

Tofu Ling and the Carp Banner

Discussion Questions & Answers on the Illustrations

Discussing the Artistic Symbolism in the Illustrations:

Describe why you think there are images of horses on the first two pages of the story. Tell why they are placed behind the carp banners and the words of the story.

The horses are not meant to be the first thing you see. They tell a story, behind the story. They add something interesting and curious to the illustrations. The horses represent "The first day of the horse", the literal translation of Tango No Sekku (Boys' Day). Tango No Sekku is a celebration in honor of Samurai Warriors, who rode horses into battle.

Describe what you see hanging on the wall in Grandfather's bedroom. Tell what design is on the Kimono and why you think it is on Grandfather's kimono. Think about what design you would use and why. Design your own Kimono.

This is a Japanese Kimono. Kimonos are seen as more than clothing, but works of art in the Japanese culture. Often times, they represent something about the person who wears them. They can also represent a special occasion in the person's life.

Tell the reason that images of Samurai Warriors appear in many of the illustrations. Describe how they might support Tofu as he prepared for the TaeKwonDo tournament.

The ancient Samurai warriors lived by a code of ethics. This code was respected and honored as a way of life in Japan. There are seven virtues of bushido, a code to live by. Being a Samurai in the Japanese culture was similar to knighthood. The Samurai tried to live their lives in honor of these principles. The seven principles are: duty, courage, benevolence, politeness, truthfulness, honor and loyalty.

Discuss why the bushido could help Tofu to grow. Tell in what ways there might be similarities between the art of TaeKwonDo and Samurais

The phoenix appears in the illustrations. Several different cultures use the mythical Phoenix, or 'Ho-oo' in Asian cultures, as a symbol of an occasion when someone rises above and changes things for the better. It is often used only by royalty. The Japanese phoenix is comprised of the tail of a fish; the back portion of a deer, a snake's neck, a swallow's jaw, a turtle's back.

Tell where the crane and swan might also be included. Tell why you think the Phoenix and the Dragon might appear together.

It is said to rise to mark the beginning of a new era during times of peace and prosperity and represents, the sun, obedience, justice and fire. The Chinese and Arabian phoenix was said to be adorned with everything that is beautiful among birds; and is the Emperor of all birds. It nests in the paulownia tree until it flies down to do its' good deeds.

The dragon also appears in the illustrations. In Asian cultures, it is seen as the spirit of change, powerful and good, magnificent and protector. It is also made up of various animals. Sometimes the Phoenix and dragon are paired together.

Footnotes:

Williams, C.A.S. (1976). *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism & Art Motives*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

1. Williams, C.A.S. (1976). *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism & Art Motives*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

2. Web Site: *A to Z Photo Dictionary Japanese Buddhist Statuary*, <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/ho-oo-phoenix.shtml>
9/20/2008

3. Janet Gaylord Moore (1979). *The Eastern Gate An Invitation to the Arts of China and Japan*. Cleveland and New York: William Collins Publishers, Inc.

4. Web Site: Nadja Van Ghelue, *the seven virtues of bushido, Their kanji and spirit highlighted*,
<http://www.theartofcalligraphy.com/seven-virtues-ofbushido.html>