An Inside Look at Himeji Castle

**Purpose:** To learn about castle life in 16th- and 17th-century Japan

A samurai warrior in 16th- and 17th-century Japan probably lived in the large castle of the lord, or daimyo, he served. It might have looked like Himeji Castle, shown here. Daimyo built castles primarily for defense, but they also served as a center to administer the lord’s estate.

These castles, and the towns that were built around them, housed servants, soldiers, officials, and the samurai’s families. As shown below, many different activities dominated castle life at this time.

**A Soldiers** As a soldier living in the castle, you were always ready to protect it. During periods of peace, you spent much of your time training on the castle grounds.

**B Scribes** As a scribe, you wrote letters and also made sure that a messenger delivered them to other samurai and to the emperor.

**C Samurai Wives** As the wife of a samurai, you educated your daughters and taught them manners. However, you might also have commanded the castle’s soldiers while your husband was away.

**D Entertainment** You and your family might have enjoyed the talents of musicians.

**E Servants** If you were a servant at this time, you spent your days preparing food, cleaning rooms, washing clothes, and keeping the castle in good order.

**CALIFORNIA STANDARDS**

7.5.3 Describe the values, social customs, and traditions prescribed by the lord-vassal system consisting of shogun, daimyo, and samurai and the lasting influence of the warrior code in the twentieth century.
1. TALK ABOUT IT  What types of activities are taking place in this castle in medieval Japan? Which people are performing the activities?

2. WRITE ABOUT IT  Choose one of the activities shown and write a brief dialogue between the people in that scene. (Writing 2.1)