



Inquire to Learn!

There are many ways in which *The Moon Princess/ Journey to Japan* can be used as a base for Inquiry Learning. This is just one suggestion.

Session 1

Using the Big Book, share-read *The Moon Princess*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Japan, folk and fairy tales, the moon, rewards and challenges, and princesses.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion

Japan: *What do you know about Japan?* Encourage the students to share what they know about Japan and Japanese culture, such as that sushi is a Japanese food and origami is a Japanese craft.

Folk and Fairy Tales: *Why do people in folk and fairy tales often wish for a child?* Discuss that folk and fairy tales often have common themes that reflect important aspects of real life. Brainstorm folk and fairy tales that involve parents wishing for a child, such as *Rapunzel* and *Thumbelina*. Say, *As we read, compare the stories of Thumbelina and The Moon Princess. How are they similar? How are they different?*

The Moon: *How many stories can you think of that involve the moon?* Brainstorm stories that involve the moon that the students may be familiar with, for example: *A Visit with Moon and Sun* (StoryWorld 1), *The Laughing Rabbit* (StoryWorld 3A), *Kawariki and Tutira* (StoryWorld 3B), *Rona and the Moon*, *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky*. Ask, *Why do you think that the moon is often a feature of folk tales?* Discuss that the moon and other physical features of nature are

often found in folk tales because in the past people used story to explain things in nature that they didn't understand. Also, the changing phases of the moon represent the passing of time, which makes it a useful narrative feature. Discuss that the changing nature of the moon reflects one of the themes of *The Moon Princess*: that sometimes in life happiness can be fleeting, or short-lived, so we must enjoy it while we have it.

Rewards and Challenges: *Why do you think folk tales often involve poor, hardworking people being rewarded?* Discuss that many folk tales have been written or told by the common person for the common person and so are often designed to give hope. Ask, *What are common challenges faced by people in folk tales? How are they similar or different to challenges people face today?* Lead a discussion around how folk tales may have different plots and settings, but they often discuss issues that affect everyone.

Princesses: *How many stories can you think of that involve princesses?* As a class, brainstorm a list of princess stories. Ask, *Are any of these princesses from Japan? As we read The Moon Princess, think about how this princess is similar or different to princesses from other stories you know.*

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Text and Illustration Based Inquiry Questions

Cover: Look at the cover and read the title. Ask, *What do you think this story will be about?* Look at the cameo illustration on the title page and discuss the green casing that the little princess is inside. Ask the students to predict what they think the green casing is.

PP. 2–3: Revisit the text and invite the students to suggest phrases that tell the reader something about the setting: *In Japan, long ago*, and the character of the bamboo cutter and his wife: *old; kind, hard-working people; sad; they longed for a daughter; the bamboo cutter went into the forest to cut bamboo, as he did every day; curious; delighted, the old man took the little girl home.* Ask, *How does the illustration help us to know that the bamboo cutter is happy to have found the little girl?* (because he is smiling and holding the little girl very carefully) *How do we know that the little girl is magical?* (because she was found inside a stalk of bamboo, *glowing like the moon*; because she is tiny – *no bigger than his thumb*)

PP. 4–5: Revisit the text and illustration on P. 4 and ask, *What were the two things that happened to the bamboo cutter and his wife that are examples of “good fortune”?* (they became parents and they became rich) Revisit the text on P. 5 and ask, *Which sentence reminds us that Kaguya-hime is magic?* (*In just a few months she went from being a tiny girl to a beautiful young woman.*) Ask the students to find the sentence that links to the title of this folk tale. (*Kaguya-hime was so beautiful it seemed that she shone with the light of the moon.*)

PP. 6–7: Review the first three paragraphs on P. 6 and ask, *How would you feel if you were Kaguya-hime?* (annoyed) Continue reviewing the text until the end of the first paragraph on P. 7. Check the students' understanding by asking, *Why did Kaguya-hime ask for impossible things?* (because she did not want any of the men to succeed) Ask, *Do you think Kaguya-hime's plan was good? Why/why not? What would you have done if you were her?*

