

THE SIGN OF THE CHRYSANTHEMUM

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

KATHERINE PATERSON

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

SYNOPSIS

Old Sato's wife bathes and dresses Muna's mother's corpse for burial. Her 13-year-old son, whom the local daimyo, Lord Yoshikuni of Awa, calls "the nameless one," ponders his illegitimacy and fantasizes about meeting his father, a grand dream of a samurai warrior who passed through the island and left Muna's mother pregnant. Muna apologizes to his mother's spirit for his plans to leave her grave untended while he searches for his father. He packs a few rice cakes and hurries to unload a ship at the command of the lord.

As the boat sails south and east, Muna hides in a crevice of goods in the ship's hold while Takanobu, a renegade samurai warrior, sleeps nearby. Sounds of Muna groaning with seasickness give away the hiding place. Takanobu takes charge of the stowaway, provides him rice and dried fish, and helps him escape the captain at the Rokuhara Port in Heiankyo. On the way to the Rashomon Gate, the pre-arranged meeting spot, Muna meets Kawaki, the sandal-maker, who invites him to dinner. The next morning, Kawaki's daughter Akiko directs him to the gate, where the renegade samurai lies snoring.

Takanobu dismays Muna by selling a stolen silver statue of Buddha to Plum Face, a peddler. Takanobu and Muna wander into the Red Dog for food; Takanobu arranges for his pal Ogasa to get Muna a job in the imperial stables. In exchange for food, Muna gives Takanobu his wages and gossip from the stables. Muna boldly insists that his father is a Heike warrior. For this reason, Takanobu and his pals seem to distance themselves from Muna.

One cold evening, Takanobu sends Muna to the gate to find Plum Face. An old man tells Muna that Plum Face died two months previously. Muna suspects that Takanobu sent him on a pointless errand. His resentment grows until he sees that the Red Dog is aflame. He rushes to save Takanobu, but collapses in the smoke.

On New Year's Eve, the swordsmith Fukuji finds Muna's limp form in the street and carries him home. After Muna's fever breaks, he mourns for Takanobu. His eyes admire the fine swords hanging on the wall. The swordsmith offers a holiday greeting and feeds him hot soup. Muna recovers and serves Fukuji, but does not enter the forge area, which seems like a holy shrine. Fukuji takes such pride in his work that he sells to no one who is unworthy of the weapon.

In April, Muna carries a message to Muratani of the Imperial Guards. With his tip, he buys rice candy and enjoys the cherry blossoms. He visits the sandal-maker and shares his sweets with Akiko. He visits Kawaki, who is dying of a withering illness. On subsequent calls, he learns that Akiko's uncle already owns the shop and menaces his niece. To cheer her up, Muna buys a goldfish in a bamboo

bowl. On his way home, he bumps into a monk who is following him. The monk is Takanobu.

Times have been hard on Takanobu, who has sold his sword. He asks Muna to steal one from the forge. Muna refuses. That night, as the swordsmith finishes the sword he is honing, Muna asks if he can become an apprentice. Fukuji gives him an ambiguous answer, "What do you think of yourself?" In frustration, Muna rushes to Akiko and finds that her father has died and her uncle has placed her in a brothel.

Muna rushes into the bawdy house and screams for Akiko. Kato, the doorman, strikes him on the head, takes him out back, and beats him severely. Muna returns to the forge and says nothing about his battering. He takes a false message to Muratani that the sword is not finished. He lies to the swordsmith that Muratani is away on patrol.

Muna steals the sword and carries it to Takanobu. He demands whether Takanobu was telling the truth about being his father. Takanobu laughs at his "puppy." Muna cuts him with one stroke of the sword and flees to the park, where he spends the night under a tree. The next morning, he runs to the west of the city toward the mountains and tries to elude a woodcutter who trails him.

That morning, Fukuji knows immediately that Muna has stolen a sword. In the forge sits Takanobu, who offers to return both boy and sword in exchange for a lesser sword. Takanobu displays a flower tattooed on his left shoulder to prove that he is Muna's father. Fukuji is jealous.

Muratani arrives and offers to ask Lord Kiyomori about the boy's father. Fukuji goes to Kiyomori, his old enemy, and asks about the chrysanthemum tattoo, which decorates the shoulders of 200 men. Kiyomori promises to find the boy, but Fukuji ruins the arrangement by refusing to make a sword for Kiyomori, a man he does not respect. Fukuji realizes he must look for Muna himself.

When he finds Muna, the boy runs away. Muna grows so grubby and ragged that he blends in with trash, beggars, and street rabble. That winter, revolution begins. Genji warriors overpower the Heike, put the Emperor under guard, and seize local power. In this fierce milieu, Muna climbs the hill once more and digs a hole in search of the hidden sword. To his relief, it is safe. He hides it in his clothing. Street ruffians try to steal it. He slashes them into submission and flees.

Muna returns to the forge and gives back the sword. Fukuji takes him in and restores their old relationship. In honor of Muna's 16th birthday, Fukuji suggests that he take a new name. Muna settles on his old name. Fukuji is so overjoyed at this sign of maturity that he retrieves the sword from the storage room and slashes it through Muna's hair to initiate him into the apprenticeship of the swordmaker.

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Inscribed on the sword is a motto: "Through fire is the spirit forged."

