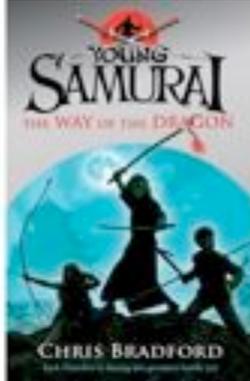




Puffin Books

Young Samurai: The Way of the Dragon by Chris Bradford

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION GUIDE



Young Samurai: The Way of the Dragon
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.



ABOUT THE BOOK

June 1613.

Japan is threatened with war and Jack is facing his greatest battle yet.

Samurai are taking sides and, as the blood begins to flow, Jack's warrior training is put to the ultimate test.

His survival - and that of his friends - depends upon him mastering the Two Heavens, the secret sword technique of the legendary samurai Masamoto Takeshi.

But first Jack must recover his father's prize possession from the deadly ninja Dragon Eye. Can Jack defeat his ruthless enemy? Or will the ninja complete his mission to kill the young samurai.....

PRE-READING

1. What do you remember about the first two books in the series *Young Samurai – the Way of the Warrior* and *Young Samurai the Way of the Sword* ?

Before reading book 3 *The Way of the Dragon*, divide students into pairs (or small groups) and have them discuss and write down what the story line was for Books 1 and 2 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, discuss why you think the author chooses to open each of his novels with a prologue:
 - Were you surprised that the assassin knows the man at the altar? Do you think it is a good device to surprise the reader at the beginning of the book and why?
 - Why has Dragon Eye not killed Jack, now he has got the rutter.
 - What is encryption? Do you know any forms of encryption, describe and discuss with group.



POST-READING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Chapter 4 The Demon Blade – the *tanto* blade taken from the dead ninja by Jack is thought to be ‘bloodthirsty and evil’. Describe the contest that the swordsmith Shizu had with his protégé Kunitome and discuss why the student didn’t win, even though his sword cut through everything it touched.
2. In chapter 5 what events happened to make Dragon Eye change from a Samurai Lord to a Ninja?
3. In chapter 7 Jack is intrigued by how in Japan two religions, Buddhism and Shinto, could co-exist so successfully, whereas in England Jack had been brought up a Protestant not a Catholic and there had been many conflicts both at home and abroad. Why do you think this is? Name as many religions as you can think of.
4. In chapter 12 eight students come together to practise the *Two Heavens* technique and spar with each other. Discuss the pros and cons of working in a team as opposed to individually. Do you think there are any similarities when you compare teamwork in Jack’s time, with today’s modern reality television programmes?
5. What skills are needed for Yabusame in chapter 14? How many other sports can you think of that require the player/s to aim at a target ?
6. The Bo Race in chapter 15 takes place in oriental gardens. What features and trees would you expect to see in a garden such as this?
7. In the aftermath of the fire in chapter 36 Yori returns to Jack his Daruma Doll which he found when collecting the weapons from the burning building. Most cultures have talisman (objects that bring good luck) can you think of at least four? Do you think superstition is something of the past, or is it relevant today?
8. In chapter 46 Takuan is cremated on a pyre – what is it and do you know of any other cultures that use the same form of cremation?
9. At the end of chapter 46 Yori is scared when they prepare to go into battle, however on more than one occasion he overcomes his fears – how does he do it? Do you think that soldiers in today’s wars have similar fears?
10. In chapter 47 how are messages passed from general to general, compare this with how messages are passed nowadays in a wartime situation? What methods do you imagine could be used in the future?



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Language Arts (English)

1. Many of the chapters have unusual titles, sometimes in Japanese, does this detract or enhance the reading of the book. Research the meaning of 4 chapter titles.
2. Write a character profile of one of the main characters in the book – including their appearance, character traits and beliefs.
3. In chapter 11 the students are taught *haiku*. Discuss the format of a *haiku* and compare the examples in this chapter and chapter 27. Choose your favourite from either chapter and state your reasons for your preference. In addition research the format of two other forms of poetry, such as a *sonnet*.
4. The last part of the book takes place at Osaka Castle, using the internet and/or books state what each of the following parts of a castle are and what they are used for.

Part of a castle	Description
Moat	
Portcullis	
Drawbridge	
Keep	
Rampart	
Battlement	
Dungeon	
Armoury	



Language Arts (Japanese)

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

1. What do these Japanese words mean?

Bushido	_____
Daimyo	_____
Haiku	_____
Katana	_____
Kiaijutsu	_____
Kukai	_____
Sencha	_____
Shoji	_____
Yabusame	_____
Zanshin	_____

History

1. Nakamura Oiko is described in chapter 9 as a 'great female warrior'. Name 3 male or female warriors from the past and describe what made them so special and what they were fighting for.
2. In chapter 19 as well as banishing Christians, Kamakura has set his sights on taking over as Ruler of Japan. In history think of some examples of where individuals have overthrown the government/leader and taken over? How successful were they?
3. In chapter 36 Jack and Akiko discuss the consequences of war. Do you think war can ever be validated? What are some of the causes of war?
4. In chapter 37 Jack and his friends try on their Japanese armour, compare it with armour from another country and produce a drawing or poster showing the differences and naming the different parts of the armour.
5. How does the civil war in Japan in the 17th century that Jack witnesses, compare or differ from modern day wars?

