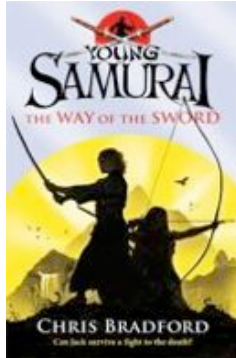




**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION GUIDE**



Young Samurai: The Way of the Sword  
By Chris Bradford

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**ABOUT THE GUIDE**

This *Young Samurai* guide includes classroom activities, discussion questions and projects intended to extend the use of the novel into classrooms, book clubs, and literature circles. It should promote discussion on the themes of the novel including adventure, loss, risk, choices, discrimination, bullying, revenge, perseverance and hope.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

One year of training in the Niten Ichi Ryū samurai school and Jack's troubles are far from over. Having been shipwrecked off the coast of Japan, orphaned when a ruthless ninja slaughtered his father and confronted daily with the prejudice and bullying of his Japanese classmates, Jack must now survive the Circle of Three, an ancient ritual that tests a samurai's courage, skill and spirit to the limit.

But the training required to even enter the Circle is punishing - Jack has to learn how to fight blindfolded, break through wood with his bare hands, wield a bō staff, and uncover the secrets hidden in the gentle art of *origami*.

While for many students the Circle of Three is about honor and glory, for Jack it is a matter of life and death. The winner will be taught the Two Heavens, the great samurai Masamoto's invincible double sword technique. Jack realises if he were to learn this from his guardian Masamoto, there is the slim chance he might be skilled enough with the sword to defend his life against Dragon Eye and protect his most prized possession, his father's rutter – an invaluable navigational guide to the world's uncharted oceans – from the ninja who murdered his father and who has vowed to stop at nothing to get the rutter.

But Jack has many enemies and his time is running out to master the Way of the Sword if he is to survive a fight to the death...

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## PRE-READING

1. What do you remember about *Young Samurai – the Way of the Warrior* ?

Before reading book 2 *The Way of the Sword*, divide students into pairs (or small groups) and have them discuss and write down what the story line was for Book 1 and list as many of the characters that they can remember. Once they have done this, share their findings with the other groups. This works well as a timed activity. You can even make it a competition to see who can remember the most in 3-5 minutes. Make the students aware that mistakes are okay, the idea is to jog their memory.

2. After reading the prologue and first chapter, discuss why you think the author chose to open the novel with a prologue:

- What was surprising about the opening?
- In chapter 1 when did you realise that Jack was dreaming about being back home in England?
- How effective was the use of the poem/song that Jack's mother sang? What emotions did they raise?



## **POST-READING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Chapter 1 starts with Jack and his sister Jess playing Knucklebones. Can you think of any other games that children or adults play today that have been about for many centuries? Do you know the rules of any of these games and the country where they originated from?
2. In order to be considered to participate in the Circle of Three the students who have logged their names will have to take part in four selection trials to test their strength, skill, intellect and courage. Discuss what each of the four trials involved and consider which of them you would have found a challenge and why.
3. Jack, Akiko and Yamato are invited to Nijo Castle to attend a Tea Ceremony. Research the ritual and discuss why this ceremony it is so important in Japanese society.
4. Jack is chased through the Castle and manages to hide in a secret passage, just as he is about to escape he is caught out by the Nightingale Floor, what is it and how does it work? [note: this floor actually exists in Nijo Castle in Kyoto]
5. In chapter 5 Sensei Kano is introduced. How does the author hint that he is blind? When did you first realise that Sensei Kano cannot see? Sensei Kano says 'disability doesn't mean inability' do you agree with this statement? Discuss the advantages that Sensei Kano has developed over sighted people.
6. Kazuki forms the Scorpion Gang. Are there any benefits of being in a gang? What are the negative effects of gangs? Why do gangs often cause problems?
7. List the reasons why it would be difficult for Jack to try and return back to England. Do you consider that Jack should accept his situation and make his life in Japan?
8. Yori finds the answer to the question 'what does origami teach us ?' and he replies 'nothing is as it appears .....just like a piece of paper can more than a piece of paper in origami, becoming a crane, fish or a flower' and Sensei Yamada adds ' a samurai should never underestimate their own potential to bend and fold to life'. In simple terms what does this mean?
9. The six entrants arrived tired, cold and hungry at the Castle of the White Phoenix. Why do you think Sensei Kyuzo only allowed them an hour's sleep before waking them to start the Circle of Three? What effects does this have on the entrants? What are you like when you are tired?
10. Sensei Yamada uses many sayings to teach Jack how to cope with life, such as, 'Anyone can give up, it's the easiest thing in the world to do. But to hold it together when everyone else would expect you to fall part, now that's true strength'. Are there any sayings you live by or have heard members of your family use?
11. Do you think how Yori's character has changed or matured since Book 1? If so describe those changes and why they have come about.
12. Why do you think that Masamoto is so strict with Jack in this book.
13. The art of meditation is mentioned in books 1 and 2. What is meditation and what are the benefits? Can anyone learn to meditate?