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born the third of five children in Tsing Tsiang, China, to Presbyterian missionary George Raymond and Mary Goetchius Womeldorf, Katherine Paterson (1932-) lived part of her childhood in the Orient, learned Chinese, and came to respect Eastern civilization and traditions. Because her parents fled China during World War II, she had to acclimate herself to American children in the grade school she attended in Winston-Salem, N.C., where her British accent set her apart from American Southerners. Her compensation for missing the Orient and for feeling like an outsider was an introduction to a well-stocked library.

Paterson graduated from King College in 1954 and received master's degrees in English and Bible from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in 1956. For the next six years she taught at a missionary school in Japan. She attended the Nagonuma School of Japanese in 1959 and Union Theological Seminary in 1962, where she met and married Reverend John Barstow Paterson. She worked as a Christian education assistant, aiding eleven pastors in rural Japan, and taught sacred studies and English in Lovettsville, Virginia, and Pennington, New Jersey, before becoming a fulltime writer of church material and young adult novels in 1966.

Paterson draws on her experiences in the Orient as well as the activities of her two sons, two adopted daughters, and their friends. Of the editing assistance and support she receives from her husband and children she says, "It means a lot to me that my family care about my work and share my pleasure in each new book." She has published works on a wide range of subjects, including *The Master Puppeteer*, which she researched in Japanese puppet theaters, and *The Sign of the Chrysanthemum*, a young adult novel requiring much study of Japanese verse. In addition to original manuscripts, she translated *The Crane Wife* and coauthored *Consider the Lilies* with her husband. The Paterson family currently lives in Vermont.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Katherine Paterson's books have received an outpouring of critical acclaim, particularly *The Sign of the Chrysanthemum*, *Bridge To Terabithia*, and *Jacob Have I Loved*, respectively the 1973, 1978, and 1981 Newbery Medal winners, and *The Master Puppeteer* and *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, National Book Award winners for 1977 and 1979. *Come Sing, Jimmy Jo* won commendations of Best Book of 1985 from *The New York Times* and *School Library Journal*. In 1978, King College conferred on Paterson an honorary doctorate. The following year she was nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen award. Paterson's *Jacob Have I Loved* is an ALA Notable Book award winner, which was featured in *School Library Journal* as best book of the year and best of the top books from 1966-1978.

Recent honors continue to spotlight Paterson as one of the top writers for young adult audiences. She has received a Lewis Carroll Shelf Award, Michigan Young Reader's and New York Public Library awards, Janusz Korczak Medal, Colorado Blue Spruce Award, and Le Grand Prix des

Jeunes Lecteurs. Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* is available on record, cassette, and sound filmstrip, as are *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, *Angels and Other Strangers*, and *Jacob Have I Loved*. Her collected works are housed at the University of Minnesota.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the value of security, belonging, and self-esteem
2. To explain the importance of doing a job well
3. To enumerate reasons why fatherless children long to identify their missing parent
4. To justify a need for self-discipline and honesty
5. To contrast the settings in terms of safety, comfort, privacy, and function
6. To discuss the aspects of a dilemma
7. To comment on the sparseness and beauty of traditional Japanese songs and verse
8. To define "coming of age" motifs
9. To enumerate ethnic traditions and explain their significance, such as removal of shoes at the door, making a pilgrimage to a parent's grave, and showing courtesy to elderly people

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the purpose of Muna's voyage from Awa
2. To assess shifts in tone as Muna frees himself of Takanobu's influence
3. To account for the theft of the sword and its subsequent return
4. To order events that lead to Akiko's placement in a brothel
5. To describe such turning points as the meeting at Rashomon Gate, burial of the sword, Muna's collapse during the fire, the captain's insistence on pay for the stowaway's food, Muna's digging of his mother's grave, Sato's kindness to Muna during funeral preparations, and Fukuji's acceptance of Muna as an apprentice.
6. To characterize Takanobu as parasite and manipulator
7. To predict how Muna will like working at the forge
8. To explain why warring factions disrupt the city's peace
9. To describe Muna's flight from the swordsmith's home

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which each item is taken.

1. Muna had not climbed the hill to the burial grounds since the last death among the serfs more than two years before, so that when he turned and saw the scene below, a thrill of pleasure went through his body. (Chapter 1, p. 1)
(Under the feudal system, a rigid caste system divided the Japanese according to status and power. At the top of the hierarchy was the shogun, the master of a section of land that represented a fiefdom, complete in its authority over all who lived within its boundaries. The daimyo supervised law and order; the samurai formed a strong defense against other shoguns who rivaled the fiefdom. The merchant class tended to trade. At the

