

SYNOPSIS

The story takes place shortly after the end of World War II in a small, remote fishing village on the Japanese island of Uta-Jima. The island has a coastline of about three miles and is home to about fourteen hundred people.

Shinji is a strong and handsome young fisherman. Since his father's death in the war, Shinji has been the primary support for his mother, a pearl-diver, and his twelve-year-old brother Hiroshi. On his return from octopus fishing, Shinji encounters Hatsue, the beautiful daughter of the wealthiest man in the village. She has just returned to town after a long stay on another island, where she trained to be a pearl diver. Shinji is entranced by the sight of Hatsue in the twilight on the beach.

That night at the regular meeting of the Young Men's Association, Shinji finds out that Hatsue's father had sent her to be adopted by another family because he felt he had too many girls. When the other daughters got married and his sole son died, Hatsue's father called his daughter back home and started to look for a husband for her. The young men talk about her great beauty. Yasuo, the fat, glib, and well-connected son of a prominent resident of the island, chairs the meeting. When he leaves early to attend a party at Hatsue's home, the normally stolid Shinji feels pangs of envy and sadness.

The next day, Shinji goes to a mountain shrine to retrieve some wood his mother had cut for kindling. He meets Hatsue, who is crying because she has lost her way. The young people talk and begin to realize their mutual attraction. Knowing the villagers' sharp tongues and love of gossip, Shinji makes Hatsue promise to keep their meeting a secret.

Shinji cannot stop dreaming about Hatsue. He is crushed when he overhears villagers gossip that she is going to marry Yasuo. Shinji and Hatsue have several other accidental meetings. While helping some fellow fishermen drag in their boat, Shinji drops his pay envelope on the beach. Hatsue returns it to him. It soon becomes clear that she shares his feelings. Hatsue declares her love for Shinji and reassures him that she has no intention of marrying Yasuo.

Hatsue takes etiquette lessons at the home of the lighthouse keeper. Since these kindly people interceded to help Shinji graduate from high school, he has been bringing them gifts of fish every week and doing odd chores for them. They do not know that their daughter, Chiyoko, a university student in Tokyo, is in love with Shinji. Despite her keen mind, Chiyoko has no confidence because she thinks herself very unattractive. In truth, she is pretty. Chiyoko is very upset with the news that Hatsue, a beautiful young woman, has come to the island.

A fierce storm rocks the island. Shinji and Hatsue meet when they seek shelter in an isolated shrine. They remove their soaked clothing to warm up by the fire and embrace

naked. Hatsue declares that she intends to marry Shinji but has no intention of losing her virginity before their wedding. The couple get dressed and cuddle by the fire. Chiyoko sees Hatsue and Shinji leaving the shrine and spreads gossip about their clandestine meeting. The villagers leap to the conclusion that they slept together, and Hatsue's father forbids her to see Shinji. Nonetheless, Shinji manages to get glimpses of Hatsue through her window and she manages to smuggle some notes to him.

Seeing his chance to sleep with the beautiful young woman, Yasuo waylays and attacks Hatsue one evening as she is drawing water at the stream. Only the arrival of a swarm of hornets that attack Yasuo saves Hatsue from being raped. Yasuo forces Hatsue to promise not to reveal what had happened and spreads the false story about her and Shinji even further throughout the village.

Shinji's family hears the gossip. Shinji's mother talks to her son and he explains what really happened. Ryuji, one of Shinji's friends, also takes his side, declaring that Yasuo is a jealous and arrogant fool. In a letter to Shinji, Hatsue explains that she told her father everything, including Yasuo's disgraceful behavior. However, her father takes no action. He has even remained friendly with Yasuo's family. Shinji's mother tries to confront Hatsue's father to get him to soften his stance, but he will not receive her.

A peddler comes down to the shore where the women are diving for pearls. He runs a contest: the diver who comes up with the most abalone wins a valuable pocketbook. Hatsue wins the contest but graciously gives the purse to Hatsue's mother. Everyone admires her generosity.

Hatsue's father puts Shinji and Yasuo in the crew of a freighter he owns. Yasuo proves himself lazy and cowardly; Shinji, in contrast, behaves with great bravery during a storm. Hatsue's father reveals that he had arranged this voyage as a test of character. Acknowledging Shinji's nobility, he agrees to the engagement and even plans to support Shinji's mother and brother. The novel ends with the young couple going to pay their respects to the kindly lighthouse keepers.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Yukio Mishima was the pseudonym of Kimitake Hiraoko, a highly prolific Japanese writer and film director. All told, he produced forty novels, eighteen plays, and twenty volumes each of short stories and essays. Born in 1925, he died at age 45 after committing *seppuku* (ritual suicide).

Mishima was one of the first Japanese writers to achieve international attention. With *Confessions of a Mask*, Mishima entered the forefront of the Tokyo literati. The hallmark of his work is a general reverence for Japan's imperialistic past, although he did incorporate elements of the Western literary tradition in his writing. His writing has been called "fanatically" Japanese, and Mishima was very skilled at self-promotion. His drama is noted for its brilliant blend of traditional ele-

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ments from the Japanese Noh tradition with contemporary themes.

