

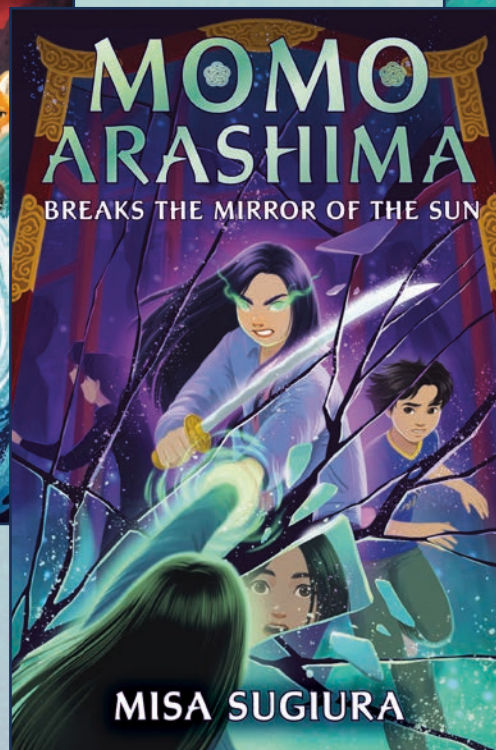
MYTHOLOGY CREATIVE WRITING GUIDE

Unleash your inner writer
with this creative writing guide,
designed for young writers,
classrooms, and writing clubs.



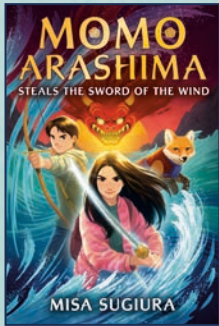
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide includes general creative writing questions that can be utilized for any book in this genre, along with specific questions related to the Momo Arashima series. The Momo Arashima series can also serve as a helpful example while developing your own stories.



About the Series

Momo Arashima just wants an ordinary life. But she's about to become legendary. In this thrilling fantasy series filled with gods and monsters of Shinto mythology, twelve-year-old Momo learns she is much more than a lonely kid with an absentminded mother. . . she is the daughter of a goddess. Struggling to understand and control her divine powers, Momo and her friends face the many dangers of the Kami-verse, including her greatest foe—Izanami the Destroyer, Queen of Death.



MOMO ARASHIMA

STEALS THE SWORD OF THE WIND

Pre-Reading Questions and Activities

1. What is your favorite fairy tale or legend? What made you like it so much?
2. Who is your favorite mythological hero? What about mythological creature?
3. If you could befriend a talking animal, what kind of animal would it be? What would you talk about? What would be the best thing about having an animal friend?
4. Do you like Japanese anime, manga, or movies? What do you like about them? Have they taught you about Japanese culture, customs, or history?
5. Author Misa Sugiura invites readers to visit hyakumonogatari.com, yokai.com, and onmarkproductions.com to learn about Japanese folklore and mythology. Choose one website and explore it until you find a favorite image or story. What made you select it? Remember it and see if it appears in the book. Use it to inspire your own story!

Questions and Activities

1. Throughout the book, Momo is worried about her mom and what's going on at home. Have you ever experienced something similar? What was it like getting through a regular day when you were worried about someone you love?
2. Niko, Momo, and Danny are the focus of the story: Are they the heroes? Are main characters always heroes? List things that

make each character a positive role model, as well as things they do that may be wrong or questionable. Can someone who does both good and bad things be a hero?

3. Momo steals a sword out of a museum while on a quest for a good cause. Was it okay for her to do the wrong thing? Have you ever done something wrong while trying to accomplish something good? How did it turn out? When, if ever, is it okay to do something bad for a good purpose?
4. Momo and friends travel through the spirit dimension's three realms. What are they? Have you ever seen or heard of similar ways to divide up our world? If you were to divide the world into three, how would you divide up the worlds of the gods, the humans, and the dead? What would they be called?
5. Momo refers to her anxiety as "a panic worm," (p. 219) which asks a lot of screeching "What if everything goes wrong?" questions. Do you have a panic worm that makes appearances in stressful situations, or another creature that represents a strong emotion that wants to take control? Describe what it is and how it affects you. How might you help this creature feel better and stop it trying to take over?
6. Throughout the book, many people doubt or don't believe in Momo. How does that make her feel? How does it make you feel when your skills or knowledge are doubted? How do you overcome these criticisms?