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- bottom of the social heap dwelled the serfs, who fished or raised vegetables, grain, and fruit for their betters and received little in return for a wretched existence.)*
2. On deck, the ronin Takanobu helps himself generously to another bowl of rice. (Chapter 2, p. 9)
(The samurai depended on their lords for sustenance and equipment. When the feudal system began to break down, former samurai had no livelihood skills and little experience with community or family life. Without the discipline of the military chain of command, they became ronin or rogues and survived by robbing, carousing, and forming bands, who roamed the countryside terrorizing peasants and committing petty crimes.)
 3. You'll lose at least a day, maybe more, and the season for typhoons is upon us. (Chapter 2, pp. 14-15)
(Japan is subject to seasonal cyclones similar to hurricanes. The term derives from the Chinese taifun, or big wind, which reaches beyond 75 miles per hour and can sweep away houses, farmland, and boats in a matter of minutes. Because Japan is a string of islands with an extensive Pacific coastline, it is vulnerable to typhoons, which can inundate the land and wreak much damage.)
 4. The retainer's halberd was hard across his chest, or, Muna might have dared reach out to touch the cart. (Chapter 3, pp. 18-19)
(The retainer or bodyguard carries a tall ceremonial weapon a foot or more higher than the man. The halberd is similar to an axe but with a longer handle. The purpose of these armed guards is to sweep aside all petitioners or potential robbers or assassins who might harm the daimyo.)
 5. Then he turned the small silver Buddha over in his hands. (Chapter 4, p. 27)
(Buddhism has existed for thousands of years in Japan, Korea, and China. Buddhists believe that they exist on a rotating wheel of experience and pass in and out of paradise, returning frequently to earth for rebirth. The devout seek enlightenment through meditation and discipline as an escape from sensual pleasures. Compassion, considered the most liberating of virtues, releases the soul to its final state, which is eternal salvation free of mortal fears, disease, pain, and death.)
 6. In the evenings Fukuji would go to the storehouse beside the forge and fetch his six-stringed zither; and in the cold, clear nights of early spring the two of them would sit in the courtyard, the boy entranced while the swordsmith plucked his instrument and sang melancholy ballads of his native province and classical poems that he himself had set to music. (Chapter 6, p. 49)
(Fukuji is adept at the zither, a stringed instrument similar to an autoharp which is held on the lap or placed on a table. The musician plucks the strings with fingers or pick. An alternate sound is derived from strumming all the strings.)
 7. "You haven't taken the tonsure?" Muna asked, indicating the robe. (Chapter 8, p. 69)
(The tonsure is a ceremonial removal of hair from the scalp to indicate a monk's devotion to his calling. Before the tonsure, monks serve a trial role in religious duties. After the tonsure, they don saffron-yellow robes and carry begging bowls as evidence of their submission to poverty and piety.)
 8. The festival of Gion was devoted to Susano, the storm-god, that "swift-impetuous deity" who could never be counted on. (Chapter 9, p. 74)
(Susano, an unpredictable god, lived in Honshu and performed many feats. His most famous are killing dragons and ridding Japan of foxes, the most mischievous of animals.)
 9. Sometimes he was a great hero, slaying the dragons that plagued mankind, but as often as not he was a naughty boy playing pranks on his noble sister Amaterasu, goddess of the sun. (Chapter 9, p. 74)
(With her back to her brother, the moon god, Amaterasu represented half of the celestial lights that guide human life. From her descended the imperial Japanese dynasty. Amaterasu was the victim of Susano's trickery and guarded herself from his conniving plots. In Chapter 11, p. 87, Fukuji prays to Amaterasu, calling himself her son and displaying his workmanship.)
 10. But news of the coup d'état reached Lord Kiyomori, and he gathered armies from outlying provinces and marched toward the capital. (Chapter 16, p. 120)
(Lord Kiyomori, who journeys toward his father's grave for a ritual visit, learns that the Genji warriors have overthrown the Emperor. To return the nation to its former rule, Lord Kiyomori musters troops and moves toward the capital. In Chapter 18, the revolt ends in death for the Genji and their ruler Yoshitomo, who is decapitated on the shores of the Kamo River.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages from the novel.

Questions 1 - 4 Literal Level

1. How does Muna get away from Awaji Island?
(On the day of his mother's burial, Muna climbs the hill to the cemetery to dig her grave and offers Sato's wife the only kimono that is fit to use as a shroud. Truly alone without a father, Muna ponders how he can locate the Heike warrior who sired him while visiting the island on a mission from Heike no Kiyomori. Muna determines to travel to the capital to begin the search for a samurai with a chrysanthemum tattooed on his shoulder, his only clue to his father.)
While Muna indulges in fantasies of discovering his father, escaping ignominy and poverty, and regaining his honor, Sato interrupts with news that a boat is in the harbor "and the daimyo sends word that it must be unloaded at once." Packing rice cakes to eat on the sea voyage, Muna hurries to the ship to carry silk, wine, and other delicacies to shore. On the last trip, he hides among the bales in the hold. In the distance he hears Sato call to him.)
2. How does Muna come into Takanobu's care?
(Muna divulges his hiding place by vomiting from seasickness. Takanobu, who hears a noise, borrows a lantern from a sailor and searches out the stowaway.)

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Announcing himself as king of the pirates, Takanobu reports to the captain and crew that he has earned his keep as ship's guardian by locating the boy. The captain threatens to turn back; Takanobu reminds him that he would lose a day or more and that he must be careful of typhoons.

As the boat rounds the southern tip of Awaji Island and moves up the coast of Japan, Muna settles into the roll of the sea and regains his stomach for rice and dried fish. As they approach Heiankyo, Takanobu insists that Muna meet him at a local landmark. In the city the next day, they rendezvous at the Rashomon Gate. Takanobu indicates that Muna can assist him by taking a job in the imperial stables and listening for choice gossip.)

