



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

Young Samurai: The Way of the Warrior
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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

August, 1611: Washed up on the shores of a mysterious land known to the British as the Japans, twelve-year-old Jack Fletcher is wounded and left for dead.

His father, the navigator of their now shipwrecked vessel, together with the entire crew have been slaughtered by ninja pirates. Jack's last remaining possession is his father's rutter, an invaluable book of maps and notes on the world's uncharted oceans. Helpless and alone, he is confronted by a deadly ninja known as Dragon Eye, who is intent upon stealing the rutter, at any cost. Rescued by Masamoto-sama, one of Japan's greatest samurai, Jack's only hope of survival is to become a samurai warrior himself. And so his training begins.

At first Jack is terrified; he cannot communicate, nor does he know anything of Japanese customs. Befriended by Masamoto's niece, the graceful and courageous Akiko, she teaches him their language and their unique way of life. Soon, Jack is deemed ready to join Masamoto's household and is sent to samurai school, where he will learn the Way of the Warrior.

Jack experiences the grueling training required of all martial arts students, but life at the samurai school is fraught with difficulty and he is bullied for being a "barbarian". While protecting the rutter - his only hope of getting home - from the ruthless Dragon Eye, Jack will need all the courage and determination he can muster if he is to survive and prove to his fellow students that he has what it takes to be a samurai.

PRE-READING

1. What do you know about Japan and Samurai?

Before reading the book, divide students into pairs (or small groups) and have them discuss and write down everything they know about Japan. 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 discover 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?
- What do you learn about the characters, setting, and plot?
- What connections are made between the prologue and first chapter, and why?



POST-READING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jack is a 'rigging monkey' onboard a trader ship. What is this job? What other jobs are there on a trader ship? What do you think it was like to be at sea for two years in the 17th century? What problems would they have faced?
2. What is the rutter? Explain why you think the rutter is important to Jack? To others?
3. Identify the differences between Japan, Jack's England and your country. Think about food, language, clothing, behaviour, houses, transport, religion, landscape...
4. Describe some aspects of Japanese etiquette mentioned in the book. How does this differ from your own culture? Discuss whether such social rules make for a better society.
5. Jack is training to be a samurai warrior. Would you want to be a samurai? Or would you prefer to be a ninja? Give your reasons.
6. What is *Bushido*? Why is *Bushido* important? Is it still relevant today? Which is the most important virtue? Which virtue do you think you, or a friend, demonstrate best and give an example of this in action?
7. Describe Jack's learning and training with Sensei Yamada, the Zen master. What does he learn from this teacher? What advice does Sensei Yamada give? Who would you pick as your teacher from the samurai school and why?
8. Akiko is a female samurai. Do you think she has to train harder than the others to prove herself? Why is that? Is the role of women different in Japan to your country?
9. Jack is the victim of racist taunts and bullying. Why do you think this is? What is your opinion on Jack's experience? How could Jack have been helped more? How could he have helped himself?
10. Sensei Kyuzo discriminates against Jack. Why do you think this is? Have you ever been unfairly treated by someone? Describe the circumstances and why you considered the treatment unfair.
11. Have you ever been to a summer camp, or boarding school, where you have been away from home? What did you miss about home and what did you enjoy about being away? If you haven't experienced this situation, how do you think you would cope? Do you think Jack made the right decision to stay at the samurai school, or should he have tried to escape back to Britain? What do you think his chances of survival would have been?
12. If you could train in a martial art, what would it be and why? Why are martial arts good for you? Research into different styles of martial arts: what are they called? which countries do they originate from? who developed the style? what are their key characteristics?



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. Fill out the following character chart as you read the novel. Use for discussion or study. e.g. which character would you choose to be in *Young Samurai* and why?