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

### Language Arts (English)

*Do you want to learn how to be a writer?*

1. Discuss the writing style of the author. How does he create tension? What techniques does he use to keep the reader reading? What skills does he use to set the scene? How does he describe his characters?
2. Look the chapter titles. Why do authors use chapter titles? What does the author need to consider when choosing a title?
3. Fill out the following chart which relates to the four challenges and the Circle of Three that feature in *The Way of the Sword*. Use for discussion or study. e.g. which challenge would you have liked to attempt and why?

4 Challenges	Description of trial	List the qualities required to complete
Trial by wood		
Trial by fire		
Trial by koan		
Trial by gauntlet		
Circle of Three	Description of activity	List the qualities required to complete
Body – visiting the shrines		
Mind – the waterfall		
Spirit – visiting the mountain monk		

3. Imagine you are one of the entrants to the Circle of Three, choose one of the activities above and write a short piece about your adventures and how you could have coped in the circumstances. You can imagine you are one of Jack's friends or enemies. Be sure to make the dialogue sound like the characters, and the action to be believable and in the style of *Young Samurai*.



## Language Arts (Japanese)

*Jack has to learn Japanese in order to survive and communicate. Can you?*

1. Can you remember the numbers 1 to 10 you learnt before in Japanese ? If you can, now learn to count from 11 to 20.
2. What do these Japanese words mean? [hint: there is a glossary in the back of the books]

Daimyo	_____
Hajime	_____
Hanami	_____
Koan	_____
Kunoichi	_____
Niwa	_____
Ozoni	_____
Shoji	_____
Mochi	_____
Origami	_____

## History

*The author had to do a great deal of research prior to writing Young Samurai and much of the story is based on historical fact. Now it's your turn...*

1. Research one of the following topics and create a PowerPoint, web page or poster based on what you have learned:
  - History of origami
  - The Thousand Day Pilgrimage by the Tendai monks
  - The Tea Ceremony
2. Discover the truth behind *Young Samurai*. Research one of the following people and create a PowerPoint, Web page or poster based on what you have learned:
  - William Adams – the inspiration for Jack Fletcher (if Adams had been a boy)
  - Miyamoto Musashi – the basis for Masamoto Takeshi
  - Tomoe Gozen – the female samurai warrior who is Akiko's idol
3. How has Kyoto changed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century? Create a presentation that shows the difference between now and then.



## Art

*The Japanese are highly skilled artists. Can you create some Japanese art?*

1. Jack is introduced to Origami:
  - a) make the origami paper crane described at the back of *The Way of the Sword* [a video is available on the website]
  - b) visit [www.origami-fun.com](http://www.origami-fun.com) and make a different Origami animal
2. The family crest (*kamon*) of the samurai Masamoto is a phoenix. What is a *kamon* used for? Research the different types of *kamon* (or *mon*) then design your own family crest.