In both his life and art, Mishima was obsessed with what he called "my heart's leaning toward Death and Night and Blood." As a result, his writing is dark and very sensual. Much of his work deals with what he thought was the meaninglessness of life; he was especially upset with the materialism of modern Japanese society.

Since his suicide, a number of literary critics have gone back through his work to find clues to his motivation for taking his own life. Some of these writers believe that Mishima may have felt that committing ritual suicide would affirm his personal convictions and would remind the Japanese people of their lost ideals. Hisaaki Yamanouchi, for example, claims that "Mishima's suicide was rooted in what may be called his personal and aesthetic motives. No explanation, in either purely political or aesthetic terms, is adequate: the truth may be seen only from a balance between the two. For Mishima's whole career was built on an extraordinary tension between spirit and body, words and action, and artistic creation and commitment to the world."

Mishima's final work was a tetralogy known as *The Sea of Fertility*, based on reincarnation. Completed on the day of his death, most critics consider it his masterpiece.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Mishima's writing has been praised for its flawless construction and subtle evocation of atmosphere. His works are also celebrated for their breathtaking imagery and dazzling figures of speech. For example, critic Susan Heath said, "Yukio Mishima is, without doubt, a supreme stylist, a mannerist, whose crystalline prose subordinates content to form. His fascination for detail, so roundly apparent, dominated his personal and professional lives."

His first volume, *The Forest in Full Bloom*, is a collection of decadent and detachedly romantic stories. They provide a heavy dose of nationalistic rhetoric glorifying the beauty and elegance of Japan's imperial past—different from much of his later work. Many of his subsequent volumes, in contrast, are heavily autobiographical and confessional. In *Confessions of a Mask*, for example, Mishima confronts his homosexuality.

The Sound of Waves is very different from the rest of Mishima's canon. As a result, it was not as enthusiastically received by the critics, who expressed serious doubts about it. Hide Ishiguro's comments are typical of the novel's reception: "How are we to account for the banality of some of his novels, such as *The Sound of Waves*. . . . Perhaps these are better understood in the light of his cult of the deliberate. He felt that the intentionally preposterous was better than the accidentally mediocre." For Mishima to be able to publish such a simple tale, written in a popular style, was a superior act. Of course, the simplistic effects he achieved in *The Sound of Waves* were attacked for having been deliberate. Ironically, it was *The Sound of Waves* that established Mishima's literary reputation in the English-speaking world.

From a literary standpoint, Mishima's plays are most likely of a higher caliber than his novels. Nonetheless, few critics debate the brilliance of his final work, *The Sea of Fertility* tetralogy. It is celebrated as a saga of the external and internal decay of traditional values and culture. During the last few years of Mishima's life, his reputation began to slip, but he was still the most exciting Japanese writer of his generation.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the exciting but difficult path of first love
2. To list and contrast different styles of parenting
3. To chart a young man's maturation and emotional coming-of-age
4. To compare and contrast different cultural norms
5. To understand how people overcome adversity
6. To contrast settings
7. To realize the importance of friendship
8. To explore the author's use of humor and irony
9. To decode symbols
10. To chart the effect of human cruelty and kindness

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the strong love between Hatsue and Shinji
2. To comprehend why Uncle Teru initially prevents Hatsue and Shinji from being together
3. To explore the relationship between children and their parents in a small Japanese fishing village
4. To note Shinji's love for his family and his ability to shoulder responsibility for them
5. To describe the effect of the setting and culture on the characters' lives
6. To understand the metaphorical meanings of the novel's central symbols
7. To evaluate Yasuo's reasons for his behavior toward Hatsue and Shinji
8. To comprehend Chiyoko's motivations for spreading destructive gossip about Hatsue and Shinji
9. To understand why Shinji decides to accept the job on the freighter that belongs to Terukichi Miyata (Uncle Teru)
10. To evaluate Chiyoko's decision to tell her parents the truth about her actions

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint the context in which the item appears.

1. "God, let the seas be calm, the fish plentiful, and our village more and more prosperous." (Chap. 3, p. 25)
(*Shinji tosses two ten-yen coins into the offertory chest at the shrine and prays to the gods. He wants to become a superbly skilled fisherman, a "fisherman among fishermen." Shinji wants to know all there is to know about fish, weather, and boats.*)

After he prays to master his craft, he prays for his family. He asks God's assistance in being able to help and protect his mother and his brother. He prays that his mother may be safe when she dives deep into the ocean for pearls.

Finally, he makes a third request: He wants to marry a "good-natured, beautiful bride. . . someone like Terukichi Miyata's daughter" Hatsue. Through Shinji's words, readers learn about his dreams, goals, and personality. This scene reveals that Shinji is a brave, selfless young man.)

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2. Thus, of eleven persons, three were killed and a number wounded. But the corpse of the old woman, stretched out on the deck under a rush mat, was not so much as touched by a single bullet. . . (Chap. 5, p. 36)

(In Shinji's village there was a maxim about being safe while sailing on the ocean: "Never have aboard one woman or one priest." Shinji's father died on a boat on which this taboo had been broken. Toward the end of World War II, an old woman on the island died and the boat belonging to the village cooperative had taken her body to Toshi-jima for the autopsy. About three miles from the island, the boat was bombed and strafed. Shinji's father and three other men were killed and several were badly injured. Ironically, the old woman's corpse—which had caused all the problems, according to the superstition—was untouched.)

