



FACT SHEET #10: Seppuku

Seppuku was ritual disembowelment, practised in order to restore or protect one's honor as a warrior. Samurai would commit seppuku to avoid falling into enemy hands, to avoid disgrace or if ordered by their daimyo (lord) . Samurai women had to obtain permission first.

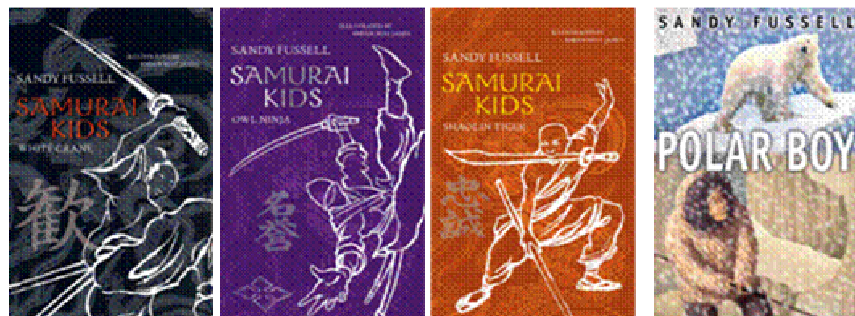
A samurai bathed, dressed in white robes and was served his favorite meal. His sword was placed in front of him. After he had finished eating, he would prepare for death by writing a death poem.

With his selected attendant kaishakunin, standing by, he would open his kimono, take up his short sword wakizashi or a knife tantō and plunge it into his abdomen, making a left-to-right cut.

The kaishakunin would then perform daki-kubi, a cut in which the warrior was all but decapitated (a slight band of flesh is left attaching the head to the body). Because of the precision necessary for such a maneuver, the second was often a skilled swordsman.



Seppuku is extremely painful and the kaishaku usually made his cut as soon as the dagger was plunged into the abdomen.



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