3. How does Muna pass into the care of Fukuji?
(Takanobu and his two henchmen, Koishi and Ogasa, continue to meet Muna at the Red Dog. On New Year's Eve Takanobu sends Muna out into wet snow on an errand to find Plum Face, the vendor. Muna learns that Plum Face died two months earlier. Thinking that Takanobu sent him on a fruitless errand, Muna returns to the Red Dog to confront him. His anger turns to fear as he sees smoke and flames devouring the building. Muna collapses while trying to penetrate the fire to rescue Takanobu.
Meanwhile, Fukuji, a lonely widower, stands in his doorway and pines for his native province, where snow is not unusual. He tends the fallen boy who was overcome by smoke. Fukuji treats the burns and the chest congestion that results from breathing heavy fumes. By bathing Muna in icy water, Fukuji breaks the fever and covers him with quilts for a long sleep.)
4. What does Muna learn from Fukuji?
(As a menial, Muna is in charge of making the fire, cooking and serving rice and tea, kitchen cleaning, sweeping the courtyard, and running errands. In the evenings, when Fukuji leaves the forge, he sits in the courtyard, plays his zither, and sings old ballads about war and gallantry and also love, nature, and longing. He explains to Muna the theme of pride, which afflicts both the Genji and the Heike and threatens the peace of Heiankyo. Muna, still intent on locating his father, tolerates "woman's work" and remains in Fukuji's home. In April, Muna gets an afternoon off to enjoy the cherry blossoms. He deliberately withholds his involvement with Akiko and the plight of Kawaki, who is dying of a wasting disease. As his fifteenth birthday approaches, Muna wonders if Fukuji has considered taking him into apprenticeship. To Muna's direct question Fukuji replies, "What do you think of yourself?" Muna misunderstands the ambiguous reply and grows resentful that Fukuji seems to consider him a child.)

Questions 5 - 8 Interpretive Level

5. What kind of men influence Muna's growing-up years?
(Without a father, Muna must learn from the men around him. Sato, his humble, helpful neighbor, soothes some of the sting of orphanhood. Takanobu, an errant rascal, plays on Muna's weakness and manipulates him into compromising or illegal activities.

In contrast, Kawaki, the dying sandal-maker, demonstrates compassion and hospitality by inviting Muna to dinner and to meet his daughter Akiko. The burden of Akiko's friendship nearly finishes Muna when he tries to free her from the brothel to which her uncle sells her.

Other men populate the city. There are vendors, thugs, and poor beggars alongside the dazzling show of the daimyo's entourage and the boastful, cocky samurai and palace guard. In contrast to the highs and lows of society, Muna is fortunate in being welcomed into the home of a master artisan, whose reputation for honesty and fair dealing sets him apart from other craftsmen. In addition to skills, Fukuji demonstrates acceptance of Muna's past and his quest for a father. To Fukuji, Muna is a likely son and apprentice.)

6. How does tempering a sword compare with tempering a boy?

(Fukuji, who has the patience to strengthen fine steel into the best of swords, dedicates himself to purity and devotion. He works hard and wears the white garment of a priest when he forges a new blade. By force of spirit and muscle, he bends "the stubborn metal into obedience to his will."

In similar fashion, Fukuji applies his talents for tempering to Muna. Fukuji has good intentions of gentling Muna and making him less suspicious, less insecure. However, as Fukuji looks into the night where Muna has fled, he thinks to himself, "Muna was not some metal the swordsmith could pound to his own design. He was nearly a man. He must find his own way.")

7. Why does Muna change his mind about giving the sword to Takanobu?

(Because Takanobu has sold his own sword, Muna lies to Fukuji about Muratani's whereabouts, steals the sword meant for Muratani, and creeps back to Takanobu. Sitting among his friends, Takanobu welcomes Muna and asks for the sword, but Muna requests a private conversation. They leave the room and walk into the street. Muna pulls the sword from his garments and says, "I brought you this sword because you said you were my father." Muna demands that Takanobu swear to take him into battle and on his wanderings.

Takanobu reveals his cynicism by laughing at the "little country fool." He has no intention of tying himself to "a great temple bell." He ends his rude comment by calling Muna "puppy." The word so angers Muna that he strikes at Takanobu and cuts the back of his hand. Comforting himself with dreams of his real father, Muna, barefoot on the harsh stones, flees into the night.)

8. How does Paterson label chapters?

(The chapter titles indicate the flow of events in the plot. At the opening of the story, Muna is newly orphaned. He meets a renegade samurai aboard the ship and travels with him to the capital. Takanobu and his shady pals gather regularly at the Red Dog until it burns.

After the fire, Muna is fortunate to awaken in the care of Fukuji, the swordsmith. The kindly artisan allows Muna to enjoy the cherry blossoms and the festival of Gion. Between these two outings, Muna locates

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Takanobu, whom he thought dead. Takanobu indicates that he knew all along Muna's whereabouts. Events threaten to overwhelm Muna as Takanobu demands a sword and Akiko is sold to a brothel.

When Muna gives in to thievery and learns that Takanobu is not interested in raising a son, he runs away and buries the sword near an abandoned shrine. Takanobu visits Fukuji and laughs at the swordsmith's jealousy of his hold on Muna. The falling action begins in the final four chapters. Fukuji learns that searching for the tattooed father is fruitless. When Muna returns the sword, Fukuji takes him in. With comfort and love, Fukuji helps heal the boy's questing heart by honoring Muna as a man worthy of apprenticeship.)

Questions 9 and 10 - Critical Level

9. Why is Isonokami's "Song of the Small Hills" essential to the closing chapter?

(In late spring, Fukuji strums his zither and sings to Muna in the courtyard of the passage of time and the inevitability of death. The second verse of the song alludes to the human quest for paradise. Humankind is not provided with a map to the land of the gods. To build a mountain high enough to reach deities, each must "pile the little clods one by one." To achieve nobility, the seeker must learn contentment with the simplest of human efforts.