PP. 8–9: Review the first paragraph on P. 8 and ask, *Why was Kaguya-hime “happy for a time”?* (because she was no longer being troubled by men who wanted to marry her) Ask, *What is an emperor?* If necessary, share with the students that an emperor is an overall ruler, like a king or a queen. Ask, *Why were “The bamboo cutter and his wife honoured that the emperor wanted to marry their daughter”?* (because emperors usually marry important women of noble class, not daughters of everyday people such as a bamboo cutter; if Kaguya-hime were to marry the emperor, she would be the most important woman in Japan) Discuss with the students that when Kaguya-hime asked the emperor *“to respect my wishes and do not ask me to marry you”*, she was giving the emperor a very difficult challenge – to put the wishes of someone else ahead of his own. Ask, *Why was the emperor impressed with Kaguya-hime?* (because she resisted the urge to ask for riches or rewards and gave up the opportunity to be famous and powerful – all she wanted was her independence and freedom)

PP. 10–11: Review the text on P. 10 and ask, *Did anyone predict that the moon princess actually came from the moon?* Ask, *Do you think that the emperor will be able to stop the moon princess' people from taking her back? Why/why not?*

PP. 12–13: Revisit the text and ask, *Why did Kaguya-hime hide inside her house?* (she didn't want to leave her parents on Earth) *In the past, Kaguya-hime has shown herself to be strong, so why do you think she cannot resist the moonlight?* (because she is being called home) Ask, *Do you think Kaguya-hime's parents will ever see her again? Why/why not?*

PP. 14–15: Review the text and ask, *What is eternal life?* (the ability to live forever) Ask, *Do you think Kaguya-hime would have received the smoke from the emperor's note on the moon? Why/why not? Would she have known what the smoke meant? Why do you think that?*

PP. 16: Review the text and ask, *What technique has the author used to create*



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a strong conclusion, or end, to the story? (repetition of structure and theme in the first three sentences) Ask, *What phrase reminds us that The Moon Princess is a folk tale? (It is said in Japan)*

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Share-read other folk tales and stories from Japan, such as *Momotarou – Peach Boy*, or *Bunbuku Chagama – The Magic Tea-Kettle*.

Share-read folk tales and stories about the moon from other cultures, such as *A Visit with Moon and Sun* (StoryWorld 1), *The Laughing Rabbit* (StoryWorld 3A), *Kawariki and Tutira* (StoryWorld 3B), *Rona and the Moon*, *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky*.

Invite the students to write their own story about elderly parents who long for a child. How will the child arrive? Will he/she have any special features or abilities? Will the child stay with the parents?

What did Kaguya-hime say in her note to her friend, the emperor? Challenge the students to write their own farewell notes from Kaguya-hime to the emperor and from the emperor back to Kaguya-hime.

As a class, learn about the moon and its changing phases. Why does the moon appear to change?

Challenge the students to keep a Moon Diary, where they record changes they see in the moon over a month.

As a class, listen to pieces from Joe Hisaishi's soundtrack for the animated film *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*. This is beautiful, relaxing classical music that could become a favourite in your classroom. Introduce the students to an orchestra by watching the New Japan Philharmonic World Dream Orchestra play the soundtrack on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZiLNfcaTzE>

Session 2

Using the Big Book, share-read *Journey to Japan*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Japan and Japanese culture, tourist attractions, mountains, festivals and cultural dances, goal setting, and traditional clothing.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion and Inquiry

Japanese Greeting: *Does anyone know how to greet someone in Japanese? If it is morning, you can say ohayō (oh-high-yoh), in the afternoon say konnichiwa (kohn-nee-chee-wah), and in the evening say konbanwa (kohn-bahn-wah).*

Cover and Contents Page: Look at the cover of *Journey to Japan* and ask, *What symbols of Japan can you see in this photo?* Point out Mt Fuji and the cherry blossoms, which mean that this photo was taken in spring. Tell the students that the

building is the Chureito Pagoda, which is a shrine commemorating citizens from the area who were killed in wars and serves the same purpose as war memorials in New Zealand and Australia. Look at the contents page and tell the students that the bridge shown is the Shinkyō Bridge, which is a sacred bridge at the entrance to one of Japan's many Shinto shrines. If any of the students come from Japan or have visited it, invite them to share their experiences.

