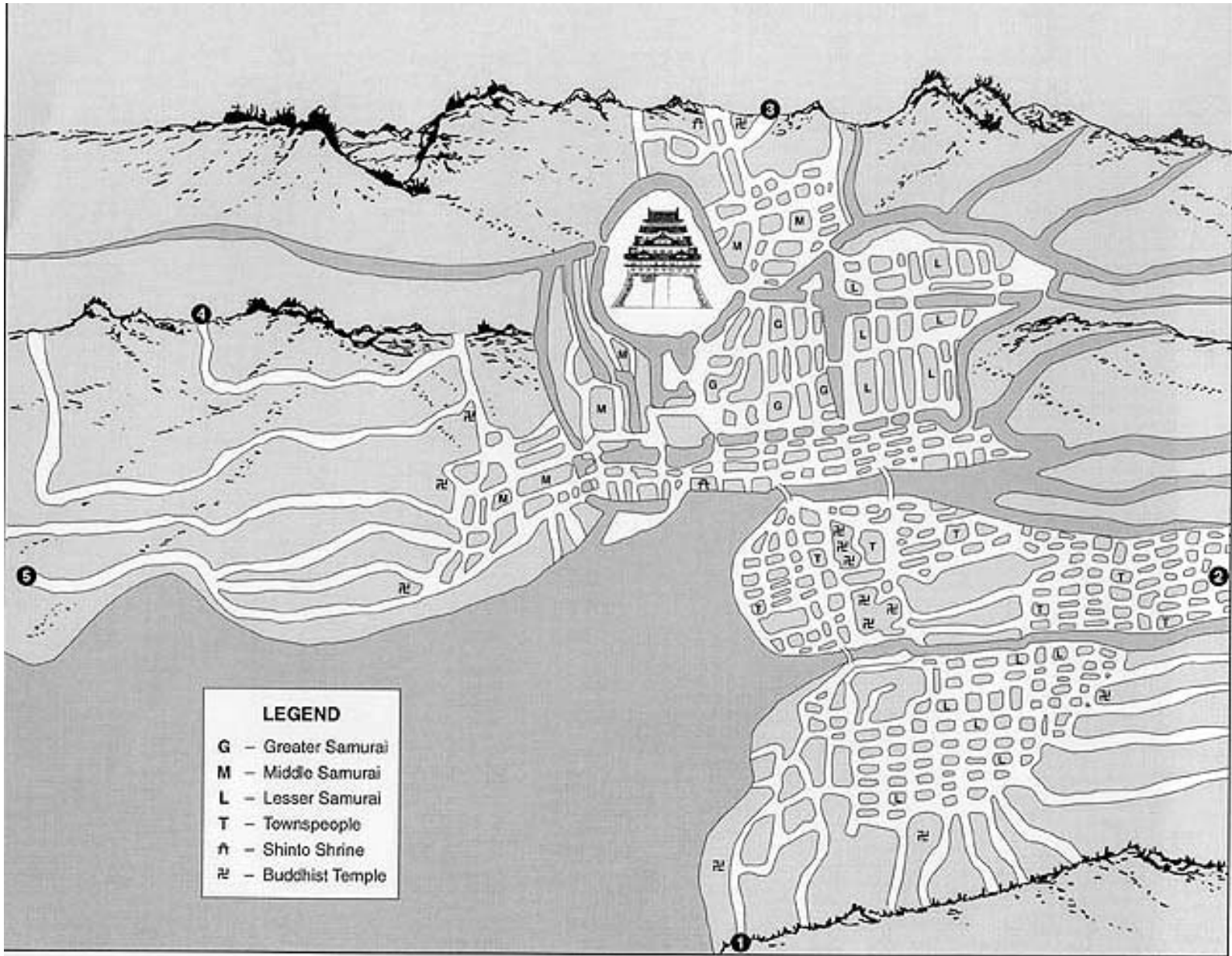
- Look at the key and tell what kinds of houses you passed along the way.

From your answers to these questions we can see three of the ways in which the castle builders used the layout of the town to slow down attacking forces:

- First, the streets do not always intersect regularly. There are a lot of T-intersections and deadends. You have a bird's-eye view of the streets so you probably didn't make too many wrong turns, but if you had been on the street surrounded by houses, shops and walls, it would certainly have taken a lot longer to find the streets.
- Second, both man-made and natural water barriers provide defense for almost any castle. Narrow bridges force attackers to cross one at a time, slowing them down and making them easier to pick off. Third, funneling attackers into a narrow area is another way of slowing them down and making them easier to push back.
- In addition, notice how the houses of the samurai were located near all the entrances to the town and near the castle, so that even if the raid were a complete surprise, the defending warriors would be close at hand.

 [Return to Castle Town Maze Activity](#)





Answer Key