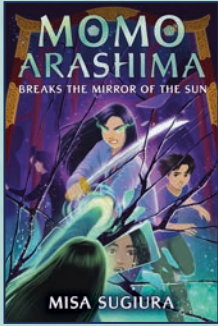
Post-Reading Questions and Activities

1. Betrayal is a theme that appears multiple times throughout the book: Momo's faded friendship with Danny, Niko's lies, and even family members not doing the right thing. What other examples of betrayal can you think of in this book? What makes Momo forgive or not forgive these betrayals?
2. Have you been betrayed? What affect did it have on you?
3. The author Misa Sugiura mixes Japanese mythology, legends, and folktales with Buddhism and Shintoism. This is a common practice in Japan and is celebrated as a creative approach to writing new stories. Use library resources to read about both religions. What deity is interesting to you? Tell a friend or family member about it.
4. The good characters and the bad characters are often living in the grey zone, with no clear good or evil. How does this make the characters more interesting? Why is it important to show characters who can make good and bad decisions or be kind as well as mean?
6. Take note of Momo's family members. Make Momo's family tree and decorate it as you like. Build upon it as you read the next books in the series.
7. Draw your interpretation of Shuten-dōji. Now compare it to [this woodblock print](#) of his head, created in Japan in the early 1800s. Compare the drawings. What is similar and what is different? What unique details does the print have? What unique features did you include?
8. Look up another image of Shuten-dōji from history. What similarities do you notice?

Classroom Activity

1. A character in an adventure book is often brave or becomes brave over the course of the story. What would happen if these character continued to be scared and anxious? Choose a famous story, such as a folktale, a myth, or even a comic book storyline, and rewrite it to make the character speak his doubts, fears, anxieties out loud.
2. What does *bravery* mean to you? Free-write about a time when you were brave. How were you brave? What gave you courage?





MOMO ARASHIMA

BREAKS THE MIRROR OF THE SUN

Pre-Reading Questions and Activities

1. Many numbers in the series are significant, mostly from Japanese cultural influences: the Seven Lucky Gods, 888 children, twelve layers of kimono, an eight-sided mirror, etc. What other auspicious numbers do you know? Ask your family members and friends about any special numbers that they know about and share your knowledge with them.
2. Find and write down the definition of *patriarchy*. Think about examples of patriarchy in your own world and take notes as you read the book. Compare what you learn with your initial understanding of the term.
3. Everyone has either intentionally or unintentionally been unkind to a peer. Describe a time when you were mean to a classmate. Was it accidental or on purpose? What did you do afterward? How did you feel before, during, and after?

Questions and Activities

1. Ryleigh and Jin join the team of main characters. Describe what they are like. What are your first impressions?
2. What primary emotions drive each character's actions? Why?
3. Momo does not use her full power when she is using Kusanagi because she thinks she will lose control to her "rage monster." What is a rage monster? Have you encountered a rage monster in your life?

4. Ryleigh is a strategist. What does that mean?
5. Ryleigh makes lists of strengths and liabilities in each character: Danny, Niko, Momo, and Jin. She lists no liabilities for herself. Do you think Ryleigh has no liabilities? What are your own strengths and liabilities? How do they change in different situations?
6. How do you feel about Amanozako? She is created from the vomit of Susano'o, who in turn was born when his father, Izanagi, washed his nose. How do you feel about all these descriptions in the book? What does it add to (or take away from) the story?
7. Momo and friends are often frustrated that the gods won't help them, even when they are aware of human problems. Niko challenges these thoughts: "Doesn't your country cover news of extreme events in other places without any intention of intervening?" (p. 132) Visit news websites available through your media center and find stories that you think fit what Niko is describing. Reflect on the way these stories make you feel.

Post-Reading Questions and Activities

1. Momo's relationship with anger changes throughout the book. What made her scared and avoidant of anger? When does it start feeling good? How did she overcome her fear of anger? What are the positive ways in which anger can be used?
2. Who is your favorite side character? Which yōkai is most intriguing to you?

3. Revisit your thoughts about Ryleigh and Jin. What is Danny's relationship with Ryleigh at the beginning of the book? What is Momo's? How do Momo and Danny react to Jin becoming part of the group? How do their relationships to Jin change?
4. Ryleigh and Jin both have talents, but they want to do something else. How do you think they should approach their parents about making those changes?
5. Describe the way the female characters wield their power within this society. Using the grid below describe how the female characters wield their power in the book.