3. "It's like seaweed," Shinji thought. (Chap. 5, p. 42)
(Shinji experienced his first kiss when he embraced Hatsue. Their dry, chapped lips had touched, and there had been a slight taste of salt. To the young man, raised by the sea, the only possible comparison to the bliss of first love is the ocean, the novel's central symbol.)
4. "Look! Look! A big dog pulling a privy!" (Chap. 7, p. 55)
(This comment shows how school boys from the previous generation regarded the first horse-drawn omnibus they had ever seen, on their first and only trip to the mainland. The remark confusing a horse with a large dog and a vehicle with an outhouse shows the children's extreme innocence and isolation. But a generation later, little has changed.)

The quotation is in the context of Shinji's younger brother Hiroshi leaving the island on his school trip, thanks to Shinji's hard work and thrift. Shinji had earned and painstakingly set aside the money to fund the excursion. The school children are to tour the Kyoto-Osaka area for six days, spending five nights away from home. This was the way the children of the small and isolated island of Uta-jima got their first glimpse of the world outside their fishing community. Because the island is so tiny, poor, and remote, the inhabitants know relatively little of the outside world. On the island, there are no novels, newspapers, or magazines to read. Of course, there is no television or any movies. In addition, other than fishermen, there are few role models.)

5. Women, not destined for that wide world, cook rice, draw water, gather seaweed, and when summer comes dive into the water, down to the sea's bottom. (Chap. 8, p. 68)
(This passage shows the misery of life for the pearl divers of Uta-jima. The men go out fishing; they board their coasting ships and carry cargo to all sorts of ports. Women, in contrast, are confined to the island. They can only go down—never up or out. Shinji's mother, as with nearly all the island women, lives in a world of gloom, symbolized by the bottom of the cold, cold sea.)
6. "Well, if you'll draw the water for me and carry it all the way home. . ." (Chap. 9, p. 94)
(Convinced that Hatsue has lost her virginity to Shinji and thus is fair game for sexual attack, Yasuo plans to rape her. He hides by the stream where she must go to gather water and grabs her. She defends herself, using her carrying pole as a weapon, but he eventually succeeds in pinning her to the ground. Hatsue is saved by a

swarm of hornets, which sting Yasuo. This allows Hatsue to escape into a grove of trees.

Realizing that he has lost, Yasuo says that he will do anything to get her down from the trees and prevent her from telling her father what has happened. She gets him to promise to draw the water and carry it home. Yasuo does as he has promised, although he looks ridiculous doing the chore traditionally assigned to women. Hatsue keeps her promise as long as she can, at great personal cost.)

7. "Don't you even know that? It means when a boy and a girl sleep together! (Chap. 10, p. 101)
(Shinji's younger brother Hiroshi is busy playing with his friends. During the game, the young boys tell Hiroshi that his brother Shinji has sexual relations with Hatsue. According to the boys, this has made the gods angry. The rumor is not true, but as this scene shows, it has been transmitted even to the young children. Like their elders, they firmly believe in its veracity—even if they don't really understand its meaning or ramifications.)
- Hiroshi is so angry at the gossip that he attacks the teller, his friend Sochan. The scuffle knocks out the candles the boys need to continue their game and so the fight is over soon. But the rumor continues to spread, as Hiroshi very soon brings it to his mother's attention.)*
8. "I'm pretty." (Chap. 11, p. 118)
(Chiyoko, the daughter of the lighthouse keeper and his wife, is a university student in Tokyo. She is in love with Shinji. Despite her keen mind, Chiyoko has no confidence because she thinks herself very homely. As she is getting ready to leave the island and return to school, she impulsively asks Shinji if she is ugly. Puzzled and in a hurry to resume his work by the ocean's edge, Shinji answers immediately: "What makes you say that? You're pretty." Shinji's quick and sincere affirmation changes Chiyoko's entire outlook on life. Her face is suddenly full of light and she is happy for the first time in her adolescence.)
9. And the prize she returned with was the brown, middle-aged handbag, which she pressed into the hands of Shinji's mother. (Chap. 13, p. 146)
(A peddler has come to the shore where the women are diving for pearls. He runs a contest: the diver who comes up with the most abalone wins a valuable pocketbook. Hatsue wins the contest with twenty abalone. This is a great blow to Shinji's mother, who was considered the best pearl diver on the island. When Hatsue graciously gives the purse to Shinji's mother, all the women realize that Hatsue is as gracious as she is beautiful. Shinji's mother had immediately understood the modesty and respect behind the girl's gesture. Shinji's mother now realizes how wise her son had been in his choice of a bride.)
10. "I'll do it," he shouted clearly. (Chap. 14, p. 161)
(Shinji and the crew are caught in a vicious typhoon. When one of the lifelines breaks, the freighter is in danger of capsizing and the entire crew being lost. Only Shinji is willing to swim through the roiling sea, tie the rope to the buoy, and secure it. Shinji embodies the fullness of life through his ideal physical strength and tremendous bravery.)