Remember there are no set rules in the design. A *kamon* commonly consists of a roundel encircling a figure of plant, animal, man-made, natural or celestial objects, all abstracted to various degrees. Religious symbols, geometric shapes and kanji were commonly used as well. (source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mon\\_\(crest\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mon_(crest)))

3. Draw one of the characters from *Young Samurai*. Perhaps someone who has been introduced in book 2, such as Sensei Kano. Then choose a quote related to them from the book. Explain why you chose that character and that particular quote to represent the character.
4. Akiko wears a number of beautiful kimono during the *Young Samurai* series, each with an exquisite pattern or picture hand painted or sewn into the silk. Design your own kimono pattern. Either:
  - a) draw and colour your pattern on paper; or
  - b) make a kimono from waste material (see larger projects for template).

For more information on kimono: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimono>  
You can see many design patterns of kimono at: <http://lovekimono.googlepages.com/>

5. *Manga* is the Japanese word for comics and they have a very distinctive illustrative style. Draw a scene from *Young Samurai – Way of the Sword*, or create a short comic strip of one chapter, in a *manga* style: for example, Jack under the waterfall; Jack and the other students crossing the chasm with Sensei Kano, or Akiko secretly leaving the school.

## Science & Technology

1. Jack and Akiko are made to stand beneath a waterfall. Akiko is under the freezing water for nearly fifteen minutes. Research the effects of hypothermia on the human body. Is it possible for a human to survive this long?
2. Jack has to break through wood with his bare hands – *tamashiwari* – as part of the trials for the Circle of Three. What are the physics behind breaking wood, tiles and breaks. Learn about the principle of physics in martial arts at this website from the Institute of Physics. Aimed at boys and girls of 11 to 16 years. [www.kungfuscience.org](http://www.kungfuscience.org)



## Geography

1. Find out where Japan is in the world. Plot the course of Jack's ship from England to the Japans. Then draw a map of Japan. Include the main cities and volcanoes. Find out if any city names have changed since Jack's time. Draw on the Tokaido Road and plot Jack's route from Toba to Kyoto. (A map can be downloaded at [www.japan21.org.uk](http://www.japan21.org.uk) or the events page at [www.chrisbradford.co.uk](http://www.chrisbradford.co.uk).)

2. Research one of the following topics and create a PowerPoint, web page or poster based on what you have learned:

- Landscape of Japan
- Flora and fauna
- Population distribution in 17<sup>th</sup> century and in 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Volcanoes and earthquakes

3. Compare Japanese gardens to gardens in your own country. How do they differ? What 'rules' do Japanese Zen gardens follow?

4. What's it like to live in Japan? What's the weather like? What food is grown? What style of houses do people live in? How do you make sushi?

A project pack on 'Living in Japan' (including 'How to make handrolled sushi') can be downloaded at [www.japan21.org.uk](http://www.japan21.org.uk) or the events page at [www.chrisbradford.co.uk](http://www.chrisbradford.co.uk).

## Culture & Philosophy

1. Research what a Tea Ceremony involves and in small groups enact the basic ritual.

2. Discuss the seven virtues of Bushido. What does each one mean in a practice? Which is the most important virtue for you? How do they relate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Who in your class do you think demonstrates a virtue of Bushido and give an example? [In the back of book 2, there is a full explanation of each principle]

3. Sensei Yamada teaches Jack about the idea of 'Mistakes are our teachers. As long as you recognize them for what they are, they can help you learn about life. Each mistake teaches you something new about yourself'. Is this a good philosophy to live by? What advice have you been given in your life that has worked for you? What other philosophies, or famous quotes, can you think of that might help someone to live a better, happier or more successful life?

4. Akiko wears kimono. So does Jack, as well as *hakama* and a training *gi*. Research Japanese traditional clothing and compare it to your own. Produce a poster highlighting the differences and similarities. What are the different knots you can tie for a kimono (e.g. a butterfly knot)? What are the rules for dressing in a kimono?