Classroom Activity

1. Pair up with a classmate. Interview each other: When did you last feel angry in a way that felt out of control? When did you last feel anger in a good way? What happened each time?
2. Discuss one thing that makes you both angry. Discuss how you could make positive change out of this anger.
3. Japanese poetry such as haiku often use kigo (季語, "season words") to indicate the season. Common examples: Spring: cherry blossoms, frogs, sowing seeds; summer: heat, rainy season, cicadas; fall: red maple leaves, moon, Asian pears; winter: snow, cranes (birds), hot pot. What seasonal words appeared in the novel?
4. Choose your favorite season and select one word or phrase that immediately makes you think of that season. Write a poem of three to five lines using that word.

	Desires	Threats	Weapons/Strengths	Flaws in the Plan
Amaterasu	Peace in her city	People/kami feeling angry and therefore causing problems	Magic: removing emotion and channeling it into the sewer	A world without anger is incomplete
Momo				
Tomamo-no-mae				
Ryleigh				
Takiri-bime-no-mikomo me				

General Mythology-Based Questions

Pre-Reading

1. What are some things different folktales or myths have in common? Why do you think that is?
2. Research how myths and folktales were shared when they were first created. Research how oral traditions influence the way we tell stories now.
3. Mythological stories often have magical objects, such as a hero's sword, a lasso that makes you tell the truth, or boots that walk miles with every step. Sometimes, the magical objects must come together to create more power: the sword, the mirror, and the jewel in the Momo Arashima series, or seven crystal balls that, combined, can summon a dragon that grants you wishes. Can you think of other examples?
4. Make your own magical objects. What are they, what do they do, and when would you use them? Do they have power on their own, or do they have to come together? Fill out the table below. Include magical objects from any story you know, as well as magical objects of your creation.

Activities

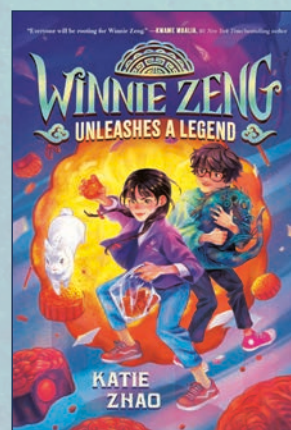
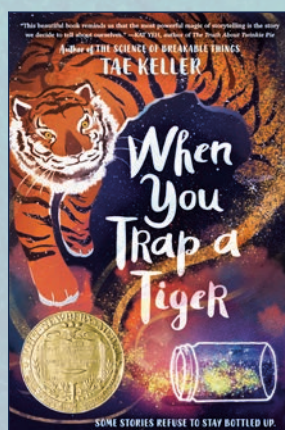
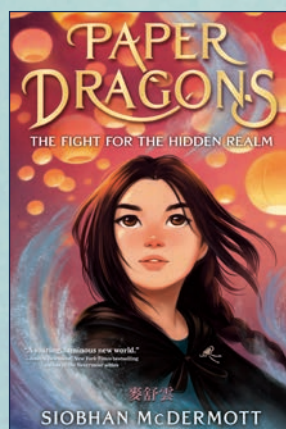
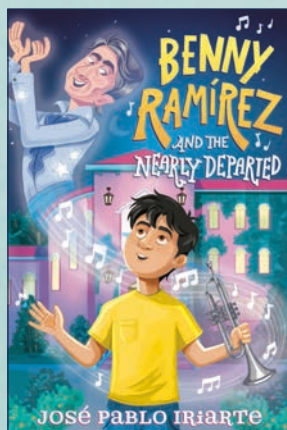
Kids are often perceived as not having power, especially in the adult world. Books like the Momo Arashima series make a strong case that, in fact, kids hold powers within themselves, even if they don't look like a typical "hero."

1. Write down your real-world superpower on a sticky note. Don't add your name. When you are done, take your sticky note and put it on a wall. When everyone has put their sticky note up, observe the responses. What do you notice? What powers are common? What power is most like yours? Are you powerful in more than one way?
2. Choose your favorite scene. Make it into a six-panel comic strip. What was challenging about making the scene into a comic strip? What was the most fun? What did you learn about telling stories with pictures AND words?

	Magical Object	What does it do?	When do you use it?	Combined Power
From a mythology book you recently read				
From stories you know				
Your own creation				

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This guide was written by Sasha Dowdy, a program specialist at the Library of Congress who leads literary programming for children and teenagers. She has extensive experience working with children, including teaching Japanese and spending six years at the library's Young Readers Center. Sasha is dedicated to creating a welcoming environment for all kids and teens, representing diverse backgrounds, experiences, interests, and storytelling formats.