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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 1-5 Literal Level

1. Why does Shinji bring fish to the lighthouse keeper and his wife?

(Shinji often takes fish to the lighthouse keeper and his wife because he feels grateful toward them. He had flunked his final examinations the previous year; as a result, it seemed as though his graduation would have to be postponed. This would have been an economic disaster for his family, since Shinji is their primary wage earner. Shinji's mother, on her frequent trips past the lighthouse to gather firewood on the mountain beyond, had become friends with the lighthouse keeper's wife. Shinji's mother appealed to this woman for help. She explained that she could not support her family any longer if Shinji's graduation was postponed.)

The lighthouse keeper's wife spoke to her husband, and he went to see his good friend the school principal. As a result of this friendly intervention, Shinji graduated on schedule. As soon as he left school, Shinji became a fisherman. Ever since then, he sometimes takes part of the day's catch to the lighthouse. He also performs small errands for the lighthouse keeper and his wife.)

2. What promise does Shinji have Hatsue make after they meet at the shrine?

(Shinji makes Hatsue promise not to mention his name to anyone or to say anything about having met him at the shrine. She agrees to his request because she loves him and since she is new to the village, she realizes that he knows more about these things than she does. Shinji extracts this promise because the villagers have sharp tongues and love to gossip.)

3. Why does Hatsue take off her clothing in front of Shinji at the shrine?

(Hatsue is a diving woman, used to drying off her naked body at a fire when coming out of the ocean. As a result, she had not given it another thought when she stripped off her wet clothing and dried her body in front of the fire in the shrine. In addition, Shinji was fast asleep when Hatsue made her decision. She decided not to waste any time drying her wet clothing and wet body while Shinji slept, never imagining that he would awaken shortly.)

Further, the idea that she was undressing in front of a man never crossed her mind. She was simply undressing in front of a fire, because the fire was there and she was wet.)

4. Why is Hatsue's father Terukichi so well respected in the village?

(Terukichi is the personification of the villagers' hard work and ambition. Possessed of fearsome physical strength, he is not afraid to assert himself and do what he thinks is correct. For example, he smashes the heads of the two gossips who spread rumors about his daughter and then sedately leaves the public bath. He has never accepted any public office in the village, which makes him all the more respected. Finally, he is able to

forecast the weather with uncanny accuracy and is the most skilled fisherman and navigator in the island. These are crucial skills to a community that depends for its survival on the sea.)

5. Why does Yasuo agree to be a "rice-rinser" and become an apprentice on Terukichi's freighter?

(Yasuo does not want to ship out on the freighter at all. He is a lazy, arrogant young man and agrees to the position only when "Uncle Teru" declares that the apprenticeship had to come before any engagement to Hatsue. In short, he is forced into the position.)

Questions 6-8 Interpretative Level

6. What is the legend of Prince Deki and how does it relate to Hatsue and Shinji?

(The legend of Prince Deki is vague. Long, long ago, in a golden ship, a prince drifted from a far island to Song Island, took a young woman from the island to be his wife, lived his life, and was buried in a royal manner. There is no account of his life, which suggests that it was happy and uneventful. It is thought that Prince Deki might have been a heavenly being who descended to earth and was never separated from happiness or the blessings of Heaven. Perhaps this is why his remains were buried in a mound overlooking the beautiful Five League Beach, leaving behind not a single story.)

Students might suggest that the saga of Prince Deki's happy life parallels the fate in store for Shinji and Hatsue, who will marry and live a blessed life. Indeed, the novel records the events leading up to their marriage and nothing about their life together. This furthers the parallel between the divine prince and the poor fisherman and the pearl diver.)

7. What is symbolized by Shinji's mother's feet, as described on pages 126-127?

(Shinji's mother's feet are described as follows: "Her toes had been roughened by the repeated cuts and bruises they had received from the diving women's customary way of always kicking off against the floor of the sea when ready to surface, and the nails were thick and badly twisted; her feet could in no way have been called beautiful, but when planted on the earth they were firm and unshakable.")

In the context of her visit to convince Terukichi to let Hatsue and Shinji see each other again, Shinji's mother's feet symbolize her solidity, her connection to the values of hard work and tradition. Like her brutalized feet, Shinji's mother is willing to endure great pain to do what she thinks is right. Here, she braves Terukichi's fearsome reputation and goes to his house to do what she knows is the right thing. She is "the salt of the earth," a good person.)

8. What are the most important values in Shinji's culture?

(At first, it would seem that money and family connections are all that matter to this island community. When Terukichi forbids Hatsue to see Shinji, he angrily says to his friend Ryuji, "It's all because I'm poor." Indeed, it does appear to be the case, as the rich Yasuo becomes the favorite candidate for Hatsue's hand in marriage.)

But by the end of the novel, it becomes plain that bravery, physical courage, and honesty matter more than money and family. Terukichi states this when he says,

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"The only thing that really counts in a man is his get-up-and-go. If he's got get-up-and-go he's a real man, and those are the kind of men we need here on Uta-jima. Family and money are all secondary." Terukichi stands behind his words when he allows Hatsue and Shinji to marry with his blessing and financial support.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. How are the characters "types" rather than fully formed individuals?

(Each of the characters in the novel is two-dimensional. The critics attacked the novel for its characterization, but the characters function effectively when accepted as static, not dynamic, figures. For example, Shinji is tall and well-built beyond his years. He has the well-shaped nose characteristic of people of the island and his lips are chapped and cracked. Deeply sunburnt, he is the epitome of young manhood. His dark eyes are exceedingly clear, but their clarity is not that of intellectuality; in fact, he barely graduated from high school. To the author, he represents an ideal figure: handsome and upright, not burdened by too much intellectualism. The same is true of Hatsue.)

