

UNIT THREE

Questions for discussion:

Samurai are knights, warrior members of an aristocratic class, most of whom, at the end of the feudal system in Japan, had lost their station due to the defeat of their liege lord and become mercenaries, though still practitioners of the warrior code of Bushido. (They had their European counterparts in the Italian condottieri of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries.) They were not brigands (neither were the condottieri) but officers-for-hire and maintained a sense of their aristocratic distance from ordinary people. How would you line up the relations of the characters? How would you articulate the ideal of heroism that it means to express? What is the theme that best expresses the point of the story, as you understand it? What is the point of the lengthy sequence in which the members of the band are selected? What is the meaning of the sequence at the end of the film, when the young man accosts the girl, who passes him by and goes into the fields to plant rice? Why does the leader of the band say that they have lost and the peasants have won? Is he right?