The last stanza of the verse contains a promise to the Great Creator that nature shall be the speaker's guardian. The speaker vows to respect both great and small. Muna internalizes the line and realizes that seeking nobility through kinship with a Heike warrior is a falsification of his true self. To Fukuji he confides, "It may seem strange to you, sir, . . . But I have decided to keep the name of Muna.")

10. What does Muna learn from his two years away from Awaji?

(The departure from the island thrusts Muna into a city, where values and behaviors range from noble to gutter level. Without realizing the political implications of his job at the stable, Muna helps spread information to bolster revolution, which causes the overthrow of the emperor. The result of restored peace is a great flow of blood as warring samurai are beheaded in public executions.

Muna suffers more from personal loss than from the threat of civil war. Losing Akiko to the brothel is a great blow to his security, but not so great as the supposed loss of Takanobu to the fire. Fukuji's gentle, persuasive teaching causes Muna to look to himself for strength and honor, a coming to knowledge that greatly reduces Muna's dependence on a fantasy quest.)

Questions 11-13 - Creative Level

11. Compose a letter to the swordsmith asking him to demonstrate his skill before an assembly of master swordsmen. List the aspects of a well-made weapon that each warrior should know.
12. Make a colorful poster announcing the parade to honor the sun goddess Susano. Comment on the role of the *chigo* and the white war-horse in the nine-day ritual.

13. Keep a journal from the point of view of a minor character, for instance, Koishi, the captain, Muratani, or a beggar at the Rashomon Gate. Comment on the New Year's festivities.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Math and Economics

1. Discuss ways of measuring the distance between Awaji Island and Nagano by flat map and on a globe. Which method is more accurate? How would the distance change for a ship traveling up the coast from one port to the other?
2. Write a short speech about the sale of stolen goods on the open market, such as the silver statue of Buddha. How can the purchaser be assured that items are not stolen? If people buy stolen merchandise, are they liable, even if they are unaware of the source?

Social Studies

1. Create a poster advertising the festival of Gion. Why is the *chigo* a special figure? How long does the festival last? What god does the holiday celebrate? Why does the sacred page make Muna feel inferior?
2. Explain the importance of the samurai in Japan's feudal class structure. Why did Japan evolve rival troops of warriors? How did warlords disrupt the peace? What change in Japanese society ended the rule of the samurai?
3. What is a ronin? Why is Takanobu a poor example of a warrior? Why does he need another sword? Why is Fukuji uninterested in Takanobu's offer to find the boy?

Psychology

1. Compose a paragraph in which you define self-reliance. Explain how Muna chooses his own destiny. Why does the motto describe him? Why does he no longer search for a father?
2. Account for Fukuji's interest in Muna and his patient teaching of menial chores. Why would Fukuji want him for a son or apprentice? In what ways do Muna and Fukuji need each other?
3. What does Akiko's fate demonstrate about women and their rights during the feudal era?

Science and Health

1. Make an oral report on the dangers of breathing smoke. How does Fukuji treat Muna's sore throat and damaged lungs?
2. Define the term "tempering." How does the swordsmith make his weapons strong and dependable?

Language and Literature

1. Work with a partner to create a series of analogies based on terms from the novel. For example: samurai : knight :: ronin : outlaw. Consider these terms for your list: daimyo, Shogun, Gion, *chigo*, resin, brazier, clogs, Awa, renegade, serf, paddy, sheath, zither, clan, allegiance, perfidy, traitor, shrine, hypocrite, knave, aristocrat, contempt, apprentice, tonsure, mimic, urchin, brocade, carrion, rebuke, heirloom, portico, halberd, typhoon, gong, and pilgrimage.

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2. Compose an extended explanation of self-confidence. Offer proof that Muna no longer needs to search for a father. Explain how the swordsmith's faith in Muna helps him overcome his insecurity.
3. Read aloud from other works about ordeals, especially Katherine Paterson's *The Master Puppeteer*, Eloise Jarvis McGraw's *The Golden Goblet*, Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*, Gary Paulsen's *Dogsong* and *Nightjohn*, Elizabeth George Speare's *The Sign of the Beaver*, Conrad Richter's *The Light in the Forest*, Scott O'Dell's *Sing Down the Moon* and *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves*, Esther Hautzig's *The Endless Steppe*, and Theodora Kroeber's *Ishi*.
4. Summarize Fukuji's reverence for a well made sword. Why is he revered as a master artisan? How does Kiyomori test Fukuji?

Art

1. Create a collage depicting Muna's departure from his island home by boat to the city. Emphasize concrete objects that figure in the plot, particularly the samurai sword, gate, clogs, teapots, cups, rice, bowls, chopsticks, forge, goldfish, silver Buddha, torii, white horse, kimono, bales, straw sandals, and swords.
2. Make a mural of significant scenes from the book. Include Kato beating Muna, the swordsmith cutting Muna's hair, Takanobu persuading the captain to feed the stowaway, Akiko's uncle taking charge of the sandal shop, Kawaki inviting Muna to stay for dinner, Kiyomori and other samurai with their chrysanthemum tattoos, Takanobu disguised as a monk, and Muna approaching the Rashomon Gate.
3. Create a character web to express various relationships: daimyo and samurai, vendors and thieves, children and parents, swordsmith and customers, and spies and revolutionaries.