Chiyoko is the intellectual, bright but obsessed with her appearance. It is only when she can overcome her concern for appearance that she is happy. Yasuo is the villain of the piece, an arrogant and self-serving young man who seizes the opportunity to attempt to rape Hatsue when he mistakenly assumes that she has already been defiled. Terukichi is the wise father, who cleverly devises a scheme to discover the best husband for his daughter. As true static characters, each remains the same throughout the novel.)

10. How does the author create a poetic, lyrical style in the novel?

(Mishima creates a lyrical style through his use of figures of speech, especially personification, metaphors, similes, and alliteration. For example, the personification on page 75 increases the threat of the storm: "At this moment the storm suddenly planted its feet wide and firmly outside the windows." The metaphors and similes make the prose flow like water. Here are some examples: "To the master fishermen the exact rise and fall of every inch of the bottom of the shallow waters off the Pacific side of the island were as familiar as their own kitchen gardens" (page 14) and "His bulging muscles had become hardened through long disuse, reinforcing the impression of a crag that has become all the more precipitous under the pounding of the waves." The alliteration is an especially poetical tool, as the following example shows: "As it passed over the pulley the taut rope threw off a sleet-like spray of salt water." (page 15) The repeated "s" sound captures the slickness of the water on the rope.)

Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. As you learned from the previous question, Yukio Mishima uses poetic devices such as alliteration, metaphors, similes, and personification to create a lyrical style. Write a poem that captures the sound of the ocean beating ceaselessly on the island. Use as many of these poetic devices as you can to make your poem sing. Start by writing ten similes to complete this sen-

tence: "The sound of the waves is like. . ."

12. Recast this novel as a brief play. To help you include all the important incidents from the novel, you may wish to first create a timeline tracing everything that happens in the story. Then divide the events into three acts. Write dialogue, edit, and proofread. Working with a small group of classmates, perform your play for the class.

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Yukio Mishima's style, present the following terms and applications in his novel:

Point of view is the position from which a story is told. The three different points of view used most often in literature are:

- **First-person point of view:** The narrator is one of the characters in the story and explains the events through his or her own eyes, using the pronouns I and me.
- **Third-person omniscient point of view:** The narrator is not a character in the story. Instead, the narrator looks through the eyes of all the characters. As a result, the narrator is "all-knowing." The narrator uses the pronouns he, she, and they.
- **Third-person limited point of view:** The narrator tells the story through the eyes of only one character, using the pronouns he, she, and they.

The Sound of Waves is told from the third-person omniscient point of view. Therefore, the readers experience events through the eyes of all the characters.

Plot is the arrangement of events in a work of literature. Plots have a beginning, middle, and end. The writer arranges the events of the plot to keep the reader's interest and convey the theme. In many stories and novels, the events of the plot can be divided as follows:

- **Exposition** introduces the characters, setting, and conflict. In *The Sound of Waves*, the exposition introduces Shinji, Hatsue, the lighthouse keeper and his family, and Yasuo. Readers also discover that the novel is set on Uta-Jima (Song Island) and can infer that the action takes place shortly after World War II. The conflicts are primarily outer: Shinji and Hatsue versus Hatsue's father, Yasuo versus Shinji, and the lovers versus the gossipy villagers.
- **Rising Action** builds the conflict and develops the characters. Readers follow the path of the young lovers as they begin to realize that their feelings are true.
- **Climax** shows the highest point of the action. In *The Sound of Waves*, the climax occurs when Shinji risks his life to help secure the freighter against the typhoon.
- **Resolution** concludes the story, tying up loose ends. During the resolution of *The Sound of Waves*, Terukichi gives his permission for Hatsue and Shinji to marry. The lovers then go pay their respects to the lighthouse keeper and his wife.

Characterization is the different ways an author tells readers about characters. Sometimes, writers tell about characters directly. Other times, writers let readers reach their own decisions by showing the comments, thoughts, and actions of the other characters. Yukio Mishima uses both direct and indirect characterization in *The Sound of Waves*. For example, on page 6, he describes Shinji's character directly when he says: "He

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was only eighteen, having finished high school just last year. He was tall and well-built beyond his years." But later, we can infer that Shinji is kind and considerate from the way he treats his mother and Hatsue, that he is strong and courageous from his brave actions helping to secure the freighter.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

1. The islanders' diet is primarily fish, radishes, and seaweed. Fish has been called "brain food" because it is thought to help people think more clearly. Argue that fish should or should not be a major part of a person's everyday diet.
2. Grow some radishes from seed and share them with the class. Chart their growth and explain why this vegetable would be popular with the islanders.
3. On page 5, the author describes how the telegraph operators tap out information. Find out how a telegraph works. Use a simple model to demonstrate the process for the class.
4. Make a calendar showing when the spring equinox occurs. Begin with the description on page 14.