6. Many of the samurai were Zen Buddhists – what are the key philosophical principles of Zen Buddhism? Do you like the idea of Buddhism? If so, why? If not, what don't you agree with?



## **Sport**

1. Do you, or a student you know, train at a local martial arts club? Is there a martial arts club at your school? If so, why not arrange an after school's *Young Samurai* training session with the club. See if you can recruit everyone in your class to take part.
2. Martial Arts is excellent for fitness, as well as developing self-defence and self-confidence. The website [www.4kicks.com](http://www.4kicks.com) suggest many excellent 'martial arts' orientated games that can be played in a *dojo* or in a gymnasium. Look under 'children's drills' section for ideas that can be run by both martial arts trained teachers and physical education teachers without martial arts experience.

## **Larger School Projects**

### **Plan Your Own Ganjitsu (New Year Celebration)**

Jack celebrates the New Year during *The Way of the Sword*.

Research and organise your own New Year Celebration based on either the Japanese Ganjitsu (or any other country that celebrates differently from you own) at your school or youth club.

Play some of the traditional Japanese New Year games and cook traditional Japanese New Year food.

A project pack can be downloaded at [www.japan21.org.uk](http://www.japan21.org.uk) or the events page at [www.chrisbradford.co.uk](http://www.chrisbradford.co.uk).

This project will involve music, design and technology, art and design, domestic science and group work.





## REFERENCE RESOURCES

### Books for Students & Teachers:

These are a selection of useful books for background research:

- Clavell, James. *Shogun*. Dell, 1986.  
Lewis, Peter. *Secret Art Of The Ninja*. Prion, 1997.  
Milton, Giles. *Samurai William: The Adventurer who opened Japan*. Penguin, 2003  
Stevens, John. *Budo Secrets*. Shambhala, 2002.  
Turnbull, Stephen. *Ninja AD 1460-1650*. Osprey, 2003.  
Turnbull, Stephen. *Samurai – The World Of The Warrior*. Osprey, 2006  
Wilson, William Scott. *The Lone Samurai*. Kodansha International, 2004.  
Yoshikawa, Eiji. *Musashi*. Kodansha International, 1995.

### On the Internet:

These are just a few of the great websites that can give you information on Japan:

*Young Samurai official website* - [www.youngsamurai.com](http://www.youngsamurai.com)

For videos on samurai, ninja, bushido, the author's Japan trip and more...

*Author official website*: [www.chrisbradford.co.uk](http://www.chrisbradford.co.uk)

For further information on the author, news and event information. All supportive teaching materials can be downloaded from this site, under 'events' page.

*Japan 21* - [www.japan21.org.uk](http://www.japan21.org.uk)

A UK charity which exclusively supports and encourages educational and grassroots activity relating to Japan. Provides many excellent teaching resources.

*Kids Web Japan* - <http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/>

Superb website all about Japan for kids including videos, stories, activities, games and loads more. A fantastic 'Explore Japan' pdf and a 'Japan Now' pdf can be downloaded from this site (or from the events page at [www.chrisbradford.co.uk](http://www.chrisbradford.co.uk)).

*Kung Fu Science* - [www.kungfuscience.org](http://www.kungfuscience.org)

Learn about the ancient martial art of Kung Fu – including the science behind it – at this website from the Institute of Physics. Aimed at boys and girls of 11 to 16 years.

*The Virtual Museum of Japanese Arts* - <http://web-jpn.org/museum/menu.html>

Excellent interactive tours around the many forms of Japanese art, from painting and sculpture to Karate and calligraphy.

*Akemi Solloway Sensei* – [www.solloway.org](http://www.solloway.org)

Akemi Sensei is a lecturer of Japanese culture and the eldest daughter of an old samurai family. She provides highly recommended workshops, seminars and talks on Japan and its culture, including etiquette, kimono and the tea ceremony.