Music

1. Describe the instruments that would make appropriate sounds to accompany various scenes. For example, why would an oboe solo be suitable for Kawaki's deathbed scene? Which scenes would call for brass and percussion, i.e. trumpets and french horns, tympani and cymbals? Which scenes would demand a full orchestra?
2. Compose a list of Japanese instruments, e.g. kokyū, koto, and samisen. Explain how each is played.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Relate the following literary terms to *The Sign of the Chrysanthemum*: literary foils, simile, contrast, milieu, flat and round characters, setting, dialogue, conflict, atmosphere, mood, motivation, rising action, summary, theme, dilemma, verse, suspense, motif, aphorism, and tone.
2. Lead a discussion of the aphorism that adorns the sword. In what way is Muna tempered? Why will his mishaps and troubles make him a stronger, more tolerant man? How will he compensate for losing Akiko as a friend?

3. Contrast Muna's daring with similar situations in literature, particularly Charles Portis's *True Grit*, Richard Adams's *Watership Down*, Esther Hautzig's *The Endless Steppe*, Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Avi's *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, Gary Paulsen's *Nightjohn*, or *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Read aloud sections of the novel that contain the most action.
4. Record student reactions to the life of the apprentice to a swordsmith. How would careers change if beginners were sent to school to study metals, design, and craft instead of being taught on the job at a forge? How would a good education help the apprentice understand the steps in creating a sword?
5. Create a scenario in which interviewers question Fukuji about the making of a sword. Ask questions about materials, temperature, shaping, styling, and inscriptions.
6. Write a televised newscast about the parade on the festival of Gion. Describe the sacred page and his role in the nine-day celebration. Explain why the holiday is devoted to Susano, the storm-god.
7. Role-play the confrontation between Fukuji and Kiyomori. What does the scene demonstrate about Fukuji's pride? Determine whether Fukuji is being stubborn or remaining true to his principles.
8. Lead a debate comparing Takanobu, Kawaki, and Fukuji as potential parents for Muna. What kind of treatment and discipline does Muna need? Why does he apologize to his mother's corpse for leaving Awa and traveling north to search for his father?
9. Describe to a group what Muna learns about people by mingling with beggars, thieves, paupers, sailors, merchants, vendors, craftsmen, and soldiers. How does a wider knowledge of people help Muna cope with disruption and insecurity?
10. Compose a time line of events that explain Japan's growing samurai class and the eventual collapse of feudalism. Make a parallel time line of Europe's chivalric age, feudal system, and knights errant.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Make a list of scenes from the novel that express contrasting attitudes toward friendship, self-esteem, responsibility, skill, fear, poverty, security, pride, Japanese lore, workmanship, violence, trust, and learning by experience. Next to each, indicate what you think is the author's personal philosophy.
2. Compose brief definitions of honor as they apply to Lord Kiyomori, Sato's wife, Muna, Takanobu, Akiko's uncle, Muna's father, Fukuji, Muratani, and Akiko.
3. List and describe scenes that depict conflict, particularly the discovery of the stowaway, the Genji uprising, the woodcutter's discovery of the sword, Kato's ejection of Muna from the brothel, Muna's fight to keep the sword, Fukuji's attempt to reduce Muna's fever, and Muna's decision to steal the sword.
4. Compose a scene in which Muna completes his first sword and presents it to the buyer. What motto might he choose for an inscription?

THE SIGN OF THE CHRYSANTHEMUM

5. Make a thorough list of items essential to a movie version of the novel, for instance rice bowls, samurai sword and sheath, kimono, rice dishes, clogs, statue of Buddha, goldfish in a bamboo bowl, straw sandals, zither, candy, grilled meat, gate, and monk's costume.

KATHERINE PATERSON'S PUBLISHED WORKS

Who Am I?, 1966
Justice for All People, 1973
To Make Men Free, 1973
The Sign of the Chrysanthemum, 1973
Of Nightingales That Weep, 1974
The Master Puppeteer, 1976
Bridge to Terabithia, 1977
The Great Gilly Hopkins, 1978
Angels and Other Strangers, 1979
Family Christmas Stories, 1979
Star of the Night, 1980
Jacob Have I Loved, 1980
The Crane Wife, 1981
"Sounds in the Heart," *Horn Book*, December 1981
Gates of Excellence: On Reading and Writing Books for Children, 1981
"The Aim of the Writer Who Writes for Children," *Theory into Practice*, Autumn, 1982
Rebels of the Heavenly Kingdom, 1983
Come Sing, Jimmy Jo, 1985
Consider the Lilies: Plants of the Bible, 1986
Once Upon a Time: Celebrating the Magic of Children's Books, 1986
The Tongue-Cut Sparrow, 1987
Park's Quest, 1988
The Spying Heart, 1990
The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks, 1990
Lyddie, 1991
The Smallest Cow in the World, 1991
The King's Equal, 1992

RELATED READING

Richard Adams's *Watership Down*
Avi's *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*
Walter van Tilburg Clark's *The Oxbow Incident*
Esther Hautzig's *The Endless Steppe*
Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*
Theodora Kroeber's *Ishi*
Joseph Krungold's . . . *And Now, Miguel*
Eloise Jarvis McGraw's *The Golden Goblet*
Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* and *Sing Down the Moon*
Katherine Paterson's *The Master Puppeteer*
Gary Paulsen's *Nightjohn*, *Hatchet*, and *Dogsong*
Charles Portis's *True Grit*
Conrad Richter's *A Light in the Forest*
Elizabeth George Speare's *The Sign of the Beaver*
Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*
Corrie ten Boom's *The Hiding Place*
Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*

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"Meet the Newbery Author: Katherine Paterson" (filmstrip with cassette), Miller-Brody/Random House, 1983.
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THE SIGN OF THE CHRYSANTHEMUM

VOCABULARY TEST

From the list that follows, select a word to fill in the blanks in this passage. Use capital letters for proper nouns and adjectives or words beginning a sentence. You will have answers left over when you finish:

appropriate	fickle	haze	naughty	resemblance
betraying	fortunate	impetuous	noxious	rogue
brocaded	gorgeous	jostled	paddies	seedlings
diety	grizzled	lush	plagued	squeamish
elements	haggling	modesty	pranks	stench

Meanwhile the rice (1) **sprouts** _____ of the rainy season were stretching green heads up above the (2) **beds** _____ toward the sun. Beyond the fields, through the veil of midsummer (3) **fog** _____ the mountains surrounding the capital were (4) **rich** _____ with green as well.