Art

1. On page 125, the author mentions the Japanese Doll Festival. The festival is called Hina Matsuri and takes place every year on March 3. On that day, girls display beautiful dolls in their homes and have doll parties. Create a doll or series of paper dolls that could be displayed during Hina Matsuri.
2. Kodomo-No-Hi, or Children's Day, is observed on May 5 as a time when Japanese families honor their sons. During this Japanese festival, families fly huge kites shaped like carp because these strong fish represent courage in Japan. Make a paper carp kite that you could display to honor your own courage.
3. Create a new set of illustrations for the novel in the same style as those done by artist Yoshinori Kinoshita. You may want to use a brush and ink or create wood block prints.
4. On page 4, the author writes: "Just now the needles of the surrounding pine trees are still dull-green from winter, but already the spring seaweeds are staining the sea red near the shore. The northwest monsoon blows steadily from the direction of Tsu, making it still too cold to enjoy the view." Illustrate this scene with watercolors or pastels.

History/Social Studies

1. Create a map to show the topography and major landmarks of Uta-Jima.
2. What role did Japan play in World War II? Find out and share your information with the class.
3. Write a current almanac entry for Japan. Include information about the population, climate, crops, religions, and history.
4. Make a timeline tracing the major Japanese dynasties. Start with the information about the dynasties on page 4.

Math

1. Find out how to use an abacus. Explain your findings to a small group.
2. Construct a chart showing the relationship of sea mea-

surements such as fathoms to land measurements such as yards and miles.

Language Arts

1. Yukio Mishima's drama is noted for its brilliant blend of the Japanese *Noh* tradition with contemporary themes. Read a Japanese *Noh* play and write an essay comparing and contrasting it to *The Sound of Waves*.
2. Explain what the title of this novel means. Be sure to cite specific scenes from the novel to make your point.
3. For many different reasons, Kimitake took the pen name "Yukio Mishima" when he started writing. Find the real names of these famous writers: Voltaire, Curren Bell, Mark Twain, George Orwell, Ellis Bell, Dr. Seuss, Ed McBain, Joseph Conrad, Constant Reader, O. Henry, Nathaniel West, and Moliere. See how many more pen names you can find for famous writers in America and abroad.
4. Read Matthew Arnold's famous poem "Dover Beach" and compare how he and Yukio Mishima describe the ocean and the sound of the waves.
5. Write a critical review explaining why you did or did not like the novel. Begin by citing three criteria or standards that you look for in a book. Then see how well *The Sound of Waves* measures up to these criteria.
6. Write a legend based on the story of Prince Deki in the novel. Do a dramatic reading of your legend for the class.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Make Shinji's report card for his high school years. Include all the subjects that you think he might have studied. Be sure to include a record of his attendance and teachers' comments about his behavior and study habits.
2. On page 25, Shinji prays at the shrine. He asks the gods to grant him everything he wants in life: good fishing, being able to help and protect his family, and a beautiful bride. Write a passage that explains your wishes for the future.
3. Read a poem by the French author Paul Verlaine and explain its rhyme scheme. First reread the information about Paul Verlaine on page 23.
4. Write a newspaper article describing the wedding of Hatsue and Shinji. Include details about the clothing, wedding, vows, and food served.
5. Make a list of etiquette lessons that the lighthouse keeper's wife might have taught Hatsue and the other young women on the island. Then make a list of etiquette lessons that you would need to know today. Explain to a small group of classmates how the lists are the same and different.
6. Explain what the shell on page 67 symbolizes in the novel.
7. Write a letter that Hatsue might have sent to Shinji while the lovers were forbidden to see each other.
8. Explain in a brief speech why Hatsue gives the purse she wins to Shinji's mother. Argue that Hatsue did or did not take the right action in this scene.
9. Make a list of items that the peddler might have successfully sold to the pearl divers. Include items the pearl

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divers want as well as those they need.

10. Write another post card that Shinji's brother Hiroshi might have sent to his brother and mother from his school excursion off the island. Write your message on one side of the card and draw a picture on the other side. Start by reading the postcard on page 83.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of cooperation, intrigue, cruelty, suffering, loyalty, and compassion in the novel.
2. Write a brief sequel to the novel, explaining what happens to Shinji and Hatsue after they marry.
3. Create a plot diagram, showing the exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution of the action in this novel.
4. Explain how the author unifies the action in the novel. Focus on the opening and closing scenes.

MISHIMA'S OTHER PUBLISHED WORKS

Acts of Worship (short stories)
After the Banquet
Confessions of a Mask
Death in Midsummer (short stories)
Five Modern No Plays
Forbidden Colors
The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea
The Temple of the Golden Pavilion
Thirst for Love
The Sea of Fertility (tetralogy)
Spring Snow
Runaway Horses
The Temple at Dawn
The Decay of the Angel

RELATED READING

Rhoda Blumberg's *Commodore Perry in the Land of the Shogun*
James E. Davis' *Tokyo*
Judith Elkin's *A Family in Japan*
Carol Greene's *Japan*
Visual Geography, *Japan in Pictures*
Florence E. Metcalf's *A Peek at Japan: A Lighthearted Look at Japan's Language and Culture*
Pamela Odijk's *The Japanese*
Jenny Roberts's *Samurai Warriors*
Rebecca Steffoff's *Japan*
Richard Tames's *Japan: The Land and its People*
Tony Zurlo's *Japan: Superpower of the Pacific*

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Bell, Pearl K. Review of Mishima's novels. *The New Leader*, June 7, 1976, p. 16.
Grumbach, Doris. Review of Mishima's novels. *New York Times Book Review*. May 30, 1976, p. 8.
Heath, Susan. Review of *The Decay of the Angels*. *Saturday Review/World*, June 1, 1974, p. 27.
Ishiguro, Hide "Writer, Rightist or Freak?" *New York Review of Books*, Dec. 11, 1975, pp. 48-9.
Prescott, Peter S. "Prelude to Crisis." *Newsweek*, June 7, 1976, pp. 93-94.