Art

1. Draw a battle scene from the book (see 'Larger School Project')
2. Sketch a picture of Jack and Yori in their armour.
3. Draw one of the characters from the *Young Samurai* series, perhaps someone who has been introduced into book 3, such as Takuan. 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. *Manga* is the Japanese word for comics and they have a very distinctive illustrative style. Draw a scene from *Young Samurai – the Way of the Dragon*, or create a short comic strip of one chapter, in a *manga* style: for example, the students on the boating lake, Jack and Akiko swimming in the well; Jack leaving Akiko's home and setting off on his journey home.



Science & Technology

1. Osaka Castle is bombarded with cannon fire. Research into cannons and how they work. What are the scientific principles behind the firing mechanism? What materials are cannon made of? How is the distance and targeting calculated?
2. 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

Geography

1. Draw a map of Japan showing Jack's journey from Akiko's home in the little port of Toba to his school in Kyoto and then onto Osaka Castle. (A map can be downloaded at www.japan21.org.uk or the events page at www.chrisbradford.co.uk.)
2. Find Nagasaki on the map. Then plot a route that Jack might take to reach it from the little port of Toba. (A map can be downloaded at www.japan21.org.uk or the events page at www.chrisbradford.co.uk.)
3. 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 17th century and in 21st century
 - Volcanoes and earthquakes
4. Compare Japanese castles to castles in your own country. How do they differ? What similarities are there?
5. 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 or the events page at www.chrisbradford.co.uk.



Culture & Philosophy

1. Discuss what has happened in the book to make Jack, Akiko and Yamato profess that they are 'Forever bound to one another'. Do you know of sayings from other books that have a similar dramatic impact? From which book does the saying 'All for one and one for all' come from?
2. In chapter 28 'The Gracious Loser' Yori copes well when his *haiku* does not win the competition. What is there to learn from how he deals with defeat? Do you think in the 21st Century we accept defeat in the same way?
3. Yori can see that Jack is jealous of Takuan's friendship with Akiko (see chapter 41) – how can feelings such as jealousy, love and hatred affect the mind?
4. Compare the Red Devils with the Ashigaru who were the conscripted foot soldiers – why is it necessary to have such different soldiers in an army and what were their different roles?
5. Discuss the concept of loyalty. And what you'd do for your friends and family.

Sport

1. Construct an obstacle course either within the gymnasium or outside in the school grounds. Erect a number of team flags at the far end. The object is the 'storm the castle' (i.e. negotiate the obstacle course) and seize the flag. The first team to do so is the winner.
2. 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.
3. Martial Arts is excellent for fitness, as well as developing self-defence and self-confidence. The website 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 Project

Make a collage of Osaka Castle and one of the battle scenes.

This project will involve research, design and technology, art and design, individual 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

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

Author official website: 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

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).

Kung Fu Science - 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

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

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.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW

1. What were your feelings on finishing writing the third book in the series?

Relief and immense pride! This book was an epic written to a very tight deadline, so I was very glad to have managed to write it. It was also the climax to the initial trilogy of the Young Samurai series and I'm very proud of what I've achieved.

2. Was it difficult to *kill off* one of your main characters, and what reaction do you expect from your fans ?

I actually cried as I wrote the death scene of this character. It was a true grieving process to 'witness' the end of someone whom I'd created and live with for three years. I think fans will be both surprised and saddened to experience the loss.

3. How did you approach writing the battle scenes, which are very realistic, bearing in mind your books are predominantly for children?

The battle are witnessed through the eyes of the child characters allowing me to describe it in their terms and how they respond to seeing the effects and realities of war.

4. Have you ever experienced swimming underwater like Jack did in the *well scene*?

I've dived with white-tip reef sharks off the coast of Fiji, so I know what it's like to be underwater for a long period of time. But I've never had to swim as far as Jack did without an oxygen tank on my back!

5. How difficult was it to come up with the ending for this book?

Ever since I came up with the idea for Young Samurai, I've known the end for book 3... and book 8! Watch out for the follow-on series: Young Samurai: The Five Rings, starting with The Ring of Earth.

6. You have said that you enjoy reading science/fantasy fiction stories, have you ever written any?

As part of my publisher, Puffin's 70th birthday celebrations, I've written a special book called VIRTUAL KOMBAT. It's like *Young Samurai* crossed with *The Matrix* film.

7. 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
www.bodyguard-books.com
www.youngsamurai.com



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.