The festival of Gion was at hand. At Fukuji's suggestion, Muna went to the great Gion Shrine to see the parade and the (5) **lucky** _____ boy who had been chosen to be this year's sacred page.

The festival of Gion was devoted to Susano, the storm-god, that "swift-impetuous (6) **god** _____" who could never be counted on. Sometimes he was a great hero, slaying the dragons that (7) **harassed** _____ mankind, but as often as not he was a (8) **mischievous** _____ boy playing (9) **tricks** _____ on his noble sister Amaterasu, goddess of the sun. The (10) **rash** _____ warriors and (11) **undependable** _____ courtiers of Heiankyo found him an (12) **apt** _____ object for their devotion.

Muna (13) **shoved** _____ his way to the front of the crowd for a better view of the (14) **beautiful** _____ procession as it neared the shrine's torii Riding on a white war-horse was a boy of about his own age—but there the (15) **comparison** _____ ended. This boy was perfect of feature, his complexion fair, as one who has always been protected from the (16) **weather** _____. He wore a red silk (17) **embroidered** _____ outer garment, the loops of the full sleeves (18) **revealing** _____ a gold inner lining. His full puffed trousers were of delicate blue silk, like the blue of an April sky. His long hair was bound up under a tall black court cap. And at his side hung a long sword in a jeweled sheath.

THE SIGN OF THE CHRYSANTHEMUM

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Identification (30 points)

Identify names and places described below. Choose from the list that follows:

Akiko	Genji	Kato	Muna's mother	Red Dog
Awaji	Heiankyo	Koishi	Murantani	Rokuhara
Buddha	Heike	Lord Yoshikuni	Ogasa	Sato
<i>chigo</i>	Kamo River	Muna	Plum Face	Takanobu
Fukuji	Kawaki	Muna's father	Rashomon Gate	woodcutter

- _____ 1. stops for a meal with Kawaki and Akiko.
- _____ 2. is the prearranged meeting spot for Muna and Takanobu.
- _____ 3. is the island where Muna's mother is buried.
- _____ 4. are the samurai who overthrow the emperor.
- _____ 5. disguises himself as a monk.
- _____ 6. expels Muna from the brothel and beats him.
- _____ 7. has no apprentice because too many of the best boys are joining the military.
- _____ 8. is the meeting spot for Takanobu and his henchmen.
- _____ 9. rides a white war-horse in a parade.
- _____ 10. guides Muna to the Rashomon Gate.
- _____ 11. calls to Muna after unloading the ship.
- _____ 12. is the port near Heiankyo.
- _____ 13. gets Muna a job in the imperial stables.
- _____ 14. chuckles as he follows Muna.
- _____ 15. is reported to have died two months earlier.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. The woodcutter knows where Muna buried the sword.
- _____ 2. Fukuji once had a wife and has grown lonely living alone.
- _____ 3. Muna bears a false message to Muratani about the completion date of the sword.
- _____ 4. Akiko's uncle acquired the sandal shop at the time of Kawaki's wife's death.
- _____ 5. Every member of the Heike warriors received a chrysanthemum tattoo on the shoulder.
- _____ 6. The straw sandals indicate that Muna left the forge in a hurry.
- _____ 7. Muna can find no suitable clothing in which Sato's wife can dress the corpse for burial.
- _____ 8. On the voyage from home, Muna gives away his hiding place by getting seasick.
- _____ 9. Muna feels no sorrow for Takanobu and his pals, who probably died in the fire.
- _____ 10. Fukuji wants to give Muna a new name in celebration of his birthday.

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Part III: Completion (20 points)

Complete each quotation below with a word or phrase.

1. The *chigo* — the sacred _____ of the festival — held his boyish face in a mask of modesty, but as he passed under the torii, Muna could see the pride in his straight back.
2. The hilt, with its delicately filigreed guard, and the _____, upon which a spray of chrysanthemums had been painted in gold leaf, had been delivered from the craftsmen entrusted with their creation.
3. No clanking of pots in the kitchen or *clop, clop* of _____ from the stones of the kitchen floor to those of the courtyard.
4. My uncle was a _____. Do you think I wished to kill him?
5. When he imitated Takanobu's ferocious manner—"I am the king of the _____!"—Akiko, who had said nothing as she shyly served his supper, became so caught up in the tale that she laughed aloud, forgetting to cover her mouth as she did so.
6. "I guess I never told." Muna's voice was as casual as he could make it. "My father is a _____ warrior."
7. I have decided to forge a sword for Muratani of the _____ Guards who was here recently.
8. It is the hour of the sheep. Watch for _____.
9. Swear — swear that I may follow you into _____ or wherever fortune may lead you.
10. "Besides"—the old bravado began to seep back—"there must be thousands of _____ like this."

