

# Introducing World Religions

## Student Discussion Questions

### Chapter 13 Shintō tradition

1. What sense do you get about the kami from each of these various words used to define them: Mysterious, Nature, Life, Creative Energy? Compare and contrast this Japanese sense of the divine with the portrayal of the deity in other religions, such as the Hindu, Judaic, Christian, Muslim, or Zoroastrian traditions.
2. Notoori Norinaga identified *mono no aware* (the pathos of things, the sorrow of human existence) as a key element of the Japanese worldview. How do you see it expressed in Japanese poetry (as in various poems presented in the "Cross-over Texture" section of chapter 13)?
3. What has been the condition of Shintō in Japan since the end of World War II? Where do you think Shintō is headed in Japan? In coming to your answer, think about the rise and fall of State Shintō, the emergence of the Japanese New Religions, and the uneven development of Christianity in Japan.

### Chapter 14 The challenge of religion

1. Your textbook author lists three areas of religion that sometimes disturb people: (1) exclusivity; (2) lack of meaning; and (3) systemic internal prejudice. Which of these three do you find most disturbing in a religion? Why?
2. Think of examples beyond those suggested in chapter 14 to fill in the Wheel of Faiths. Do you agree or disagree with the various suggestions put forward by your textbook author to start off the analysis? Explain.
3. Discuss the "stereotypical" attitudes reported by the Pew Global Attitudes Project about "Westerners" and "Muslims." Can you detect any bias or cultural insensitivity in the name of the Pew study, which was entitled: "The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims view each other"? Explain.