

# EDUCATORS' GUIDE

## MAGIC TREE HOUSE<sup>®</sup>

# MERLIN MISSIONS

### *Dragon of the Red Dawn*



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Grades: 2-5  
F&P: N • Lexile: 580L

### **ABOUT** *Dragon of the Red Dawn*

Merlin the Magician will not eat or sleep or speak to anyone in Camelot. What can be done? The enchantress Morgan knows who to ask for help: young Jack and Annie of Frog Creek, Pennsylvania! The brother-and-sister team quickly head off in the magic tree house on another magical and historical adventure. Their mission: discover one of the four secrets of happiness. Their journey: to a land of fierce samurai and great beauty, the capital city of Edo (now the city of Tokyo), in ancient Japan in the 1600s. Their tools: a research book to guide them and a magic wand with three special rules. In *Dragon of the Red Dawn*, Mary Pope Osborne transports readers back to the splendor, rich culture, and magic of traditional Japan.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Read the prologue and explain what kinds of adventures Jack and Annie have been on before. What does the word mythical mean? What adventures were mythical for them and which ones were from actual history? How do you know the difference?

Ask students: Have you ever read a Magic Tree House book before? How does the magic in the story work? Do Jack and Annie ever get in trouble at home for their adventures far away? How do they get back in forth in time? Where would you like to go if you could visit any place in history?

Have students fill out a KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) Chart based on the book.

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

### **Questions for Class Discussion**

What do Jack and Annie need to discover as they visit ancient Japan? Who needs this information? Why? What things make you happiest?

Describe Edo (Tokyo) in the 17th century. What made this a dangerous location for foreigners during this time?

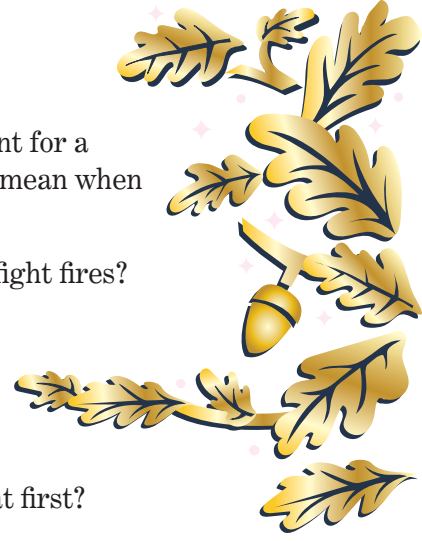
Why did this put Jack and Annie in a difficult position to help Merlin?

What did Basho teach his students? Why was poetry considered important for a samurai to learn? Would you like to study with Basho? What does Basho mean when he says, “Words can outlive their creators.”

Why is the dry spell frightening for the residents of Edo? How can they fight fires? Why does Basho tell Jack and Annie to stay near the river?

What is the most fascinating fact you learned about Japan while reading this book? What more would you like to learn about Japan and its people?

How do Jack and Annie use the wand of Dianthus? Why doesn't it work at first? What rules must they follow? How does it help the people of Edo?



### **Basho's Best Students**

Lead a class walk in a nature area or display a wildlife photograph ( National Geographic magazines are ideal) that will inspire students to write a haiku like Basho. Haiku is a traditional three-line Japanese poem that consists of counted syllables: five for the first line, seven for the second, and five again for the third. It often gives a hint to the season or reflects on nature. Haiku is always created by close observation.

**CURRICULUM:** *Language Arts • Haiku*

### **Great Haiku Poets**

Have the class research and read other books written by these great Japanese poets of Japan: Basho, Buson, Issa, Izumi Shikibu, Ono No Komachi. Then, find your favorite haiku and illustrate it using a piece of poster board. These pieces can be displayed to create an entire hall of haiku.

**CURRICULUM:** *Language Arts • Haiku*

### **A View of Japan**

Sal Murdocca, the illustrator of *Dragon of the Red Dawn*, creates pictures with fascinating detail about Japan. In addition, he plays with the perspective (or view) of his topic. (Look on p. 64 for a terrific aerial view of Basho's home.) Have students sketch their own scene from ancient Japan from at least two different perspectives, trying to show as much detail as they can on the topics of food, dress, architecture, or entertainment. Encourage them to share their sketches with a partner.

Perspectives to explore: from the sky or ceiling, child level, bottom up, widescreen, zoom in, landscape, or portrait.

**CURRICULUM** *Language Arts • Haiku*

*Teaching ideas by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author.*