*4 Kicks* - [www.4kicks.com](http://www.4kicks.com)

This website lists many excellent games that can be played in the dojo or in a school gymnasium. Look under 'children's drills' section for ideas.

To read or listen to the prologue and first chapter of *Young Samurai: The Way of the Warrior*, please visit [www.youngsamurai.com](http://www.youngsamurai.com).



## **AUTHOR INTERVIEW**

### **1. Was it difficult to write the second book in the series *Young Samurai – the Way of the Sword* after the success you have had with book 1?**

To begin with, yes! I didn't know whether I could write a second good book. You have to understand the Way of the Warrior was my first attempt at writing fiction. The question was, could I do it again? But once I started writing the story for The Way of the Sword, I immediately knew everything was going to be fine.

### **2. Have you ever experienced any of the challenges or trials that Jack did to join the Circle of Three ?**

Yes, as part of my black belt grading, I had to break through 10 roof tiles with my bare hands! This was very hard, especially after 2 hours of intense martial arts, but I managed it. The feelings Jack goes through are exactly what I felt in my grading.

### **3. In *Young Samurai*, Jack has to learn martial arts. How can those readers who are not so keen on martial arts relate to him?**

I don't practise magic, but I still loved Harry Potter. Martial arts is simply the device that drives the plot, while the story itself deals with the popular themes of friendship, heroism and courage as the young Jack Fletcher strives, against all the odds, to become the first foreign samurai. Yet the story is not just an action-adventure; it's about a clash of culture as much as a clash of swords; it's about being a stranger in a foreign land, of struggling to fit in, and of coping with bullies. This is a story for everyone.

### **4. Can you describe how you went about writing an adventure story?**

I've been very conscious of my writing style, taking tips from the television series *24* by employing a combination of strong characters, non-stop action and the need to read on at the end of each chapter. Most chapters last only 6 pages; long enough to develop character and set the scene, but short enough to entice a potential reader who has a spare five minutes.

### **4. Are there any similar disciplines to writing a book and in martial arts?**

Many. Dedication is the first shared principle. You have to commit to writing a book, just as you have to with martial arts. Also, you need courage. *Young Samurai* was my first attempt at writing fiction and it took a lot of guts for me to let anybody read the book in case they didn't like it!

### **5. What three tips would give to becoming a successful author?**

My three tips would be:

- i) Write and read lots. Continually feed your creative side.
- ii) Every day try to do something that will help your writing career. It can be as big as writing a full chapter; or as small as finding out the name of the editor at a publishing company.
- iii) Write the story you would love to read yourself. If you get excited by it, then others will too.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo © Charles Shearn

**Chris Bradford** is a true believer in '*practising what you preach*'. For his award-winning *Young Samurai* series, he trained in samurai swordmanship, karate, ninjutsu and earned his black belt in Zen Kyu Shin Taijutsu.

For his new BODYGUARD series, Chris embarked on an intensive close protection course to become a qualified professional bodyguard. During his training, he acquired skills in unarmed combat, defensive driving, tactical firearms, threat assessments, surveillance, and even anti-ambush exercises.

His best-selling books are published in over 20 languages and have garnered more than 18 children's book award nominations, including shortlist for the Red House Book Awards 2009 and winner of the Northern Ireland Book Awards 2011.

Before becoming a full-time author, he was a professional musician (who once performed for HRH Queen Elizabeth II), songwriter and music teacher.

He lives in England with his wife, two sons and two cats.

Find out more about Chris Bradford. Visit his websites at:

**[www.chrisbradford.co.uk](http://www.chrisbradford.co.uk)**  
**[www.bodyguard-books.com](http://www.bodyguard-books.com)**  
**[www.youngsamurai.com](http://www.youngsamurai.com)**



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This guide was created by Chris Bradford, the book's author and a PGCE qualified teacher, and Kate Bradford, Cert Ed in Education and teacher trainer. If you have any questions, please email [info@youngsamurai.com](mailto:info@youngsamurai.com).