

READER'S GUIDE

1. This story is told by two narrators: Yoshi and Jack. Why do you think the author decided to write the book this way? How are the two narrators' perspectives similar? How are their perspectives different?
2. Though Yoshi wants to be a bushi, he is not allowed to train as a samurai because he was born into the wrong class. Do you think this is fair? What qualities does Yoshi have that would serve him well as a samurai? What qualities do you think are important for a warrior to have?
3. Ozawa the painter tells Yoshi that a paintbrush is more likely to stop conflict than swords. What does Ozawa mean by this? Are there moments in the story where this sentiment proves true?
4. When Jack tells off Toley for bullying Willis, he points out that friendship is different from intimidation. Jack says, "Why don't you ask him what he wants to do, instead of telling him what he wants to do?" How does this theme relate to the larger plot happening around him?

sources," which means that they were created during the time period being written about or studied. How do these primary sources contribute to your reading experience?

10. Since the Japanese and American customs that show respect or friendship are different, several misunderstandings arise. What is the result of these misunderstandings, and could they have been avoided? How does knowledge of foreign customs help or make lives better for characters in the story?

11. When Yoshi and Jack meet again in America as young men, they talk about the political turmoil and the resulting violence happening in Japan. The men who are revolting are afraid of change and afraid of losing their culture. But are there other ways to react to change? Is it possible to keep important traditions while still adopting new ones? What are some ways societies can preserve what is important?

12. "Dramatic irony" is when the reader knows more than the characters in a story do. During Jack and Yoshi's conversation in America, the author uses the situation in Japan to allude to something similar that will occur in America without actually naming the event. What clues does the author provide, and how did it feel when you put them together?

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5. Each section of the book (and many of the chapters) opens with an epigraph, a quotation that relates to what follows. Choose an epigraph in the book that is meaningful to you. How does it relate to the section or chapter that follows it?

6. Jack leaves the ship on a whim and finds himself wandering through the unfamiliar woods of Japan. What does he notice, and how does the author's prose transport the reader into the scene?

7. Yoshi tries to sell his pictures of the Americans, but his customers complain when the images don't depict the foreigners as hairy or ugly. In response, Yoshi changes his images to fit what his customers want to see. How could this action be harmful? Have you seen instances where this kind of alteration happens in the present day?

8. Manjiro recites for Yoshi the American motto "E pluribus unum," which is Latin for "Out of many, one." How does Manjiro explain this saying? What does the phrase mean to you?

9. The book includes traditional Japanese paintings as well as journal excerpts from the America expedition that actually visited Japan in 1853. Materials like these are called "primary