



We read the Book, "Heart of a Samurai" by Margi Preus in English class. Our final activity was to write a letter to the author. The best letters were sent to Ms. Preus. We received a reply in less than one week. Here are the letters and the responses.

GR.6

Sent January 18, 2016

Dear Margi Preus,

Our final writing piece for our novel study of Heart of a Samurai was a letter to you. I have picked the 6 that are the most clear and have copied them out correcting a little.

My 6th graders study the period of history covered in your book, making this a great cross-curricular unit. They know that Manjiro first washed up in Okinawa and thought that maybe should be added to your book. They also understand the class system Japan had and that Manjiro was a part of it going away. Reading was a challenge for some but the messages of multiculturalism and perseverance came through clearly in your writing.

Please enjoy these letters and if you have time to write back my students would love it.

Sincerely,

Dennis Patterson

Okinawa Amicus International Gr.6

We read our book in Okinawa Japan. We read the "Heart of a Samurai." I didn't know about Manjiro before I read this book but now I know his life story. One part I really liked was the part that Manjiro gave a mayday basket to Catherine and she kept that basket until her 80s. We study a little about Manjiro in social studies class but I didn't know the details so it was exciting to read this book. I have one question, I want to ask you. Where did you learn about Manjiro?

From, Student A

Hi Ms. Preus! I loved you book "The Heart of a Samurai"! Even though we live in Okinawa, we understand and enjoyed the book. We studied a little bit about Manjiro in social studies and read the book in English. I really liked that Tom was made up to make the story more interesting! I really enjoyed the book.

From Student B

For a few months we 6th graders read the book "Heart of a Samurai" that you wrote. It was an awesome book so I liked it. We are in Japan and living in Okinawa so I thought it will be difficult to understand but everyone could finish the book. Our teacher chose this book to read because we studied about John Manjiro at social studies a little bit. Now, we read you English book so we could know more about Manjiro. I think your imagining story, book cover is so great but I didn't like that picture was almost all Manjiro. I wanted to have more picture about explaining the book. That was the only part I didn't like. At last I have 1 question to ask you. Why was this the first book that you wrote? Can you tell me the answer? Thank you for reading this e-mail.

From Student C

Hello, I'm Japanese and writing this letter from Okinawa Japan. I am going to international school in Okinawa and in 6th grade English class we read you book Heart of a Samurai. WE are also learning some about John Mung in social studies too. It was

really fun to read this book. I sometimes didn't know what it mean and that time my teacher helped me to understand. I heard from my teacher that Heart of a Samurai was your first book. Why did you choose the topic and how did you choose?
From Student D

Hell Ms. Preus,

I'm a Japanese student from Okinawa, Japan. I do to an international school and I'm in Grade 6. I read this book in English class for novel study. I studied John Manjiro a little bit in social studies class, but I didn't know that he is that important to Japan. The best part in this book was when Manjiro met his mom 12 years later. Even when he came back to Japan he was imprisoned for over a year, so I felt very sad. I really liked this book, please write more in this series.
From Student E

Heart of a Samurai was a very interesting story. I thought Manjiro was very brave, and I thought that I want to be like him because I'm not brave as Manjiro. He went to America, if I can't speak English I would not go. Also, I was very thankful when I read that MAnjiro did translation when Perry came because I think that if there was no Manjiro, Japan will be not like now. It was very interesting to read, please write more books. Your book was very fun to read.
From Student F

Response January 22, 2016

Dear Mr. Patterson and 6th grade,

Thank you for these wonderful letters! I am thrilled that your 6th graders are reading Heart of a Samurai. I'm sure it is challenging, what with all the whaling lingo and so forth! I am impressed with their reading ability. Yes, Manjiro did arrive on Okinawa first. I didn't mean to ignore Okinawa which has a fascinating history all by itself, but since I was writing for American kids, I tried to keep it as clear and simple as I could. And a lot of American kids are unfortunately a little shaky on geography!

In answer to the students' questions:

1. To Student A:

I learned about Manjiro in a book called "Shipwrecked!" by Rhoda Blumberg, a nonfiction picture book. Very interesting! Then I read all I could and was happy to find that Manjiro's own account of his adventures, "Drifting to the Southeast" had recently been translated into English when I started working on the book.

2. To Student C

Heart of a Samurai is the first novel that I wrote, but I wrote three picture books before that. I thought Heart of a Samurai would be a picture book, too, but Manjiro had so many adventures, I couldn't fit it into such a small book . . . so it grew and grew!

3. To Student D

I loved the story of Manjiro and his friendship with the captain. I liked his message of peace between people and nations. I thought he had so many amazing adventures, too. Plus, I knew that not many American children (or adults, either) had heard of him, and I thought they should! That's why I wanted to write the book.

4. To Student E

You may be interested in The Bamboo Sword which picks up where Heart of a Samurai leaves off, just as Commodore Perry arrives in Japan. Manjiro is not the main character, but he is an important character in the book.

Thanks to everybody for writing!

Best wishes and happy reading!

Margi