Spurling, John. "Death in Hero's Costume: The Meaning of Mishima," *Encounter*. May 1975, pp. 56, 58-64.
Wagner, Dick and Yoshio Iwamoto, "Yukio Mishima: Dialectics of Mind and Body" *Contemporary Literature*. Vol. 16, No. 1, Winter 1975, pp. 41-10.
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THE SOUND OF WAVES

VOCABULARY TEST

Using the vocabulary words that follow, complete each sentence. You will have answers left over.

crimson	glibly	haltingly	loath	oratorical	serene
desolate	gloomy	hygiene	luminously	prohibited	thriving
divested	gratified	jibes	mangled	quatrain	vigor
gaunt	guffaw	juts	naive	scrutiny	vivacious

1. The tip of the island _____ out from across the channel into the sea.
2. Song Island was lonely and _____ because so few people lived on it.
3. Shinji was calm and _____ since he rarely worried about anything.
4. He liked to watch the _____ sun sink between the piles of blackening clouds. The sun's bright red color was very beautiful.
5. Hatsue was a lively, _____ island girl who got along well with everyone.
6. To find out more about Hatsue, Shinji stared at her, but she was not bothered by his _____.
7. Shinji was pleased and _____ to discover that Hatsue loved him in return.
8. The men had to be careful when they fished in _____ waters, because they could be fined if they were caught.
9. Since Shinji was innocent and _____, he did not believe that Yasuo could harm him by spreading nasty rumors.
10. Yasuo spoke _____ because he was very self-confident.
11. This was one of the few opportunities left for Hatsue's father to give public proof that, old though he was, his _____ was undiminished.
12. From time to time he put the watch to his ear, looking often at its _____ glowing face.
13. Before each school excursion Yashiro Shrine did a _____ business in talismans.
14. He was quite _____, and his sunburned ribs could be seen through the open collar of his shirt.
15. Solitude had _____ him of any feeling that men could have base motives.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with each character from the novel. Choose your answers from the list below. You will have answers left over.

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| A. Shinji's mother | F. Shinji | K. Katchan |
| B. Yasuo | G. Ryuji | L. Hatsue |
| C. Mishima | H. Jukichi Oyama | M. Omeko |
| D. Hiroshi | I. peddler | N. Uta-jima |
| E. Chiyoko | J. Sochan | O. Uncle Teru Miyata |

- _____ 1. a brave and strong eighteen-year old fisherman
- _____ 2. a pearl diver recently come home to Song Island
- _____ 3. a master fisherman who hires Shinji to fish for octopus
- _____ 4. the richest man on Song Island
- _____ 5. Shinji's friend and fellow fisherman
- _____ 6. an arrogant young man who attacks Hatsue and then lies about her virtue
- _____ 7. daughter of the lighthouse keeper and his wife
- _____ 8. a widow who is the second-best pearl diver on the island
- _____ 9. runs a contest for the best pearl diver on the island
- _____ 10. Shinji's younger brother

Part II: True/False (20 points)

In the space provided write **T** if the statement is true or **F** if the statement is false.

- _____ 1. The story takes place on Uta-Jima—Song Island—a small, remote fishing village in Japan.
- _____ 2. Hatsue is the beautiful daughter of the lighthouse keeper and his wife.
- _____ 3. Shinji and Hatsue meet by the shrine and Shinji makes Hatsue promise to keep their meeting a secret.
- _____ 4. Paying a visit to his father's shrine, Shinji is crushed to hear the villagers gossip that Hatsue is going to marry Yasuo.
- _____ 5. Chiyoko, a university student in Tokyo, despises Shinji because he insulted her parents.
- _____ 6. Chiyoko is an unattractive young woman who is arrogant and conceited about her accomplishments.
- _____ 7. Because of the bad gossip being spread around, Hatsue's father forbids her to ever see Shinji again.
- _____ 8. Shinji's mother tries to confront Hatsue's father to get him to soften his stance, but he will not even receive her.
- _____ 9. Shinji waylays and attacks Hatsue one evening as she is drawing water at the stream.
- _____ 10. Hatsue's father acknowledges Shinji's noble character and decides to let Shinji and Hatsue get married.

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Part III: Cause and Effect (20 points)

Justify each of these statements. Write your answer in the space provided.

1. Shinji is the primary support for his mother and brother because _____

2. Shinji has never seen Hatsue before the day they meet because _____

3. That night at the meeting of the Young Man's Association, Shinji feels pangs of envy and sadness because _____

4. Hatsue was crying at the mountain shrine because _____

5. Hatsue visits the lighthouse keeper's home over and over because _____

6. Shinji brings fish to the lighthouse keeper and his wife because _____

7. At the beginning of the novel, Chiyoko is very upset because _____

8. Shinji gets a rare day off from fishing because _____

9. Hatsue gives Shinji's mother a purse because _____

10. At the end of the novel, Hatsue's father does not like Yasuo because _____

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answer one of the following questions in an essay of at least 250 words. Try to include specific details from the book in your answer.