Character	Description	Relationship to Jack	Key line in book
Jack Fletcher			
Akiko			
Yamato			
Kazuki			
Dragon Eye			
Masamoto Takeshi			
Sensei Yamada			
Sensei Kyuzo			
Sensei Yosa			

3. Imagine and write a scene for your favorite character that may have occurred before the book starts. For example, an adventure Jack may have had on the journey to the Japans; or a story based on Akiko as an Ama diver; or of a mission Dragon Eye had been on before Jack's arrival. 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. What Japanese words are used in *Young Samurai: The Way of the Warrior*? And what do they mean? (hint: glossary in back of book)
2. Learn to count from 1 to 10 in Japanese (worksheet available on author website).
3. Find out the Japanese for the following phrases and learn how to say them:

Good Afternoon	_____
Goodbye	_____
Pleased to meet you	_____
Excuse me	_____
How are you?	_____
I'm fine	_____
Thank you (very much)	_____
Yes/No	_____
Do you speak English?	_____
Sorry, I don't understand	_____

4. Act out a conversation with a partner using the Japanese phrases you have learnt.

Visit 'Ready Steady NihonGO!' a 10 lesson course in spoken Japanese at www.japan21.org.uk

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 the samurai
- History of the ninja
- Kimono
- Martial Arts in Japan and the world

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 Japan changed since the 17th 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 given a Daruma doll as a gift from Sensei Yamada. What is it for? Research what a Daruma doll looks like, then either:

- a) draw your own Daruma doll face
- b) make a papier-mâché Daruma doll and paint on a face

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*. 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 book, 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*, or create a short comic strip of one chapter, in a *manga* style: for example, Masamoto duelling against Godai on the beach; Jack, Akiko and the others at the Hanami Party; or Jack and Yamato climbing the Sound of Feathers Waterfall for the Jade Sword.

Science & Technology

1. Jack is presented his first samurai sword by Masamoto. Research how samurai swords are made and discover what all the different parts of a sword are called. Then present your findings to the class using a PowerPoint, Web page or poster.

2. Jack has been taught by his father to navigate by the stars. In groups, research the basics of celestial navigation. What main stars, planets and constellations are used to tell direction? Which star helps you find north? south? What instruments do you need? What is longitude, how is it measured and why was it so important to work out?



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 or the events page at 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 17th century and in 21st 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 or the events page at www.chrisbradford.co.uk.

Culture & Philosophy

1. 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 21st century? Who in your class do you think demonstrates a virtue of Bushido and give an example?
2. Sensei Yamada teaches Jack about the idea of 'never giving up' in life through the concept of the Daruma Doll 'seven times down, eight times up'. 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?
3. Make a list of Japanese etiquette that you have learnt from the book. Then make a list of all the social etiquette that occurs in your own society. Compare the lists – which ones do you think are unusual? Which ones do you think a foreigner would find unusual about your own culture?
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.
5. The samurai were the warrior class of Japanese society. Discover the other classes during this time in Japan – were there Lords? Peasants? Do you think there is a class system in your country? How does it compare?



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 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 Matsuri (Festival)

At the end of *The Way of the Warrior*, Jack goes to *Gion Matsuri*, a famous festival in Kyoto. There are floats, music, dancing, mask-wearing and food. You can organise your own matsuri at your school or youth club.

A project pack can be downloaded at www.japan21.org.uk or the events page at www.chrisbradford.co.uk.

The pack includes guidance on how to make *yukata* (summer kimono), prepare Japanese food, play Japanese music and dance properly.

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
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).

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.

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.hyperionbooksforchildren.com.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW

1. What gave you the idea for writing *Young Samurai: The Way of the Warrior*?

When I signed to my literary agent, he asked me for a short biography for his website. I wanted to expand my writing boundaries so considered what else I loved doing and could write about – travel and martial arts were my two main passions. Suddenly the idea hit me like a spinning hook kick and *Young Samurai* was born! The story developed from the fact that I began learning martial arts at an early age and have always dreamed of what it would be like to be a real samurai.

2. 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.

3. 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 the award-winning author of the *Young Samurai* series (Great Britain Sasakawa Award 2007 and 'Book of the Year' at the Fighting Spirit Awards 2008).

Chris has earned his black belt in Zen Kyu Shin Taijutsu, and is also trained in judo, karate, kickboxing and samurai swordsmanship.

Before writing *The Way of the Warrior*, he was a professional musician, songwriter and music teacher.

He lives in England with his wife and two cats.

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

www.youngsamurai.com

www.chrisbradford.co.uk



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.