

Using
The Water of Possibility
in the classroom

A fantasy adventure about a girl who journeys through a magical land filled with shapeshifting foxes, playful *tanuki* and ogre-ish *oni*. In search of her brother, she must survive with her wits and bravery. And, perhaps, find magic within herself. Alone in a strange land, Sayuri is joined by a *kappa* and a fox who have troubles of their own. Danger is everywhere, but the girl receives guidance from a giant mountain woman. Plunging through caves, fighting *oni* and imprisoned, Sayuri must face every challenge in order to find her brother, for without him, they can never return home...

- Sayuri faces many challenges. The challenges were often linked with fear. Invite discussion about Sayuri's fears and how she overcomes them. What does the class do when they are afraid?
- Sometimes decisions are very hard to make. Sayuri had a chance to escape the *kappa* army but that meant leaving her friend, Machigai, behind. Sayuri abandons her friend only to return. Have students write a paragraph explaining why she went back when she could have escaped. Did she make the right decision? What would the students do?
- Invite discussion about Sayuri's betrayal by her *kappa* friend, Echo. Was Echo a real friend or an enemy? What was going on inside Echo's mind? Did she care for Sayuri or was she just pretending?
- Sayuri's story starts out in the prairies in Canada but she journeys into a land filled with creatures from Japanese folk legends. The author imagines folk creatures of her cultural background in a Canadian setting. Have the students explore their own cultural backgrounds and research cultural stories from the library (myths, legends, folk stories, etc.). Have the students write their own fantasy story with creatures from their cultural background. For children who do not know their cultural background, explore myths which speak to them, or have them create their own folk creatures.
- Invite discussion about the disappearance of Sayuri's brother, Keiji. What do they suppose happened to him while Sayuri was searching for him? Have students write Keiji's adventure as you imagine how it might have been.
- Even though Sayuri finds her mother rather strange, she becomes a source of inspiration for the girl when she is facing her hardest times. Have students write a personal essay about their mother (foster mom, aunt, older sister, etc.) and detail the things she has taught them that might come in handy later.
- Water comes up in the story many times. Have students write down three examples of how and why water is important in those scenes. Why do they suppose the author wrote about water so many times?
- Hiromi Goto, the author of *The Water of Possibility*, makes sure that readers know her e-mail address: hiromi_goto@shaw.ca. What are 4 or 5 questions the class would like to ask Hiromi?