Location of Japan/Geography: Ask, *Where is Japan?* Look at the map on P. 1 of *Journey to Japan* and note that Japan is made up of five main islands. Revisit the text and point out the clues to Japan's location (*Pacific Ocean, Northern Hemisphere, off the coast of Asia*) Challenge the students to find Japan on a world map or globe and compare its size to New Zealand and Australia. Tell the students that Japan is 1.4 times bigger than New Zealand, but its population is



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more than 25 times larger. Ask, *What is Japan's capital city? Which island is it on?* (Tokyo, Honshu)

Tourist Attractions: Ask, *Have you ever been away to another place on holiday? Where did you go? What did you do there?* Revisit PP. 2–3 of **Journey to Japan** and ask, *What is a tourist?* If necessary, tell the students that a tourist is someone who visits a place for pleasure and interest, usually while on holiday.

Mountains: Reread the second caption on P. 2 of **Journey to Japan** and ask, *What does the word sacred mean?* If necessary, tell the students that if something is described as sacred it is considered to be deserving of respect and may be associated with a religion or a god. Share with the students that many cultures believe mountains to be sacred places. Mt Fuji is seen by some Japanese as being a stairway to heaven. To others, it is the home of gods or ancestors.

Festivals and Cultural Dances: *Which Japanese festival would you most like to go to?* Reread PP. 4–5 of **Journey to Japan** and review the students' understanding of the text. Compare and contrast the Japanese festivals with other festivals the students are aware of, such as Matariki, Diwali, Chinese New Year/Spring Festival. Ask, *Can you think of other cultural dances that celebrate ancestors?*

Goal Setting: *Why do many people in Japan get a new Daruma doll every year?* Reread P. 6 of **Journey to Japan** and review the students' understanding of the words *perseverance* and *determination*. Ask, *Why is goal setting a good idea?* Discuss with the students that goal setting helps us to identify ways in which we can improve and helps us to plan how we will achieve our goals. Remind the students that goals need to be concrete and achievable and the steps to achieve them should be broken down into steps. It is also a good idea to set an end date for achieving the goal.

Traditional Clothing: *What is the name of the main traditional garment worn in Japan?* (kimono) Review P. 8 of **Journey to Japan** and draw the

students' attention to the caption. Ask, *Can you think of other traditional items of clothing that are sometimes passed down through the generations?*

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Using PP. 2–3 of **Journey to Japan** as a springboard, invite the students to select a tourist attraction or activity in their home city, town, or region or in Japan and write a diary entry or post about visiting it. Remind them to include information on the attraction/activity, why it is interesting, and what they enjoyed about their visit.

Invite the students to invent a new national festival. Would it be Children's Day, a dance festival, or a sports festival? What would happen on this special day? Ask the students to design a poster about their new festival.

Set up a research project on other Japanese festivals. Are they nationwide or local festivals? How are they celebrated? Are there any unusual festivals?

As a class, follow the procedural text on P. 7 of **Journey to Japan** and make Daruma dolls. Ask the students to set themselves a goal and write down the steps they will take to reach the goal.

Learn origami. There are many origami tutorials on YouTube.

Research to find out more about Mt Fuji. Then research to learn about the mountains of New Zealand/Australia. What is New Zealand's/Australia's highest mountain? How was it formed? Are there folk tales associated with it?

Invite the students to make fish kites to hang in the classroom.

Learn how to make sushi as a class. There are many easy-to-follow tutorials on the Internet.

