Q1.

The Japanese sense of art and value is tied heavily to the world that surrounds them and influences everything in their lives. Japanese are very emotional and rely heavily on their outside world such as the current season, paying respect to the different kami of the natural world, reverence for nature, and many other things to influence their decisions in life and plan for the future. It’s easy to see the the great deal of respect Japanese people have for nature in a multitude of art forms and the deep respect they have for the seasons of the country. Whenever I view a Japanese art piece, one of the things that’s always apparent is what season the piece of work is supposed to take place in. From Spring to Winter there is always a visual cue or indicator and it speaks highly of how much Japanese artists and Japanese people truly appreciate the different seasons. The fact that so many different festivals during the year are tied to different seasons and only take place in that season are also a testament to the amount of love that Japanese people have for seasons and the outside world. I feel that they base everything in life on the different flow of seasons, with Spring being the start of life and showing things in bright colors to represent new beginnings, Summer being life the prime of life, Fall being when it’s time to take things slower in life and appreciate all that’s happened and done, and Winter with the end of life. They mimic the different seasons in all their art forms to remind themselves how tied to the world they actually are.

Japanese aesthetics all shine through very deeply in Sadou. In Sadou I believe just about every defining trait of Japanese way of life and aesthetics can be found. Using Sadou, one can find Japanese artistic value in things such as Wabi-Sabi in the decorations of each ceremony in example, the hanging scrolls in the room, or even the singular flower that comes from flower arrangement for the ceremony. Sadou is also a great demonstration of the Japanese sense of hospitality in their aesthetics and politeness for one another.

Q2.

Japanese anime and it’s current pop culture have really helped to change the Japanese image from that of the imperial Japan from the WWII era to a cultural giant in the modern era. The robot culture has put Japan as the leader in the robotics field and helped to make Japan appealing to foreign countries and cultures. Many if the Japanese robots shown in class during the videos for example give a friendly non threatening and even useful image that helps to make them appealing to people from all sorts of cultures and helps to ease in the image of Japan as a very helpful country with art that and science that is both fascinating and highly useful. The robots have a distinctly human feel to them because of the kami belief, and help to make them all the more appealing, which is something that only Japan would be able to achieve due to exclusive kami belief.

To go along with the change in image, Japanese anime has also helped greatly in appealing Japan and its artistic works to foreign countries. Shows such as Pokemon or Power Rangers, adapted from Japanese anime, have created cultural phenomenons that inspired many people world wide to become interested in Japanese works and created a great wave of interest in Japan. These pushes for Japanese art and entertainment into foreign cultures have almost even created a new currency in Japan, its cool factor, and many Japanese companies are quick to create more artistic works in pursuit of this currency. Japanese anime such as Miyazaki Hidao’s films have been compared to those created by Disney and have been dubbed works of art by many across the globe. By tapping into people’s imaginations with anime, Japan has been able to create an image of an extremely cool, mysterious, and mystical country to people in the west and have created a large interest in the country.

Q3.

By far one of the most interesting subjects in the class has been that of Satoyama and the ease with which people in Japan can live with nature. American society and culture doesn’t allow for living in harmony with nature to such an extent outside of certain ideological groups, so seeing how easy and natural it is communities in Japan to do so is rather awe inspiring and impressive. The world would receive a significant positive impact if more people could live in such a harmonious way with their environment.

Learning about the different Japanese castles was equally entertaining and enlightening. Before class Japanese castles seemed very mysterious but less useful than their European counterparts, but after class the differences between the two a far fewer and their utility is more than appreciated. They all have a certain elegance to them typical of Japanese culture while maintaining a usefulness for war and protection. The different lectures in class also helped to differentiate between the Japanese castles and discover what makes each of them so unique. Because of these lectures I was able to gain a a great deal of love for the elegance of each castle but also sorrow to learn that so few still exist in comparison to how many there once was.