1. Analyze what the sea symbolizes in the novel.
2. Explain the relationship between Yasuo and Hatsue.
3. Describe the main conflicts in the novel.
4. Argue that Uncle Teru did or did not make the right decision in the end of the novel.

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the best answer for each question. Write your answer in the space provided.

- _____ 1. The story takes place on
a. Song Island—a small, remote fishing village in Japan.
b. Toyko.
c. a freighter in the middle of the Pacific Ocean..
d. a Japanese-American community in America shortly after World War II.
- _____ 2. The attractive daughter of the lighthouse keeper and his wife is
a. Hatsue.
b. Shinji.
c. Chiyoko.
d. a pearl diver.
- _____ 3. According to the village gossip, Hatsue is going to marry
a. Chiyoko.
b. Shinji.
c. Yasuo.
d. Terukichi.
- _____ 4. Chiyoko is best described as
a. an intelligent young woman who believes she is unattractive.
b. a skilled pearl diver.
c. cruel and vindictive.
d. not very intelligent but hard working.
- _____ 5. Shinji's mother tries to confront Hatsue's father to get
a. money for her family.
b. Shinji a job on a freighter.
c. him to allow the young people to meet.
d. forgiveness for her crime.
- _____ 6. Shinji loses his pay when
a. it is stolen by Hatsue.
b. he is attacked by Yasuo.
c. he gambles it away.
d. he drops his pay envelope on the beach.
- _____ 7. At the lighthouse keeper's home, Hatsue learns
a. good manners.
b. all about her adoption.
c. the truth about her father.
d. about Japan's role in World War II.
- _____ 8. Prince Deki is the story of
a. a wretched prince.
b. a happy prince.
c. greed and sorrow.
d. lusting after great wealth.
- _____ 9. The action of the story spans about
a. a week.
b. ten years.
c. one year.
d. five years.
- _____ 10. At the end of the novel,
a. Hatsue and Shinji elope.
b. Shinji's mother and Terukichi get married.
c. Yasuo prays at the shrine of Shinji's father
d. Hatsue and Shinji go to pay their respects to the lighthouse keeper.

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ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. juts | 9. naive |
| 2. desolate | 10. glibly |
| 3. serene | 11. vigor |
| 4. crimson | 12. luminously |
| 5. vivacious | 13. thriving |
| 6. scrutiny | 14. gaunt |
| 7. gratified | 15. divested |
| 8. prohibited | |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. B |
| 2. L | 7. E |
| 3. H | 8. A |
| 4. O | 9. I |
| 5. G | 10. D |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

Part III: Cause and Effect (20 points)

1. his father has died in World War II and his mother does not earn enough money as a pearl diver
2. she has just moved to town after a long stay on another island, where she has trained to be a pearl diver
3. Yasuo has gotten invited to attend a party at Hatsue's home, and Shinji has not been invited
4. she has lost her way
5. she takes etiquette lessons at the lighthouse keeper's home
6. these kindly people interceded to help Shinji graduate from high school
7. a beautiful young woman has come to the island; she does not think that she is attractive
8. a fierce storm rocks the island
9. she wants to apologize for her father's rude behavior and the ill feelings between them
10. Yasuo proves himself lazy and cowardly

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. a | 6. d |
| 2. c | 7. a |
| 3. b | 8. b |
| 4. a | 9. c |
| 5. c | 10. d |

Part II: Character Identification (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. | 6. X | 11. |
| 2. | 7. | 12. |
| 3. X | 8. | 13. X |
| 4. | 9. X | 14. |
| 5. | 10. X | 15. X |

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

1. To the people on the island, the ocean is life. It is the source of all their food and sustenance. They depend on it for survival.
2. In the context of her visit to convince Terukichi, Shinji's mother's feet symbolize her solidity, her connection to the values of hard work and tradition. Like her brutalized feet, Shinji's mother is willing to endure great pain to do what she thinks is right.
3. The shell symbolizes Hatsue. It shows her great natural beauty and her intimate connection to the sea.
4. According to the legend, a long time ago, in a golden ship, a prince drifted from a far island to Song Island, took a young woman from the island to be his wife, lived his life, and was buried in a royal manner. There is no account of his life, which suggests that it was happy and uneventful. It is thought that Prince Deki might have been a heavenly being who descended to earth and was never separated from happiness or the blessings of Heaven. Perhaps this is why his remains were buried in a mound overlooking the beautiful Five League Beach, leaving behind not a single story. The saga of Prince Deki's happy life parallels the fate in store for Shinji and Hatsue, who will marry and live a blessed life. Indeed, the novel records the events leading up to their marriage, and nothing about their life together. This furthers the parallel between the divine prince and the poor fisherman and the pearl diver.
5. By showing the way through the fog and clouds, the lighthouse helps ensure the safety of the fishermen and the sailors. It represents physical safety. The lighthouse keeper and his wife help ensure emotional safety by their good counsel and helpful intervention.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

THE SOUND OF WAVES

TEACHER'S NOTES

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Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
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