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Select two and answer in paragraph form.

1. Explain why Fukuji picks up the unconscious boy and tends him.
2. Discuss why samurai warriors threaten revolution.
3. Describe how Muna reacts to Akiko's disappearance.
4. Explain how Muna received his ignoble name.

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions.

- _____ 1. Who accompanies Muna to the ship to unload cargo?
- _____ 2. What does Muna leave behind when he steals the sword?
- _____ 3. What motif is etched on the sheath?
- _____ 4. What official names Muna?
- _____ 5. What disguise does Takanobu wear in the street?
- _____ 6. What gift does Muna bring Akiko?
- _____ 7. What kind of shop does Kawaki own?
- _____ 8. What object does Takanobu steal?
- _____ 9. What musical instrument does Fukuji play?
- _____ 10. Whom does Muratani call "uncle"?
- _____ 11. Who makes a pilgrimage to the Kumani Shrine?
- _____ 12. What pet name does Muna despise?
- _____ 13. With what does Fukuji cut Muna's hair?
- _____ 14. What does "Muna" mean?
- _____ 15. Of whom is Takanobu king?

Part II: Character Analysis (20 points)

Place an X beside each statement that is true of Muna.

- _____ 1. never knew his father.
- _____ 2. was born on New Year's Day.
- _____ 3. makes no attempt to liberate Akiko.
- _____ 4. climbs the hill faster than the old woodcutter.
- _____ 5. is clumsy at the work of menial servant.
- _____ 6. challenges Akiko's uncle's right to the sandal shop.
- _____ 7. withstands the furor of a typhoon.
- _____ 8. hides the stolen sword in his clothing.
- _____ 9. collapses during the fire.
- _____ 10. witnesses the overthrow of the emperor.

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Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the word or phrase that will complete each statement below.

1. Takanobu plans to use Muna as (messenger to the Heike, gossip collector at the imperial stables, seller of the silver Buddha, apprentice ronin).
2. Muna apologizes for (leaving a grave untended, stowing away among the bales, dressing the corpse in a kimono, rushing past Kato).
3. Muna awakens in the New Year to (the clanging of the forge, Takanobu's boast of being king of pirates, a revolution in Heiankyo, hot soup).
4. Fukuji asks what Muna (thinks of himself, plans to do when he finds his father, stole when he left the ship, did to free Akiko).
5. Muna lies about (Takanobu's chrysanthemum tattoo, Muratani's being away on patrol, 200 warriors having the same tattoo, Koishi's disguise as *chigo*).
6. Fukuji asks no questions about (the trip from Awaji, Ogasa's work at the stables, the captain's stowaway, the battering Muna receives from Kato).
7. Genji warriors (guard the Rashomon Gate, join with the Heike to protect the emperor, seize local power, question the woodcutter).
8. Fukuji refuses to make a sword for (a man he doesn't respect, Takanobu, Imperial Guards, the sacred page).
9. The inscription indicates that Muna (was sired by a samurai, has undergone the test of manhood, is loyal to the Heike, will never carry a weapon in battle).
10. In spring, Muna goes out to (enjoy the cherry blossoms, sell stolen goods to Plum Face, buy sandals from Kawaki, sit among the pickpockets at the Rashomon Gate).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Select two and answer in paragraph form.

1. Account for the change in Muna and Fukuji when they reunite.
2. Describe ways that Muna learns from experience.
3. Discuss the class system that gives the samurai special privileges.
4. Explain why Muna returns the stolen sword.

THE SIGN OF THE CHRYSANTHEMUM

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. seedlings | 10. impetuous |
| 2. paddies | 11. fickle |
| 3. haze | 12. appropriate |
| 4. lush | 13. jostled |
| 5. fortunate | 14. gorgeous |
| 6. deity | 15. resemblance |
| 7. plagued | 16. elements |
| 8. naughty | 17. brocaded |
| 9. pranks | 18. betraying |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Identification (30 points)

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Muna | 9. <i>chigo</i> |
| 2. Rashomon Gate | 10. Akiko |
| 3. Awaji | 11. Sato |
| 4. Genji | 12. Rokuhara |
| 5. Takanobu | 13. Ogasa |
| 6. Kato | 14. woodcutter |
| 7. Fukuji | 15. Plum Face |
| 8. Red Dog | |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. F |

Part III: Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. page | 6. Heike |
| 2. sheath | 7. imperial |
| 3. clogs | 8. fires |
| 4. traitor | 9. battle |
| 5. pirates | 10. tattoos |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Sato | 9. zither |
| 2. sandals | 10. Fukuji |
| 3. chrysanthemums | 11. Lord Kiyomori |
| 4. daimyo | 12. puppy |
| 5. monk's robe | 13. sword |
| 6. goldfish | 14. No Name |
| 7. sandals | 15. pirates |
| 8. silver Buddha | |

Part II: Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. X | 6. |
| 2. | 7. X |
| 3. | 8. X |
| 4. | 9. X |
| 5. X | 10. |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- gossip collector at the imperial stables
- leaving a grave untended
- hot soup
- thinks of himself
- Muratani's being away on patrol
- the battering Muna receives from Kato
- seize local power
- a man he doesn't respect
- has undergone the test of manhood
- enjoy the cherry blossoms

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

TEACHER'S NOTES

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Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
PERMA-BOUND CANADA • Box 517, Station A • Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5T1
Toll free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-705-876-9703